



## U.S. Adoption of No-First-Use and its Effects on Nuclear Proliferation by Allies

No-first-use is a commitment to use nuclear weapons only in the case of a nuclear attack against oneself or one's allies. With reports that President Obama is considering the adoption of a no-first-use policy, a familiar criticism resurfaces: by limiting the flexibility of a nuclear response, the United States will weaken the nuclear umbrella that shields its allies, pushing states to proliferate. This report assesses the potential for a no-first-use policy to encourage proliferation among states in formal and informal extended deterrence arrangements with the United States. It focuses on two regional blocs: advanced nuclear states in East Asia and NATO member states (Central European states, nuclear burden sharing states, and nuclear powers).

Extended deterrence is central to U.S. strategy in maintaining critical alliances and mitigating proliferation concerns. It exists when a state commits to the defense of allies in incidences of aggression, usually emphasizing use of nuclear force. Uncertainty and assurance are inherent to extended deterrence arrangements, both formal and informal. The limits of U.S. willingness to resort to nuclear force in defense of its allies have never been challenged by a hard test, and there is always tension in trusting even close allies to fulfill security commitments that might put their own security at risk.

The invocation of a no-first-use policy by a U.S. president, while unprecedented, would only be one among many decisions that have required reevaluation of extended deterrence. It would rule out an already improbable nuclear response to scenarios that are themselves highly unlikely to occur. First use is not a response that vulnerable allies at highest risk of proliferation, such as South Korea and Turkey, find credible – regardless of formal posture; there is no evidence that any state today has organized its security around the assumption that it could rely on a first-use nuclear strike deployed on its behalf by an ally. As an implausible response, first use casts doubt on U.S. commitments to its allies, whereas a less rigorous but far more plausible conventional commitment could better reassure those doubts.<sup>1</sup> More important to extended deterrence, especially for allies who are not confident in U.S. commitment, is the reliability of conventional and second-strike commitments.

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<sup>1</sup> Sagan, Scott D. "The Case for No First Use," *Survivor* Vol. 1 No. 3, June-July 2009, [https://fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/51-3\\_12\\_Sagan\\_author\\_proof.pdf](https://fsi.stanford.edu/sites/default/files/51-3_12_Sagan_author_proof.pdf), 169.

# Advanced Nuclear States

## Overview

Two countries in East Asia, South Korea and Japan, both face a significant nuclear threat and maintain sophisticated civil nuclear programs. Extended deterrence was vital to strategic relationships between the US and its allies in South Asia during the Cold War because of the proximity of two major nuclear powers and has become even more imperative with the advent of North Korea as a nuclear power that is both aggressive and unpredictable. If Japan or South Korea felt like U.S. extended deterrence was no longer sufficient to protect their security interests because of a no-first-use policy, there is a risk that either of these states could quickly pursue a ‘breakout’ nuclear capability.

South Korean public opinion favors the development of an independent nuclear capability, something that its leaders have thus far disavowed. Interest in developing a nuclear capability is driven by low confidence in U.S. extended deterrence, but it is a second strike and not the first use of nuclear weapons that cause concern. A no-first-use policy would not challenge existing expectations about U.S. commitments to South Korea. By demonstrating greater conventional commitment and reassuring the reliability of a second strike, the U.S. could support South Korean leaders in making a case for security without an independent nuclear deterrent. Japan, in contrast, has no significant public or political support for developing a nuclear capability and much higher confidence in U.S. extended deterrence. However, that confidence is not centered on the first use of nuclear weapons – nor on nuclear force more generally. In Japan, too, leaders and the public put more emphasis on conventional deterrence that can address low-level and grey conflicts that are increasingly relevant to security.

## South Korea

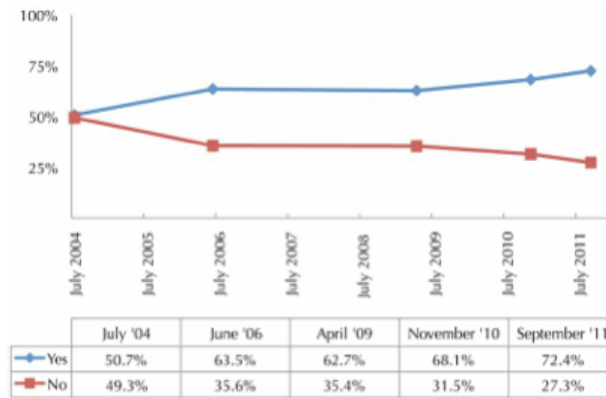
- There is considerable and sustained public support in South Korea not only for the return of U.S. nuclear weapons to the state (signaling concern about the reliability of U.S. security assurances) but for an independent nuclear deterrent: “a decade of polling from a number of sources suggests that that a consistent majority of South Koreans support an independent nuclear program as well as the return of U.S. nuclear weapons. Two separate polls conducted after North Korea’s third nuclear test in 2013 found that nearly two-thirds of respondents (to date, the highest mark in available polling data) favor both of those strategies.”<sup>2</sup> More recent polls confirm public support for a nuclear capability and its general increase over time in the last decade.

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<sup>2</sup> Smith, Shane. “Implications for US Extended Deterrence and Assurance in East Asia,” US-Korea Institute at SAIS, November 2015, <http://38north.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/NKNF-Smith-Extended-Deterrence-Assurance.pdf>, 15.

Gallup	2013	64% support South Korean nuclear weapons possession; 28% oppose
	2016	54% support South Korea nuclear weapons possession; 38% oppose <sup>3</sup>
JoongAng Ilbo	2016	67.7% favored South Korea having its own nuclear weapons <sup>4</sup>
Yonhap News Agency and KBS	2016	52.2% favor South Korean nuclear armament <sup>5</sup>

**FIGURE 1:**  
Responses from the South Korean public to the polling question, “Do you agree that South Korea should possess nuclear weapons?”



Source: Jinho Park, “Literature Survey Paper on the Potential Impact on the Korean Peninsula of US Reductions of Its Nuclear Forces,” December 9, 2012.

Graph from Huntley, 333.

- Critically, public desire for a nuclear capability is rooted in the lack of trust in US extended deterrence – but South Korean fears are focused on the credibility of a second strike, not first use: “a 2012 poll found that... less than half of the respondents believed that the United States would use nuclear weapons **even if the North attacked the South with nuclear weapons first.**”<sup>6</sup>
- Highlighting that concerns about extended deterrence focus on the credibility of a second, not first, use of nuclear weapons, even more conservative Korean experts were not concerned about the effect of a no-first-use policy on extended

<sup>3</sup> The actual Gallup Korea poll is in Korean, so information was gathered from Carnegie who believes Gallup Korea’s consistency makes it a more valid comparison than the preceding polls.

<http://carnegieendowment.org/2016/04/27/south-korea-debates-nuclear-options-pub-63455>.

<sup>4</sup> Park, Ju-min. “Calls in South Korea for nuclear weapons as parliamentary poll looms,” Reuters, February 15 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-northkorea-satellite-southkorea-polit-idUSKCN0VO0U4>.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Smith, 15

deterrence at a July 2009 summit. Dr. Taewoo Kim wrote an essay in which he argued that “even if the U.S. were to come back to a no first use... and no first strike... policy, there may be no ripple effect for extended deterrence” because such a policy would not affect the scenario most central to South Korean fears, a North Korean first strike.<sup>7</sup>

- High-level South Korean officials do not publicly advocate for a nuclear capability despite public support, consistently reaffirming a commitment to nonproliferation. Senior officials such as President Park Geun-hye, Prime Minister Hwang Kyo-ahn, and Defense Minister Han Min-koo consistently and publicly disavow an independent nuclear capability.<sup>8</sup> The resistance of South Korean leaders to public demands stems from the desire to protect the political and strategic advantages of its alliance with the United States, which would be greatly damaged by the pursuit of a nuclear capability.<sup>9</sup> Some members of the ruling Saenuri party have expressed support for a South Korean nuclear weapons program, but party leaders dismiss these calls, which may be intended to pressure the U.S. or China to address North Korea or to appease domestic constituencies.<sup>10</sup>

President Park Geun Hye	March 2016	“I have a strong conviction that the vision for a nuclear-free world must begin with the Korean peninsula. The Korean government maintains an unwavering stance in support of denuclearization.” <sup>11</sup>
Presidential Joint Statement with Iran	May 2016	“Expressing their support for the objectives of the nuclear weapons-free world, the two sides reaffirmed their commitment to the NPT and denuclearization. Both sides supported the efforts towards these ends, and shared the view that nuclear weapons development can never enhance security.” <sup>12</sup>

<sup>7</sup> Pifer, Steven, Richard C. Bush, Vanda Felbab-Brown, Martin S. Indyk, Michael O’Hanlon, and Kenneth M. Pollack. “U.S. Nuclear Extended Deterrence: Considerations and Challenges,” Brookings Arms Control Series Paper 3, May 2010, [http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/6/nuclear-deterrence/06\\_nuclear\\_deterrence.pdf](http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/papers/2010/6/nuclear-deterrence/06_nuclear_deterrence.pdf), 33.

<sup>8</sup> Einhorn, Robert and Duyeon Kim. “Will South Korea go nuclear?,” Bulletin of Atomic Scientists, August 15, 2016, <http://thebulletin.org/will-south-korea-go-nuclear9778>.

<sup>9</sup> Smith, 16.

<sup>10</sup> Einhorn and Kim.

<sup>11</sup> Kim, Sam. “Park Says South Korea Must Rid World of Nukes, Not Develop Them,” Bloomberg, March 30 2016, <http://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-03-30/park-says-south-korea-must-rid-world-of-nukes-not-develop-them>.

<sup>12</sup> “Joint Statement on the Comprehensive Partnership Between the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Republic of Korea,” May 2 2016, <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=0ahUKEwjUxZuTrs3NAhVEbj4KHUjmDfoQFggeMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Fwww.korea.net%2Fkoreanet%2FfileDown%3FfileUrl%3D%2Fupload%2Fcontent%2Ffile%2F1462236038135.pdf&usq=AFQjCNEDunt3jGbuXM4EwfdO8yxNAXOSOA>.

Defense Minister Han Min-koo	February 2016	“Rejected calls from fellow politicians for South Korea to acquire its own nuclear weapons... told the National Assembly’s Defense Committee that the calls are mainly an expression of anger and disappointment at North Korea’s latest nuclear test and rocket launch.” <sup>13</sup>
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No-first-use is unlikely to affect the extended deterrence dynamic between South Korea and the U.S. The South Korean public, which so broadly doubts a U.S. nuclear response to even a direct nuclear attack, would not be convinced that a first use response is on the table regardless of formal posture. Reassurance is needed regarding a pre-emptive strike in the event of a nuclear threat from North Korea, but conventional force could successfully perform that role much more credibly.<sup>14</sup> Further, South Korean leaders are practiced at resisting public demand for nuclear weapons and want to preserve political and strategic aspects of the U.S. alliance. Augmenting the extended deterrence relationship between the U.S. and South Korea requires assurance of conventional and second strike commitments, not first use.

## Japan

- Unlike South Korea, Japan’s public has minimal appetite for any modification of the Three Non-Nuclear Principles forbidding the manufacture, possession, or introduction of nuclear weapons to Japanese territory. This reflects significant normative barriers to nuclear development weapons that, because of Japan’s unique historical relation to nuclear weaponry, are arguably higher for Japan than for any other state.

Mainichi Newspaper	2009	<b>72%</b> support keeping the Three Non-Nuclear Principles intact; 24% wanted to revise or scrap them to allow the introduction of nuclear weapons <sup>15</sup>
Yomiuri Shimbun	2006	<b>79.9%</b> respond “We should preserve” (66.6%) or “If anything, we should preserve” (13.3%) Three Non-Nuclear Principles; 8.1% respond “If anything, we can alter; 9.5% respond “We can alter” <sup>16</sup>

<sup>13</sup> “Defense Minister Rejects Calls for S. Korean Nukes,” The Chosunilbo, February 16 2016, [http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html\\_dir/2016/02/16/2016021601916.html](http://english.chosun.com/site/data/html_dir/2016/02/16/2016021601916.html).

<sup>14</sup> Sagan, 176.

<sup>15</sup> Dawson, Chester. “In Japan, Provocative Case for Staying Nuclear,” The Wall Street Journal, October 28 2011, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970203658804576638392537430156>.

<sup>16</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 2006, <https://web.archive.org/web/20100928084250/http://mansfieldfdn.org/polls/2006/poll-06-18.htm>.

- Japanese leaders consistently and fervently reject an independent nuclear deterrent even in the context of the North Korean nuclear security threat.

Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida	April 2016	“Regarding nuclear capabilities, Japan has the Three Non-Nuclear Principles as well as the Atomic Energy Basic Act. Furthermore, in terms of responsibilities to an international treaty, Japan is a party to the NPT and considers that the NPT is highly important. It is unthinkable that Japan would possess nuclear weapons in light of its stance of placing emphasis on the NPT framework.” <sup>17</sup>
	March 2016	“It is impossible that Japan will arm itself with nuclear weapons.” <sup>18</sup>
Foreign Minister spokesperson Yasuhisa Kawamura	April 2016	“It is unthinkable that Japan use or possess nuclear weapons.” <sup>19</sup>  “... not to possess, not to develop, and not to bring in” nuclear weapons. Plus, Japan is a contracting party to the Non-Proliferation Treaty and acts ‘in full conformity’ with NPT, [Kawamura] noted. ‘Judging from these elements, Japan wouldn’t become a nuclear power.’” <sup>20</sup>
Cabinet of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, addressing lawmakers	April 2016	The government “firmly maintains a policy principle that does not possess nuclear weapons of any type under the three non-nuclear principles.” <sup>21</sup>

- Japan regularly connects its role as an advocate for nonproliferation to its reliance on U.S. extended deterrence, such as in the debate over the impact of the Obama

<sup>17</sup> Kishida, Fumio. Press Conference, G7 Foreign Ministers’ Meeting, Hiroshima, Japan, April 11 2016, [http://www.mofa.go.jp/ms/is\\_s/page4e\\_000415.html](http://www.mofa.go.jp/ms/is_s/page4e_000415.html).

<sup>18</sup> Hancocks, Paula. “Japan and South Korea hit back at Trump’s nuclear comments,” CNN, March 31 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/03/31/politics/trump-view-from-south-korea-japan/>.

<sup>19</sup> Dorell, Oren. “Japan agrees to reduce nuclear stockpiles,” USA Today, April 3 2016, <http://www.usatoday.com/story/news/world/2016/04/01/japan-reduce-nuclear-stockpiles/82523590/>.

<sup>20</sup> Tiezzi, Shannon. “Japan’s Regional Partnerships, as Revealed at the Nuclear Security Summit,” The Diplomat, April 2 2016, <http://thediplomat.com/2016/04/japans-regional-relationships-as-revealed-at-the-nuclear-security-summit/>.

<sup>21</sup> “Abe Cabinet says Article 9 does not ban possessing, using N-weapons,” The Asahi Shimbun, April 2 2016, <http://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/AJ201604020026.html>.

administration's nuclear initiatives on the nuclear umbrella.<sup>22</sup> However, the specifics of nuclear retaliation are less important to Japanese perceptions of U.S. extended deterrence, which is “shifting the basis of [confidence] away from narrow nuclear measures and toward a broader consensual conception of deterrence that views conventional capabilities as more effective than the threat of nuclear retaliation in deterring the kinds of lower level threats Japan actually faces in today's security environment.”<sup>23</sup> Polling further supports a sense of Japanese confidence in U.S. extended deterrence – a deterrence that is not necessarily nuclear:

“in a December 2006 *Yomiuri Shimbun* poll, 71 percent predicted that the U.S. would help Japan militarily if Japan should come under armed attack by another country.”<sup>24</sup>

- Most Japanese security officials and experts prefer the U.S. to maintain strategic ambiguity rather than pursue a no-first-use policy, despite heavy doubts that first use would ever be employed. However, interviews in 2010 suggest that a no-first-use policy, if not preferred, would be tolerated.<sup>25</sup> There is no evidence that a no-first-use policy would alter the current Japanese position to abstain from nuclear weapons.

Japan has shown no proliferation risk despite the nuclear threat represented by North Korea. More relevant than the nuclear umbrella to Japan's non-nuclear status is an entrenched public and political commitment to nonproliferation and disarmament, as well as confidence in a U.S. extended deterrent in which conventional commitment is valued. There is no evidence that Japan assigns critical security importance to the first use of nuclear weapons or that a no-first-use policy would increase its risk of proliferation.

## NATO Member States

### Overview

Extended deterrence is the foundation of NATO. Article 5, which requires every member to come to the defense of a member under attack, was understood by negotiators to be “a nuclear

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<sup>22</sup> Huntley, Wade. “Speed Bump on the Road to Global Zero,” *The Nonproliferation Review* 20:2, June 27 2013, 316.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Perkovich, George. “Extended Deterrence on the Way to a Nuclear-Free World,” *International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament*, May 2009, [https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwi93LY\\_pbOAhXCWD4KHQQ6AqEQFggeMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Ficnd.org%2FDocuments%2FPerkovich\\_Deterrence.pdf&usq=AFQjCNEEVFLFDZXY63H9TGRqeTQ63SNZZDw](https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=1&ved=0ahUKEwi93LY_pbOAhXCWD4KHQQ6AqEQFggeMAA&url=http%3A%2F%2Ficnd.org%2FDocuments%2FPerkovich_Deterrence.pdf&usq=AFQjCNEEVFLFDZXY63H9TGRqeTQ63SNZZDw), 12.

<sup>25</sup> Kulacki, Gregory. “Japan Can Accept No First Use” *Union of Concerned Scientists*, July 31 2016, <http://allthingsnuclear.org/gkulacki/japan-can-accept-no-first-use>.

guarantee for the Alliance."<sup>26</sup> First use was initially introduced to address the conventional superiority of the Soviet Union, but European NATO partners advocated for the retention of First Use even when U.S. experts determined that conventional strength was sufficient to defend Europe. Because the conventional balance of power has shifted heavily to the U.S. and its European allies,<sup>27</sup> there have been more public discussions for a revision of NATO's Defense and Deterrence Posture, including no-first-use.

## Central European States

Due to conventional vulnerability to Russia,<sup>28</sup> Central European NATO members desire a highly credible deterrence and traditionally advocate for the maintenance of the status quo in NATO's nuclear posture. In 2012, Central European states did not join the debate for including negative security assurances (NSAs) in NATO's Defense and Deterrence Posture, but generally disapproved;<sup>29</sup> their position would likely reflect a similar resistance to a no-first-use policy, which would also constrain the doctrine of flexible response. Nevertheless, while Central European states argue for a rigorous deterrent, including staunch commitment to the NATO nuclear sharing program, there are no public or political indications that Central European states would seek to strengthen a deterrent by possessing nuclear weapons – nor even publicly pursuing a burden sharing arrangement. Although likely to resist a no-first-use policy, Central European states are at low risk to proliferate as a response.

## Poland

- 50% of Polish citizens do not want NATO to deliver and place nuclear weapons in Poland, versus 26% who do.
- For an interview given in December 2015, Polish Deputy Defense Minister Tomasz Szatkowski stated that the Defense Ministry was contemplating the decision to ask for access to NATO's nuclear sharing program. This was the first statement of interest in hosting nuclear weapons from a Polish official. The Polish Defense Minister quickly walked back the comment and denied any pursuit of nuclear sharing. The Former Defense Minister Tomasz Siemoniak commented that “the last few days have become a great pity for Poland's credibility. The world is looking at us. If we continue to hold a debate on access to nuclear weapons, the allies will not lend even a PlayStation, let alone serious weapons.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mendelsohn, Jack. “NATO's Nuclear Weapons: The Rationale for ‘No First Use,’ Arms Control Association, July 1 1999, [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999\\_07-08/jmja99](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/1999_07-08/jmja99).

<sup>27</sup> Gerson, Michael S. “No First Use: The Next Step for U.S. Nuclear Policy,” *International Security* Vol. 35 No. 2, 2010, [http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/ISEC\\_a\\_00018](http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/ISEC_a_00018), 9-19.

<sup>28</sup> Perkovich, 6-7.

<sup>29</sup> Rózsa, Erzsébet N. and Anna Péczeli. “Nuclear Attitudes in Central Europe,” *Non-Proliferation Papers* No. 25, EU Nonproliferation Consortium, January 2015, <http://www.nonproliferation.eu/web/documents/nonproliferationpapers/nuclear-attitudes-in-central-europe-43.pdf>, 8.

<sup>30</sup> “Polish Defense Minister Denies Wanting US Nukes After Deputy Says Otherwise,” RT News, December 6 2015, <https://www.rt.com/news/324903-nato-poland-nuclear-weapons/>.



## Nuclear Burden Sharing States

Five states participate in the NATO nuclear burden sharing program: Belgium, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, and Turkey. Though they host nuclear weapons, there is considerable public pressure among these states to undertake nonproliferation and disarmament measures despite the consequent reduction in NATO's extended deterrent. In 2006, 72% of the population of the five host states supported the removal of U.S. nuclear weapons from Europe.<sup>31</sup> States that are willing to give up nuclear weapons possession to advance nonproliferation goals, a much more serious adjustment to extended deterrence, will likely have few qualms over a no-first-use policy. There is strong sentiment in both Germany and Italy that nuclear weapons use is never justified, a position that is easily compatible with a no-first-use policy. In Turkey, there is some public appetite for an independent nuclear capability, but only on the condition of a regional security risk; this implies that Turkey's current non-nuclear status is not determined by the extended deterrent provided by the U.S. and would be unaffected by a no-first-use policy.

### Belgium

- According to a poll by the Flemish Peace institute in 2007, almost 70% of the Belgian population do not want nuclear weapons stationed on Belgium soil, while 20% support the status quo.
- Belgium has not yet made “an explicit show of indefinite commitment to NATO nuclear sharing by investing in a life extension program for its F-016s... rather than purchasing the JSF.” In 2005 the Belgian Senate passed a unanimous resolution to review NATO nuclear sharing with the eventual aim of removing nuclear weapons from Belgium, while the Belgian government reaffirmed its interest to work within NATO to determine nuclear strategic posture.<sup>32</sup>

### Germany

- There is increasing political support in Germany for the removal of nuclear weapons from Europe. Former Foreign Minister Westerwelle, entering his position in 2009, said that “we will take President Obama at his word and enter talks with our allies so that the last of the nuclear weapons stationed in Germany, relics of the Cold War, can finally be removed... Germany must be free of nuclear weapons.”<sup>33</sup> This echoes a call from the currently serving Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier.<sup>34</sup>
- There is overwhelming public support in Germany for a variety of disarmament and nonproliferation objectives, signaling that there is no anxiety about the importance of maintaining or expanding the NATO extended deterrent. Over 90%

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<sup>31</sup> Lamond, Claudine and Paul Ingram. “Politics around US Tactical Nuclear Weapons in European Host States,” BASIC Getting to Zero Papers No.11, January 23 2009, <http://www.atlantic-community.org/app/webroot/files/articlepdf/CLamondTNWinNATO.pdf>, 2.

<sup>32</sup> Lamond and Ingram, 4.

<sup>33</sup> Pifer, Bush, Felbab-Brown, Indyk, O’Hanlon, and Pollack, 20.

<sup>34</sup> Meier, Oliver. “Steinmeier Calls for U.S. to Withdraw Nukes,” Arms Control Association, May 8 2009 [https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009\\_5/Steinmeier](https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2009_5/Steinmeier).

of Germans believe that nuclear weapons make the world more dangerous and assert the responsibility of the government to pursue global abolition.<sup>35</sup>

- According to a poll conducted by The Simons Foundation and Angus Reid Strategies in 2007, **76.9%** of Germans believe that the use of nuclear weapons by NATO would never be justified. 11.7% of Germans support the use of nuclear weapons in the context of an actual war, and 8.7% as a deterrent against a possible attack.<sup>36</sup> This result suggests that a no-first-use policy would be widely supported by the German public.

## Italy

- According to a poll conducted by The Simons Foundation and Angus Reid Strategies in 2007, **69.9%** of Italians believe that the use of nuclear weapons by NATO would never be justified. 9.6% of Italians support the use of nuclear weapons in the context of an actual war, and 18.4% as a deterrent against a possible attack. This result suggests that a no-first-use policy would be widely supported by the Italian public.<sup>37</sup>

## The Netherlands

- The Dutch government has publicly supported nuclear abolition, and the former Foreign Minister Maxime Verhagen specifically addressed NATO's role in March 2010: "NATO, too, should shoulder its own responsibilities with regard to nuclear disarmament."<sup>38</sup>

## Turkey

- Public opinion in Turkey strongly favors disarmament in general. Almost 60% of the population support the unilateral removal of NATO nuclear weapons from Turkey, and 72% support a nuclear-weapons-free zone in Turkey.<sup>39</sup>
- Given the specific context of a nuclear-armed Iran, however, a slight majority of the Turkish population (54%) support an independent nuclear capability rather than relying on NATO's extended deterrent. Only 8.2% responded that NATO's extended deterrent was sufficient for security, while 34.8% supported Turkey's non-nuclear status regardless of the circumstance.
- It is clear that the Turkish government considers a nuclear capability one of the valid responses to a nuclear-armed Iran. General Hilmi Ozkok, upon leaving office, stated pointedly without mentioning Iran that "unless the crisis over nuclear weapons is not resolved diplomatically, [Turkey] would soon be faced with important strategic choices. Otherwise, we would be faced with the

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<sup>35</sup> Lamond and Ingram, 3.

<sup>36</sup> "Global Poll Finds Varied Views on Nuclear Weapons," August 18 2007,

<http://www.nuclearfiles.org/menu/library/opinion-polls/nuclear-weapons/global-poll-nuclear-weapons.html>.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Pifer, Bush, Felbab-Brown, Indyk, O'Hanlon, and Pollack, 24.

<sup>39</sup> Lamond and Ingram, 4.

possibility of losing our strategic superiority in the region.” Yet that decision seems relatively distant in the minds of Turkish leaders, who condemn potential military responses to the Iranian nuclear program. Prime Minister Erdogan in 2008 even admonished US negotiators by saying that “those who counsel Iran not to acquire nuclear weapons should themselves not have these weapons in the first place.”<sup>40</sup>

- Turkey has called into question NATO commitments to its defense, but on a conventional and not nuclear basis; Turkish leaders have criticized the “sluggishness” with which NATO members responded to a request for military deployments to Turkey during the 1991 Iraq/Kuwait crisis.<sup>41</sup>

## Nuclear Powers

The reduction or perceived reduction of extended deterrence could encourage nuclear allies to expand nuclear arsenals qualitatively and/or quantitatively to ‘fill the gaps’ of a reduced U.S. commitment. Since France has consistently committed to a nuclear deterrent independent of allies’ nuclear postures, and since the U.K. recently voted to renew the Trident’s nuclear weapons systems,<sup>42</sup> it is unlikely that a no-first-use policy would encourage vertical proliferation among NATO’s nuclear members.

### United Kingdom

- Significant public support recently existed for reducing or eliminating the role of the Trident program in national defense. Public opinion polling since 2005 weakly favors “relinquishing nuclear weapons after Trident when given a simple yes/no choice” and more broadly favors “keeping nuclear weapons in some form, but against a like-for-like replacement of the current system.”<sup>43</sup> Perceptions that U.S. extended deterrence is weaker or less reliable could bolster arguments in favor of Trident renewal or expansion.

### France

- France is highly committed to a rigorous independent deterrent and would “oppose NATO adoption or a move toward a ‘no first use’ policy, believing it could weaken the Alliance’s deterrent and would not be seen as credible.”<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Barkey, Henri J. “Turkey’s Perspectives on Nuclear Weapons and Disarmament,” in *Unblocking the Road to Zero: Perspectives of Advanced Nuclear Nations*, ed. Barry Blechman, Stimson Nuclear Security Series Volume VI, September 22 2009, 71-72.

<sup>41</sup> Barkey, 68.

<sup>42</sup> “MPs Vote to Renew Trident Weapons System,” BBC News, July 19 2016 <http://www.bbc.com/news/uk-politics-36830923>.

<sup>43</sup> Ritchie, Nick. “Trident in UK Politics and Public Opinion,” British American Security Information Council, July 15 2013 <http://www.basicint.org/publications/dr-nick-ritchie/2013/trident-uk-politics-and-public-opinion>.

<sup>44</sup> Pifer, Bush, Felbab-Brown, Indyk, O’Hanlon, and Pollack, 24.

## **Conclusions**

To argue that no-first-use encourages nuclear proliferation in U.S. allies, one must demonstrate that polities and publics 1) assign credibility to a U.S. first strike on their behalf and 2) evaluate their nuclear security needs in part or in whole on the basis of that credibility. U.S. allies under the nuclear umbrella represent a diversity of security environments, stages of nuclear development, and attitudes to nonproliferation. In no case, however, has the decision to remain a non-nuclear power or pursue a nuclear capability rested on the expectation of a first use defense from the U.S.

For allies that face a current or future vulnerability to a regional nuclear power – South Korea, Japan, and Turkey – insecurity regarding U.S. extended deterrence is focused on conventional and second strike deterrence. Maintaining a first use option for the sake of U.S. allies would be a poor prescription for their concerns.