No First Use Policy

Why in news?

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Defence Minister Manohar Parrikar's recently articulated "personal" view that was contrary to India's No First Use (NFU) nuclear doctrine.

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What is NFU?

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No first use (NFU) refers to a pledge or a policy by a nuclear power not to use nuclear weapons as a means of warfare unless first attacked by an adversary using nuclear weapons.

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What are the advantages?

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There are many advantages of the NFU policy.

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- A hair-trigger alert, to ensure that the other side does not get a chance to strike first, does not have to be maintained and so forces and **equipment can be in a relaxed posture**. Nuclear forces can be maintained in a de-mated condition waiting for orders from higher echelons to go to a higher alert status, thus ensuring that command and control stays **firmly with the civilian political leadership**, which is a very important aim.
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- Since there is no first use alert requirement, the chances of reacting to a false alarm are nullified thus effectively quashing the chances of unnecessary chaos.
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- **The onus** of taking the decision to escalate to a nuclear use **lies on the adversary** and not on the party having an NFU doctrine.

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- A first use would result in **international condemnation** and weigh heavily on a country with a first use posture.
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- A first use posture still requires a country to have survivable second strike capability as there is nothing such as a “splendid” first strike implying 100% decapitation of the adversary’s assets and leadership.
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- In a time of India’s efforts to gain membership in Nuclear Supplier Group (NSG) and United Nations Security Council (UNSC), NFU should be strictly adhered to strengthen the India’s image as a responsible power.
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- **A NFU doctrine is cheaper** to implement. For India, which has many economic targets to achieve, this is a very important factor.
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- The avoidance of nuclear blackmail can be achieved by India demonstrating its readiness to accept risks that are not less than that of Pakistan. This is already happening through the element of signalling in the conventional exchanges between the two armies across the LoC in J&K.
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- The NFU policy is just right for India as it ensures security for the nation and does not detract it from its march towards better prosperity for its people.
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Why Pakistan will not use nuclear weapons?

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- The questioning of India’s NFU doctrine came out of the enragement that has come about due to Pakistan’s use of sub-conventional methods under the overhang of its nuclear weapons.
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- However, Pakistan knows that it cannot afford to use any nuclear weapons in a war, including its tactical nuclear weapons, as India would respond with massive nuclear retaliation as per its doctrine.
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- Additionally, with China heavily invested in Pakistan, it would be in Beijing’s interest to ensure that the leadership of its geopolitical “outpost” does not take any rash decision of initiating a nuclear exchange.
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