No First Use Policy - Part II

Click here for No First Use Policy Part I

\n\n

What is the issue?

\n\n

The recent remarks by the Defence Minister revamped the question of whether the best way to prevent the use of Nuclear Weapons is to consider these as weapons for war fighting (just like conventional weapons but only more destructive) or to see them as qualitatively different, meant exclusively for deterrence.

\n\n

What is a nuclear doctrine?

\n\n

A nuclear doctrine determines the nuclear posture, provides guidance for deployment and targeting, chain of command and control, communication and signalling to adversary and, in the ultimate, the use of nuclear weapons.

\n\n

What is India's Nuclear Doctrine?

\n\n

\n
- India's Nuclear Doctrine summarises the following key principles\n\n
\n
  - building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrent
\n
  - posture of 'No First Use', nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere
\n
  - nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage

\n
- non-use of nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states; however, in the event of a major attack against India, or Indian forces anywhere, by biological or chemical weapons, India will retain the option of retaliating with nuclear weapons.
\n
\n
\n
- The two key elements — a “credible minimum deterrent” and “no first use” — were first articulated by Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee
\n
- He also stated that India did not see nuclear weapons as weapons of war; that their role was to ensure that India is not subjected to nuclear threats or coercion; that India will not engage in an arms race; and that India believes in a “no first use” policy and remains ready to discuss this with other countries, bilaterally or in a collective forum.
\n
- Prime Minister Narendra Modi categorically stated that there was no change in policy and “no first use” remained India’s nuclear doctrine.
\n
- India’s doctrine does not mention any country, but it is no secret that the Indian nuclear arsenal is to counter threats from China and Pakistan.
\n

\n\n

What are our neighbour’s policies?

\n\n

\n
- China has maintained a ‘no first use’ policy since 1964 when it went nuclear, and the Chinese leadership has always considered nuclear weapons as political weapons.
\n
- Pakistan has adopted a first-use policy to ensure full-spectrum deterrence; in other words, it envisages a tactical, operational and strategic role for its nuclear weapons.
\n
- Since it maintains that its nuclear arsenal is exclusively against India, it seeks to counter India’s conventional superiority at all levels.
\n
- Another difference is that Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal is totally under the military’s control, and by and large, the military approach to any weapon system is to find a use for it; it is difficult for the military to possess a weapon system and then conceive of a doctrine that aims at deterring its use.

\n

\n\n

How significant is the deterrence?

\n\n

\n

- Deterrence is a product of ‘technical capability’ and ‘political will’. In dealing with Pakistan, India has to define who is to be deterred and find ways of demonstrating the requisite political will even as we build up our technical capabilities. e.g Israel is a state possessing advanced technical capabilities and also having demonstrated political will. Yet, this has failed to deter rocket strikes and terror attacks on Israeli territory.
  \n
- This is not to suggest that India’s nuclear doctrine cannot be changed. It should be periodically reviewed and updated, possibly every decade or so, taking into account technological developments and changes in the security environment.
  \n
- Ultimately, deterrence is a mental construct which requires clarity in its planning. Even ambiguity needs to be a calculated ambiguity. Only then will the doctrine serve to reassure the Indian people even as it deters the adversary in order to safeguard India’s security.
  \n

\n\n

Category: Mains | GS – II | International relations

\n\n

Source: The Hindu

\n\n

Author: Shankar IAS Academy Bangalore - Best Academy for UPSC

\n