India’s Nuclear Doctrine

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India’s Nuclear Reality

Complex
- Two nuc powers with different doctrines and capabilities
- With both India has territ disputes and a history of wars

Unique
- Both of which share a robust proliferation relationship
- Both of whom use proxies to complicate security

Risk Prone
- Nuclear war as a result of accident, miscalculation or unauthorized use

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India Meets Challenge…

- **Credible Nuclear Deterrence**
  - Nuclear test necessary but not enough
  - Build up of capability
    - Warheads/delivery vectors
  - Display of resolve to use
    - Command and control
    - Survivability measures
  - Communication of both
    - Capability and resolve

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INDIA’S NUCLEAR DOCTRINE
Purpose & Process of Making

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Definitional Clarity

- **Nuclear Doctrine**
  - Set of guiding principles, Philosophy/raison détre of NWs
  - Emerges from strategic culture of nation
  - Relatively abiding & timeless

- **Strategy**
  - Plan of action to achieve aim defined by doctrine
  - Set of ideas to employ instruments of national power

- **Posture**
  - Attitude/approach to capability build up & deployment
  - Could be exaggerated or assumed to mislead
  - Changes with cap and threat envt
India’s Nuclear Doctrine (IND)

  - Prepared by first NSAB
  - Chaired by K Subrahmanyam
  - Put out for public debate by then NSA
  - Criticised abroad (action); at home (content)
  - Never formalised

- CCS note on operationalisation – 4 Jan’03
  - Acceptance of basic attributes
  - Two differences

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INDIA’S NUCLEAR DOCTRINE
Attributes and Appraisal
1. Credible Minimum Deterrence

- Credible – believable to adversary
  - In capability
    - Nuclear warheads & attendant infrastructure
    - Delivery vectors of requisite range, accuracy & reliability
  - In resolve to use
    - Command & control structures
    - Communication channels & redundancies
    - Political will
1. Credible Minimum Deterrence

- **Minimum** – sufficient in quantity
  - To inflict unacceptable damage
  - **Determination of number**
    - **Calculation of adversary’s unacceptability threshold**
      - Historical experiences of a nation
      - Value at stake
      - State of economic development
      - Political system
    - **Reliability of own arsenal**
    - **Survivability of own arsenal**

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Should Minimum Change?

- **In relation to increase in adversary arsenal?**
  - No – nuclear parity/superiority immaterial
  - Only need enough to cause unacceptable damage – deterrence thru punishment

- **In relation to adversary’s move to BMD?**
  - Yes - changes calculation of ability to cause unacceptable damage

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2. NFU against NWS and Non Use against NNWS

- Rules out nuclear pre-emption
  - Not possible to defend nation by NW use
- Retaliation only policy
- Mere public posturing?
  - Evidence available in force structures, alert levels, etc.
Should NFU Change?

- In relation to Pakistan lowering threshold with TNW?
  - No – part of policy of brinkmanship & projection of irrationality

- In relation to China’s possible abandonment of NFU?
  - No – First use by India provides no protection
Why NFU Should Not Change?

- Militaries prefer offence, but
- Nuclear FU not a good idea....
- When adv has secure second strike capability
- No possibility of ‘splendid first strike’
- No guarantee against escalation
- Calculations not ltd to damage caused by first strike, but damage suffered in response
- Nuclear offence cannot assure victory, nor help escape damage to self

- Is FU Credible? Useful?
- McNamara admission
- “A Hell of an Alternative” President Kennedy
Why NFU Should Not Change?

- NFU more credible & liberating
  - No ‘weight’ of first use
    - When, how early or late, red lines etc
  - Onus of escalation on adversary
    - No strain on nuclear leash
    - No need to perfect logistics of first use
    - No psychological ‘burden’ of FU
  - Decision to retaliate far easier, legitimate, guilt free
Why NFU Should Not Change?

- Arsenal Requirements for Credible FU
  - Projection of war fighting to gain victory
  - Large numbers of first strike weapons
  - Nuclear superiority for counterforce
  - Elaborate and delegated C2
  - Nuclear forces on hair trigger readiness
- None conducive to strategic stability
- Raises existential risks
- NFU raises chance of no use of NW
3. Civilian Control over NW

- **Physical**
  - DAE & DRDO
  - Only delivery systems with military

- **Decision making**
  - National Command Authority
  - Political Council to decide use
  - Executive Council for policy planning

Derived from Indian Political System
4. Pursuit of Universal Nuclear Disarmament

- Aspiration for NWFW voiced in doctrine
- No dichotomy in twin-track approach
  - Short term compulsion Vs longer time security
- Search for multilaterally negotiated, universal, verifiable nuclear disarmament
Why India must pursue disarmament?

- For National Security
  - Challenge of Nuclear Pakistan
    - Pak sponsorship of terrorism driven by its NW
  - Challenge of Nuclear China
    - Threat of nuclear blackmail/coercion

- Challenge of Existential Risks
  
  *Region Minus NW Enhances Security*
Should Pursuit of UND be Abandoned?

- In relation to lack of international enthusiasm?
  - No – In India’s security interest
  - “When a goal appears unattainable, don’t adjust the goal, adjust the actions”…

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Situating NW in India’s Strategic Priorities

- Comprehensive National Development
  - Economic, Social, Technological and Military
- Peace and Stability at home & beyond
- Credible Deterrence – Conventional
  - Prevent war
  - Fight & terminate war – early & favourably
- Credible Deterrence – Nuclear
  - Force high nuclear threshold of adversary
  - Leave no doubt on assured, punitive retaliation