

India's Nuclear Doctrine

Why in news?

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Former national security advisor (NSA) Shivshankar Menon has shed new light on India's nuclear doctrine.

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What is India's nuclear doctrine?

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- India's nuclear doctrine was first enunciated following a Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting in January 2003.

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- Some of the main features of India's nuclear doctrine are -

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1. Building and maintaining a **credible minimum deterrent**
2. A **No First Use** posture i.e nuclear weapons to be used only in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere,
3. Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be "**massive**" and designed to inflict "**unacceptable damage**".

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- The concept of "credible minimum deterrence" is used in conjunction with the concepts of "No First Use" and "Non Use" against nuclear weapon states.

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- It clearly indicates that India envisages its nuclear weapons as only a deterrent merely for defensive purposes and not as a means to threaten

others.

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What is the view of former NSA?

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- In his book he indicates that India's threat of massive retaliation need not involve nuclear strikes against enemy's urban centres (i.e counter-value or **CV strikes**).

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- Instead, India's massive response could take the form of targeting enemy's nuclear arsenal (i.e counter-force, or **CF strikes**).

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- This will the enemy with a diminished capability of striking back.

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- He carefully differentiates between first use and first strike, which refers to a disarming CF strike aimed at leaving an adversary without nuclear recourse.

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- So the disarming CF strike need not amount to a 'massive' response, which might include civilian population too.

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What are the issues?

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- The effectiveness of India to execute a disarming CF strike that takes out most of Pakistan's nukes is also under question.

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- Pakistan is building up its nuclear arsenal faster than any other country. It is currently estimated to have 120-130 nuclear warheads.

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- It is difficult for India to target are Pakistan's small, highly mobile Tactical Nuke Warheads (TNWs) that are basically truck-mounted, tube-launched artillery.

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- Furthermore, any impression in Pakistan of Indian counterforce strikes would incentivize their early use.
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Source: Business Standard

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