

Deterrence, Assured Retaliation Capability- An Analysis on India's Second-Strike Policy

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Abstract— Nuclear weapons are considered as the ultimate weapon to exist ever. The foreign policy of a country especially the nuclear policy of a country is considered vital in today's world scenario. Deterrence is the concept of using some form of punishment as a threat against offenders. Deterrence is using of threat against an offender to stop an attack. The concept of deterrence is very important as the strength of a nation's deterrence policy determines the safety of the nation. If a nation has a weak deterrence policy then it is highly susceptible to being attacked. Certain countries follow the first use policy of nuclear weapons where a country can strike first with their nuclear weapons however in the case of certain countries second-strike policy is followed. Nuclear weapons can be used only after they've been attacked known as Assured Retaliate Capability. India is such country that practices second-strike capability with mutual assured destruction. India views the possession of nuclear weapons as an instrument of global politics. India does not aim to use these weapons however in case of an attack India will be ready to use it as an instrument of deterrence. Thus, India's nuclear doctrine is based on a sound deterrence policy that is based on the principle of Second-Strike Capability.

Keywords— Second-strike, Mutual assured destruction, Assured retaliate capability, India, nuclear weapons, deterrence.

I. INTRODUCTION

Assured retaliate capability is also known as second strike capability of a country. In a nuclear strategy if a country responds to a nuclear attack with assured capability using nuclear weapons against its attacker it's called second strike capability. The possession of such an ability by all countries is considered vital. Nuclear weapons are widely considered as the ultimate weapon by all countries. It is seen as the only weapon that has the ability to damage and destroy one's enemy to such an extent it's impossible for them to recover. Thus, every country aims for a functional command and an ability to survive a first strike and retaliate with assured mutual destruction.

In the case of India, the most essential element of India's nuclear doctrine is to survive the first strike and retaliate with a mutually assured destruction. Indian nuclear policy promises a credible deterrence by which its aims at telling that it will for sure destroy its attacker once already being attacked. In the case of India, it views the possession of nuclear weapons as instruments of global politics. India does not aim at using it for war. Another vital point to consider while studying second strike capability is that it is very important to all nuclear countries because if not for this threat the attacker country will attack with one massive nuclear Wipeout. Thus, assured retaliate capability is a method by which a nuclear country

warns the others that once if they are attacked, they have the capacity to strike back with greater power. To have this ability is considered important in nuclear deterrence, if not the other side will attempt to win a nuclear war with one massive strike on its opponent's own nuclear forces.

The major theoretical link for second strike capability is the support it offers the "no first use" policy. It counters a first strike nuclear threat. Second strike capability uses the mutual assured destruction strategy. By which if a country attacks another country with the use of nuclear weapons then that country possesses the power to retaliate with more momentum. The second-strike capabilities generally cause a defence strategy of mutual assured destruction. In this however one side might have a low level of minimum deterrence response. Second strike capabilities are strengthened with the use of "fail deadly" mechanism.

Objectives

This study tries

1. To analyse and understand the concept of Assured Retaliate Capability (ARC)
2. To analyse the concept of assured retaliate capability in Indian context,
3. To explain the concept of Mutual assured destruction,
4. To justify India's stand on Nuclear Minimalism.

II. II. METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on a well-defined methodology. This paper has used both historical and descriptive method. The study adopts a descriptive-analytical method. It is non-diagnostic and non-experimental in scope of analysis. Given the scope of the issue, the study explored the secondary sources identifying the major categories of deterrence, India's nuclear policy literature and defence policy literature which was available in the forms of books, articles, monographs, book reviews and reports.

Assured Retaliate Capability

Assured retaliate capability is a very well used term in nuclear strategy. In the nuclear field, it is also known as second strike capability. A second-strike capability of a country is its ability to respond to a nuclear attack with powerful nuclear retaliation. Not only does the possession of such an ability is important but also the countries capability to convince the other nations of its capability. According to Nuclear Strategy, a second-strike is the ability of a country to

respond to a nuclear attack with a much powerful nuclear retaliation.

The most important goal of second-strike capability is to stop a country from making a first strike. A positive second-strike policy of a country should aim at threatening and stopping other countries from making a first strike, by demotivating them to make use of their nuclear arsenals and put their nuclear weapons to use. It is very important for a nation's nuclear doctrine to promise a massive mutual assured destruction which will be a threat to all other nuclear nations from aiming at attack them. Only by formulating a second-strike capability this can be achieved by nations. This should be the primary goal of second-strike capability to threaten and stop other nuclear nations from using nuclear power against a country.

The most traditional way of second strike is by using submarine-launched ballistic missile. This method is expensive and also should be supported by a reliable method of identifying who the attacker is. This is a very crucial method, if the most accurate method of identifying is not possible then the submarine-launched intercontinental ballistic missile might attack another country who isn't involved in the conflict at all there by creating new conflicts. For a submarine-launched ICBM, using SLBM as a second-strike capability has serious problems because the wrong country can get targeted and can cause an escalation of conflict. Thus, even after a first strike implanting a second strike is highly complicated and dangerous. Considering the above point its essential to stop a first strike from occurring and this is possible only by second strike capability. Most countries with nuclear weapons make sure that they convince the other nuclear nations that a first strike is not worth risking for a second strike. These countries also see to that they are prepared for a nuclear attack by improvising their technology. These countries will have many diverse launch mechanisms, these mechanisms will be in various locations within the country with underground launch facilities that specifically are for withstanding a nuclear attack. Some countries also go to the extent of placing nuclear missiles at the borders to dissuade attackers from attacking. Launch on warning is another method by which a nation can operate its retaliatory attack before it gets hit by the first strike, a second strike before the first strike. This is another way by which a second strike is achieved basically deterring a countries first strike. During the Cold War "launch on Warning" a strategy was used between the United States and the Soviet Union that is a Strategy of nuclear weapons retaliation.

Technology towards second strike capability has grown tremendously in the present world. Use of intercontinental missiles, placing missiles in the borders, launch on warning are some of them. Basically, a country has to be prepared for a massive second strike which eventually results in a good nuclear doctrine. A nations second strike capability establishes that countries nuclear capacity which in turn can stop the country from facing a nuclear attack.

The possession of a second-strike capability is to stop a country from using first strike. By knowing that if attacked the nation would retaliate with massive power the attacking nation

will think twice. Also, the possession of a second-strike capability will ensure that to an extent there won't be first use policy because any nation which knows the consequences it will be facing if it uses first use policy will think twice. In the case of reciprocation with the use of second-strike policy it is well known that it will be done with the help if mutual assured destruction.

Mutual assured destruction (MAD) is a doctrine of national security policy that is used in military strategy. In mutual assured destruction both the attacker and the defender use full scale nuclear power. This is based on the policy of deterrence according to which the threat of using strong weapons by one country will stop the other country from using the same weapon. This strategy is a form of Nash equilibrium. According to Nash equilibrium neither of the countries with powerful nuclear weapons can initiate or inflict damage over the other.

The second-strike capability can further be made strong by using fail deadly mechanisms. Fail deadly is a Nuclear military strategy. Fail deadly strategy deters by guaranteeing an immediate response that is automatic and an overwhelming response to an attack. This term fail deadly was coined as a contrast to fail safe. Fail deadly operation is a second-strike strategy in which aggressors are discouraged from doing a first strike attack. Under fail deadly strategy a nation that plans on striking first is being discouraged by means of fail deadly strategy. The Soviet Union was believed to have used a fail-deadly system known as Dead Hand. Whether Russia still uses it is not known.

Specific technological components or the system as a whole can be referred to as fail deadly. The United Kingdom uses a fail-deadly policy that delegates strike authority to submarine commanders in case there is loss of command, through a letter of last resort. This ensures that even with loss of coordination nuclear retaliation can be carried out. An example of such a strategy is ballistic missile submarines are often asked to come to the surface to receive commands about changes in defence conditions. If the submarines are unable to receive the command and control signal, their orders would be to launch their nuclear missiles in the assumption that the command and control structures have been destroyed in a nuclear attack and that retaliation was necessary. Fail deadly is also related to massive retaliation. In which it is understood that a counter strike will be conducted more stronger than the initial strike.

India's Assured Retaliatory Capability

The Indian nuclear doctrine was an effort of global pressure. Mostly of the United States of America asking for India's purpose for venturing into the nuclear world. History very clearly shows that the Indian nuclear doctrine was made in an urgent fashion and was let to evolve with time. However, the then leaders in India understood the need for nuclear weapons very clearly. They clearly saw what possession of nuclear weapons did to a country. Thus, for political supremacy and for safety of the territory of India we entered the nuclear world. However, India did not intend to use this power that they possessed. Even though India entered the

nuclear group of countries with much aims and ambitions its primary aim was to formulate an effective deterrent policy which India needed very much.

For this purpose of formulating an effective nuclear doctrine a combination of minimum deterrence and no first use policy served the purpose. India signed in for minimum deterrence with maximum credibility along with no first use policy. “The combination of minimum deterrence and a commitment to no-first-use provides a hedge against nuclear adventurism”. In another way by choosing no first use policy India also could achieve its position in proving it self to be a promoter of nuclear disarmament.

Ever since India publicly came out about its assured retaliatory capability and massive retaliation it has been questioned on these grounds persistently. Tenacity of these questions was clear in the recent round of debates on the review of India’s nuclear doctrine. This was done by defence minister Manohar Parrikar’s remarks on the doctrine itself. Over a period of time whether India’s massive retaliation capability and assured retaliation capability are enough has been debated. Our defence minister however has raised questions about why massive retaliation is a failure policy.

Three major points where to be considered by the Indian nuclear doctrine one, was to make Indian nuclear motives transparent; two, was to initiate an open policy and three, was to assert India’s dominance over Pakistan and highlight the importance of formulating a deterrent plan towards china which developed gradually. Keeping these three imperatives in mind India chose nuclear minimalism.

While India debates over almost most issues in the country a majority support India’s interest towards taking up nuclear minimalism. One of the main reasons why India chose nuclear minimalism is because of her neighbour, Pakistan. With Pakistan on one side who openly supported and adopted first use policy India definitely required the need for nuclear minimalism under which India chose no first use and credible minimum deterrence. Over the time India has been stating that India is capable of taking down India with half the nuclear weapons they possess. Indian officials state that Pakistan definitely knows that they cannot survive an Indian counter attack. “Indian officials are convinced that Pakistan, despite making nuclear threats in crisis situations, would understand the suicidal consequences of crossing the nuclear threshold”. On the other side of the nation however its completely a different story. The Chinese claim lands in Arunachala Pradesh which is under the Indian Territory and occupies parts of the old princely state of Jammu and Kashmir. In such a case it should be noted that even though china refuses to let go of the claims it places over these territories it does not find it worthy to wage a war against India. Although what’s more important is that China has adopted a no first use policy, making it clear for India that there will be no nuclear attack from china over India. Thus, making India worry less about china and extend its concentration more towards Pakistan.

Massive retaliation in Indian context is the publicly released nuclear doctrine possess a threat on massive retaliation on an adversary if a nuclear weapon irrespective of the yield is used by the latter even on Indian soldiers on the

adversary’s territory. If we see in history massive retaliation is a concept according to which the use of massive retaliation ensures the adversary that once being struck or attacked with nuclear weapons the nation that receives the attack will retaliate with massive power which will affect the adversary very badly cost wise as well as decreasing the chance of it winning the war. Once nation is made aware about the retaliatory capability of a nation it will definitely think twice before making a move as it is aware of the damages it will be inflicting on itself. However, there is a huge deference seen in the concepts of massive compared with proportionate or flexible. Where massive means that the damage will be on a massive or larger scale or population including industrial areas. However, what should be noted is that so far India has not made sure what India means by its massive retaliation. What is interesting is that India’s introduction of massive retaliation in 2003 in contrast to India’s punitive retaliation of 1999 shows that India has gone against its flexibility to retaliation strategy. As of now no Indian Government has so far detailed on what would constitute its threat of massive retaliation and the inclusion of unacceptable damage, in the doctrine. Nonetheless, the concept of “Punitive Retaliation” was replaced by “Massive Retaliation” in the year 2003, from the 1999 draft doctrine which indicates that the Indian Government has reduced the flexibility it had in its threat to retaliate earlier.

Another reason for India to choose nuclear minimalism is because India is a promoter of nuclear disarmament. India also is not a signatory of both the non-proliferation treaty and the comprehensive test ban treaty because India feels that they are both partial towards the countries that possess nuclear weapons. “The Government of India argued before the International Court of Justice in 1994 that “any use of nuclear weapons to promote national policy objectives would be unlawful.”⁹ India continues to call for universal and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament, rejecting the partiality of the Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) and the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT), which, in New Delhi’s view, perpetuate inequality”. However, the weaponization process has created problems for India’s nuclear disarmament diplomacy. For which time and again New Delhi has been replying by telling that India has nuclear weapons for security reasons and will give up if all nuclear countries become signatories of the NPT and CTBT. And also states that India’s choice of nuclear minimalism is a positive move towards not using nuclear weapons until nuclear disarmament is achieved.

India’s choice over “no first use” policy can also be justified as a move towards supporting nuclear minimalism as mentioned in “the challenge of minimal nuclear deterrence” This posture affirms India’s stance on de-legitimizing nuclear weapons as weapons of war. It helps underscore India’s pacific intentions toward Pakistan and China, while reinforcing India’s preference for a de-alerted and de-mated force posture—a force-in-being rather than a ready arsenal for rapid response. This constitutes a minimum nuclear posture that poses the least incompatibility with New Delhi’s declared goal of global, verifiable, nuclear disarmament.

However, considering the fact that India's foreign policy or nuclear policy mainly targets Pakistan has shown that India's second-strike policy will make sure that Pakistan too follows suit. It will leave Pakistan with no other choice than to consider the second-strike policy.

Apart from this there are a lot of other forces that contribute towards India choosing nuclear minimalism like, economics and India's bureaucratic command and control setup. If excessive amounts of money are spent over nuclear weapons then there will be a clash between conventional and nuclear expenditure. And Indian leaders are keen in seeing nuclear weapons as political instruments rather than war fighting tools.

Considering the role of the bureaucrats and the command setup in India it emanates from The President, The Prime Minister and the Cabinet with the help of certain ministries like the home ministry, external affairs ministry, defence ministry and finance ministry in prime positions on the cabinet committee on security. This committee is further assisted by the national security advisor, the cabinet secretary, the strategic police group, the head of atomic energy, the DRDO and the chief of the intelligence agencies.

India and Nuclear Minimalism

India's way of viewing nuclear weapons as political instruments over war tools is being challenged by many factors especially strongly by Pakistan. Pakistan regards nuclear weapons as essential elements to national defence as well as deterrence. Considering this view of Pakistan nuclear weapons equalize Pakistan's conventional military disparities with India. Nuclear weapons also support as a backup for the militancy in Kashmir for Pakistan. The possibility of a breakdown in deterrence cannot be dismissed. Unconventional warfare could escalate to conventional conflict. India's response to Pakistan's conventional military capability and nuclear posture is to focus on maintaining a survivable delivery system and not to pursue a posture where India will have to fight a war.

In this point it is very important to know that the reason why India is very keen about promoting its no first use policy is because Pakistan a nuclear nation has adopted first use policy under its nuclear doctrine. And considering the history between India and Pakistan it should be India's primary concern to have an effective nuclear policy that threatens India's counterparts. In this case India has done pretty well including two important policies the no first uses policy and the credible minimum deterrence with assured retaliation capability under which India makes it clear to the world that in case of being attacked India is strong and capable enough to strike with a counter attack. Time and again it has also made it clear to Pakistan that India is more capable than Pakistan and in case of being attacked with nuclear weapons India can crush back Pakistan with not more than half of what India possesses. It's made clear to Pakistan that a first strike attack against India will be a very foolish idea by Pakistan because India is capable to striking back with a huge force of nuclear power. This has kept India safe for decades now. By doing so India has managed to deter the Pakistan from using nuclear

weapons against India and also has managed to build an image as a very responsible nuclear weapon owning country globally. On the other side however, India shows less concern when compared to what she shows towards Pakistan. Likewise, china too shows less interest towards India concerning a nuclear attack as both are signatories of no first use policy. But still India has managed to keep an eye on china learning the friendship between Pakistan and china.

India's no first use commitment is central to its concept of nuclear minimalism. India proposed the no first use policy against Pakistan for the first time 1994 as a formal arms control measure. In the aftermath of the May 1998 nuclear tests, a formal no-first-use declaration was included in the India's no first use policy states that India will not use nuclear weapons against states that do not possess nuclear weapons or those who are not aligned towards nuclear weapons owning states.

However, India has made it clear that it can withstand a nuclear attack by Pakistan and can deliver a credible second strike. But recently it was discussed that Pakistan too is ready and capable of a second strike. "Former defence secretary retired Lt Gen Naem Khalid Lodhi has claimed that Pakistan possesses second strike capability against India". Still Pakistan did not explain whether their second-strike capability is air, land or water based and whether their capability is submarine based assured second-strike capability when India has moved towards it.

India is prone to two worst case scenarios. First, a joint attack by Pakistan and china which is very remote to happen but in case it does then India should be prepared for it. Second, a large-scale nuclear attack by china considering china's nuclear capacity. Again, this scenario is equally deadly for India. India has been stating its preparedness for a second strike but in reality, this has never been tested. India also claims it will be able to counter an attack by Pakistan. Again, this has not been tested. The only way out for India is to be prepared and develop a good and effective assured retaliatory capability which will be able to bail out India if in case either of the scenarios happen.

India's pursuit of a triad of nuclear delivery means will be prolonged, due to India's slow progress in developing and deploying sea-based deterrence. As the triad evolves, India will rely on a dyad of manned aircraft and land-based, mobile missiles. In such a case India need to develop her nuclear technology to high standards in order to achieve first grade second strike capacity. In simple words India needs to prepare itself for a tough fight.

The credibility of Indian nuclear deterrent is based on the certain means of retaliation more than the speed with which retaliation would be made. Certain retaliation is assured by the survivability and dispersal of India's nuclear assets, and by the sureness with which the retaliation is affected. The extent of retaliation by India would be based on the damage inflicted by the attacker over India's assets and infrastructure. The damage of India will equal to the force of retaliation imposed by India over her attacker. India's nuclear doctrine gives importance to fast retaliation. However assured retaliation is more important than fast retaliation. It's also justified that a delayed retaliation

need not be signs for weakness or lack of capability as far as it is followed by retaliation. A retaliation is what that matters not its speed. “Assured retaliation is more essential than speed” as quoted from the challenge of minimal nuclear deterrence. The delay in retaliation depends on the country on how long they require to plan a counter attack.

A speedy retaliation is what is required by a maximalist. In case of a surprise nuclear attack over the subcontinent it will require time and planning to ready the Indian arsenals. In this case India will face a lot of international pressure which will have to be ignored by the Indian leaders. Irrespective of whatever India plans on doing even if it has the best retaliation strategy, even if it possesses the most high-quality nuclear technology, even if India has good financial support and weaponry if the commanding authority is not with India then the credibility of India’s second-strike capability is questionable. What this means is that when it is time for an assured retaliation India should be able to make its own decision and not be pressurized by the international community to stop. If this happens then irrespective of how effective and good India’s nuclear deterrence is it’s a waste. “There must be a high degree of mobility for India’s nuclear assets—delivery systems, warheads, dummies, and decoys—and proper linkage to the National Command Authority, the apex command and control structure that would direct retaliatory strike operations.” There must be a good network of connectivity inside the country this is also very crucial for a good second strike strategy. Considering the vulnerability of the country a good connectivity among the state leaders, defence officers and civilians is crucial during such times.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Thus, the term minimum is up for debate. It cannot be given a particular measurement. However, India needs to prepare itself towards a good retaliatory strategy. While India has opted for minimal, credible nuclear deterrence the size and scope of it is not specified. In this case it is subject to change. Given the asymmetric situation vis-à-vis Pakistan and China, India’s targeting requirements cannot be completely divorced from developments elsewhere in the region. It would not be easy on India if other countries impose limits over India. India will be facing a difficult situation. With time moving at a high speed and with tension arising in the neighbourhood India needs to wake up and check on how credible and reliable is India’s deterrence policy. decades back India chose credible minimum deterrence and no first use policy which has definitely been effective deterring its enemies against it. But will it be enough in the future? Assured retaliation capability or second-strike policy tags along with no first use policy, in this case it’s important to check the credibility and effectiveness of India’s nuclear deterrence.

Although over the years debate has been over whether India should revise her No First Use (NFU) policy, majority of

the experts express that there is no need for revision and India’s nuclear policy is good as it is. Some have argued that India should change its focus from NFU to DND in the doctrine and show interest towards massive retaliation. According to some, with respect to Pakistan’s Tactical nuclear weapons India needs to find an alternative to how it is going to handle it. Thus, it is unlikely the Indian Government will make drastic changes to the existing nuclear doctrine, given the strong agreement of the elite in India they might release periodic reviews and release more information about the nuclear doctrine of India.

IV. CONCLUSION

Thus, from the above discussions it is clear that the Indian nuclear Doctrine based on Second Strike capability is effective in terms to deterring the potential attackers. Although concerns have been raised with respect to Pakistan’s first use policy, the Indian nuclear doctrine specifies Mutual assured destruction that promises that if attacked India will make sure the attacker is completely destroyed. Thus despite its Second-Strike policy India with her Credible minimum deterrence and Mutual assured destruction has a sound nuclear doctrine.

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