



## INDIA'S NUCLEAR POLICY - GS II AND III MAINS

Q. India's nuclear doctrine needs to strike a balance between deterrence and diplomacy along with ensuring national and global security. Elucidate (10 marks, 150 words)

**News:** *50 years since Pokhran I, does India need to look at reviewing its nuclear doctrine?*

### What's in the news?

- The 1974 test demonstrated that the Indian establishment had the capability to keep secrets.
- None of the 'listening' systems and surveillance and intelligence networks of the US or the Soviet Union had information on India's preparations.

### Nuclear Doctrine:

- A nuclear doctrine outlines the guidelines for the use of nuclear weapons by a nuclear-armed state, encompassing both peacetime and wartime scenarios.
- This doctrine serves as a means to establish deterrence against potential adversaries, communicating the state's intentions and determination.
- It further provides a framework for the state's actions and decisions in the event of armed conflict.

### Features of India's Nuclear Doctrine:

#### 1. No-First-Use (NFU) Policy:

- India maintains a No-First-Use policy, committing not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in a conflict.
- This policy underscores India's focus on deterrence and retaliation rather than initiating nuclear warfare.

#### 2. Minimum Credible Deterrence:

- India's nuclear posture is based on achieving and maintaining a minimum credible deterrence.
- This means possessing a nuclear arsenal sufficient to deter potential adversaries without pursuing an extensive stockpile.

#### 3. Civilian Control:

- The authority to use nuclear weapons is firmly vested in the civilian leadership of the Indian government, with the Prime Minister as the ultimate decision-maker.
- This ensures responsible decision-making regarding nuclear use.

#### 4. Negative Security Assurances:

- India has declared that it will not use nuclear weapons against non-nuclear-weapon states or in a first-use scenario against any state, even if they possess nuclear weapons.
- This is a commitment to responsible nuclear behavior.



## 5. Retaliation and Massive Retaliation:

- India's doctrine emphasizes credible retaliation in the event of a nuclear attack.
- The country aims to inflict unacceptable damage on an adversary in response to a nuclear strike, often referred to as the concept of "massive retaliation."

## 6. Non-Use Against Non-Combatant Targets:

- India's nuclear weapons are intended for deterring military aggression and are not meant to be used against civilian populations or non-combatant targets.

## 7. Commitment to Nuclear Disarmament:

- India is committed to the goal of global nuclear disarmament and has called for comprehensive and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament measures.
- It actively advocates for a world without nuclear weapons.

## Significance of India's Nuclear Doctrine:

### 1. Deterrence:

- The NFU policy, combined with a credible retaliatory capability, serves as a strong deterrent against potential adversaries.
- It discourages them from initiating a nuclear conflict, contributing to regional and global stability.

### 2. Strategic Stability:

- By adopting a policy that restricts the use of nuclear weapons to retaliation, India helps maintain strategic stability in the region.
- This reduces the risk of preemptive strikes or miscalculations that could lead to unintended nuclear escalation.

### 3. Civilian Control:

- India's Nuclear Doctrine emphasizes civilian control over the use of nuclear weapons.
- This ensures that decisions related to nuclear warfare are made with careful consideration and a focus on national interest, avoiding hasty or impulsive military actions.

### 4. International Credibility:

- India's commitment to responsible nuclear behavior, as reflected in its NFU policy, enhances its credibility in the international community.
- It demonstrates a commitment to global security and adherence to established norms.

### 5. Avoiding Arms Race:

- India's Nuclear Doctrine, with its emphasis on minimum credible deterrence, discourages the unnecessary proliferation of nuclear weapons.



- It encourages restraint in nuclear arms development, preventing a costly and destabilizing arms race.

## 6. Nuclear Disarmament Advocacy:

- India's Nuclear Doctrine aligns with its advocacy for global nuclear disarmament.
- By emphasizing its commitment to a world free of nuclear weapons, India contributes to the broader international dialogue on disarmament.

## 7. Conflict Resolution:

- India's Nuclear Doctrine promotes the resolution of conflicts through diplomatic and non-nuclear means.
- It encourages dialogue and peaceful negotiations as preferred methods for addressing disputes, reducing the likelihood of nuclear confrontation.

## 8. Regional Security:

- The policy contributes to stability in South Asia by discouraging other regional actors from adopting aggressive nuclear postures.
- It can help prevent the proliferation of nuclear weapons in the region.

## 9. National Security:

- Ultimately, the Nuclear Doctrine enhances India's national security by providing a credible deterrent against potential threats.
- It reassures the Indian populace and ensures the country's strategic interests are protected.

## Concerns of India's Nuclear Doctrine:

### 1. Lack of Clarity:

- Critics argue that India's Nuclear Doctrine lacks clarity in some aspects, particularly in defining what would constitute a "credible threat that might trigger nuclear retaliation.
- This ambiguity can lead to potential misunderstandings or misinterpretations by adversaries.

### 2. No-First-Use Ambiguity:

- While India's No- First-Use (NFU) policy is generally seen as a positive step, some critics are concerned that the circumstances under which India might abandon NFU are not clearly defined.
- This lack of specificity can lead to doubts about the commitment to NFU.

### 3. Influence of Non-State Actors:

- India's nuclear infrastructure and the risk of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of non-state actors, such as terrorists, is a significant concern.
- Critics worry that despite India's security measures, the risk of nuclear proliferation remains.

### 4. Arms Race in South Asia:





- Some critics argue that India's nuclear doctrine contributes to an arms race in South Asia, with Pakistan as a major regional competitor.
- Both countries' nuclear postures are seen as contributing to regional instability.

## 5. Global Disarmament:

- Critics contend that India's commitment to global nuclear disarmament may be undermined by its continued development and modernization of its nuclear arsenal.
- Some view this as hypocritical and call for India to take more significant steps toward disarmament.

## 6. Doctrine's Rigidity:

- India's Nuclear Doctrine, with its no-first-use and minimum credible deterrence principles, is seen by some as rigid and less adaptable to changing security dynamics.
- Critics argue that it might limit India's ability to respond effectively to evolving threats.

## 7. Uncertainty in Crisis:

- During times of crisis, India's nuclear doctrine may create uncertainty about how it would respond. This uncertainty could be destabilizing and increase the risk of nuclear escalation in a tense situation.

## 8. Limited Tactical Nuclear Weapons:

- The development of limited, battlefield-use nuclear weapons by India has raised concerns about the potential for their use in a conventional conflict, blurring the line between conventional and nuclear warfare.

## 9. Non-Participation in NPT:

- India's stance of not signing the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) is criticized by some countries and non-proliferation advocates, who argue that India should join the treaty as a non-nuclear-weapon state.

To address concerns, India can enhance transparency, engage in confidence-building with regional nuclear-armed states, and strengthen non-proliferation commitments. Continuous review and adaptation, nuclear security measures, and diplomatic outreach are key. India's global leadership in advocating nuclear disarmament and promoting dialogue, alongside public awareness, resilience, and crisis management, can help strike a balance between deterrence and diplomacy while ensuring national and global security.