India's Nuclear Strategy to Deter: Massive Retaliation to Cause Unacceptable Damage

Balraj Nagal

The strategy of "massive retaliation" has become the subject of debate and discussion in strategic circles with select analysts recommending change/revision.[1] The arguments advocating change in response vary from "proportional response"[2] to "quid pro quo"[3] to "no response to small scale use of tactical nuclear weapons". Simultaneously, there are proponents who favour continuation of the existing strategy as has been enunciated in the official Indian nuclear doctrine.[4] The debate needs to be put in the overall context of the use of nuclear weapons. Significantly, the concept is to be examined in the context of doctrine application and *not* situational use, which appears to be the preferred choice to discuss this subject –because of which, most analysts debate the issue in isolation. War has never been a prioritised choice/option for India, as is proved by history, however, in the event of deterrence failing and war being imposed, then the aggressor could initially determine the escalation ladder, leading to a nuclear attack, following which India has limited options to achieve escalation dominance, massive retaliation being the present choice.

Nuclear war has no precedents and cannot be treated, contextualised or patterned on the existing understanding of application of force; some critical differences lie in the scale of destruction and more importantly,

Lieutenant General **Balraj Nagal** (Retd) is Director, Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi.

the follow-on effects of contamination, radiation and fall-out in distant areas. Borders become immaterial to the spread of radiation and diseases, owing to which the possibility of a nuclear winter remains a grave danger.

The most critical and important decision of initiating war by states with nuclear forces cannot be examined in isolation. The global community, being interested parties, will council restraint or even mediate to prevent war. However, despite this, if the adversary initiates war against India, it has no choice but to defend itself and employ its resources to the fullest to its advantage. Alternately, for India, if it has to wage war, the reason must be of such magnitude that the alternative is ruin, collapse and disintegration. If a situation or position is reached where the policies of the adversary are leading to the downfall of the state in terms of economic bleeding, resulting in the breakdown of the economy, and/or the social and cultural fabric being torn apart, and, aided or orchestrated by the adversary, leading civil insurrection, then an evaluation of alternatives must lead to war as the only option.

In a situation where there are alternatives, some of whose consequences are equally disastrous, the case for initiating war, knowing that it can, or will, escalate to the nuclear threshold currently does not appear to be on the horizon in spite of the ongoing rhetoric in the strategic and academic fields. Nuclear strategists, of course, note the academic discourse and temper it with their knowledge of the consequences before arriving at decisions on employment of nuclear weapons. Whenever a war takes place between two nuclear armed states with the potential to escalate to a nuclear war, it would assuredly be after exhausting all possible alternatives. It needs to be underscored that India has no rationale to initiate war since the present environment is well within its control, notwithstanding the irritants and obstacles it faces in the regional environment. This paper attempts to evaluate the eventuality of relations deteriorating to such an unimaginable state that nuclear war becomes a reality, as elaborated above.

India adopted a benign and defensive nuclear doctrine on January 04, 2003,[5] after putting it up for public scrutiny as a draft doctrine for over three years.[6] India is the only country to have put out officially, in writing, a formal nuclear doctrine. India assured the world that nuclear weapons are political instruments for deterrence, not for war-fighting. India's nuclear doctrine has four crucial aspects which can be summarised as, firstly, "building and maintaining a credible minimum deterrent"; secondly; "a posture of 'No First Use'" (NFU); thirdly, "nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere"; and, fourthly, "nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage". In this final doctrine, one crucial amendment was "nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage"[7], in support of "nuclear weapons will only be used in retaliation against a nuclear attack on Indian territory or on Indian forces anywhere".[8] It was a replacement of the draft statement, "*any nuclear attack on India and its forces shall result in punitive retaliation with nuclear weapons to inflict damage unacceptable to the aggressor.*"[9]

War has never been a prioritised choice/ option for India, as is proved by history. However, in the event of deterrence failing and war being imposed, the aggressor could initially determine the escalation ladder, leading to a nuclear attack, following which India has limited options to achieve escalation dominance—massive retaliation being the present choice.

Specific aspects of the Indian doctrine relevant to "massive retaliation", as stated in the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) release of January 04, 2003, and the draft doctrine released on August 17, 1999, described in the above paragraph, are further reinforced by certain details in the draft. These are, firstly, "the fundamental purpose of Indian nuclear weapons is

to deter the use and threat of use of nuclear weapons by any state or entity against India and its forces";[10] secondly, India has "adequate retaliatory capability should deterrence fail"[11]; thirdly; "this is consistent with the UN Charter, which sanctions the right of self-defence."[12] The original policy of "massive retaliation" had its origin in the 1950s in the US, though it was replaced later, hence, it is essential to understand its origin and context, and the reasons for the change, and thereafter compare with one's own policy imperatives and application.

Massive Retaliation During the Cold War Years

The strategy of massive retaliation was first highlighted in the US in 1954 when Secretary of State John Foster Dulles stated that the United States will protect its allies through the "deterrent of massive retaliatory power". The policy announcement was further evidence of the Dwight Eisenhower Administration's decision to rely heavily on the nation's nuclear arsenal as the primary means of defence against Communist aggression. Dulles began his speech by examining the Communist strategy which, he concluded, had as its goal the "bankruptcy" of the United States through overextension of its military power. Both strategically and economically, Dulles explained, it was unwise to "permanently commit US land forces to Asia," to "support permanently other countries," or to "become permanently committed to military expenditures so vast that they lead to 'practical bankruptcy" Instead, he argued, for a new policy of "getting maximum protection at a bearable cost". Although Dulles did not directly refer to nuclear weapons, it was clear that the new policy he was describing would depend upon the "massive retaliatory power" of such weapons to respond to future Communist acts of war. The speech was a reflection of two primary tenets of foreign policy under the Eisenhower Administration. First was the belief, particularly on the part of Dulles, that America's foreign policy toward the Communist threat had been timidly reactive during the preceding Democrat Administration

of President Harry S. Truman. Dulles consistently reiterated the need for a more proactive and vigorous approach to rolling back the Communist sphere of influence. Second was President Eisenhower's belief that military and foreign assistance spending had to be controlled. Eisenhower was a fiscal conservative and believed that the US economy and society could not long take the strain of overwhelming defence budgets. A stronger reliance on nuclear weapons as the backbone of America's defence answered both concerns—atomic weapons were far more effective in terms of threatening potential adversaries, and they were also, in the long run, much less expensive than the costs associated with a large standing Army.[13] The consequences of this policy approach saw the expansion of the Strategic Air Command[14] and the nuclear arsenal, and their forward deployment. The research and development of nuclear strategy and thought brought to the fore new concepts and challenges to existing policies, and these were reflected in the literature published thereafter.

From the mid-1950s, criticism of massive retaliation became increasingly vocal. As Eisenhower well knew, the most challenging aspect of implementing massive retaliation was that it required a leap of faith on the part of the adversary that the United States would respond to localised and small-scale aggression by launching a nuclear strike, a reaction that was increasingly akin to suicide because of the rapid advances the Soviets were making in nuclear technology. As a consequence, there was a growing number of calls for the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) to bridge that leap of faith by modifying the strategy of massive retaliation to what British RAdm Anthony W. Buzzard (Retd) termed as "graduated deterrence." Only by being capable of responding in proportion to the threat, critics of massive retaliation argued, would nuclear threats become credible. Implicit here was a distinction between the *tactical and strategic use* of nuclear weapons – a distinction that massive retaliation explicitly disavowed. In 1957, Henry Kissinger elaborated on this argument by calling for increased

investment in tactical nuclear weapons and acceptance of the possibility of a limited nuclear war. The observations of Buzzard and Kissinger were part of a trend toward public debate over nuclear policy. The increasing frequency of nuclear crises in the late 1950s and early 1960s and the growing absurdity of both superpowers' nuclear postures led to increased public concern with nuclear policy. The presidential election of 1960 further propelled the public debate on deterrence. Since Buzzard's call for "graduated deterrence" in 1956, Eisenhower's political opponents adopted the strategy under a revised name, "*flexible response*". When John F. Kennedy was nominated as the Democrat presidential nominee, he quickly adopted flexible response as the basis of his military programme.[15]

Massive retaliation was an all-or-nothing strategy. It was the threat to turn the Soviet Union into a smoking, radiating ruin at the end of two hours. By making nuclear war too destructive to fight, and making the distinction between victor and loser in such a conflict increasingly meaningless, the deterrent strategy aimed at eliminating war itself. Furthermore, and more concretely, massive retaliation meant the possible deterrence of an all-out attack—reflecting a policy of brinkmanship. The expectation was that by going to the "brink of war", the United States would be able to deter future Koreas.

What turned out, however, was that the threat of massive retaliation could not prevent limited challenges. It was not an effective foreign policy tool to deal with everyday situations. Short of an ultimate provocation, the Soviet Union could raise tensions and challenge the US, as the Korean War displayed, and the future crisis involving Berlin would again prove. In other words, more limited responses were necessary to deal with less-than-total challenges.[16] The Soviet Union successfully tested the American resolve several times. On June 17, 1953, it suppressed an anti-Communist revolt in East Berlin and in late 1956, it suppressed a national uprising in Hungary.[17] Critics listed several flaws/shortcomings in the strategy. First, massive retaliation lowered US credibility. It was not

credible to threaten the Soviet Union with massive retaliation in the face of its growing strategic power. Even if the American politicians really meant it, stakeholders in other capitals would not believe it. If the threat was losing credibility in the eyes of the very nation it was supposed to deter, then the policy had lost its meaning. Second, massive retaliation increased the vulnerability of the opponent. As a consequence, the US Strategic Air Command (SAC) was becoming more vulnerable to a surprise attack. If the Soviet Union felt insecure because of massive retaliation, Moscow might decide to strike first, in that growing vulnerability could have been a strong incentive for such a first, disarming strike.[18]

Massive retaliation was attractive because it was containment "on the cheap." It was also an attempt to explain the Korean War—which would never have happened, the argument went, had the Communists known that the US would retaliate. So, when the allies feared a lack of American commitment to extended deterrence, it could be explained or, at least, it could be declared away with excuses.[19] Massive retaliation was plausible only as long as the Soviet Union could not retaliate. In other words, it was based on the assumption of the US' territorial invulnerability. During the Cuban Missile Crisis, this assumption was challenged. The Soviet Union wanted to make the United States territorially vulnerable to the extent that it itself was territorially vulnerable to Western delivery systems in Europe. However, the Soviet Union launched its first Inter-Continental Ballistic Missile (ICBM) in 1957. Implying that long before the Cuban crisis, and the time that massive retaliation was announced, the military strategy was questioned by the very people who designed it.[20]

Soviet ICBMs threatened the territorial invulnerability of the United States, and the question arose about whether the US would risk nuclear suicide for the sake of its allies. Washington's willingness to sacrifice New York for Berlin seemed implausible. Thus, Soviet ICBMs diminished the credibility of extended nuclear deterrence. For the allies of the US, the spectre was raised that US military strategy might move

from a deterrence posture to a defence posture. This change in strategy, however, implied the consideration of Europe as a future nuclear battlefield and, consequently, endangered alliance management.[21] A nuclear power in charge of an alliance has to deter the opponent and reassure the allies. The alternative to reassuring US allies would have been for the Europeans to produce nuclear weapons themselves and create core deterrence either on a national basis or in cooperation with other Europeans. It also would have meant that the Germans would have gotten a finger on the nuclear button.[22]From the perspective of the United States, nuclear parity and territorial vulnerability required the adoption of a new strategy. The Kennedy Administration accepted the strategy of flexible response.[23]

Contextualising 'Doctrine Application', Not 'Situational Use': The Indian Perspective

The main impediments to the policy of massive retaliation were the scope and context of the application of one size fits all problems that did not address the geo-strategic competition at the lower levels, especially ideological expansion and sub-conventional war or insurgencies.

The Indian doctrine should not be compared with older concepts applicable to the Cold War rivalry. India's doctrine is based on regional geo-strategic environmental realities, with a specific context and clarity of intention. India faces complex challenges and threats which are collusive in nature. A former Defence Minister defined the main rationale for India's decision to go nuclear, however, he retracted quickly, stating the obvious in essence. Whilst the greater danger was clearly indicated, the instability would always lie with the revisionist state, hence, the doctrine had to address both states and also the emerging forces of sponsored non-state actors capable of using Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD).

The important differences between the Indian doctrine and the US strategy are:

- Indian "massive retaliation" is specifically in retaliation to a nuclear attack on India or Indian forces anywhere, whereas, the US strategy was to counter conventional and sub-conventional threats and ideological expansion by other means, in essence the total opposite of each other
- India follows an NFU policy where nuclear weapons have no role to deter conventional or sub-conventional threats, whilst this was not the case in the US strategy
- The US strategy was to reduce the cost of defending allies and provide extended deterrence. India has no such compulsions because the nuclear role is regional and limited in context, and not to overcome conventional inadequacy
- India entered the nuclear domain against an established nuclear power and another undeclared but well known nuclear power and, therefore, the equations are dissimilar

With such dissimilarities, the strategies do not need to be compared and India's strategy must be evaluated for the end result sought. Massive retaliation in the Indian context is limited to adversaries that attack India or Indian forces *anywhere* and are not directed at anyone specifically.

The essence of massive retaliation lies in addressing the heartland of the adversary and attacking its centre of gravity rather than conducting local nuclear exchanges which do not serve the cause of deterrence. For a strategy to be useful, it must be capable of achieving the aim set for itself. If the purpose is deterrence, then not addressing the adversary(s) valued areas primarily defeats the strategy. The adversary will seek to localise the nuclear conflict for intervention by outside powers or ensure that decision-makers and value targets remain safe. It would suffice to state that India does not require Tactical Nuclear Weapons (TNWs) for local deterrence, and that the Indian armed forces are capable of conducting proactive defensive operations to ensure territorial integrity. During the

India has chosen strategic deterrence, and rejected nuclear war-fighting, hence, any feature related to nuclear war-fighting will not be the choice under any given circumstance or situational pretext.

Cold War, the build-up of TNWs by both superpowers continued unabated, and there was no effort to cap the numbers, but once both sides developed capabilities to destroy the heartland, the Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (SALT) came into force, in spite of the Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) threat. A similar analogy may be used here to understand the logic of massive retaliation.

Massive retaliation to cause unacceptable damage is a term that is not easily defined, and is open to different interpretations. Each adversary has different levels of tolerance to accept punishment. There is no formula or set piece answer to what should be targeted to achieve unacceptable damage. The more advanced a society, the lower is the level of tolerance to bear punishment. The US which fought World War II (1941-45), the Korean War (1950-53) and the Vietnam War (1955/1964-75), suffered casualties in the thousands. However, today, it is unimaginable for the US to accept similar casualties, and even a few cities being struck can be termed unacceptable. But the situation in Asia is different—here nationalism still dominates human values, poverty and poor understanding of repercussions keep the public unaware of the dangers of nuclear war, and governments manipulate public opinion to create hysteria/frenzy in support of their policies. Under such circumstances, higher destruction will be in order, to cause unacceptable damage to bring an end to a nuclear war.

Delineating 'Unacceptable Damage'

Unacceptable damage should be viewed in two segments/ parts: first, the damage that is likely to occur to own country; and second, the conditions that would force the adversary to agree to the terms of own country. If the adversary

miscalculates and fires limited weapons to de-escalate the war, the damage to own country will be limited; however, if an all out nuclear weapons attack is executed, the damage may be unimaginable. Based on India's doctrine and with no guarantee of escalation control, planning is needed to destroy a large number of counter-value targets to include population centres, industrial complexes and important infrastructure, and available counter-force targets as well. The retaliatory strikes must cause destruction to the extent that recovery and reconstruction is long-drawn and costly, incapacitating the population, regressing the economy, defeating the military, and decimating the political leadership that took the call to go to war. There is a contrary view that only a few targets are sufficient (three to six) to bring an end to a nuclear war. In conducting retaliatory strikes, care must be taken to avoid destruction of the environment and damage due to radioactive fallout that will have an effect on the country, the region, and the world.

To instil confidence and reassure the people, *massive retaliation to cause unacceptable damage* is the most prudent strategy in the given circumstances and prevailing environment.

India has categorically stated that nuclear weapons are purely meant for deterrence and if it fails, then the retaliation would be to terminate the war. The experiences of the past few decades convinced India that coercion and threats can limit choices in policy formulation and execution. To shield and protect against future restrictions and constraints, India opted for strategic deterrence as the basis of its doctrine, which became the foundation of its nuclear strategy and force formulation, as stated in the draft: "The requirements of deterrence should be carefully weighed in the design of Indian nuclear forces and in the strategy to provide for a level of capability consistent with maximum credibility, survivability, effectiveness".[24] Once the doctrine establishes the fundamental beliefs and tenets, the force structures, weapons and delivery systems, and

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Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (C4ISR) organisations will be created to fulfill the aim enunciated. India has chosen strategic deterrence, and rejected nuclear war-fighting, hence, any feature related to nuclear war-fighting will not be the choice under any given circumstance or situational pretext.

The Indian nuclear doctrine is very specific on the conditions of use of nuclear weapons, i.e., retaliation to nuclear attacks on India or Indian forces anywhere, while retaining the right to use nuclear weapons in the event of major chemical or biological attacks. India's doctrine, thus, commits it to accept the first strike by the adversary, the size and scale of which cannot be determined now. In the absence of experience and depending on the scale at which the strike occurs, the choices to be made will depend upon war termination at the earliest to prevent continued destruction. Massive retaliation to cause unacceptable damage is most suited to achieve these objectives.

India's decision to adopt a no-first-use policy already constrains its strategy options, and if it were to further dilute the strategy, it would allow continued and greater damage to the country. The perception of the people would be of drift and confusion, resulting in escalation dominance being with the adversary. In a hypothetical situation where the people of India perceive that nuclear weapons have created a threat rather than deterrence, and that their destruction is guaranteed, and that the policy is inimical to national interest, any war at the conventional level would cause panic and create anxiety owing to the fear that escalation

would be doomsday, resulting in war efforts/preparations being adversely affected. To instil confidence and reassure the people, *massive retaliation to cause unacceptable damage* is the most prudent strategy in the given circumstances and prevailing environment.

Besides nuclear forces, the other most critical aspect for retaliation is the command and control elements and systems. Any damage to, or destruction of, these shall degrade or eliminate the capability built up during peace-time. In order to ensure the efficacy of the retaliatory strike, it must be launched soonest, with full force planned for the adversary. Any delay through piecemeal application is fraught with the danger of destruction as time passes or delay increases. A quid pro quo or graduated response opens the vulnerability of one's own C4ISR, as escalation control remains with the adversary. A strategic operational plan must surely provide security in the future and address the threats in being, or likely to emerge. For ensuring all these concerns, massive retaliation does indeed provide the requisite assurance and guarantee.

The first use of nuclear weapons against India on a large scale would cause immense damage and the retaliatory choice would only be full retaliation. However, if the initial strikes are limited, then the adversary may escalate gradually or even at full scale in the aftermath of the Indian response. A situation in the second scenario also provides the adversary the option of strikes on Indian nuclear forces in an endeavour to reduce the retaliatory capability – which definitely is not in the interest of India's strategy. India can ill afford to allow the adversary the choice and option, of escalating the nuclear war to endanger its own arsenal. Hence, the wise and pragmatic decision once again is massive retaliation to cause unacceptable damage.

Once the adversary has decided to initiate nuclear attacks on India or Indian forces anywhere, the aim will be to terminate the war at the earliest. One method will be to destroy the command and control system of the adversary to prevent further orders for nuclear strikes.

Having gone to war for a just and decided cause, after evaluating all the consequences, no leadership will imperil itself and the people who repose faith in it, by exposing them to unknown and unforeseen costs and penalties.

This is feasible if all possible steps are taken to destroy the enemy's C4ISR system and leadership. Selective targeting or small scale strikes will not suffice and the call would be for massive retaliation to cause unacceptable damage in the expectation that these would be successful in eliminating the flow of orders. A decapitated leadership replaced by new leaders may allow them to review the direction of the war and consider opting for a ceasefire.

Whilst theorists may deliberate on the escalation ladder and thresholds when nuclear weapons will be used, practitioners of nuclear strategy will not lower the threshold unless the very existence of the state is in danger. If a state wishes to lower the threshold knowing fully well the implications of the adversary's policy, it may be an act of brinkmanship or miscalculation. Any nation which wants/considers use of nuclear weapons at low levels of war, is probably not aware of the dangers that the initiating country is being exposed to by such an action. Hence, there will be no confidence in the future rationality of that leadership. The aim of nuclear strikes/attacks will be to terminate the war, and in that direction, massive retaliation to cause unacceptable damage again proves to being the best available option. It not only conveys resolve and credibility but also closes the window for continued nuclear exchanges at the tactical levels, which if conducted, may result in greater devastation and contamination and will finally lead to strategic exchanges, defeating the very purpose of TNWs and limited war. Proponents of TNWs assume that nuclear war can be contained and confined to the battlefield, but they fail to define or explain how and on what basis victory shall be defined. Contrarily, in the case of massive retaliation, the very existence of the state is threatened and put to question.

It is often stated that in order to implement the strategy of massive retaliation, the political will may be found wanting or deficient, based on the premise that large-scale devastation may deter such a decision or the idea of proportionality may set in during the war. The moot point here is that having gone to war, for a just and decided cause, after evaluating all the consequences, no leadership will imperil itself and the people who repose faith in it by exposing them to unknown and unforeseen costs and penalties. If doubts arise during the conduct of the war, then the debates and evaluations of peace have failed to provide the correct inputs—there is no scope for vacillation in war. The nation will lose not only the war, but also endanger its existence. There should be no doubts that the political will exists in India to pursue the declared policy, and there is no evidence to suggest the contrary. Bearing in mind the fact that the interests of the nation are supreme, the political leadership will deliver in times of need and crisis, and the nation should be assured of the same, as clearly stated in India's draft doctrine document: "Deterrence requires that India maintain the will to employ nuclear forces and weapons"[25] as well as the CCS release of 2003: "Nuclear retaliation to a first strike will be massive and designed to inflict unacceptable damage".[26]

Bearing in mind the fact that the interests of the nation are supreme, the political leadership will deliver in times of need and crisis, and the nation should be assured of the same, as clearly stated in India's draft doctrine document.

TNW Scenarios in the South Asian Context

A visualisation of the escalation ladder will show that nuclear escalation before the use of TNWs should witness cold tests, shot across the bow, missile tests, warning at political and diplomatic levels, deployment of strategic delivery systems and imposition of the disaster management

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organisation at enhanced scales. The idea of TNWs usage, without a series of action outside conventional war, may not be generally possible unless the adversary inflicts a bolt from the blue attack. Thus, it can be assumed, that some notice will be available of the adversary's intention. The challenges of nuclear war-fighting have been well analysed in the aftermath of the Cold War: the proliferation of nuclear weapons to the lower levels of military organisations, with concurrent delegation and deployment in the forward battle zone, and if used, the incalculable harm to the environment and the inadequacy of escalation control continue to remain the main hazards of TNWs.[27]

Those who propose *quid pro quo* levels of nuclear exchange assume that tactical nuclear weapons will be used as battlefield weapons to decide battles or local manoeuvres as continuation of conventional war, and further presume that an exchange of this nature is within the bounds of escalation control, hoping that war will terminate at a local or, at best, operational level. One of the biggest imponderables is the number of locations where the TNWs will be used simultaneously and the quantum of weapons detonated at each place. Any analyst will deduce that these may range from a few scores to above hundreds; in case these are to be used for effect, as was planned during the Cold War, without such use, the weapons will not halt or stop any offensive(s) and below this, the seriousness of their efficacy remains doubtful. India has chosen a strategy of strategic deterrence and does not have an inventory of TNWs which implies that India does not intend to engage in a localised nuclear battle conducted with TNWs. The problems of deploying TNWs are as follows:

- Creating a large inventory of nuclear weapons to be deployed in forward areas, the numbers depending on the area and density of coverage required.
- Delegation of authority, and command and control moving down the chain to local commanders whose perception of battle will be limited and who will seek employment of nuclear weapons for restoration of local reverses or limited defeats.
- Due to range and sector requirements, far too many nuclear weapons will be available in the forward battle zone, creating grave security and protection concerns.

The most credible option while accepting an NFU policy is to use the weapons for effect, which India defines as "massive retaliation". After suffering catastrophic damage, no nation will accept that its leadership not inflict punishment for the damage that has occurred or may occur.

- It is not in the best interest of raising the threshold, conversely the threshold will be lowered to meet lower level battle requirements.
- Escalation control in nuclear war is not an established principle and, thus, needs to be deliberated and debated upon separately. In a *quid pro quo* situation, there can be no guarantee whatsoever that the adversary will not suddenly escalate or jump many steps in the escalation ladder to full scale nuclear strikes, leaving India in a situation that could be calamitous.

Escalation Control in the India-Pakistan Case

Often, the idea of *quid pro quo* being propounded in an India–Pakistan scenario is based on an assumption that nuclear war resembles conventional war and should follow the same set of suppositions, which the above argument negates. Theorists, who propose "proportional responses", examine the concept and stages of war in parts and not as

a whole, with the aspect of proportionality appearing similar to *quid pro quo*, if it is at the strategic level with the aim to de-escalate the war. The most pressing question arising here is, will the aim of the war be settled by India agreeing to de-escalation or will the adversary accept a proportional nuclear strike and then accept a ceasefire?

Who determines escalation control in a nuclear war is not a settled issue, in that, there is no established norm or rule to guide escalation control in a nuclear exchange. Escalation, theoretically, can be vertical or horizontal, and may also be intentional or accidental – making them features that are not conducive to control. Escalation control is plagued with the following problems:

- Each force has distinctive planning parameters, hence, there can be no universal application of rules.
- Communication breakdown in war is a near certainty which will complicate planning.
- The friction and fog of war result in complicating the situational awareness and decision-making.
- Intelligence inaccuracies lead to decisions not entirely correct, but taken in the best interest of the nation.
- The desire for victory propels both belligerents to continue till one relents in the contest of wills.

Escalation control in a nuclear exchange is not feasible as no rules govern a nuclear war. India's objective of nuclear weapons was, and continues to be deterrence, and for this very deterrence to be credible, the option is to display the will to use the weapons. The most credible option while accepting an NFU policy is to use the weapons for effect, which India defines as "massive retaliation". After suffering catastrophic damage, no nation will accept that its leadership not inflict punishment for the damage that has occurred or may occur. Any adversary must know that India can, and will, surely, retaliate

with sufficient nuclear weapons, to inflict destruction and punishment that the aggressor will find unacceptable, if nuclear weapons are used against India and/or its forces.[28] A nation wants a credible response when the very survival of the state and the security of its people are at stake. The adversary(s) heartland and value targets must be attacked to fulfill the objectives of the strategy adopted. The design and strategy of the strategic forces are predicated on this doctrine. It is the responsibility of strategists and academics to present India's case in the ongoing and future debates, regionally and globally. Nuclear war is serious business and there should be careful consideration of the potential ramifications of the debates in various fora, and the informed leadership and stakeholders from the political and military fields need to be regularly consulted and briefed. Analysts who propound an escalated nuclear war mislead new nuclear weapon states on the controllability of nuclear war and lower thresholds, resulting in abnormal behaviour and brinkmanship, waste of resources and an arms race. Any adversary who does not believe, or casts aspersions on, India's resolve on massive retaliation by initiating a nuclear strike against India, does so at its own peril, and seeks self-destruction.

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