India’s Nuclear Doctrine

Why in news?

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

What is India’s nuclear doctrine?

- India’s nuclear doctrine was first enunciated following a Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) meeting in January 2003.
- Some of the main features of India’s nuclear doctrine are -

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**”.

- The concept of “credible minimum deterrence” is used in conjunction with the concepts of “No First Use” and “Non Use” against nuclear weapon states.
- 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.
What is the view of former NSA?

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).

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

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

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

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

What are the issues?

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

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

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.

Furthermore, any impression in Pakistan of Indian counterforce strikes
would incentivize their early use.

Source: Business Standard