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Draft Report of National Security Advisory Board on Indian Nuclear Doctrine

August 17, 1999

Opening Remarks by National Security Adviser Mr. Brajesh Mishra at the Release of the Draft Report

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1. Preamble

1. The use of nuclear weapons in particular as well as other weapons of mass destruction constitutes the gravest threat to humanity and to peace and stability in the international system. Unlike the other two categories of weapons of mass destruction, biological and chemical weapons which have been outlawed by international treaties, nuclear weapons remain instruments for national and collective security, the possession of which on a selective basis has been sought to be legitimised through permanent extension of the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) in May 1995. Nuclear weapon states have asserted that they will continue to rely on nuclear weapons with some of them adopting policies to use them even in a non-nuclear context. These developments amount to virtual abandonment of nuclear disarmament. This is a serious setback to the struggle of the international community to abolish weapons of mass destruction.
2. India's primary objective is to achieve economic, political, social, scientific and technological development within a peaceful and democratic framework. This requires an environment of durable peace and insurance against potential risks to peace and stability. It will be India's endeavour to proceed towards this overall objective in cooperation with the global democratic trends and to play a constructive role in advancing the international system toward a just, peaceful and equitable order.

3. Autonomy of decision making in the developmental process and in strategic matters is an inalienable democratic right of the Indian people. India will strenuously guard this right in a world where nuclear weapons for a select few are sought to be legitimised for an indefinite future, and where there is growing complexity and frequency in the use of force for political purposes.
4. India's security is an integral component of its development process. India continuously aims at promoting an ever-expanding area of peace and stability around it so that developmental priorities can be pursued without disruption.
5. However, the very existence of offensive doctrine pertaining to the first use of nuclear weapons and the insistence of some nuclear weapons states on the legitimacy of their use even against non-nuclear weapon countries constitute a threat to peace, stability and sovereignty of states.
6. This document outlines the broad principles for the development, deployment and employment of India's nuclear forces. Details of policy and strategy concerning force structures, deployment and employment of nuclear forces will flow from this framework and will be laid down separately and kept under constant review.

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2. Objectives

1. In the absence of global nuclear disarmament India's strategic interests require effective, credible nuclear deterrence and adequate retaliatory capability should deterrence fail. This is consistent with the UN Charter, which sanctions the right of self-defence.
2. 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, safety and security.
3. India shall pursue a doctrine of credible minimum nuclear deterrence. In this policy of "retaliation only", the survivability of our arsenal is critical. This is a dynamic concept related to the strategic environment, technological imperatives and the needs of national security. The actual size components, deployment and employment of nuclear forces will be decided in the light of these factors. India's peacetime posture aims at convincing any potential aggressor that :
(a) any threat of use of nuclear weapons against India shall invoke measures to counter the threat: and (b) any nuclear attack on India and its forces shall result in punitive retaliation with nuclear weapons to inflict damage unacceptable to the aggressor.
4. 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. India will not be the first to initiate a nuclear strike, but will respond with punitive retaliation should deterrence fail.
5. India will not resort to the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons against States which do not possess nuclear weapons, or are not aligned with nuclear weapon powers.
6. **Deterrence requires that India maintain:**
 - (a) Sufficient, survivable and operationally prepared nuclear forces,
 - (b) a robust command and control system,
 - (c) effective intelligence and early warning capabilities, and

- (d) comprehensive planning and training for operations in line with the strategy, and
- (e) the will to employ nuclear forces and weapons

7. Highly effective conventional military capabilities shall be maintained to raise the threshold of outbreak both of conventional military conflict as well as that of threat or use of nuclear weapons.

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3. Nuclear Forces

1. India's nuclear forces will be effective, enduring, diverse, flexible, and responsive to the requirements in accordance with the concept of credible minimum deterrence. These forces will be based on a triad of aircraft, mobile land-based missiles and sea-based assets in keeping with the objectives outlined above. Survivability of the forces will be enhanced by a combination of multiple redundant systems, mobility, dispersion and deception.
2. The doctrine envisages assured capability to shift from peacetime deployment to fully employable forces in the shortest possible time, and the ability to retaliate effectively even in a case of significant degradation by hostile strikes.

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4. Credibility and Survivability

The following principles are central to India's nuclear deterrent:

1. **Credibility:** Any adversary must know that India can and will retaliate with sufficient nuclear weapons to inflict destruction and punishment that the aggressor will find unacceptable if nuclear weapons are used against India and its forces.
2. **Effectiveness:** The efficacy of India's nuclear deterrent be maximised through synergy among all elements involving reliability, timeliness, accuracy and weight of the attack.
3. **Survivability:**
 - I. India's nuclear forces and their command and control shall be organised for very high survivability against surprise attacks and for rapid punitive response. They shall be designed and deployed to ensure survival against a first strike and to endure repetitive attrition attempts with adequate retaliatory capabilities for a punishing strike which would be unacceptable to the aggressor.
 - II. Procedures for the continuity of nuclear command and control shall ensure a continuing capability to effectively employ nuclear weapons.

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5. Command and Control

1. Nuclear weapons shall be tightly controlled and released for use at the highest political level. The authority to release nuclear weapons for use resides in the person of the Prime Minister of India, or the designated successor(s).

2. An effective and survivable command and control system with requisite flexibility and responsiveness shall be in place. An integrated operational plan, or a series of sequential plans, predicated on strategic objectives and a targetting policy shall form part of the system.
3. For effective employment the unity of command and control of nuclear forces including dual capable delivery systems shall be ensured.
4. The survivability of the nuclear arsenal and effective command, control, communications, computing, intelligence and information (C4I2) systems shall be assured.
5. The Indian defence forces shall be in a position to, execute operations in an NBC environment with minimal degradation.
6. Space based and other assets shall be created to provide early warning, communications, damage/detonation assessment.

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6. Security and Safety

1. **Security:** Extraordinary precautions shall be taken to ensure that nuclear weapons, their manufacture, transportation and storage are fully guarded against possible theft, loss, sabotage, damage or unauthorised access or use.
2. **Safety** is an absolute requirement and tamper proof procedures and systems shall be instituted to ensure that unauthorised or inadvertent activation/use of nuclear weapons does not take place and risks of accident are avoided.
3. **Disaster control:** India shall develop an appropriate disaster control system capable of handling the unique requirements of potential incidents involving nuclear weapons and materials.

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7. Research and Development

1. India should step up efforts in research and development to keep up with technological advances in this field.
2. While India is committed to maintain the deployment of a deterrent which is both minimum and credible, it will not accept any restraints on building its R&D capability.

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8. Disarmament and Arms Control

1. Global, verifiable and non-discriminatory nuclear disarmament is a national security objective. India shall continue its efforts to achieve the goal of a nuclear weapon-free world at an early date.
2. Since no-first use of nuclear weapons is India's basic commitment, every effort shall be made to persuade other States possessing nuclear weapons to join an international treaty banning first use.

3. Having provided unqualified negative security assurances, India shall work for internationally binding unconditional negative security assurances by nuclear weapon states to non-nuclear weapon states.
4. Nuclear arms control measures shall be sought as part of national security policy to reduce potential threats and to protect our own capability and its effectiveness.
5. In view of the very high destructive potential of nuclear weapons, appropriate nuclear risk reduction and confidence building measures shall be sought, negotiated and instituted.

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Opening Remarks by National Security Adviser Mr. Brajesh Mishra at the Release of Draft Indian Nuclear Doctrine
August 17, 1999

Ladies & Gentlemen,

I am happy to present to you the draft of the Nuclear Doctrine prepared by the National Security Board. A copy has been placed in each of the seats in the hall. We have decided to make this document public in keeping with our position in favour of greater transparency in decision-making. Please note that this is a draft proposed by the NSAB and has not yet been approved by the Government. That will have to wait until after the general elections.

As our thinking on the nuclear tests has been fairly well publicised, I do not intend to go over the ground again. Suffice it to say that this was a step necessitated by the security environment and our need to ensure for ourselves the element of strategic autonomy in decision making which we will need in the coming years. Our position has all along been that global security would be enhanced by the universal elimination of all nuclear weapons, and this remains our conviction today. Unfortunately, the indefinite extension of the Non-Proliferation Treaty in 1995 was in the reverse direction.

Our nuclear weapons are not country-specific but, as I mentioned earlier, are aimed at providing us the autonomy of exercising strategic choices in the best interest of our country, without fear or coercion in a nuclearised environment. That being so, we have adopted a policy of minimum deterrence as the basic building block of our nuclear thinking. Minimum but credible deterrence is the watchword of our nuclear doctrine. From this, flows the decision to adopt a no-first-use posture. We have therefore given unconditional guarantees to States that do not have nuclear weapons, or are not aligned with nuclear weapon powers.

A cardinal principle regarding the use of nuclear weapons is that of civilian control. Only the elected civilian leader of the country is empowered to authorise the use of nuclear weapons. As the recent operations in Kargil have demonstrated, our system and the political leadership, believe with great responsibility and restraint, as you would expect from the largest democracy in the world. This sense of responsibility will also guide our actions with regard to nuclear weapons.

With these words, I have great pleasure in releasing the document for public discussion and debate.



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