

ASSESSMENT

The Advisory Board's draft offers a relatively clear blueprint of the basic prerequisites essential to the creation of a secure and effective minimum nuclear deterrent. Yet the rationale underlying development of such a force, along with the capacity to build and maintain it are more questionable.

Rationale

The doctrine is justified in broad terms. Beyond assertions that nuclear arsenals and NWS create a threat which necessitates a nuclear counter, detailed identification of specific nuclear dangers is avoided.

Such contentions avoid the acrimony which would likely attend a more precise discussion of threats. Nonetheless, as justification for the development of a nuclear deterrent, they are tenuous. In fact, a more detailed assessment of the existing strategic environment suggests that the document tends to exaggerate both the nature of the threat itself and the lack of available alternatives for addressing it.

Threats

For the foreseeable future the majority of NWS pose few appreciable threats (either nuclear or otherwise) to India. In fact, those possessing the largest, most sophisticated arsenals appear relatively uninterested in nuclear diplomacy of any kind.

In the case of the United States, possession of overwhelming conventional military superiority and a strong interest in preventing further proliferation of nuclear arms, eliminates the likelihood of nuclear use in all but the most extreme conflicts and circumstances. In fact, the employment of nuclear weapons under less compelling conditions would not only subject the U.S. to near-universal moral condemnation, but would likely spur further nuclear spread – an outcome which could erode the conventional advantage the U.S. would seek to exploit in subsequent conflicts.

The threat of a premeditated Russian attack is similarly remote. While Russia's nuclear arsenal is now predicated on first use options, lingering economic and political turmoil internally insures that Moscow's concerns with security and stability are primarily confined to the domestic sphere and developments in its near abroad (e.g., Chechnya). A long and continuing tradition of cordial relations with India, and recent military cooperation between Moscow and New Delhi make any foreseeable Russian threat all the more remote.

As for Britain and France, existing arsenals and doctrines are strongly premised on homeland defence, and are configured largely around native concepts of "minimum deterrence." Recent years