



Deepening insecurity

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The buzz around 'Mission Shakti' should be an opportunity to review India's defence strategy

- After 'Mission Shakti' — India's anti-satellite test — there is a feeling that India needs this form of deterrence for its security.
- To be visibly strong in order to deter any enemy from attacking is a concern that goes back to pre-historic times.
- But when this ancient urge is exerted by nations with nuclear weapons, it must be an occasion to revisit the arms race, the Mutually Assured Destruction (MAD) doctrine and their long-term implications.
- The doctrine emerged during the Cold War in the mid-20th century when the U.S. and the erstwhile U.S.S.R. had stockpiled so many nuclear weapons that if launched, the weapons could destroy both nations many times over.
- For more than 100 years now, scientists and writers of science fiction alike have fostered the illusion that someday humankind will have a weapon so terrible that the fear of its impact will end war for all times.

Deterrence and violence

- Having invented dynamite and unleashed it upon the world in 1867, Since then incalculably more destructive weapons, including nuclear bombs and chemical weapons, have been deployed but this has not ended war.
- On the contrary, the invention of increasingly deadly weapons has fuelled a global arms race.
- Globally, the annual spend on armaments is now estimated to stand at about \$1.7 trillion.
- According to the Global Peace Index, in 2017, the economic impact of violence globally was estimated at about \$14.76 trillion, which was 12.4% of global GDP.
- The Global Peace Index also shows that over the last 70 years the per capita GDP growth has been three times higher in more peaceful

countries.

- This is partly why, compared to 10 years ago, 102 nations are spending less on military as a percentage of their GDP.
- According to the website of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN), the failure of the nuclear powers to disarm has heightened the risk that other countries will acquire nuclear weapons.
- In 2017, the ICAN was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize.

Double-edged sword

- Theoretically, MAD is supposed to eliminate the incentive for starting a conflict but it also makes disarming almost impossible.
- This is partly why, long after the Cold War ended, the U.S. is poised to spend enormous amounts of money over the next 10 years in updating and modernising its nuclear arsenal.
- The tragic irony of this trend is that nuclear defence, particularly with warheads riding on rockets of supersonic speed, actually deepens insecurity in both countries by causing millions of lives to perpetually be at the risk of instantaneous annihilation.
- All through the Cold War and even now, the MAD doctrine has been opposed on both moral and practical grounds by a variety of disarmament and peace groups.
- The most prominent of these, War Resisters' International (WRI), which will turn 100 in 2021, has 90 affiliated groups in 40 countries.
- Such groups ceaselessly serve as a counter to all those who glamorise or justify war or an arms race.
- Above all, they constantly draw attention to the fact that the only true security lies in dissolving enmity by going to the roots of any conflict.

