



P.L.RAJ IAS & IPS ACADEMY

Building Bureaucrats Since 2006

3. SIPRI Yearbook 2026– International Organization

According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Yearbook 2026, India is estimated to have modestly expanded its nuclear arsenal in 2025.

1. The report documents a reversal of decades-long efforts to reduce the role and number of nuclear weapons as nuclear-armed states increase reliance on nuclear deterrence.
2. Global nuclear stockpiles continue expanding with all nine nuclear-armed states pursuing modernization programmes.

1.Global Nuclear Trends

Growing Dependence on nuclear weapons

1. Nuclear-armed states are placing greater emphasis on nuclear deterrence in their security strategies marking a reversal of Cold War-era disarmament trends.
2. This shift reflects heightened geopolitical tensions and strategic competition particularly in Asia-Pacific and Eastern Europe regions.

Expansion and Modernization of Arsenals

1. All nine nuclear-armed states—United States, Russia, United Kingdom, France, China, India, Pakistan, North Korea, and Israel—continued modernization programmes in 2025.
2. Each nation deployed new nuclear-capable systems representing technological advancement in delivery mechanisms and warhead sophistication.

Global Nuclear Stockpile

1. Estimated global inventory (January 2026) – 12,187 nuclear warheads reflecting continued arsenal accumulation.
2. Russia and USA together possess around 83% of all stockpiled nuclear warheads maintaining strategic balance concerns.

Declining Arms Control and Disarmament

1. Since the end of Cold War, dismantling retired warheads generally exceeded deployment of new ones reflecting disarmament progress.
2. SIPRI warns this trend is likely to reverse as dismantlement slows and deployment of new weapons accelerates.

Weakening Arms Control Regime

1. Strategic dialogue among major nuclear powers is declining reducing communication channels preventing miscalculation.
2. Traditional arms control treaties face increasing strain with compliance and verification challenges.

Rising Escalation Risks

1. Advances in missile technology, artificial intelligence, cyber capabilities, and space-based systems complicate deterrence calculations.
2. SIPRI warns heightened geopolitical tensions increase possibility of miscalculation leading to nuclear escalation.

2.India-Specific Nuclear Observations

Arsenal Expansion

1. India's estimated nuclear arsenal increased to 190 warheads, up from 180 the previous year reflecting modest expansion consistent with strategic requirements.
2. Expansion reflects India's response to regional security challenges and evolving strategic environment.

Modernization and Capability Development

1. India continues modernizing its deterrent through developments including longer-range missiles extending strike capability.
2. MIRV technology development (Multiple Independently targetable Re-entry Vehicles) enhances penetrability against air defences.
3. Stronger sea-based nuclear capabilities provide survivability and continuous deterrent capability.

Strategic Planning Drivers

1. India's strategic planning is increasingly influenced by China's growing military capabilities reflecting broader Asian security dynamics.
2. India-Pakistan nuclear rivalry remains important consideration in strategic doctrine though focus has shifted toward China.

Military Spending

1. India retained its position as world's fifth-largest military spender in 2025 reflecting defence modernization emphasis.
2. India's military expenditure at \$92.1 billion, an increase of 8.9% over previous year demonstrating rising defence budgets.

Arms Imports

1. India remained world's second-largest importer of major arms during 2021-25 period, accounting for 8.2% of global arms imports.
2. High import dependence reflects limited domestic defence manufacturing capacity and need for advanced weaponry.

3.Nuclear Disarmament Framework

Definition and Approaches

1. Nuclear disarmament refers to act of eliminating or abolishing weapons (particularly offensive arms) either unilaterally or reciprocally.
2. May refer to reducing number of arms or eliminating entire categories of weapons.

4.Key Treaties and Agreements

Treaty on Non-Proliferation of nuclear weapons (NPT)

1. Signed in 1968 and entered into force in 1970, NPT aims to prevent spread of nuclear weapons and promote disarmament.
2. Divides world into nuclear-weapon states (NWS) and non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS) with differential obligations.
3. Requires NWS to pursue disarmament negotiations in good faith though enforcement remains weak.
4. India, Israel, North Korea, and Pakistan have not signed NPT maintaining strategic autonomy.

Treaty on Prohibition of nuclear weapons (TPNW)

1. Adopted by United Nations in 2017 and opened for signature in 2018, TPNW aims to prohibit development, testing, production, stockpiling, stationing, transfer, use, and threat of use of nuclear weapons.
2. Represents significant step toward nuclear disarmament although not signed by nuclear-armed states limiting practical impact.

Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT)

1. Opened for signature in 1996, CTBT aims to ban all nuclear explosions for civilian and military purposes.
2. While signed by 185 countries and ratified by 170, has not entered into force as nuclear-armed states must ratify for operation.

Outer Space Treaty

1. Multilateral agreement entered into force in 1967 banning siting of weapons of mass destruction in space.
2. All nine states believed to have nuclear weapons are parties to this treaty.

5. India's Nuclear Weapons Policy

No First Use Doctrine

1. India has declared nuclear no-first-use policy under which will not use nuclear weapons unless first attacked by nuclear weapons.
2. This policy distinguishes India from some other nuclear powers maintaining moral authority and strategic restraint.

Non-Use Against Non-Nuclear States

1. India committed to not using nuclear weapons against non-nuclear weapon states providing negative security assurances.

Retaliation Only Doctrine

1. India's nuclear doctrine asserts nuclear weapons are solely for deterrence and will pursue policy of 'retaliation only'.
2. Emphasis is on credible minimum deterrent protecting national interests.

Multilateral Legal Arrangements

1. India is prepared to convert nuclear commitments into multilateral legal arrangements supporting disarmament frameworks.

6. Way Forward

1. **Strengthen Dialogue Channels** - Enhance strategic communication with nuclear-armed states reducing misunderstanding and miscalculation risks.
2. **Support Arms Control Treaties** - Advocate for stronger verification mechanisms and compliance frameworks in existing treaties.
3. **Promote Disarmament** - Support international disarmament initiatives while maintaining credible deterrent against identified threats.
4. **Technological Governance** - Develop international norms governing artificial intelligence and cyber capabilities in nuclear security.

Source - https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2026-06/yb26_summary_en_0.pdf