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India's Nuclear Doctrine: Strategic Features and SIPRI 2026 Stockpile Review

Evolving regional dynamics and SIPRI 2026 estimates on global nuclear stockpiles have renewed discussions on India's nuclear posture.

India's Nuclear Doctrine is the official framework defining the nation's posture, command structure, and principles regarding nuclear weapons deployment and deterrence.

KEY EXAM POINTS

- The **Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS)** publicly released the operational principles of India's Nuclear Doctrine on **January 4, 2003**.
- According to the **SIPRI Yearbook 2026**, India possesses approximately **190 nuclear warheads** as of January 2026.
- SIPRI estimates that **Pakistan** holds around **170 warheads** and China possesses approximately **620 warheads** in 2026.
- The doctrine anchors a strict **No First Use (NFU)** policy, specifying that nuclear retaliatory strikes will occur only if India is attacked with nuclear weapons.
- India maintains **Credible Minimum Deterrence**, aiming to deter nuclear aggression without engaging in a competitive arms race.
- The **Nuclear Command Authority (NCA)** holds execution control, with political authorization vested solely in the **Prime Minister of India**.

DID YOU KNOW..!?

India conducted its first peaceful nuclear test (code-named **Operation Smiling Buddha**) at **Pokhran** on **May 18, 1974**.

The Pokhran-II underground nuclear tests (**Operation Shakti**) were successfully executed on **May 11 and 13, 1998**.

India observes **National Technology Day** annually on **May 11** to celebrate the scientific achievement of the Pokhran-II tests.

The Draft Nuclear Doctrine (DND) was prepared in **1999** by the National Security Advisory Board chaired by **K. Subrahmanyam**.

The Nuclear Command Authority (NCA) consists of a **Political Council** chaired by the Prime Minister and an Executive Council chaired by the **National Security Advisor**.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (**SIPRI**), established in **1966**, is an independent international institute based in Solna, **Sweden**.

India achieved full **Nuclear Triad** capability upon the commissioning of its ballistic missile submarine **INS Arihant** in **2016**.

REVISION FLASHCARD

India's Nuclear Doctrine, announced on Jan 4, 2003, is built on 'No First Use' and 'Credible Minimum Deterrence'.

Syllabus Relevance: High importance for Science & Technology, National Security, and Defense Policy questions in TNPSC Group 1, 2, 2A & 4 exams.

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