

India Second-Largest Arms Importer



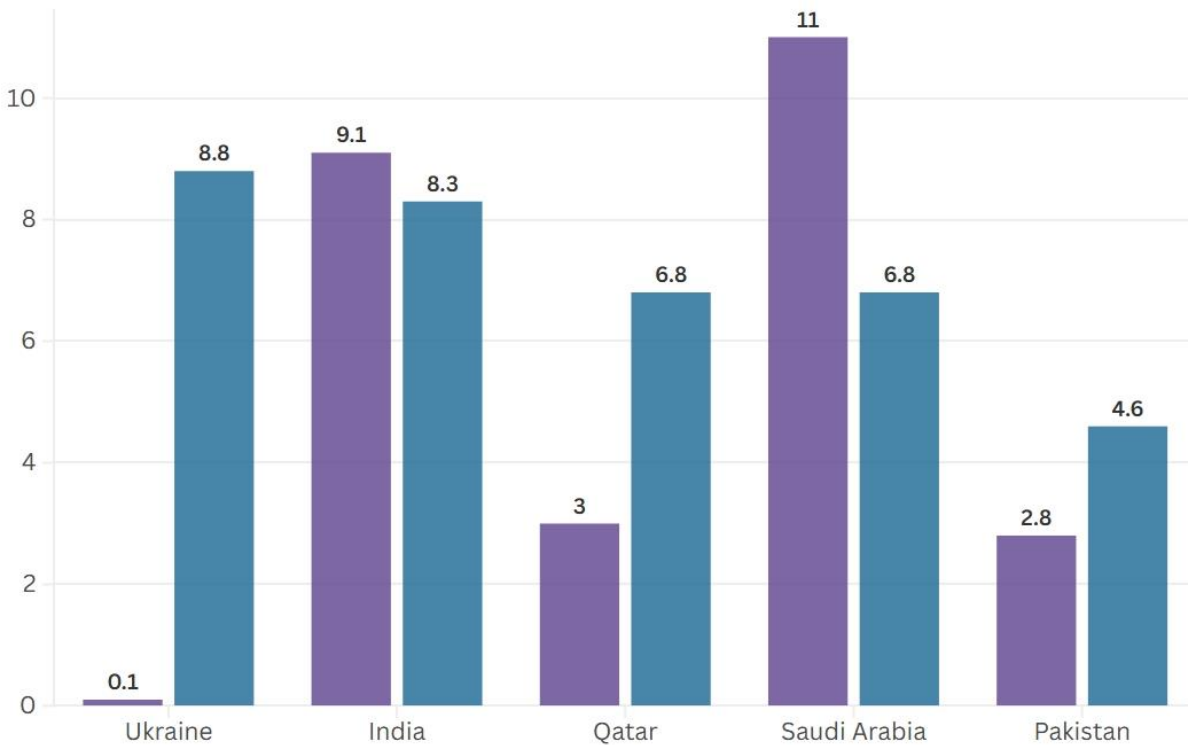
India stands as a persistent top-ranking importer of military armaments since it faces various security threats while adapting its defense requirements. Although India actively works to cut its dependence on international arms it holds the position behind Ukraine as the second-biggest arms importing nation throughout the 2020-24 period. This study investigates how India acquires its military equipment through examination of its recent import activities as well as its main sources and procurement determination elements.

Ukraine: The Largest Arms Importer (2020-24)

- Russian conflict with Ukraine made Ukraine the top arms importing nation among all countries in the world.
- Arms imports increased 100-fold compared to 2015-19.
- The major contributing factor behind this rise was Western military aid and acquisition of defense equipment from the United States and European countries.

Share of global arms imports (%)

■ 2015-19 ■ 2020-24



India: The Second-Largest Arms Importer

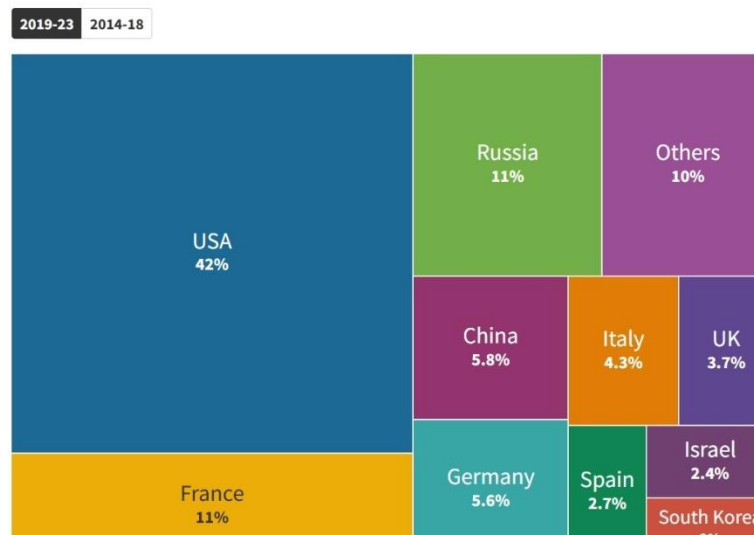
- **India holds the position of second-largest arms importer although it experienced a 9.3% decrease in acquisitions between 2015-19 and 2020-24.**
- The Russian supply of weapons to India maintained its position as leader but decreased its market share regarding Indian imports from 55% to 36%.
- **France became the leading supplier for global arms exports** since it provided 28% of its total sales which surpassed European competitors.

India's Arms Imports Trends (According to SIPRI)

Time Period	Russia (%)	France (%)	USA (%)	Others (%)
2010-2014	72	-	-	28
2015-2019	55	-	-	45
2018-2022	45	29	11	15
2019-2023	36	28	-	36

2020-2024	36	-	-	64
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Share in global arms exports (%)



Russia's Global Arms Exports

- The **Russian arms market reached 33 nations while India acquired 38% of their exports and China received 17% with Kazakhstan following at 11%.**
- The geopolitical landscape did not discourage Russia from holding its position as one of the world's leading weapon exporters.

France's Expanding Defense Exports

- The **major arms contracts with India led France to experience a 155% increase** in its exports of military equipment.
- **India bought Rafale fighter jets alongside Scorpène-class submarines** in substantial international defense acquisitions.
- The signing of major weapon procurement agreements by India made it the leading country to purchase French military equipment thus increasing French power in global arms commerce.

China's Declining Role in Arms Imports

- China reached a decade-long record by missing the top 10 arms importers ranking after 1990-1994.
- China has dedicated itself to building its domestic defense industry and achieving defense self-sufficiency which explains this market trend.

Other Major Arms Importers

- **Saudi Arabia together with Qatar and Pakistan maintained their positions as three of the leading ten importers of military weapons.**
- The arms imports of Pakistan grew while China became its main military supplier with an 81% share.

India's Changing Arms Procurement Strategy

- **Diversification of Suppliers**
 - The Indian military continues to decouple from Russian supply routes by escalating its acquisitions from France and the United States.
 - India's arms imports amount to 8.8% of the global market which indicates the country has adopted a wider supply base.
- **Strengthening Domestic Defense Industry**
 - The government of India supports military manufacturing operations through both **"Make in India" and Atma Nirbhar Bharat** efforts.
 - India now consistently chooses its national defense contractors to supply fighter jets and submarines and missile system technology.
 - **The defense budget is showing active growth as the government plans to allocate ₹6.81 lakh crore during the fiscal year 2025-26** to develop military strength.
 - The expansion of domestic defense manufacturing within India will cause its arms imports to decrease steadily during the future.
- **Global Arms Transfer Trends**
 - The world-wide arms business exhibited no significant change between the time periods of 2015-19 and 2020-24.
 - The increased export of Italian military arms established Italy as one of the world's leading 10 arms exporters.
 - A number of 35 countries actively contributed military equipment to Ukraine throughout the conflict starting from 2022.
 - The French defense industry received substantial progress in exports to India because of large-scale military procurement agreements.

Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) Research

- As an independent research organization operating from Stockholm Sweden the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI) dedicates itself to investigating international conflict together with armaments control and disarmament approaches and studies of weapons systems.
- **SIPRI shows that India continues to lead as the world's biggest weapons buyer during 2018-22 despite a 11% decrease in military imports between 2013-17 and 2018-22 alongside Saudi Arabia.**
- **India reduces its reliance on Russian military equipment** because its military seeks to reach a greater degree of independence through multiple suppliers and domestically produced weapons.
- The Arms imports of India are strongly influenced by these essential factors.

Regional Security Challenges:

- Current border conflicts with China and Pakistan demand India to maintain its military development program constantly.
- Between 2013–17 and 2018–22 Pakistan's arms imports showed a 61% growth while China supplied 81% of their acquisitions leading India to strengthen its regional defenses.

Strategic Partnerships and Diversification:

- India has established **multiple defense partnerships** which help the country **reduce its dependence on any individual supplier**.
- The strategic procurement flexibility of India emerged through important **defense deals signed with France, the U.S. and Israel**.

Indigenous Defense Capabilities:

- The government of India leads the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' mission to achieve defense self-reliance.
- The restrictions in domestic advanced technological capabilities force India to maintain vital defense system imports from foreign sources.

Defense Budget Allocation 2025-26

- The Indian Ministry of Defence received its **largest budget allocation reaching ₹6.81 lakh crore during the current fiscal year with an increase of 9.53%** when compared to the previous year.
- The **Capital Budget received ₹1.80 lakh crore** to allow modernization of armed forces.
- A budget allocation of **₹1.12 lakh crore exists for defense procurement from home-based industries** to promote domestic manufacturing.

Conclusion

India stands as the world's second-largest arms-buying nation because it needs advanced weapons systems to protect its regional areas from possible threats. Despite ongoing initiatives to increase local defense manufacturing India needs to sustain foreign procurement for its armed forces to remain ready. Defense acquisition policies of India will be influenced by strategic partnerships and changes in the geopolitical environment throughout the forthcoming years.