



An advanced sea-to-sea variant of the BrahMos Supersonic Cruise missile is test-fired from the Visakhapatnam, an Indian navy ship, Jan. 11, 2022. [Photo courtesy Defense Research and Development Organization @DRDO_India via Twitter]

India’s Nuclear Behaviour: A Threat To Humanity’s Survival – OpEd

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By [Safia Malik](#)



In January 2026, the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists set the Doomsday Clock to an alarming 85 seconds to midnight, the closest humanity has ever come to global catastrophe. The organization cited nuclear risks, geopolitical tensions, arms race and “irresponsible state behaviour” as key reasons behind this alarming assessment. Assuming that India’s irresponsible behaviour as a nuclear-weapon state must have contributed to the decision, it is important to underscore that in nuclearized South Asia, where decision-making time compression demands the highest level of responsible state behaviour and restraint, India’s ever-increasing nuclear arsenal, long-range dual-capable land-based Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles (ICBMs), Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) and scores of unsafeguarded nuclear power plants constitute a recipe for global disaster. India’s aggressive military doctrines and threats of yet another attack on nuclear-armed Pakistan by Hindutva-driven leadership of extremist mindset also pose a grave threat to international and regional peace and security and strategic stability.

In the past seven years, nuclear-armed India has attacked nuclear-armed Pakistan thrice: (i) Attack on Balakot in February 2019; (ii) Firing of BrahMos Missile in March 2022; and (iii) Massive air, drone and missile attack in May 2025. Had it not been for the restraint exercised by Pakistan as a responsible nuclear state on all the three occasions, India’s unprovoked attacks could have escalated with catastrophic consequences for the region and international community.

A number of international studies, reports and scientific assessments have warned that nuclear conflict in South Asia would have far-reaching ripple effects extending far beyond South Asia. These include environmental disaster, massive loss of human lives, widespread famine, economic devastation, large-scale displacement, long-term damage to global public health and ecosystems, breakdown of critical infrastructure, radioactive contamination of air, water and soil and irreversible climate disruption.

A nuclear war in South Asia would unleash immediate and unprecedented global destruction with indiscriminate killing. The world would face instant devastation, as blast waves, intense heat and radiation wipe out entire populations in no time. According to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons(ICAN) 2025 report, a nuclear war between India and Pakistan would cause millions of immediate deaths in the region and have severe global consequences. The report mentioned that “The smoke from burning cities ignited by even a nuclear war involving two percent of the global nuclear arsenal would suddenly plummet temperatures worldwide to ice age levels, decimate agriculture, disrupt ocean food chains and condemn over two billion people to starve to death.”

A comprehensive assessment by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) highlights the global environmental disruption that could result from a nuclear conflict in South Asia. According to the 2022 IPPNW report, using less than three per cent of the world’s nuclear weapons, a nuclear war between India and Pakistan could kill up to every third person on earth, with average global temperatures dropping about 1.3 degrees Celsius. The largest caloric reductions from abrupt cooling after a nuclear war will occur at high latitudes in the Northern Hemisphere. Countries such as Canada, Finland, Norway and Sweden would be heavily affected.

According to a study *How an India-Pakistan Nuclear War Could Start—and Have Global Consequences?* published by the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists in 2019, a nuclear conflict between India and Pakistan could result in 50–125 million deaths within days due to blast effects and thermal radiation. Environmental impact could include firestorms injecting 16–36 million tons of black carbon into the stratosphere, blocking 20–35 per cent of sunlight. Rainfall could be reduced by 15–30 per cent, resulting in declining crop yields. Major urban centres would become uninhabitable due to infrastructure collapse, radiation poisoning and widespread firestorms. Critical systems such as healthcare, transportation and food distribution would breakdown.

In 2025, Owen Brian Toon and Alan Robock, in their book chapter titled *Impacts on Human of Nuclear War*, emphasised the global climatic consequences of nuclear war in South Asia. The smoke generated from large-scale urban firestorms would rise into the upper atmosphere and block sunlight for years. David Hosansky, in his article *Smoke from Nuclear War Would Devastate Ozone Layer, Alter Climate*, published in 2021, mentioned that smoke from a global nuclear war could significantly damage the ozone layer for up to 15 years, with depletion peaking at approximately 75 per cent worldwide. He further noted that even a regional nuclear war could result in around 25 per cent global ozone loss.

According to ICAN 2025 report titled *Climatic Change, Famine and Nuclear Weapons*, nuclear cooling would also have an impact on global food production due to reduced crop yield, thus causing a **nuclear famine**. The remaining food production could be contaminated with radioactive chemicals, potentially causing infectious diseases. An India-Pakistan nuclear war alone could cause a **decline** in global Net Primary Productivity (NPP) of food production by 10–20 percent in the oceans and 15–40 percent on land over multiple years. According to an article titled *Environmental Cost of War in Nuclear South Asia*, published in May 2026, a nuclear war between India and Pakistan, producing 37 million tonnes of smoke would cause the starvation of 1.029 billion people in China, 126 million in Russia, 186 million in the US, and 37 million in the UK, within two years.

The Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev had famously said that “the survivors of the nuclear war would envy the dead”. If a nuclear war is initiated by nuclear-armed India against nuclear-armed Pakistan, the consequences would not remain confined to South Asia; they would have severe and far-reaching consequences for humanity’s survival. Recent statements by Indian military and political leaders to erase Pakistan from the world map and launch Operation Sindoor 2.0 prove India’s irresponsible behaviour as a nuclear-armed state. Such statements increase the risk of miscalculation and could push South Asia toward a nuclear conflict with devastating consequences for the whole world. This stark reality must serve as a wake-up call for the international community, which must take decisive measures to address India’s nuclear madness in a MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) situation and ensure strict monitoring of India’s nuclear behaviour, which is increasingly posing a threat to humanity’s survival.

About Safia Malik

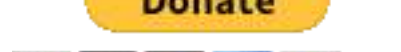
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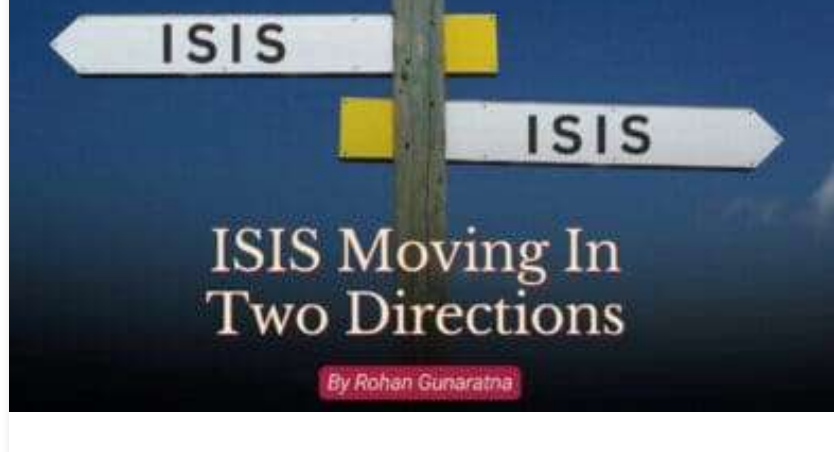
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