Pakistan's nuclear bomb: beyond the non-proliferation regime.













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Pakistan's nuclear bomb: beyond the nonproliferation regime

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Abstract

Pakistan's status as a nuclear power, which was made manifest when it carried out six nuclear tests in May 1998, came under renewed international

scrutiny following the terrorist attacks on the United States in September 2001. Of most immediate concern was the security of Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, which was believed to be vulnerable to Muslim terrorist groups with close links to the al-Qaida organization, headed by Osama bin Laden. However, the international crisis centering on the 'war against terrorism' is bound to revive debate about Pakistan's involvement in the nuclear nonproliferation regime; the risks of a nuclear war between India and Pakistan over Kashmir; and the need for tighter curbs on the export of nuclear technology to politically volatile regions in the Muslim world. These debates are likely to be overshadowed by Pakistan's own perceptions of the danger it faces of a military threat from a nuclear-capable India; its aspirations as a regional power; and its desire to be recognized as 'first among equals' in the Muslim world community of nations. Any attempt to draw Pakistan into the non-proliferation regime and to persuade it to assume its responsibilities as a nuclear power will need to address these concerns. Ultimately, however, it will be for Pakistanis to decide how long they wish to subordinate their country's economic well being to the pursuit of a nuclear programme whose priorities are defined by an unaccountable military regime.

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