

SOUTH ASIA'S SECURITY DEFICIT

Some Implications of the Nuclear Tests

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INTRODUCTION

Nuclear tests in India and Pakistan last Spring altered perceptions of the regional strategic order. Considerable effort has been expended since then, explaining why the two states chose to move from nuclear ambiguity to the status of nuclear states. Within academe, explaining the reasons, and downplaying the consequences, has consumed much the intellectual effort to date. At the political and diplomatic level, containment of the spread of weapons of mass destruction, or at least efforts to shore up the battered non-proliferation regime, has preoccupied the international arena.

Here we will argue that more attention should be paid to the new security environment within the region, and suggest that the situation is worse than the protagonists and many analysts seem really to accept; and that contemporary concepts of security, that is, human security, should be added into the reckoning. In summary, it will be argued that in traditional security terms South Asia is now in an apparently perpetual 'security deficit' trap; and additionally that the costs in terms of paths not taken will be a worsening of human development. The opportunity costs of the tests may prove to be the greatest long term result of crossing the nuclear threshold.