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Abstract

Indiens Nuklearpolitik zwischen Sicherheitsinteressen und Statusdenken (India's Nuclear Policy: Between Security Interests and Status Issues)

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This paper gives an analytic account of the dynamics of India's nuclear build-up. Its approach contrasts to conventional studies on the issue by explicitly accepting motives of arming behaviour that lie outside the classical strategic realm. Within the model, the structural conditions of India's regional security environment permitted India's nuclear development, but were not sufficient to make India's nuclearisation imperative for maintaining its self-preservation. The issue here is not whether nuclear weapons improve India's security, but the extent to which security considerations play a role in India's nuclear policy development. The interplay between security-related factors and unit-level variables accounts for India's dissatisfaction with the existing international nuclear order. These factors determined India's policy to seek a system change by building up its own nuclear arms. In contrast to its nuclear-armed neighbours China and Pakistan, India's nuclear policy-making takes place within the country's democratic framework. This allows an exceedingly intensive, protracted and emotional debate on the nuclear issue. Above all, the values attached to nuclear weapons are based upon the country's prestige and its status within the international community of states. The concepts of 'status' and 'prestige' are social constructs and only exist because actors attribute a certain meaning to them. The interaction between the elected leaders and the public within India's democratic set-up is not a direct one, but occurs through the intermediation of a limited number of strategic thinkers and opinion leaders, referred to as the 'strategic elite'. The rationale and dynamics behind India's struggle for international recognition and the strong, often obsessive sensitivities of India's elite with regard to perceived acts of discrimination or ignorance by the West towards their country have proven to be pivotal driving forces behind India's quest for the nuclear bomb.