Books of Note

- **Arms Control Today**

**Confronting the Bomb: Pakistani and Indian Scientists Speak Out**


*Alexandra Schmitt*

The essays collected by Pervez Hoodbhoy in *Confronting the Bomb* delve into the challenges of India’s and Pakistan’s nuclear weapons and power programs. Authors from India and Pakistan “reject nuclear patriotism” and cover a wide variety of topics, including histories of both countries’ programs and technical developments in safety standards, and provide recommendations for future policy. Hoodbhoy, who is a nuclear physicist and social activist, also wrote or co-wrote many chapters of the book. In his chapter on the safety and security of Pakistan’s nuclear arsenal, he explores the concerns unique to Pakistan’s program: threats from outside the military, such as terrorists; threats from inside the military, such as fundamentalists; or a collaborative hostile effort between these internal and external forces. Emphasizing the unique dangers in Pakistan and its lack of control over extremist elements of the military, Hoodbhoy paints a worrying picture of nuclear weapons security in Pakistan. His bottom line is that, despite these concerns, there is no way for international powers to try to ensure the security of Pakistan’s nuclear weapons; thus an inherently dangerous situation remains with no tenable solution in sight. Another chapter by Hoodbhoy and Zia Mian speculates on the future of a nuclear South Asia, concluding that “a continuing India-Pakistan arms race, episodic crises and the nuclear shadow will ensure that South Asia as a whole will remain unstable.” They predict that the nuclear struggle between India and Pakistan will last beyond 2060 and that power dynamics will remain in flux as China and the United States compete for strategic and economic influence in the region.

**Phantom Menace or Looming Danger? A New Framework for Assessing Bioweapons Threats**


*Serena Kelleher-Vergantini*

The judgments produced in U.S. biological weapons assessments have a double component, Kathleen M. Vogel, a professor in the Department of Science and Technology Studies at Cornell University, says in this book. On one side, they are influenced by biology and biotechnology concepts, which she calls “technological frames.” On the other, they are influenced by “analytic practices,” which refer to the daily work life of analysts. In Vogel’s model, the combination of these frames and practices involves material and social factors. Material factors include pathogens, intelligence reports, databases, and equipment. An example of social factors is the way analysts
interact and talk to one another. According to Vogel, current practices in analysis of biological threats have overemphasized technological factors at the expense of social ones, which can shape conclusions about threats. To stress the importance of social factors, Vogel cites the case of a biological weapons facility in the Soviet Union at which scientists had to create a new management and organizational structure to develop their most potent anthrax weapon because simply drawing on available biological materials and equipment was not sufficient. On the basis of her case studies, she makes the point that “social engineering” factors—analytic practices such as know-how, laboratory disciplines, and organizational management—are often forgotten in analyzing the production of biological weapons. The book suggests a new “strategic sociotechnical approach” for assessing biological threats, which takes into account social and technical issues.

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