
The Myth of the Nuclear Revolution: Power Politics in the Atomic Age

Keir Lieber

Georgetown University

Korea University
Seoul, Republic of Korea

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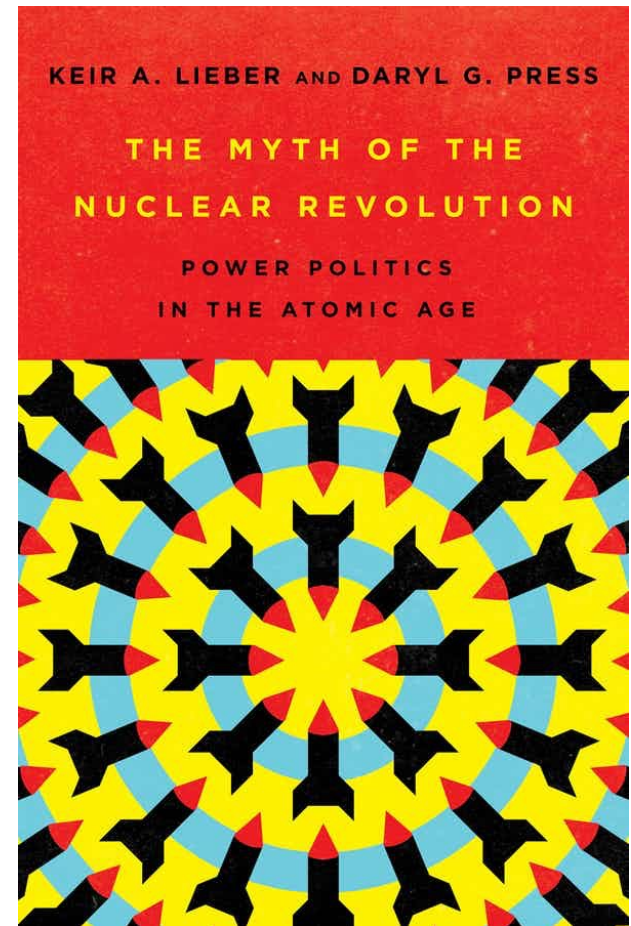
The Book

Key question: Why does intense security competition endure in the nuclear age?

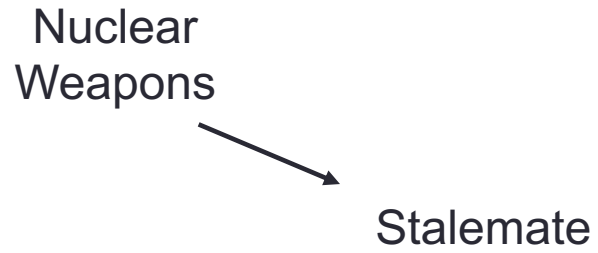
- Theory of the nuclear revolution
- Puzzles of the nuclear age

Our explanation: Analysts have misunderstood the nature of nuclear stalemate:

- Nuclear stalemate is hard to create
- Nuclear stalemate is not permanent
- Nuclear stalemate doesn't deter everything



The Theory of the Nuclear Revolution



The Theory of the Nuclear Revolution

Nuclear
Weapons



Stalemate



- No major war among nuclear powers
- Muted “relative gains” fears
- Reduced need for alliances
- Muted arms races
- Reduced value of strategic territory

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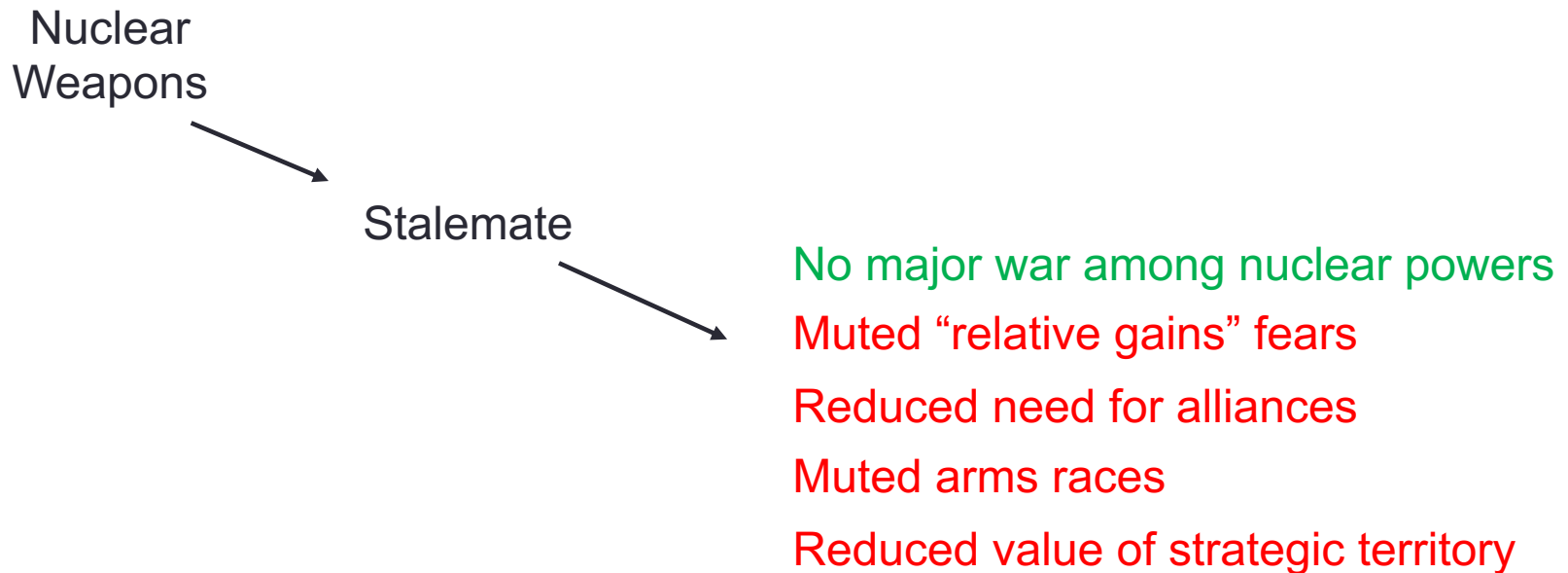
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Reduced value of strategic territory

Why can't nuclear powers – especially nuclear great powers – just relax?

The Theory of the Nuclear Revolution



Why can't nuclear powers – especially nuclear great powers – just relax?

- **Is the problem organizational / bureaucratic politics?**
- **Is the problem that leaders are ignorant or don't understand?**

Central Argument

1. Nuclear weapons *are* the greatest instruments of stalemate ever created:
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 - *Stalemate* is the key to understanding the “nuclear peace”
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 - is hard to build (secure retaliatory forces = **competitive process**)
 - is reversible (determined through a **competitive process**)
 - does not preclude using NW to deter *conventional* attack (locking weak and strong states in a **competitive process**)

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– Examples: NATO (Cold War), Pakistan, Russia, North Korea, Israel

North Korea's Dilemma



- DPRK vs. CFC
 - DPRK will face inevitable defeat
 - Kim family faces grim fate
- DPRK options:
 1. Golden parachute? Or...
 2. *Escalation to force stalemate:*
 - E.g., missile strike vs. Busan port, or Kadena AB, with 20kt nuclear weapon
 - Demand ceasefire; threaten to destroy a dozen more targets with more NW

US / ROK Dilemma

1. Accept cease fire

- Halt operations

- Sets dangerous precedent
- Encourages proliferation

2. Punitive Nuclear Response

- Target NK leadership
- March on Pyongyang
- Missile defense

- Targets may be located in major population center
- Risks several more nuclear hits on allied territory

3. Continue campaign

- March on Pyongyang
- Missile defense

- Risks several more nuclear hits on allied territory
- Permanent damage to global alliance network

4. Nuke / conv counterforce

- March on Pyongyang
- Missile defense

- May not destroy them all
- If U.S. strike nuclear – kill many noncombatants

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Requirements:

Weak states: develop *survivable* and *versatile* nuclear forces

Strong states: develop *counterforce* (conventional and nuclear) – to deter or respond to coercive nuclear escalatory strategy

Weak and strong nuclear powers: locked in a competitive process

Conclusion

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Implications

- Nuclear Competition Endures
 - *Defense*: Growing vulnerability of forces; don't acquire NW unless committed to building survivable second-strike force.
 - *Offense*: What capabilities are desirable? Especially for intra-war deterrence or damage limitation?
- Regional Stability Concerns
 - Many nuclear dyads facing deterrence instability: US/ROK-DPRK, India-Pakistan, NATO-Russia, China-US, India-China?
- Arms Control Problems
 - Might arms cuts *increase* instability?
 - Why would the weak cave to the strong?
- Nuclear Deterrence is a Serious Business...