

The Instability of a Post-Nuclear World

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'Strangelovian' Jargon

- ▶ Survivability: the ability of one's arsenal to survive a first strike by an opponent
- ▶ Secure second strike: the ability to retaliate even after an opponent's first strike
- ▶ Crisis (in)stability: the incentives – or, preferably, lack of incentives – to resort to nuclear use in an interstate crisis...a product, hopefully, of the previous two



How the P5 generate secure second-strike capability today...



The Policy and Scholarly Backdrop

- ▶ Multilateral disarmament on the global policy and academic agenda – particularly since the Kissinger et al article (2007) and Obama election
- ▶ Unilateral disarmament hints in the UK – Lib Dems in government (Danny Alexander led review), Ed Miliband reportedly lukewarm on Trident/ *Vanguard* replacement, Conservatives may well not be in next government...
- ▶ Recent scholarly attention has tended to take desirability of disarmament as given, and focus on the challenges of getting ‘to zero’

Regenerative Capability Cannot be Foregone – It's a Fact, *and* a Policy

- ▶ Four premises:
 1. Disarmament *is* possible, but...
 2. Removing the ability to regenerate nuclear weapons is *not* possible
 3. Sovereign states will remain pivotal actors in the international system – and value their own interests more than those of some international community/regime
 4. Uncertainty over capabilities and intentions a pervasive feature of international politics

From Nuclear Regeneration to Nuclear Use?

- ▶ Regenerative capability resides in scientific–industrial complex – but cannot be made survivable
- ▶ Introduces severe crisis instability...
- ▶ What to do in a diplomatic/military crisis between two regeneration–capable powers?
- ▶ 1: Conventional strike on rival's regeneration...
- ▶ If that does not resolve crisis, 2: *use* regenerated nuclear capability against rival's facilities of rearmament, if win the regeneration race!
- ▶ Why? Because rival faces same incentive structure... Dominant strategy to strike first – so regeneration races *more* dangerous than stable deterrence

What nuclear use might look like... Kubrick's Take



Conclusion: Is Disarmament worth the Price?

- ▶ Obviously, the world can never ‘uninvent’ nuclear weapons – so the question must be, is the roll-back in terms of deployment times worth the price in terms of stability?
- ▶ This analysis would suggest not...
- ▶ The P5 NWS have achieved stable deterrence through secure second-strike arsenals
- ▶ Consciously choosing instability by moving away from survivable retaliatory capability would therefore be dangerous, and should be resisted

Questions, or: should we learn to stop complaining and accept the Bomb?

