

## **Inter-alliance Security Dilemmas: Korean Counterforce Systems and Their Effect on the Sino-American Nuclear Competition (Sam Seitz)**

Cold War strategic competition was dominated by the actions of the US and USSR. Their material preponderance, coupled with tightly integrated multilateral alliances systems in Europe, oriented competition around this central axis of competition. But the current environment is less centralized, characterized by cross-cutting alliances and interacting nuclear dyads. How has this changed the nature of nuclear competition? We assess this question by considering the inter-Korean competition and its effects outside the peninsula. In response to North Korea's acquisition of nuclear weapons, Seoul has procured stealth aircraft and precision, long-range missiles. It has also authorized the deployment of US missile defense systems to its territory, pursued greater nuclear coordination with Washington, and even threatened nuclear acquisition itself. These moves are aimed at Pyongyang, but they have spillover effects on China. Exploiting new Chinese language military documents, we show that South Korea's increasingly sophisticated arsenal of counterforce systems is contributing to Beijing's anxiety about the survivability of its nuclear arsenal, helping to spur China's nuclear arsenal expansion. This has important implications both for the academic literature on alliances and arms racing as well as for policy debates surrounding Sino-American nuclear competition. In particular, it suggests that alliances might not just entrap patrons in wars but also in arms races. This creates a type of inter-alliance security dilemma, where security spirals in one state dyad produce security spirals in separate state dyads. Further, it reveals that contemporary strategic competition in East Asia systematically differs from the Cold War due to the existence of multiple cross-cutting alliances. This complicates signalling efforts, and, by increasing the number of relevant actors, augurs deep challenges for any efforts at bilateral nuclear arms control between the US and China.