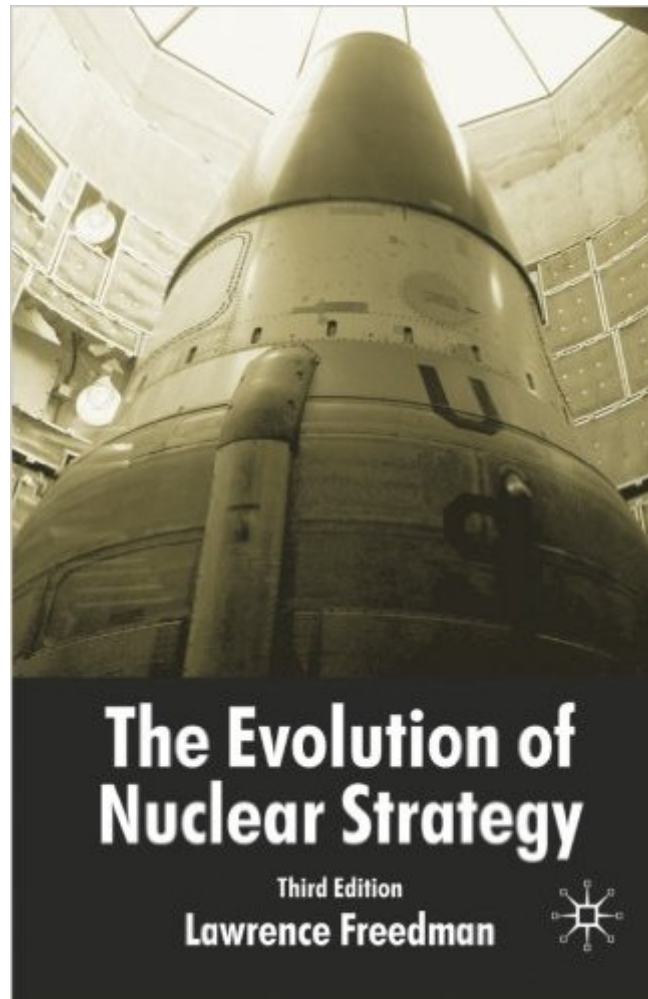


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# The Evolution Of Nuclear Strategy, Third Edition



## Synopsis

First published twenty years ago, Lawrence Freedman's *Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* was immediately acclaimed as the standard work on the history of attempts to cope militarily and politically with the terrible destructive power of nuclear weapons. It has now been rewritten, drawing on a wide range of new research, and updated to take account of the period following the end of the cold war, taking the story to contemporary arguments about missile defence.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Lawrence Freedman has written many important articles and books but *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* is probably his best. He presents a comprehensive analysis of the development nuclear strategy from 1945 to the end of the Cold War. The book usefully explains a multitude of concepts such as second strike capabilities, massive retaliation, and selective options. Freedman gives added depth by covering nuclear strategy in China, Europe, and the Soviet Union. One of the great strengths of this book is its objectivity. Most works on nuclear strategy focus on arguing whether nuclear war is still possible, how a nuclear war would be fought, or if mutually assured destruction is a stable and inevitable strategy. Freedman definitely questions the logic of strategies that aim to fight nuclear wars and favors mutually assured destruction. However, the text is devoid of rhetoric or argumentation that would cloud his historical analysis. Some may criticize the book because it does not concentrate on certain issues relevant today, such as non-proliferation or nuclear terrorism. From the perspective of 2001, though, Freedman's work serves as a history of the major strategic

discourse of the Cold War. In a way, his work serves as a the cap on fifty years of writings on nuclear strategy. For students of strategy, *The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy* is an essential read. In terms of comprehensiveness, objectivity, and good explanation, this book cannot be matched.

I picked this up thinking it would be a detailed, comprehensive treatment that would lay out the reasons behind why nuclear strategy is what it is. Instead, I got a political science text that traces the history of nuclear strategy, but fails to lay it out. There's almost zero focus on the technical side of things and much actual analysis either. In fact, there's no real delving into strategy either - everything is merely presented, and not very well at that. The prose is dry and humorless - it is at best a broad overview of points of view held by various factions. Although I'm sure Freedman tried to present everything in an impartial and unbiased manner, it seems like he is dismissive of some issues, and places too much emphasis on others.

Lawrence Freedman is a superbly accomplished historian of the Cold War, and his expertise is on display in *"The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy"*, first published in 1981 and most recently updated in 2003. Freedman explores in detail the struggle of the nuclear-armed states, beginning with the US in 1945, to define a credible military strategy in which nuclear weapons might be used to achieve a reasonable political end short of annihilation. Freedman's narrative carries the reader from Trinity, Hiroshima, and Nagasaki in 1945 up to the eve of the US-led intervention into Iraq in 2003. Much of the book is taken up with the long Cold War confrontation between the US and USSR, the powers that accumulated the largest strategic arsenals, dominated the debate over strategy, and were nearly the opponents in a nuclear confrontation over Cuba in 1962. Freedman devotes space along the way to briefer discussions of the attempts at nuclear strategy by the United Kingdom, France, China, and in late chapters, India, Pakistan, and North Korea. In the end, Freedman cannot bring himself to accept that nuclear weapons have a function beyond deterring the use of other nuclear weapons. This might not be an entirely satisfying conclusion after over 450 pages; the author was clearly reluctant to explore the dynamics of limited exchanges. However, his presentation is even-handed and he does not foreclose other lines of thought. This reviewer wishes he had spent more time on the present instance of deterrence between a small nuclear state such as North Korea and a larger nuclear state such as the US. *"The Evolution of Nuclear Strategy"* is highly recommended to students of international and military affairs, as a topic unlikely to go away in the near term.

Freedman does a great job of covering the history and evolution of Nuclear Strategy - It is enlightening to see how different theories developed over time and what logic trails led to different conclusions.

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