NWS07-2007-000075

Abstract for an Invited Paper
for the NWS07 Meeting of
the American Physical Society

Recent Advances in Our Understanding of Nuclear Forces

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The attempts to find the right (underlying) theory for the nuclear force have a long and stimulating history. Already in 1953, Hans Bethe stated that "more man-hours have been given to this problem than to any other scientific question in the history of mankind." In search for the nature of the nuclear force, the idea of sub-nuclear particles was created which, eventually, generated the field of particle physics. I will review this productive history of hope, error, and desperation. Finally, I will discuss recent ideas which apply the concept of an effective field theory to low-energy QCD. There are indications that this concept may provide the right framework to properly understand the nuclear force.