

Spinning Yarns and Tying Hands: Status Motivations for Nuclear Decision Making

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Why status?

- Policy interest
 - Understanding state motives and incentives
 - Identifying potential levers
 - Understanding domestic nuclear politics
- Academic interest
 - Logic and empirics are underdeveloped
 - Identifying independent contribution of status vs. security or other motives to outcomes

What is status?

- *Status*—an attribute of an individual actor or a role that derives from rank or position.

Concepts

- Status confers *authority*
- International status can derive from capabilities and institutional authority.
 - Military capabilities
 - UN Security Council membership
 - NPT nuclear weapons status
 - Technical expertise, i.e. IAEA or nuclear suppliers
- But not everyone agrees on status rankings or what confers status
 - NAM vs. NWS debates
 - OECD/EU debates over development and democracy

Argument

- Some decision makers believe that nuclear technology (broadly defined) confers greater international status.
- But there is variation in:
 - Beliefs about *how* nuclear confers status
 - How states see their own status vis-à-vis others (status conceptions)
- *Different combinations of status conceptions and beliefs about nuclear technology produce different narratives used to justify nuclear programs.*

Argument

Belief about reality

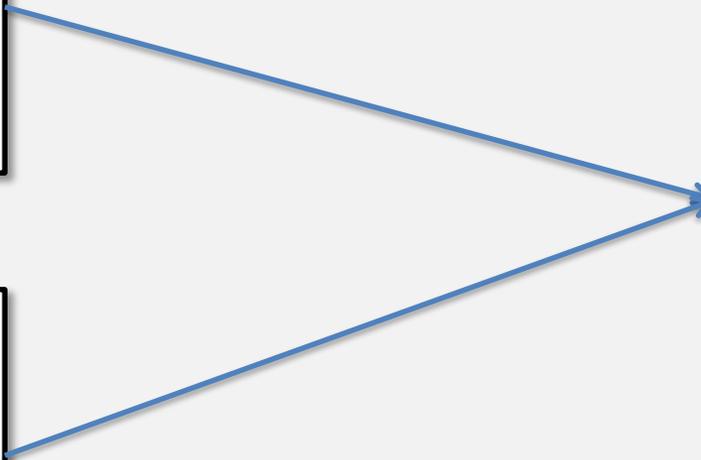
STATUS CONCEPTION
*Who are we and where
do we fit in the pecking
order?*

BELIEFS ABOUT
NUCLEAR
*What does nuclear
tech. represent? What
can it do for us?*

STATUS "ROAD MAP"
*How will nuclear get us
what we want?*

Ends

Means



Four types of nuclear status

	Symbolic/ Nukes-as-tokens	Instrumental/ Nukes-as-currency
Inclusive	<i>Modernist-symbolic</i> (symbol of modern statehood)	<i>Modernist-instrumental</i> (way to become a modern state; means to autonomy/sovereignty)
Exclusive	<i>Nationalist</i> (symbol of superiority)	<i>Revisionist</i> (means to regain lost status)

Historical status conceptions

	Nukes-as-tokens	Nukes-as-currency
Inclusive	<i>Modernist-symbolic</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• India (pre-'64)	<i>Modernist-instrumental</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• India (post-'64/pre-'98)• France pre-1960
Exclusive	<i>Nationalist</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• France (post-'60)• Libya	<i>Revisionist</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• China• India (post-'98)• Libya• Pakistan• South Africa

Potential consequences

1. Programmatic justification/legitimation
 - Status motives provide a reason for undertaking costly and risky nuclear programs
2. Lock-in
 - Some particular status conceptions (nationalist, revisionist) may make roll back or course correction harder.

Potential levers

- Leverage may depend on particular status conception.
 - Inclusive status conceptions are susceptible to cooptation by leading states (invitation into the club)
 - Exclusive status conceptions may only be susceptible to change/cooptation from credible domestic players (redefinition of what status means)
- Symbols vs. instruments
- Nonproliferation norms mean calling for nuclear weapons is riskier than framing programs in technological/development terms.

Iranian rhetoric: moderate/conservative

- Nationalist (exclusionary/symbolic)
- VP Aghazadeh, 2003:
“My country is independent and has now become the champion of dialogue among civilizations and a promoter of the cause of the global peace...We wish to rely on our own capabilities with respect to nuclear knowledge and technology.”

Iranian rhetoric: moderate/reformers

- More inclusive

- Rowhani, 2005:

I believe it is possible [to form an eventual partnership with the West] , but it would be very difficult and complicated...We don't trust Europe, and Europe doesn't trust us. In the process of negotiating and working with Europe, we are seeking to build a foundation of trust, so that eventually the West will accept that the Islamic Republic of Iran is a country with its own particular features, culture, beliefs and ideals, but also one that is not seeking adventurism and does not meddle in the internal affairs of other countries and undermine the interests of other nations.

Iranian rhetoric: rightward turn

- Ahmadinejad, 2013:

We're already an industrial and nuclear country, a country that has conquered space. For years we have been thinking about sending a human being into space, and we will do that, with Allah's help. We must ensure development and growth and bring them to pass, and the world must acknowledge our progress,"

Iranian rhetoric: instrumental-modernism under Rouhani

- As president, Rouhani returned to modernist rhetoric
- 4/9/15:
“We announced to the world from the beginning that we want enrichment capability for fuel demands. If they [West] had given us the technology, maybe there would not have been any issues, but they said we will not give you this technology, that did not matter so much, but then they said that it was important not to allow Iran to enrich, but our nation did not [kneel] to pressure.”

Conclusions

- Understanding the domestic politics of nuclear decision making and status ambitions requires looking to how leaders legitimate programmatic choices
- Need to probe whether status-motivated actors have explored the links between their ambitions and what nuclear technology can provide.
- Limits to the ability of the West to offer prestige from without; status for some political cultures must come from within.

Assumptions and scope

- Two assumptions
 - Policy makers care about their international status and want to pursue it.
 - All bureaucratic actors are accountable in some way to someone.
- Nuclear aspirants rather than nonproliferation advocates