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Determinants of Public Support for Nuclear Proliferation

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What are the determinants of public support for nuclear proliferation? Fielding two survey experiments to nationally representative samples in a non-nuclear weapon state, we provide micro-level foundations for the acquisition of nuclear weapons. We find individual support for proliferation augments as existential threats loom large and it diminishes when external security is plentiful. Results also show that the presence of a powerful security guarantor tempers popular support for nuclear-weapon acquisition. But we also find that when it comes to issues of nuclear proliferation, psychology matters in a specific way: individuals who rank high on conservation values express preferences that align with rationalist incentives for and against proliferation more intensely than other members of the public.

Promotional text

Our results show that assessments of the external security environment drive proliferation preferences. The public in a non-nuclear weapons state offers or withdraws support for proliferation policies within a set-up involving a potential proliferator, her allies, and her enemies

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