Stanton Nuclear Security Fellows Seminar

PANEL 4: Perceptions and Language Matter

1. Matthew Hartwell, BCSIA

How to Escape Vulnerability: Population Protection Throughout the Cold War

Issue: My project focuses on the issue of population vulnerability in the context of American Cold War-era nuclear weapons policy. While the number of casualties caused by blast, thermal effects, and local fallout depends on the "type" of attack, there is significant research to demonstrate that the American civilian population was exceptionally vulnerable to even a limited strike throughout much of the Cold War.[1] Despite the threat to American civilians, the three primary population protection policies - civil defense, "no-cities" counterforce targeting, and national missile defense - played a somewhat marginal role in American nuclear weapons policy throughout this period. However, at specific points, the issue of population vulnerability came to the fore, leading to several measures ostensibly introduced to protect the American civilian population from the threat of nuclear war.

Research Questions:

- What explains the intermittent interest in population vulnerability in American nuclear weapons policy throughout the Cold War?
- Were population protection policies genuine efforts to limit population vulnerability, or were strategic or domestic political goals the critical driver behind these policies?

Methods and Research Design: My research uses case studies, hypothesis testing, and process tracing to search for an explanation for the intermittent interest in population vulnerability. My dependent variable is policies intended to limit the potential number of civilian casualties in the event of a nuclear strike. This includes examining enacted policies, as well as those that were actively discussed and seriously considered. Furthermore, I explore the variation in the comprehensiveness and durability of each policy. Regarding comprehensiveness, while the United States maintained a civil defense program, it never engaged in large-scale shelter construction, by far the most effective civil defense measure. In terms of durability, while civil defense faded from importance during the 1960s, missile defense has remained an essential aspect of American nuclear weapons policy since the 1980s.

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[1] Daugherty, William, Barbara Levi, and Frank Von Hippel. 1985. "Casualties Due to the Blast, Heat, and Radioactive Fallout from Various Hypothetical Nuclear Attacks on the United States." Essay. In *The Medical Implications of Nuclear War*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University. Center for Energy and Environmental Studies; Daugherty, William, Barbara Levi, and Frank Von Hippel. 1986. "The Consequences of 'Limited' Nuclear Attacks on the United States." *International Security* 10 (4): 3–45.

My cases are periods throughout the Cold War in which certain administrations sought out new arrangements to address the threat posed to the American civilian population. The first case covers the period leading up to the creation of the Federal Civil Defense Administration, looking explicitly at why the Truman administration decided upon the specific institutional arrangement for civil defense. The second case examines the American civil defense program during the existence of the Federal Civil Defense Administration, primarily exploring why the program failed to deal with the threat posed to the civilian population. The third case examines the final push for civil defense and the "no-cities" counterforce targeting doctrine, examining why the Kennedy administration adopted robust population protection before quickly backtracking. The final case examines the Strategic Defense Initiative, focusing on why the Reagan administration pursued the policy despite the technological limits to population protection during the period. My research assesses the evidence for three hypotheses. More specifically, I employ a level of analysis approach to explore factors that likely influenced the decision-making of administrations - and particularly presidents - on when and how to address population vulnerability. The action-reaction hypothesis is a structural approach in which threat perception affects the administration's policies toward population vulnerability. This hypothesis predicts that military and civilian elites pursue population protection to address a perceived capabilities gap. The organizational politics hypothesis is an organizational-level approach in which parochial biases affect the administration's approach to population vulnerability. This hypothesis posits that military and civilian organizations pursue population protection based on the degree to which these policies fall within their organizational mission. The domestic politics hypothesis is a domestic level approach in which the American public and Congress affect the administration's policy towards population vulnerability. This hypothesis predicts that the strength and nature of domestic political demands shape and constrain policy choices.

Preliminary Findings: So far in my research, I have found that competing domestic level factors - specifically, organizational interests and domestic political culture - are critical for explaining the American approach to population protection. Looking at the first case, in the run-up to the creation of the Federal Civil Defense Administration, military organizations' concerns over muddling their core mission and congressional opposition to the militarization of the home front meant that Truman faced significant difficulties enacting a robust program. When domestic pressure accompanying the Korean War forced the administration to act, it quickly rushed through weak legislation representing these domestic demands. Moving on to the second case, I find that this organizational structure set up by Truman was the primary impediment to robust population protection. While the domestic political environment acted as a secondary constraint, congressional indifference and public apathy limited a program that was fundamentally unable to deal with the threat posed to the civilian population. Countering these limitations required an extensive restructuring. However, as in the 1940s, resistance from military leaders and the lack of political will for a comprehensive model of population protection ensured civil defense remained in its marginal position.

Contribution: Previous work on population protection has primarily examined policy measures in isolation, leading to conflicting explanations. Research on the limits to civil defense has focused mainly on the financial constraints imposed by Congress, the attempts to shield the public from the horrors of nuclear war, and the weakness of civil defense organizations in relation to their military counterparts.[2] Work exploring "no-cities" counterforce targeting has pointed to the importance of alliance politics, economic priorities at the Pentagon, and the role of organizational interests.[3] Research on the rise of national missile defense has focused on its symbolic importance, its use as a bargaining chip in arms control negotiations, and the role technological development plays in driving decisions surrounding deployment.[4] Overall, there are clear divergences in explanations emphasizing different actors and processes.

My research explores the determinants behind these policies in concert by explicitly focusing on population vulnerability. Taking population vulnerability as the core area of focus contributes to existing research in a few ways. First, my research explores possible path-dependent dynamics by taking a long view of the different population protection policies. This approach allows me to assess how decisions concerning early institutional models for addressing population vulnerability constrained and shaped later attempts to address the shifting nature of the nuclear threat. Second, by examining an underexplored area of American nuclear weapons policy, I aim to contribute to research on when and why domestic and structural factors emerge as the key drivers behind nuclear decision-making.[5] Based on my current findings, I believe that my most important contribution is demonstrating how long-term shifts in the nature of domestic level preferences lead to differing outcomes in American nuclear weapons policy.

Policy Implications: I intend to use my research to inform work on two contemporary policy issues. First, missile defense has persistently reemerged as a stumbling block in negotiations on arms control and strategic stability between the United States and Russia. Considering these programs' indeterminate track record in testing and the proliferation of new destabilizing technologies, the continued financial and political support for the policy is a puzzling

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[2] William H. Kincade, "Repeating History: The Civil Defense Debate Renewed," *International Security* 2, no. 3 (1978): 99, https://doi.org/10.2307/2538516; Dee Garrison, *Bracing for Armageddon: Why Civil Defense Never Worked* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006); Guy Oakes, *The Imaginary War: Civil Defense and American Cold War Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Edward Geist, *Armageddon Insurance: Civil Defense in the United States and Soviet Union, 1945-1991*, The New Cold War History (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2019): 97-137.

[3] Jane E. Stromseth, *The Origins of Flexible Response: NATO'S Debate over Strategy in the 1960s* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1988): 21-27; Fred M. Kaplan, *The Wizards of Armageddon* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1983): 315-316; Scott Douglas Sagan, *Moving Targets: Nuclear Strategy and National Security* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton university press, 1989): 33.

[4] Roger Handberg, "The Symbolic Politics of Ballistic Missile Defense: Seeking the Perfect Defense in an Imperfect World," *Defense & Security Analysis* 31, no. 1 (January 2, 2015): 44–57; William H. Kincade, "Arms Control or Arms Coercion?," *Foreign Policy*, no. 62 (1986): 24–45; George Rathjens, "The Dynamics of the Arms Race," *Scientific American* 220, no. 4 (1969): 15–25.

[5] For example, see Saunders, Elizabeth. "The Domestic Politics of Nuclear Choices – A Review Essay." *International Security* 44 no, 2 (2019): 146-184.

phenomenon. By examining the origins of the Strategic Defense Initiative, I aim to explain how missile defense became embedded within American nuclear weapons policy. Tracing this process is important for highlighting the domestic constituents behind missile defense and, therefore, assessing the possible conditions under which an administration could place limits on the program. Second, I aim to examine how attempts to understand and mitigate population vulnerability influenced decision-maker's thinking on risk and credibility. Due to the limits of declassification, these historical assessments provide a practical basis for helping to expand our understanding of the circumstances under which decision-makers could consider limited nuclear war a viable option.

Feedback: There are two aspects of my study on which I would particularly appreciate comments. First, I am looking at the causal processes leading to distinct policies that were often put forth by different organizations and included various levels of congressional involvement. Any input on balancing rigorous hypothesis testing with assessing diverse evidence across cases would be appreciated. The second area concerns the issue of policy relevance. While my final case study on national missile defense will allow me to link my research to current policy issues, I would be interested in any feedback on how to offer concrete policy recommendations from my earlier case studies.

2. David Logan, MIT SSP

Surveys of Superiority: Experimental Evidence on the Impact of the Strategic Nuclear Balance

Research Question: Does the Strategic Nuclear Balance Matter?

My research project addresses issues of nuclear war, especially crisis escalation, force posture, and the factors contributing to the use of nuclear weapons. Understanding these issues is important for reducing the likelihood of nuclear use. The project seeks to answer two questions. First, what is the impact of the strategic nuclear balance on policy preferences in a crisis and, in particular, the likelihood of nuclear use? Second, how does the impact of the nuclear balance on these preferences systematically vary across groups and individuals?

Answering these questions has proved challenging. There have been, fortunately, few observations to study: only two instances of nuclear weapons use against another state and few instances of interstate crises in which nuclear weapons were prominent. The data that emerges from such scattered occurrences is, however, often messy, complicating efforts to isolate the independent effect of the nuclear balance from other factors such as conventional military capabilities or the stakes in the crisis. To gain inferential leverage on rare phenomena involving nuclear weapons, scholars have turned to experimental methods to gain leverage on questions such as whether there is a nuclear taboo, how proliferation impacts willingness for nuclear use, and whether Americans apply just war principles to nuclear weapons. However, to date, no work has been done examining whether and how the relative nuclear balance matters.

Methods: Survey Experiment of Policymakers, Academics, and the Public

My research study consists of a vignette-based survey experiment of U.S. policymakers, academics, and the public. This survey experiment is designed to determine the extent to which changes in the nuclear balance affect policy preferences in a crisis or conflict. Modeling recent work by Sagan, Press, and Valentino, the experiment presents respondents with mock news articles describing a crisis between the United States and Russia in the Baltics. Respondents are presented with two rounds of articles. The first round describes an unfolding crisis in which Russian troops have invaded the Baltics. Here, the U.S. president is described as choosing between a “cautious option” of levying economic sanctions on Russia and an “assertive option” of dispatching ground troops to the Baltics. The second round describes a military conflict between the United States and Russia, which has resulted from the escalation of the crisis described in the first round. In each round, each article specifies important variables such as the conventional balance of power, the stakes in the crisis, and the likelihood of escalation. Each article also describes, in both the main text and several pull quotes, the nuclear balance between

the United States and Russia, which functions as the main independent variable. The balance is represented as the expected number of fatalities each side would suffer in a full-scale nuclear exchange.

The main outcome variable is respondents' policy preferences. Each article describes policy options the U.S. president is considering and asks their views about the options. In the first (crisis) round, respondents are asked to choose between the cautious option of levying economic sanctions and the assertive option of dispatching ground troop. They are also asked, independent of which policy they preferred, how much they approved or disapproved of dispatching ground troops. In the second (conflict) round, respondents choose between dispatching additional ground troops or launching a nuclear strike against Russian forces, which is described as reducing the number of American military casualties compared to dispatching additional ground forces. Regardless of their preference, respondents indicated how much they approved or disapproved of launching a nuclear strike as well as their reasons for approving or disapproving.

Respondents also answer questions to measure their knowledge of nuclear weapons issues, including whether they could identify the meaning of the acronym MAD (mutually assured destruction), which countries possessed nuclear weapons, and which nuclear materials were used in the construction of nuclear bombs. The policymaker and academic surveys also include a series of questions about contemporary nuclear policy questions such was whether the United States should adopt a no-first-use policy and how many nuclear warheads the United States should deploy. The survey collects demographic information, political views, and general foreign policy beliefs.

I will field the experiment on three populations: 1) a nationally representative sample of American adults through the survey firm Qualtrics; 2) a convenience sample of international security academics drawn primarily through the STRATCOM Academic Alliance and the Nuclear Studies Research Initiative of Johns Hopkins SAIS; and 3) a convenience sample of national security practitioners working in the U.S. government, through the National Defense University, STRATCOM, and other U.S. government agencies.

Preliminary Findings: The Nuclear Balance Is What People Make of It

I have conducted pilot surveys of 350 American adults and 85 American academics and policymakers. The results so far suggest that wiliness to resort to nuclear use and sensitivity to the nuclear balance varies significantly with sample population, familiarity with nuclear weapons concepts, and demographic characteristics.

The results suggest that, compared to elites, the public is more willing to resort to nuclear use and more sensitive to the nuclear balance. Among the public, 40 percent of those who

received the Russian superiority treatment favored a nuclear strike over dispatching additional ground troops, while 52 percent of those who received the American superiority treatment favored a nuclear strike. By contrast, in the elite sample, only 10 percent of those who received the Russian superiority treatment favored a nuclear strike, while 9 percent of those who received the American superiority treatment favored a nuclear strike (see Table 1 below).

Table 1	*Public Sample*	*Elite Sample*
U.S. Superiority	52%	9%
Russian Superiority	40%	10%

Further, the results suggested willingness to use nuclear weapons varied systematically with knowledge about nuclear issues. In the public sample, respondents who correctly identified the meaning of MAD were less likely to prefer nuclear use and their preferences were less sensitive to the nuclear balance. Among those who knew the meaning of MAD, 22 percent preferred a nuclear strike in the U.S. superiority condition compared to 21 percent in the Russian superiority condition. By contrast, among those who did not know the meaning of MAD, 63 percent preferred a nuclear strike in the U.S. superiority condition, compared to 58 percent in the Russian superiority condition (see Table 2 below). Similarly, among the public, of those with a high degree of knowledge of nuclear issues (as indicated by correctly answering all the nuclear knowledge questions), only 18 percent preferred a nuclear strike, while 59 percent of those with a low degree of knowledge of nuclear issues (correctly answering only one or none of the nuclear knowledge questions) preferred a nuclear strike.

Table 2	*MAD Incorrect*	*MAD Correct*
U.S. Superiority	63%	22%
Russian Superiority	48%	21%

Preference for nuclear use varied with demographic traits. Among the public, there were higher preferences for a nuclear strike among respondents who became adults after the Cold War, those with military, and those with a bachelor's degree.

Finally, respondents offered several reasons for supporting or opposing a nuclear strike. Among those who approved of a nuclear strike, the most cited reasons were, in order, that it would save American lives, that it would provide a military advantage, and that it would deter further Russian aggression. Among those who disapproved of a nuclear strike, the most cited reasons were, in order, that it would increase the risk of a Russian nuclear strike, that it would increase the risk of nuclear strikes by other countries, and that it would be unethical.

Contributions, Extensions, Objections, and Implications

The project offers several contributions to our understanding of nuclear weapons. First, it offers important evidence about the impact of the nuclear balance on policy preferences in a crisis, including the willingness to use nuclear weapons. Second, it provides evidence as to whether those reactions to the nuclear balance vary with important covariates such as nuclear knowledge, military experience, political beliefs, and personal background. Third, identifies the underlying *reasons* driving how respondents react (or not) to the nuclear balance. Finally, it offers evidence as to whether "elites" and "non-elites" perceive nuclear weapons differently and identifies an important role for nuclear knowledge and "nuclear learning" to shape individual beliefs about and responses to nuclear weapons.

As an extension of the research, I hope to conduct parallel surveys on both British and Russian samples to examine how national context may affect respondents' views. This can contribute greatly to understanding how concepts such as deterrence and the nuclear taboo may (or may not) operate in different strategic cultures.

Primary objections to the research design include the potentially limited external validity of survey experiments and the U.S. bias of the samples. The key weakness of the study is the difficulty of fielding it on a sufficiently large number of academics and policymakers. I have encountered some bureaucratic challenges to fielding it on policymakers and the response rate from academics has, so far, been low. I would particularly appreciate recommendations in how to more effectively obtain policymaker and academic responses, including both distribution channels and response incentives.

In terms of policy recommendations, the findings suggest that crisis dynamics may be insensitive to the nuclear balance if each side retains a survivable second strike. In an actual crisis, the views of state leaders are more likely to approximate the results from the elite than the public surveys. This suggests that there may be little additional deterrent value in nuclear superiority. It further suggests, in a crisis, that policymakers should be wary of emphasizing the nuclear balance to deter aggression or control escalation.

3. Abigail Post, RAND

The Role of Moral Language in Nuclear Bargaining

This project examines how moral and legal framing, what I classify as "principled rhetoric", impacts nuclear proliferation. From a policy perspective, can understanding the effects of rhetoric help us develop more effective strategies for countering proliferation? This project will proceed in two stages: first looking at the broader narrative of the United States and its impact on international proliferation patterns over time, then examining the more direct impact of principled language on interactions with North Korea.

The motivation for this project arises from ongoing U.S. nonproliferation efforts. The United States has sought to limit nuclear proliferation from the beginning of the nuclear age. As part of these non-proliferation efforts, the United States promotes a strategy that stigmatizes nuclear weapons, embodies anti-proliferation efforts in international law, and ostracizes proliferating nations. In the process, the United States (and the other nuclear weapons states) has imbued nonproliferation norms with moral meaning and legal institutionalization.

Over time, this strategy has created a normative environment that U.S. leaders appeal to in their discourse. But what is the impact of such rhetoric? The narrative of nonproliferation is intended to deter nations from pursuing their own programs. However, certain framings may have the opposite effect of what is intended. Principled language that portrays nuclear proliferation as wrong, evil, or illegal may confer special status to these weapons, making them more appealing to some states.[6] Such language may provide fodder for a proliferating state to inspire audiences against an adversarial United States. The language may sour interactions between states, narrowing the bargaining range and making it more difficult to broker a deal.

Still, although rhetoric is ubiquitous in politics, most research in political science sidesteps the impact of rhetoric on nuclear proliferation. When exploring the determinants of proliferation, existing research typically focuses on material factors, such as the overall security environment that the proliferator faces, the proliferator's domestic politics and state institutions, economic

[6] A classic example of this is President George W. Bush's 2002 State of the Union that classified Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as part of an "axis of evil." Needless to say, this speech did not deter either Iran or North Korea from continuing their proliferation efforts. However, according to my framework, it may have spurred the Iranian and North Korean programs, although it is more difficult to assess the impact of the speech on Iraq because of the U.S. invasion a year later. For one of several studies on the impact of this speech on U.S.-Iranian relations, see: Heradstveit, Daniel, and Matthew G. Bonham. 2007. "What the Axis of Evil Metaphor Did to Iran." *The Middle East Journal* 61(3): 421-440.

development, nuclear powers' existing nuclear arsenals and assistance, among others.[7] However, while the impact of rhetoric has only been tangentially explored, the opportunity is there. There is substantial research that focuses on how nonmaterial factors such as norms[8] and psychology[9] impact nuclear proliferation. Language, another nonmaterial factor, can play a systematic role too.

Overall, I plan to examine variation in U.S. nonproliferation framing—a verbal focus on principled, normative considerations compared with a verbal focus on nonmoral, strategic factors.[10] Just as norms have both material and ideational components, principled language and strategic language nearly always coexist, but the weight of such language varies over time. I choose to focus on moral rhetoric because of its potential to deadlock negotiations and spur proliferation efforts. In previous research, I found that moral rhetoric causes actors to view an issue as indivisible. In turn, it reduces opportunities for compromise between negotiating states. I expect similar dynamics during cases of nuclear bargaining.

I plan to look at the effects of American narratives on nuclear proliferation efforts and during public interactions with North Korea. I focus on U.S. language for two reasons. For one, the U.S. was the first proliferator and has been at the head of nonproliferation efforts from the start. Its language is most likely to shape the dominant narrative. On a second and more practical note, I am confident that I can systematically access and code U.S. statements, while I do not know that I can do this with statements from others nuclear states.

The first part of the project analyzes how does the ebb and flow of U.S. rhetoric affects nuclear proliferation across space and time. I hypothesize that increases in moral and legal references will be associated with an increase in nuclear proliferation efforts by prospective nuclear states, although I plan to operationalize the dependent variable in several ways. Measures of nuclear

[7] For an overview, see: Kroenig, Matthew. 2016. "US Nuclear Weapons and Non-proliferation: Is There a Link?" *Journal of Peace Research* 53(2): 166-179.
[8] Tannenwald, Nina. 2007. *The Nuclear Taboo: The United States and the Non-use of Nuclear Weapons Since 1945*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

[9] Hymans, Jacques. 2006. *The Psychology of Nuclear Proliferation.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
[10] In previous research, I found that framing varies considerably over time during cases of international crisis bargaining. I have not yet worked through this for nuclear security observations, but I expect that the rhetoric will vary in nuclear bargaining cases as well.

proliferation (explore, pursue, or acquire)[11], sensitive nuclear assistance[12], nuclear latency[13], and votes on non-proliferation issues in the UNSC are four possible candidates for measuring the dependent variable.

For the independent variable, I intend to scrape the American Presidency Project for U.S. presidential speeches that refer to nuclear security from 1945-2021, with a focus on post-1970 statements after the ratification of the NPT. I will then code the resulting documents for references to international law (a list which I will compile myself) and moral statements (drawing from Moral Foundations Theory).[14] I then intend to examine how the narrative ebbs and flows over time and whether these changes correlate with patterns in nuclear proliferation behavior. To do so, I will merge the textual data with existing datasets of nuclear proliferation (see above description of dependent variable). In keeping with other studies, I will control for existing political, economic, and security variables such as levels of economic development, the intensity of a state's security environment, regime type, time variables, relative power, openness to trade, etc. during quantitative analysis. Since moral language tends to be used in conjunction with other types of statements, I look at the overall weight of such language in a speech, rather than the mere presence/absence of it.

The second part of this project will look at the actual dynamics of rhetoric that lead to proliferation outcomes through the case of North Korean nuclear proliferation. I choose the case of North Korea for two reasons: 1) it allows me to look at the impact of principled language on interactions over time, before and after nuclear proliferation; and 2) it is a case that has received a lot of public attention, which means that there will be sufficient public documents to test the framework proposed here. I am open to other case study options and am considering adding Iran as a second case study.

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[11] Singh, Sonali, and Christopher R. Way. 2004. "The Correlates of Nuclear Proliferation: A Quantitative Test." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48(6): 859-885.

[12] Kroenig, Matthew. 2009. "Exporting the Bomb: Why States Provide Sensitive Nuclear Assistance." *American Political Science Review* 103(1): 113-133.

[13] Fuhrmann, Matthew and Benjamin Tkach. 2015. "Almost Nuclear: Introducing the Nuclear Latency Dataset." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 32(4): 443-461.

[14] Hoover, Joseph, Kate Johnson-Grey, Morteza Dehghani, and Jesse Graham. 2017. "Moral values coding guide." https://psyarxiv.com/5dmgj/.

The goal of the case study is to assess how moral language affects compromise, negotiation, and aggression as precursors to proliferation outcomes. How has moral language on the part of the United States altered North Korea's path to proliferation? Did it precede North Korean hostile diplomatic and military activities? Did it help or hurt efforts at negotiation? I plan to apply the same content analysis techniques as I proposed in the previous section to U.S. public statements regarding North Korea. I can merge this textual data with existing data on North Korean nuclear provocations from 1958-2021 (military demonstrations, hostile statements, etc.).[15] I hypothesize that U.S. moral language will precede North Korean provocations and rejections of compromise. This case will provide more fine-grained evidence for *how* language affects nuclear proliferation. In presenting this evidence, I plan to weave the textual analysis into the case study to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of rhetoric.

One possible extension of this research[16] would be to look at the impact of this rhetoric on U.S. public perceptions as well. Research in psychology and political communication indicates that "moral begets moral" rhetoric.[17] If this is the case, then moral language from the United States against North Korea will provoke the same, promoting a vicious cycle of moral condemnation. I am unsure whether I will be able to collect systematic data on North Korean statements (because of translation issues), but one option to tap into this psychological aspect of the theory would be to field a survey experiment on U.S. public perceptions of North Korean moral rhetoric. Alternatively, I could examine the impact of U.S. rhetoric surrounding nuclear proliferation to gain a better understanding of how moral language might provoke the U.S. public (and, by extension, U.S. politicians) to oppose compromise over issues of nuclear proliferation.

This research will yield a more comprehensive understanding of the determinants of successful (and unsuccessful) nuclear bargaining. All of this is not to say that rhetoric has the most important impact. Language can have a direct effect on the bargaining opponent, but it can also have more indirect effects. Rhetoric shapes the way in which states respond to a static security environment; provides fodder for domestic appeals; shapes and solidifies norms. I predict that surges in principled discourse tend to increase proliferation and provoke proliferating states to take more hostile actions.

If the language that negotiators and leaders use during bargaining has the impact I expect, then political actors may be able to carefully shape both their public and private statements to

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[15] Database: North Korean Provocations. December 20, 2019. https://beyondparallel.csis.org/database-north-korean-provocations/.

[16] I am interested in feedback on whether this would be feasible and useful for the Stanton project.

[17] Pearce, W. Barnett, and Stephen W. Littlejohn. 1997. *Moral Conflict: When Social Worlds Collide*. Sage.

better have the desired effect. To this point, this project speaks to both scholarly literature and policy analysis. While few theoretical frameworks exist within political science to grapple with the complexity of speech, policy expertise suggest that framing does indeed influence negotiations. I intend to merge expertise from both areas to bridge this gap.