Countries in the Global South, particularly the three large democracies – India, Brazil, and South Africa – have been historically strong opponents of nuclear weapons and command an important voice of the nonproliferation regime. Such enthusiasm for the nonproliferation has been contrasted with a strong opposition towards proposals how strengthen the regime, as well as a lukewarm attitude towards Iran’s nuclear program. This position was surprising for Western diplomats and remains counterintuitive for academic analysts.

Explanation: Ideas!
⇒ ambiguous material incentives: states can choose from multiple equally possible paths
⇒ ideational frameworks influence how leaders respond to material incentives
⇒ ideas originate in historical experiences, socialization, and self-perception
⇒ sometimes conflicting, and contradictory. Prioritization happens.
⇒ provide heuristic to leaders to solve complex policy puzzles in ways that “make sense”

Why different ideas about nonproliferation?
⇒ Seen from the Global South, global liberal peace is not the rule
⇒ Nonproliferation just a part of global governance; where struggle is the order of the day
⇒ Different preferences, different interpretation
⇒ Different historical experiences, different ideational frameworks
⇒ Iran is about setting the rules for the future, future is what matters for leaders in IBSA

Further information

*Iran’s Nuclear Program and the Global South: The Foreign Policy of India, Brazil, and South Africa* (Palgrave, forthcoming in 2015)

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[1] Agencia Brasil (Ricardo Stuckert / PR; 2010)