## Lewis Acids

# The Reactivity of Isomeric Nitrenium Lewis Acids with Phosphines, Carbenes, and Phosphide

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**Abstract:** Alkylation of spiro[fluorene-9,3'-indazole] at N(1) and N(2) with tBuCl affords the nitrenium cations  $[C_6H_4N_2(tBu)C(C_{12}H_8)][BF_4]$ , **1** and **2**, respectively. Compound **1** converts to **2** over the temperature range 303–323 K with a free energy barrier of  $28 \pm 5$  kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>. Reaction of **1** with PMe<sub>3</sub> afforded the *N*-bound phosphine adduct  $[C_6H_4N(tBu)N(PMe_3)C(C_{12}H_8)]BF_4]$  **3**. However, phosphines attack **2** at the *para*-carbon atom of the aryl group with concurrent cleavage of N(2)–C(1) bond and proton migration to C(1) affording  $[(R_3P)C_6H_3NN(tBu)CH(C_{12}H_8)][BF_4]$  (R = Me **4**,

## Introduction

The classification of electron donors and acceptors as bases and acids, respectively delineated by Lewis in the 1920s is a concept that permeates much of chemistry.<sup>[1]</sup> Indeed, this concept remains relevant today as one of the underpinnings of coordination and main group chemistry. Moreover, built on perturbations to Lewis' fundamental notion, the concepts of *"umpolung*<sup>4(2,3,4–11]</sup> and *"frustrated Lewis pairs (FLPs)*<sup>*"*(12–16]</sup> have led to new and unique approaches to synthetic and catalytic chemistry. The combination of these latter two concepts has unveiled new Lewis acids for FLP chemistry. For example, in 2013, we described the development of highly electrophilic phosphonium cations (EPCs) for the activation of C–F bonds.<sup>[17]</sup> Moreover, those Lewis acids based on phosphorus, an element traditionally used in Lewis donors, proved useful in *n*Bu **5**). Analogous reactions of **1** and **2** with the carbene SIMes prompt attack at the *para*-carbon with concurrent loss of H<sup>•</sup> affording the radical cation salts [(SIMes)C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>N-(tBu)NC(C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>8</sub>)<sup>•</sup>][BF<sub>4</sub>] **6** and [(SIMes)C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>3</sub>NN(tBu)C(C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>8</sub>)<sup>•</sup>][BF<sub>4</sub>] **7**, whereas reaction of **2** with BAC gives the Lewis acid-base adduct, [C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>N(BAC)N(tBu)C(C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>8</sub>)][BF<sub>4</sub>] **8**. Finally, reactions of **1** and **2** with KPPh<sub>2</sub> result in electron transfer affording (PPh<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub> and the persistent radicals C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>N(tBu)NC(C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>8</sub>)<sup>•</sup> and C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>NN(tBu)C(C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>8</sub>)<sup>•</sup>. The detailed reaction mechanisms are also explored by extensive DFT calculations.

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FLP hydrogenations, transfer hydrogenations and hydrosilylations.  $^{\left[ 18\right] }$ 

In a similar sense, nitrogen-containing compounds usually feature an accessible lone pair at the N atom, and thus act as Lewis bases. Nonetheless, there are known examples of *N*-centered electrophiles.<sup>[19-23]</sup> One class of such nitrogen-centered electrophiles, nitrenium ions has drawn recent attention. In seminal work, Gandelman showed that a triazinium salt (*N*-heterocyclic nitrenium (NHN)) can form classic Lewis acid/base adducts with phosphines (Figure 1). Gandelman and co-workers have also expanded the range of triazolium salts, demonstrating access to a wide variety of N-based Lewis acids.<sup>[24-27]</sup> More recently, Mehta and Goicoechia<sup>[28]</sup> as well as Gandelman<sup>[29]</sup>

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Figure 1. Recent examples of nitrenium cation-based Lewis acids.

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have exploited the Lewis acidity of triazinium salts for Lewis acid catalysis and FLP Si–H activation.

In a concurrent effort, Osuka and co-workers have described the synthesis of a stable diporphyrinylaminyl nitrenium cation.<sup>[30]</sup> Moreover, they showed that this species was prepared by stepwise oxidation of the corresponding diporphyrinylamine through a stable aminyl radical.

In our own efforts, we developed a cyclic (amino)(alkyl)nitrenium (CAAN) cation that exhibited enhanced electrophilicity (Figure 1)<sup>[31]</sup> forming Lewis adducts or participating in FLP reactivity when combined with phosphines or carbenes. This finding was also consistent with a computational study that found annulation to be an effective way to stabilize cyclic nitrenium ions.<sup>[32]</sup> More recently, we also reported that alkylation of spiro[fluorene-9,3'-indazole] with Ph<sub>2</sub>CHCl affords a nitrenium cation that is indeed Lewis acidic at nitrogen.<sup>[33]</sup> Interestingly, upon deprotonation of the benzylic carbon, the resulting zwitterion exhibits Lewis basicity at the nitrogen atom that was formerly acidic. In addition, we demonstrated that diazonium cations of the form  $[ArN_2(PR_3)]^+$  are N-based Lewis acids and behave as one or two electron acceptors, yielding the corresponding radical and Lewis acid-base adducts, respectively.<sup>[34]</sup>

In the present work, we further examine more steric-hindered Lewis acidic nitrenium cations illustrating that alkylation of the N(1)-position of fluorene-9,3'-indazole with a *tert*-butyl group provides access to a nitrenium cation that thermally isomerizes to N(2)-alkylated isomer. Moreover, these nitrenium cations exhibit diverse reactivity upon combination with donors such as phosphine, carbene, and phosphide. The observed products are shown to depend on both the steric demands and basicity of the donors.

#### **Results and Discussion**

Reaction of the spiro[fluorene-9,3'-indazole] with tBuCl and Ag[BF<sub>4</sub>] in CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub> at room temperature generates two products, **1** and **2** (Scheme 1). Under these conditions, **2** is the dominant product containing about a 1: 2.6 ratio of **1**: **2**. After work-up, these salts were separated by recrystallization from a saturated CH<sub>2</sub>Cl<sub>2</sub>/pentane solution at -35 °C with the bright orange product **1** precipitating first in 24% yield and the sandy orange product **2** requiring higher concentrations of



Scheme 1. Synthesis of 1–5.

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**Figure 2.** POV-ray depictions of cations (a) **1** and (b) **2**; hydrogen atoms and  $BF_4$  anions are omitted for clarity. C: black; N: blue. Selected bond lengths: (a) N(1)–N(2) 1.263(5), (b) N(1)–N(2) 1.265(3) Å.

pentane was isolated in 65% yield. These products are readily distinguished by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectra and they show distinct resonances at 1.54 and 2.61 ppm attributable to the *t*Bu groups of 1 and 2, respectively.

Crystallographic studies (Figure 2) confirmed the product salts as  $[C_6H_4N(tBu)NC(C_{12}H_8)][BF_4]$  1 and  $[C_6H_4NN(tBu)C(C_{12}H_8)]$  $[BF_4]$  2, which are isomers in which alkylation occurred at the N(1) and N(2) positions, respectively. The metric parameters in the two isomers were similar. For example, the N(1)-N(2) bond lengths in 1 and 2 were found to be 1.263(5) and 1.265(3) Å, respectively, slightly longer than typical N=N double bonds. However, the difference between the torsion angles of N(1)-N(2)-C(1)-C(19) in 1 (124.4(3)°) and N(1)-N(2)-C(1)-C(15) in 2 (128.2(2)°) is consistent with variations in the steric conflict between the bulky fluorene and the tBu-substituent. In contrast to previously reported CAANs,<sup>[31,33]</sup> compound 1 was observed to slowly convert to 2 in solution at ambient temperature. The initial rates observed for this isomerization was carefully monitored by <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectroscopy. The rate of formation of 2 showed a first order dependence on the concentration of 1 (see Figure S32 in the Supporting Information). While the solubility of 1 limited the temperature range accessible, an Eyring plot analysis was performed with kinetic data collected over the temperature range 303–323 K, with the free energy  $\Delta G$  (activation enthalpy  $\Delta H$ ) barrier of the isomerization determined as  $28 \pm 5$  (34  $\pm$  3) kcal mol<sup>-1</sup>.

To further probe the mechanistic implications of these kinetic data, DFT calculations at the PW6B95-D3/def2-QZVP + OSMO-RS//TPSS-D3/def2-TZVP + COSMO level of theory in CHCl<sub>3</sub> solution<sup>[35-49]</sup> was undertaken (see the Supporting Information). Both salts 1 and 2 should exist as separated ion pairs 1<sup>+</sup> and 2<sup>+</sup>, respectively (see Computational details in the Supporting Information). The conversion from cation 1<sup>+</sup> to 2<sup>+</sup> is -4.8 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> exergonic over a free energy (activation) barrier of 23.2 (32.6) kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> via a 1,2 *tert*-butyl-migration (via transition structure **TS1 b**<sup>+</sup>, Scheme 2), in excellent agreement with the kinetic experimental data.

The nature of the LUMOs in the isomeric cations **1** and **2** was probed computationally (Figure 3). In both cases, the LUMOs consist of the  $\pi^*$  orbital mainly located on the conjugated N=N bond and its adjacent aryl ring. Given that these contributions to the Lewis acidity of **1** and **2** have distinctly different degrees of steric congestion at nitrogen centers, divergent reactivity toward nucleophiles can be expected.

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Scheme 2. DFT-computed free energy paths (in kcalmol<sup>-1</sup>, at 298 K and  $1 \text{ molL}^{-1}$ ) of the reaction of cation  $1^+$  with PMe<sub>3</sub>.



Figure 3. Depictions of the LUMOs of (a) 1, (b) 2 in  $CHCI_3$  solution; computed at the TPSS-D3/def2-TZVP + COSMO level.

To begin to probe this possibility, reactions of these nitrenium cations with phosphine and carbene donors were probed. Initially, 1 was exposed to an excess amount of PMe<sub>3</sub>. Upon addition, the intensely orange solution of 1 faded to colorless immediately. A white solid 3 was isolated in 95% yield. The <sup>31</sup>P NMR spectrum of **3** showed a signal at 64.6 ppm, which is similar to that seen for previously reported CAAN-phosphine adducts.<sup>[31,33]</sup> Indeed the coordination of phosphine to nitrogen with the pyramidalization of nitrogen atom in  $[C_6H_4N(tBu)N(PMe_3)C(C_{12}H_8)][BF_4]$  3 was confirmed by an X-ray diffraction study (Scheme 1, Figure 4). The resulting N-P distance was found to be 1.679(3) Å which is similar to that re-(1.693(3) Å),<sup>[31]</sup>  $[C_6H_4(tBu)NN(PMe_3)C(C_6H_5)_2]^+$ ported for  $[(C_{12}H_8)(Ph_2CH)NN(C_6H_4)(PMe_3)]^+$  (1.686(2) Å)<sup>[33]</sup> and typical of N–P single bonds.<sup>[51]</sup>

The analogous treatment of **2** with PMe<sub>3</sub> afforded a tan solid **4** in 92% yield after workup (Scheme 1). The <sup>31</sup>P{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum of **4** revealed a sharp singlet at 22.0 ppm while the <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum showed a new resonance appearing at 6.21 ppm. Further, 2D HSQC NMR spectroscopic data affirmed the correlation of this proton signal with the resonances at 47.2 ppm in the <sup>13</sup>C{<sup>1</sup>H} NMR spectrum arising from a sp<sup>3</sup> carbon atom. Repeated efforts to characterize **4** by X-ray crystallographic methods gave consistently poor quality crystals, although diffraction data confirmed the connectivity in which phosphine is bound to the carbon atom *para*- to N with con-



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**Figure 4.** POV-ray depictions of cations (a) **3**, (b) **4**, and (c) **5**; hydrogen atoms and BF<sub>4</sub> anions are omitted for clarity. C: black; N: blue; P: orange. Selected bond lengths: **3**: N(1)–N(2) 1.470(4), N(1)–P(1) 1.679(3) Å; **5**: N(1)–N(2) 1.228(5), C(5)–P(1) 1.783(5) Å.

current cleavage of N(2)–C bond and proton migration affording  $[(Me_3P)C_6H_3NN(tBu)CH(C_{12}H_8)][BF_4]$  **4** (Figure 4).

In a similar fashion, addition of  $nBu_3P$  to **2** resulted phosphonium diazo salt **5** in 95% yield (Scheme 1). The crystallographic study confirmed the formulation as  $[(nBu_3P)C_6H_3NN(tBu)-CH(C_{12}H_8)][BF_4]$ . With two molecules in the asymmetric unit, the average N–N bond length was determined to be 1.232(5) Å, while the P-C distances were found to be 1.783(5) and 1.802(5) Å. It is noteworthy that the nucleophilic attack at the carbon *para*- to the Lewis acidic N(1) in **2** is reminiscent of the reaction of bulky phosphines with  $B(C_6F_5)_3$  in which the donor attack *para*- to the Lewis acidic boron affording the phosphonium-borate zwitterions,  $(R_3P)C_6F_4B(C_6F_5)_2F.^{[52,53]}$ 

To garner further insight, the free energy paths of the reactions of both salts 1 and 2 with phosphine PMe<sub>3</sub> in CHCl<sub>3</sub> solution were computed at the PW6B95-D3/def2-QZVP+COSMO-RS//TPSS-D3/def2-TZVP+COSMO level of theory. The reaction of cation 1<sup>+</sup> with PMe<sub>3</sub> was computed to proceed via the direct P...N nucleophilic attack at the N(2)-site to give the stable Lewis acid-base adduct **3**, which is  $-10.7 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1} \text{ ex-}$ ergonic over a low free energy barrier of 12.5  $kcal\,mol^{-1}$  (via TS1, Scheme 2). The alternative P...C nucleophilic attack at the aryl para-carbon is 13.7 kcalmol<sup>-1</sup> endergonic over a barrier that is 5.0 kcalmol<sup>-1</sup> higher (via **TS1 a**<sup>+</sup>) to give the adduct **3 a**. Further deprotonation of 3a with PMe<sub>3</sub> is unlikely due to an additional barrier of 21.0 kcalmol<sup>-1</sup> (see the Supporting Information). It is noteworthy that the formation of 3 is also kinetically 10.7 kcalmol<sup>-1</sup> favored over the isomerization of 1 to 2 (1,2-shift of *t*Bu via **TS1**b<sup>+</sup>).

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Scheme 3. DFT-computed free energy paths (in kcalmol<sup>-1</sup>, at 298 K and 1 mol  $L^{-1}$ ) for the reaction of cation 2<sup>+</sup> with PMe<sub>3</sub>.

Computations for the corresponding reaction of the cation  $2^+$  with PMe<sub>3</sub> show that nucleophilic attack at the N(1)-site is only -1.2 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> exergonic over a low barrier of 14.4 kcal  $mol^{-1}$  (via **TS4a**<sup>+</sup>) and thus reversible at ambient temperature (Scheme 3). On the other hand, the nucleophilic attack by PMe<sub>3</sub> at the aryl *para*- to N is 2.0 kcalmol<sup>-1</sup> endergonic over barrier that is 2.0 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> lower in energy (via **TS2**<sup>+</sup>) yielding the transient adduct  $2p^+$ . Deprotonation by additional PMe<sub>3</sub> is 8.9 kcalmol<sup>-1</sup> endergonic over a moderate barrier of 18.0 kcal  $mol^{-1}$  (via **TS4**p<sup>+</sup>) However, the resulting transient phosphonium-complex 4p, can mediate protonation of at the basic Nsites with an overall barrier of 21.2 kcal mol<sup>-1</sup> due to reversibly formed adduct 4a<sup>+</sup>. Protonation at the N(1)-site is barrierless but and  $-20.7 \text{ kcal mol}^{-1}$  exergonic giving the cation  $4b^+$  and free PMe<sub>3</sub>. Alternatively, protonation at the N(2)-site (via TS4 c<sup>+</sup> ) is also barrierless, prompting proton transfer to carbon, C-N bond cleavage rotation of 9-fluorenyl group to give the cation of **4**.

To further exploit these cations, **1** was also reacted with 1,3bis(2,4,6-trimethylphenyl)-4,5-dihydroimidazol-2-ylidene (SIMes) yielding a purple species **6** at 67% yield (Scheme 4). The

<sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of **6** is silent and attempts to characterize radical 6 by X-ray crystallography were fruitless. However, the EPR spectrum of 6 was recorded and simulated revealing a g value of 2.0049 of which hyperfine couplings of N: 11.50, 4.18, 0.98, 0.33 G and H: 0.59, 0.41, 0.21 G (Figure 5). The corresponding reaction of the N-Lewis acid 2 with the carbene SIMes was performed in  $o-C_6F_2H_4$  affording a red species 7 at 80% yield. The <sup>1</sup>H NMR spectrum of **7** is also silent, while the EPR spectrum of 7 was similar to that of 6 with a g value of 2.0042 and hyperfine couplings of N: 9.39, 6.67, 0.48, 0.39 G, and H: 2.67, 0.60, 0.53 G (Figure 5). Single crystals for X-ray diffraction analysis were obtained by layering of pentane into a THF solution of 7 at -35 °C. The solid-state structure revealed the formulation of **7** as  $[(SIMes)C_6H_3NN(tBu)C(C_{12}H_8)^{\bullet}][BF_4]$ (Figure 6). The N-N bond length in 7 was found to be 1.350(3) Å, which is longer than that seen in 2. The unambiguous characterization of 7 suggests an analogous structure for 6 (i.e.  $[(SIMes)C_6H_3N(tBu)NC(C_{12}H_8)^{\bullet}][BF_4])$ . Indeed, the liberation of H<sub>2</sub> was confirmed by NMR spectroscopy of the reaction mixtures in a sealed NMR tube in C<sub>6</sub>D<sub>6</sub>.

Compound **2** was also reacted with the sterically smaller, yet more basic carbene, bis(diisopropylamino)-cyclopropenylidene (BAC), at room temperature. This yielded a black solid **8** in



Scheme 4. Synthetic routes to 6-8.

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Figure 5. Observed (blue) and simulated (orange) EPR spectra for (a) 6 and (b) 7.

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**Figure 6.** POV-ray depictions of cations (a) **7** and (b) **8**; hydrogen atoms and BF<sub>4</sub> anions are omitted for clarity. C: black; N: blue. Selected bond lengths: **7**: N(1)–N(2) 1.350(3), C(6)–C(24) 1.461(4) Å; **8**: N(1)–N(2) 1.505(6), N(1)–C(24) 1.404(7) Å.

78% yield. While the NMR data was consistent with the combination of the two reagents, an X-ray crystallographic study confirm the formulation of **8** as  $[C_6H_4N(BAC)N(tBu)C(C_{12}H_8)][BF_4]$ (Figure 6). In this species, the BAC is coordinated to the electrophilic N(1)-site leading to pyramidalization of nitrogen atoms and an N–N bond length of 1.505(6) Å. The newly formed N–C bond length was found to be 1.404(7) Å, which is significantly longer than those seen in the carbene-stabilized nitrogen cation,  $[(BAC)_3 N]^{3+}$  ((1.378(3) Å) reported by Alcarazo and co-workers.<sup>[54]</sup>

The formation of the radical cations in **6** and **7** suggests that steric demands preclude nucleophilic attack of SIMes at the Lewis-acidic N(1) site, instead prompting attack at the aryl *para*-carbon. While this aspect is analogous to the formation of **4** and **5**, the strong  $\sigma$  donation from carbene prompts loss of a H-atom affording H<sub>2</sub> and the radical cations. Presumably in the case of BAC, the significantly lesser steric demand results in the classical donor–acceptor bond between the carbene and the Lewis acidic nitrenium cation.

Interestingly, compounds **6** and **7** exhibit reversible redox behavior at -0.29 and -0.14 V, respectively, as evidenced by the cyclic voltammetry in  $o-C_6F_2H_4$  containing 0.085 M  $nBu_4NPF_6$  as a supporting electrolyte (Figures 7 and S42). These were attributed to the facile oxidation of the radical cations to the corresponding dications, reminiscent of the oxidation of aminyl radical reported by Osuka<sup>[30]</sup> and pyridinyl radicals by Hansman.<sup>[55]</sup> Compound **7** showed a second reversible redox wave at -1.14 V attribute to the reduction of the cation to the corresponding neutral zwitterionic species.<sup>[56]</sup> A further reduction of this species is irreversible at -2.47 V. In contrast, compound **6** is reduced irreversibly at about -1.4 V. The high reversible nature of the reduction of **7** are attributed to the stabilization of the zwitterionic species by the adjacent  $\pi$ system (Scheme 5).

In related efforts compound **1** or **2** were treated with 1 equiv of  $KPPh_2$  in THF. This prompted the immediate color



Figure 7. Cyclic voltammogram of compound 7 recording by using  $[nBu_4N]$  [BF<sub>4</sub>] as the electrolyte and ferrocene as the standard.



Scheme 5. Redox reactivity of 7.

change to a deep green color while the <sup>31</sup>P{<sup>1</sup>H} spectrum of the reaction crude showed the formation of (Ph<sub>2</sub>P)<sub>2</sub>, (Figures S35 and S37). Monitoring the reactions by EPR spectroscopy showed signals suggesting the formation of the respective radicals 9 and 10. These observations suggest a net electron transfer from phosphide to the corresponding nitreniumcation and thus the formulations of 9 and 10 as the aminyl radicals C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>N(*t*Bu)NC(C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>8</sub>)<sup>•</sup> and C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>4</sub>NN(*t*Bu)C(C<sub>12</sub>H<sub>8</sub>)<sup>•</sup>, respectively. EPR data for these species were consistent with g values of 2.0038 and 2.0037 for 9 and 10, respectively (Figures S36 and S38). In addition, spectral simulations revealed hyperfine couplings to two N atoms and four hydrogen atoms, consistent with these formulations (Scheme 6, Figure 8, see the Supporting Information). While these radicals were not isolable in analytically pure form as only spiro[fluorene-9,3'-indazole] was recovered, these formulations were further supported by the observation of a reversible reductions in the cyclic voltammograms of 1 and 2 at ca.-0.70 and -0.54 V vs. Fc<sup>+</sup>/Fc, re-



Scheme 6. Reactivity of 1 and 2 with KPPh<sub>2</sub>.

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Figure 8. Experimental (blue) and simulated (orange) X-band EPR spectra of (a) 9 and (b) 10.

spectively (see Figures S40 and S41 in the Supporting Information).

The reaction of **1** and **2** with phosphines and carbenes suggests that the reactions with phosphide could involve nucleophilic attack at either the electrophilic *N*-positions or at the *para*-carbon atom. It is noteworthy that in related work, Gandelman et al.<sup>[27]</sup> recently described the analogous reaction involving a N-based Lewis acid derived from a triazolium derivative with phosphide suggesting that this proceeds via a transient nitrenium-phosphide adduct. However, DFT calculations for the present reactions of **1** and **2** with dimer (KPPh<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub> show that the initial electron transfer effects the reductions affording K(PPh<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub><sup>-</sup> and **9** and **10** respectively are exothermic by 4.5 and 8.0 kcalmol<sup>-1</sup> reductions, while further electron transfer to **1** or **2** affording (PPh<sub>2</sub>)<sub>2</sub> is even more exothermic (-60 kcalmol<sup>-1</sup>) (see the Supporting Information).

#### Conclusions

Alkylation of spiro[fluorene-9,3'-indazole] with tBuCl affords the product of alkylation at the N(1) position, 1, which undergoes a thermal rearrangement to give alkylation at N(2), 2. While experimental and computational data show that each of these species are nitrenium cation salts, reactions of these species with various donors demonstrates Lewis acidity at both the nitrenium *N*-atom and the aryl carbon *para*-to N. For example, **1** binds PMe<sub>3</sub> at the Lewis acidic N(2) center to give 3, while 2 reacts with phosphines at the para-carbon resulting in proton migration to carbon affording 4 and 5. The bulky, yet stronger donor carbene, SIMes, reacts with 1 or 2 at the para-carbon, inducing loss of H to give NHC-substituted radicals cations 6 and 7. In contrast, the smaller carbene nucleophile, BAC, reacts with 2 to form the classical adduct 8 at the electrophilic N atom. Finally, in reactions of 1 and 2 with KPPh<sub>2</sub>, electron transfer affords the  $(PPh_2)_2$  and the corresponding diazo-radicals 9 and 10. The access to one and two electron chemistry derived from these nitrenium cation-based Lewis acids augurs well for the development of a rich chemistry of N-based Lewis acids. We are continuing to explore related systems, with a particular interest in the applications in FLPs and Lewis acid catalysis.

#### **Experimental Section**

**Crystallographic data**: Deposition number(s) 2035309, 2035310, 2035311, 2035312, 2035313, 2035314, and 2035315 contain the supplementary crystallographic data for this paper. These data are

provided free of charge by the joint Cambridge Crystallographic Data Centre and Fachinformationszentrum Karlsruhe Access Structures service.

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### **Conflict of interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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phosphines • radicals						

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