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Excerpt
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Part I

Introduction

1 Status and World Order

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Can the international order be modified to incorporate a greater role for rising or more assertive powers such as China, Russia, India, Brazil, and Turkey? While the rise and decline of major powers cannot be forecast with precision, there is scant uncertainty about the core expectation that relative economic and military clout will shift away from the states that created and have upheld the current international order – the United States and its close allies – in favor of states heretofore thought of as outsiders or as minor players in that order.¹ On the surface, accommodating this shift would appear simple: adjust voting rules in international organizations to reflect new distributions of bargaining power, alter spheres of influence to reflect new military capabilities and interests, and allocate new rights and responsibilities as the situation dictates. After all, nuclear-armed major powers, most of which are democratic, are not going to contest global leadership by resorting to arms. Surely the leaders of modern states in a globalized world will not forgo the massive gains of multilateral institutionalized cooperation over some squabble about the shape of the table and who gets to sit at its head.

Or will they? The ongoing scholarly and public discussion reveals a level of anxiety about rising powers and world order that is hard to explain if people only care about economic prosperity and basic national security. Yet most of what political scientists claim to know about the rise and decline of powers rests precisely on that assumption. The discourse on changing power balances mixes concern over pragmatic adjustments of security- and material welfare-maximizing actors with a vaguer apprehension about clashing national claims to greatness and precedence. To an important degree, the worry is about the search for higher status by emerging powers and the conflict this quest may generate with reigning major power actors. Why do rising powers seek status? What are the mechanisms of status adjustment and accommodation and what are the

¹ National Intelligence Council, *Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds*. Available at: <http://www.dni.gov/index.php/about/organization/national-intelligence-council-global-trends>

conditions for use of one rather than another? Can the status aspirations of the rising powers be accommodated without violence, and if so, how?

This book is a collaborative effort to address these questions. It builds on a large and growing research program to clarify the mechanisms by which status-seeking affects interstate relations. Our premise is that this area of research is finally in a position to demonstrate its value added. Scholars of international relations (IR) have always sensed that status was important, but only rarely have they focused rigorously on this aspect of human behavior. Mid-twentieth-century classical realists considered prestige a key factor in interstate relations but generally treated it as a reflection of a state's military capabilities, especially as demonstrated in war, precluding any investigation into nonmaterial determinants of status.² English School scholars such as Hedley Bull, Adam Watson, and Evan Luard analyzed social hierarchies of states in international society but did not explore explicitly the interaction between material capabilities and incentives and status politics.³ For a brief period in the 1960s and 1970s, scholars such as Johann Galtung and Maurice East examined sociological hypotheses about status inconsistency and conflict, but a sustained research program never emerged.⁴ The chief limitation of previous efforts to grapple with status in international politics was that the field of international relations developed in ways that made it hard to integrate and sustain this work. Research on the international politics of status-seeking simply did not fit the field-shaping debates of the 1980s and 1990s, which featured the “paradigm wars” of neorealism, liberal

² Hans J. Morgenthau, *Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace*, Sixth edn. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 87, 94–96; E. H. Carr, *The Twenty Years' Crisis: 1919–1939* (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), 109–113. Robert Gilpin adopted this approach in *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 32. On the realists' reduction of prestige to an instrumental motive, see Daniel S. Markey, “Prestige and the Origins of War: Returning to Realism's Roots,” *Security Studies* 8, no. 4 (Summer 1999), 126–172. Classical realism draws from political philosophy, especially that of Thomas Hobbes. According to Arash Abizadeh, Hobbes argues that wars occur not because of material competition alone, but because human “*anger can become irrationally inflamed by even trivial slights to our glory*.” See “Hobbes on the Causes of War: A Disagreement Theory,” *American Political Science Review* 105, no. 2 (May 2011), 298.

³ Evan Luard, *Types of International Society* (New York: Free Press, 1976); Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, *The Expansion of International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984).

⁴ See Johan Galtung, “A Structural Theory of Aggression,” *Journal of Peace Research* 1, no. 2 (June 1964), 95–119; Maurice A. East, “Status Discrepancy and Violence in the International System: An Empirical Analysis,” in *The Analysis of International Politics: Essays in Honor of Harold and Margaret Sprout*, eds. James N. Rosenau, Vincent Davis and Maurice A. East (New York: The Free Press, 1972), 299–319; and Michael D. Wallace, *War and Rank among Nations* (Lexington: D. C. Heath, 1973).

institutionalism, and constructivism, and issues such as interdependence, regimes, norms, and the role of non-state actors.

The sole partial exception to this history of neglect is a set of related structural theories of dynamic power change in which status and interstate hierarchies of prestige figure centrally.⁵ These theories all build on the basic proposition that uneven growth in capabilities eventually generates a disjuncture between the distribution of power and the hierarchy of prestige that may be (and in some case may only be) closed by a hegemonic war. This line of research clearly contains important conceptual and empirical building blocks for addressing contemporary rise-and-decline dynamics. Yet its focus on the great-power subsystem and on the purely instrumental rather than the social and psychological dimensions of status limits its applicability to a very large range of other important phenomena below the level of system change and hegemonic war. And these rise-and-decline theories, too, fell victim to intellectual developments in the study of IR that reduced incentives for other scholars to engage their findings.⁶

The past decade has witnessed an outpouring of new multidisciplinary research on status in international politics.⁷ Rediscovering previous

⁵ A. F. K. Organski, *World Politics* (New York: Knopf, 1958) (transition theory); Gilpin, *War and Change* (hegemonic stability theory); Charles F. Doran, *The Politics of Assimilation: Hegemony and Its Aftermath* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1971); Charles F. Doran, *Systems in Crisis: New Imperative of High Politics at Century's End* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) (power cycle theory); Karen A. Rasler and William R. Thompson, *The Great Powers and Global Struggle: 1490–1990* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1994); Manus I. Midlarsky, *On War: Political Violence in the International System* (New York: The Free Press, 1975) (long cycle theory).

⁶ For more on this in the case of Gilpin's theory, see Stefano Guzzini, "Robert Gilpin: A Realist Quest for the Dynamics of Power," in *The Future of International Relations: Masters in the Making?* eds. Iver B. Neumann and Ole Wæver (London: Routledge, 1997), 121–144; and William C. Wohlforth, "Gilpinian Realism and International Relations," *International Relations* 25, no. 4 (December 2011), 499–511.

⁷ Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Randall Schweller, "Realism and the Present Great Power System: Growth and Positional Conflict Over Scarce Resources," in *Unipolar Politics: Realism and State Strategies after the Cold War*, eds. Ethan B. Kapstein and Michael Mastanduno (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 28–68; Yong Deng, *China's Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Shogo Suzuki, "Seeking 'Legitimate' Great Power Status in Post-Cold War International Society: China's and Japan's Participation in UNPKO," *International Relations* 22, no. 1 (March 2008), 45–63; Andrew Hurrell, "Rising Powers and the Question of Status in International Society," Paper presented at the International Studies Association Meeting, New York, February 15–18, 2009; William C. Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War," *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (January 2009), 28–57; Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 34, no. 4 (Winter 2010), 63–95; David C. Kang, "Status and Leadership on the Korean Peninsula," *Orbis* 54, no. 4 (Fall 2010), 546–564; Thomas J. Volgy et al., eds., *Major Powers and the Quest for Status*

lines of IR research as well as new theoretical and empirical literatures in cognate disciplines such as sociology, social psychology, political theory, and behavioral economics, IR scholars have begun to tackle the role of status motivations in new ways, exploring new hypotheses and using new research techniques. In so doing, their work has begun to expand dramatically the range of phenomena in which status-seeking may be implicated. All of this presents the as yet unrealized promise of building status into our models in a way that will provide leverage on the core theoretical and policy concerns raised by the rapidly shifting scales of world power.

This book brings together leading scholars who have contributed to this cutting-edge research program. Their marching orders were to go beyond a mere stock-taking exercise to develop and clarify their models, and use them actively to address puzzles and problems relevant to a rapidly changing international setting. The chapters that follow investigate the determinants of status and status-seeking. They seek to explain why and how status considerations affect the behavior of rising powers such as China, India, and an increasingly assertive Russia. They broaden the scope beyond great-power war to encompass the politics and processes of status signaling, recognition, and adjustment – and not just among the great powers but also middle and regional powers that are similarly concerned with their relative position in the status hierarchy. They seek to elucidate the conditions under which status concerns not only lead to rivalry but also shape diplomacy and cooperation in system management.

The book thus represents three novel analytic departures. First is the extension of the range of analysis out and down from the great-power subsystem and the issue of systemic war. Second is to bring together scholars utilizing different approaches, from realist and rationalist to political psychology and critical constructivism. And third is to incorporate perspectives that are critical of the enterprise. In part owing to the way debates developed in the field, much previous work on status has suffered from a lack of direct engagement with skeptics. Even when scholars working on status addressed research in other areas, the reverse was not always the case. But the value added by new lines of research can only be made clear in a cooperative but also competitive dialogue. Unusually, we engage in such a dialogue within the covers of this book by presenting two critical

in International Politics: Global and Regional Perspectives (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); Reinhard Wolf, “Respect and Disrespect in International Politics: The Significance of Status Recognition,” *International Theory* 3, no. 1 (February 2011), 105–142; Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia’s Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); and Lilach Gilady, *The Price of Prestige* (Toronto: University of Toronto, Manuscript). For a review, see Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and Paul Huth, “Reputation and Status as Motives for War,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, in press.

chapters: one by William Thompson (Chapter 9) questioning our effort to extend the study of status beyond the central issue of great-power positional conflict, and one by David Lake (Chapter 10) questioning whether status or authority is the right research bet to study elements of social hierarchy in international politics. In the concluding chapter (Chapter 11), Anne Clunan addresses and adjudicates the debate thus engaged.

To begin, we define status and differentiate it from related concepts such as power, authority, honor, face, prestige, and recognition. Having set the terms of analysis, we then explain why states value status, beginning with perception and preferences. The third section outlines the research questions used to guide the study and previews some of the principal findings, including the contingent nature of status, the context-specificity of status markers, the influence of status concerns on state foreign policy, and the risk of misperception of status signaling.

Conceptualization

Status

We define status as collective beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout).⁸ In international politics, status manifests itself in two distinct but related ways: as membership in a defined club of actors, and as relative standing within such a club. Membership in international society – sovereignty – is a status sought by many substate groups. Once this status is conferred via recognition by others, a state may eventually seek membership in a status group within the overall system of states, most notably great-power status. But status politics do not stop with membership in a given club, for there are less formalized positional rankings within clubs that become particularly salient when they imply some form of primacy, leadership, or

⁸ We have transposed to international relations the classic sociological definition of status as a hierarchy of social groups ranked in terms of societal values, derived from Durkheim and Weber. See David Lockwood, *Solidarity and Schism: 'The Problem of Disorder' in Durkheimian and Marxist Sociology* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 70, 85–86; John Scott, *Stratification and Power: Structures of Class, Status and Command* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996), 30, 31–33, 36; Wendy Bottero, *Stratification: Social Division and Inequality* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 39–41, 44. Similar translations of status to international relations may be found in Jack Levy, *War in the Modern Great Power System, 1495–1975* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1983), 16–18; Baldev Raj Nayar and T. V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 32; Barry Buzan, *The United States and the Great Powers: World Politics in the Twenty-first Century* (Malden: Polity Press, 2004), 69–73.

“number one” status: leaders in various regional groupings, for example, or “global powers,” superpowers, or hegemonies within the great-power club. Whether it involves membership in a club or position within an informal social hierarchy, status is *collective*, *subjective*, and *relative*. Status in both senses, moreover, is recognized through voluntary *deference* by others.

Status reflects *collective* beliefs,⁹ transcending individual state perceptions. To be sure, states may disagree slightly over the relative ranking of a particular state, but overall there is general agreement about the identity of the leading states and the members of various status clubs. In the case of great powers, Kenneth Waltz adopts a view shared by many international relations scholars when he asserts that “[h]istorically, despite the difficulties, one finds general agreement about who the great powers of a period are, with occasional doubt about the marginal cases.”¹⁰ Similarly, J. David Singer and Melvin Small, in discussing the construction of the ubiquitous Correlates of War data set, agree: “[W]e do achieve a fair degree of reliability on the basis of ‘intercoder agreement.’ That is, for the period up to World War II, there is high scholarly consensus on the composition of this oligarchy.”¹¹ As Thomas Marshall observes, “Social status rests on collective judgment, or rather a consensus of opinion within a group. No one person can by himself confer status on another, and if a man’s social position were assessed differently by everybody he met, he would have no social status at all.”¹² Status thus refers to higher-order beliefs about a state’s relative ranking – beliefs about what others believe.¹³

Status is also highly *subjective*. Status cannot be read off a state’s material attributes; it depends on others’ perceptions. A state’s estimate of its status is based in part on interpretation of the behavior and speech of others, a judgment that may leave it either satisfied or dissatisfied with its status. Although some attributes that serve as the basis for status are measurable – such as the size of the national economy or military forces – more intangible assets such as cultural achievements, soft power, and moral

⁹ Murray Milner, Jr., *Status and Sacredness: A General Theory of Status Relations and an Analysis of Indian Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 23–24; Yoram Weiss and Chaim Fershtman, “Social Status and Economic Performance: A Survey,” *European Economic Review* 42 (May 1998), 804–805.

¹⁰ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), 131.

¹¹ J. D. Singer and Melvin Small, *The Wages of War: A Statistical Handbook* (New York: Wiley, 1972).

¹² Thomas Marshall, *Class Citizenship and Social Development: Essays* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 198.

¹³ Dafeo, Renshon, and Huth, “Reputation and Status.”

authority are not. Even when dealing with tangible indicators, it is not always easy to aggregate and compare the different values. For example, a state may be strong on some indices of great-power status but not others, as with the Soviet Union, which had superb military capabilities and global reach but a weak economic, technological, and industrial base.¹⁴

It is important to stress that the subjectivity of status applies whether we think of it in club or positional terms. Which states occupy a higher position than others is not an environmental attribute independent of perception and observable by all; it is a social construction. For example, one of Thompson's "global powers," Portugal, despite having overseas colonies in the fifteenth century – in the New World, Africa, and Asia – was a weak, poor state.¹⁵ After World War II, France and Taiwan were given the status of great powers with veto power in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) not because of material attributes they possessed but because the existing great powers treated them as such. To paraphrase Alexander Wendt, status is what states (albeit the most powerful states) make of it.

As a ranking, status is measured *relative* to others. Status is often described as a "positional good."¹⁶ Status is socially scarce in the sense that it cannot be enjoyed by everyone. If everyone has high status, then no one does. While status is always relative, it is not always zero-sum. As Lake emphasizes, when status manifests itself as a "club good," the zero-sum quality of status politics is attenuated.¹⁷ That is, a substate group can become a state without diminishing the value of statehood for existing members. Similarly, a middle power might rise to great-power status without demoting an existing member of that club. That more than one state may belong to the great-power club, however, does not eliminate competition for status. Elite groups restrict membership to avoid diluting their status and privileges. If every state is a great power, none is.

And, as noted, club membership does not end status politics, because within any grouping there is likely to be jockeying for position. While it is true, as Lake points out, that Prussia was recognized as one of the major powers, it was clearly of lesser rank until Germany's unification in 1871, a process driven in part by the quest for higher status.¹⁸ After unification

¹⁴ Luard, *Types of International Society*, 202; Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War."

¹⁵ David B. Abernethy, *The Dynamics of Global Dominance: European Overseas Empires, 1415–1980* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), 213–214.

¹⁶ Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1976); Schweller, "Realism and the Present Great Power System."

¹⁷ Chapter 10.

¹⁸ Otto Pflanzte, *Bismarck and the Development of Germany, Vol. 1, The Period of Unification, 1815–1871* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

and subsequent industrialization, German elites were no longer content with being one of the great powers – they wanted to be at least equal if not superior to Great Britain, an aspiration that led to the naval race and search for overseas colonies.¹⁹ As State Secretary of the Navy Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz advised Kaiser Wilhelm II, a great battle fleet was an “absolute necessity for Germany, without which it will face ruin. There are four World Powers: Russia, England, America, and Germany. Since two of those World Powers can only be reached across the sea, so sea power must predominate.... Since Germany is particularly backward in sea power, it is a life-and-death question for her, as a World Power and great cultural state, to make up the lost ground.”²⁰ For Germany, having a second-best navy was unacceptable.

Status cannot be attained unilaterally; it must be recognized by others.²¹ Status is manifested in *voluntary deference* directed toward the higher-status actor.²² As Hedley Bull observes, great powers are recognized by other state leaders and peoples as possessing “certain special rights and duties, namely the right to play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole and the responsibility of modifying their policies in the light of the managerial responsibilities they bear.”²³

Status recognition is concretized in the form of *status markers*, referring to positions and protocol symbolizing respect and deference. In the current international system, status markers include membership in elite clubs such as the Group of 8 (G8), permanent membership in the UNSC, leadership positions in international organizations, hosting international sports events,²⁴ formal state visits, summit meetings, and

¹⁹ Michelle Murray, “Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics: The Tragedy of German Naval Ambition Before the First World War,” *Security Studies* 19, No. 4 (October 2010), 656–688.

²⁰ Paul M. Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy: 1870–1945* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983; Fontana Paperback, 1984), 157–158.

²¹ In focusing on status, we differ from constructivist writings on recognition, which, drawing on Hegel, are concerned with recognition of a state’s identity. Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996); Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest, and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden’s Intervention in the Thirty Years War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Thomas Lindemann and Erik Ringmar, *The International Politics of Recognition* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers, 2012); and Thomas Lindemann, *Causes of War: The Struggle for Recognition* (Colchester: ECPR Press, 2010).

²² Theodore D. Kemper, *A Social Interactional Theory of Emotions* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1978), 378.

²³ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), 202.

²⁴ Roger Blitz, “Sport Organisers Play High-Stakes Game,” *Financial Times*, September 29, 2010; Simon Kuper, “Developing Nations Go on Offensive for Games,” *Financial Times: The World*, January 29, 2011.

inclusion in informal problem-solving groups. In their quantitative study of membership in the club of major powers, Volgy and colleagues measure community attribution of status by the number of embassies sent to a country's capital and the number of state visits.²⁵

Status accommodation occurs when higher-status actors acknowledge the state's enhanced responsibilities, privileges, or rights through various status markers such as summit meetings, state visits, speeches, strategic dialogues, and so on. President Richard M. Nixon's 1972 meeting with Mao Zedong in Beijing and the Shanghai Communiqué symbolized China's elevation to a role as part of the "strategic triangle" with the United States and the Soviet Union.²⁶ Another symbolic indicator of status accommodation was the 2005 nuclear cooperation agreement between India and the United States,²⁷ which required the United States to abandon its strict nuclear nonproliferation policy and to recognize India's status as a nuclear weapons state.²⁸

Because status is subjective, status-seeking behavior seeks to influence others' perceptions of a state's relative standing by acquiring status symbols. In society, this leads to people buying goods largely to impress others with their wealth and good taste, such as designer clothing, jewelry, or sports cars. Conspicuous consumption involves goods that are observable by others, because "one can't envy what one can't see," as opposed to goods that are less visible, such as insurance or savings.²⁹ Similarly, status-seeking by states is likely to focus on observable qualities and assets rather than less visible goods such as public health, leisure, clean air, or social insurance. India is competing with China to put a man on the moon, but often fails to provide public toilets for urban slums, chalk for primary school teachers in the countryside, or clean syringes for doctors in rural health clinics.³⁰ China may be building aircraft carriers precisely because they are highly expensive and require substantial

²⁵ Chapter 3.

²⁶ Evelyn Goh, *Constructing the U.S. Rapprochement with China, 1961–1974: From "Red Menace" to "Tacit Ally"* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 66–67, 78–81, 128, 165–166, 200.

²⁷ C. Raja Mohan, *Impossible Allies: Nuclear India, United States and the Global Order* (New Delhi: India Research Press, 2006), 35, 57–58, 64, 77–78.

²⁸ George Perkovich, "Global Implications of the U.S.-India Deal," *Daedalus* 139, no. 1 (Winter 2010), 20–31; and T. V. Paul, "The US-India Nuclear Accord: Implications for the Non-Proliferation Regime," *International Journal* 62, no. 4 (Autumn 2007), 845–861.

²⁹ Robert H. Frank, *Luxury Fever: Why Money Fails to Satisfy in an Era of Excess* (New York: Free Press, 1999), chapter 9; Gilady, *Price of Prestige*.

³⁰ Edward Luce, *In Spite of the Gods: The Strange Rise of Modern India* (Boston, MA: Little, Brown, 2006), 81.