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**An Exploration into Status Attribution in International Politics\*\***

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## Introduction

The study of status has a long and elaborate history in political science (e.g., Brodie 1996), sociology (e.g., Galtung 1964; Olzak and Tsutsui 1998), and social psychology (e.g., Hyman 1980; Huberman et al. 2004).<sup>1</sup> The status of groups and states has long been considered an essential and important concern for observers of international politics (dating back to ancient times; see Thucydides 1951; Lebow 2003), and more recently international relations scholarship has borrowed richly from each of these traditions and has sought to adapt these differing disciplinary conceptions of status to the analysis of the relationship between states rather than to groups and individuals. The shift to states is not an easy one, either theoretically or methodologically, and as a partial result analyses of the role of status in international politics have been hit or miss affairs throughout the last four decades of research in the field. Despite such theoretical and methodological difficulties, the focus on status has reemerged once more as highly salient for students of international affairs (for examples, see Larson and Shevchenko 2010; Lebow 2008; Lindemann and Ringmar 2011; Nayar and Paul 2003; Paul et al. 2013; Renshon 2013; Volgy et al. 2011; Wohlforth 2009; Wolf 2011).

The effort we engage in below is focused on one part of the larger picture involving status concerns in international politics: seeking to identify conditions under which status is *attributed* to states. Our approach represents an attempt to consider more systematically status attribution, given its salience for international politics and given the limited systematic attention it has received in past research. In doing so, we recognize that there are a variety of crucial puzzles at least as salient—in addition to status attribution—that are raised in the broader realm

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<sup>1</sup> Social psychology is claimed by both psychologists and sociologists and owes much to both disciplines, but has at its focus the group rather than the individual, and is more amenable to translation to political phenomena than psychology (Mercer 1995; Rosenberg and Turner 1981; Stephan and Stephan 1990).

of status considerations. Regarding *status pursuit and status maintenance*, these puzzles include at least the following: 1) Why would states (and their decision-makers) seek status? 2) Assuming that the interest in generating additional status or maintaining the status a state already has is salient but not a constant concern to policy makers, when are status concerns more or less important to states (under what conditions do status concerns vary for states)? 3) What strategies are utilized by states to pursue status and are there different strategies pursued by states that are in danger of losing status than for states that seek to gain additional status? 4) Under what conditions is the pursuit of additional status a zero sum game and under what conditions can it be a positive sum game?

Additionally, treating status and status seeking or status maintenance concerns as independent, explanatory variables in international politics raises two other salient questions: 1) Under what conditions does the pursuit of status (or attempts to maintain status) exacerbate conflicts in international politics or provide incentives for cooperative relationships? and 2) To what extent does status enhancement or diminution have an impact on the successful pursuit of foreign policy objectives by states?

These questions are vital to understanding a number of issues about status and to building a general theory of status in international politics. However, in order to examine fully these critical puzzles regarding status and its effects, we approach the subject by focusing this exploratory effort on trying to account for how states attribute status to each other. Developing a more systematic understanding of what affects status attribution should allow us to consider more fruitfully these other puzzles. Therefore, and while we bring into our discussion some of these concerns, our primary focus is not the status pursuit by individual states (here we are not focused on status as an independent variable) but on status attribution by the community of states

in international affairs. Thus, we treat status attribution as a dependent variable and search for explanations to account for variation in status attribution across the community of states in international politics. In this sense, and while recognizing that status pursuits and status attribution are interrelated, we believe that analytically they can be separated, and in this effort we underemphasize strategies of status seeking.

We focus on status attribution as a dependent variable because our assessment of the state of knowledge regarding the role of status in international politics indicates that researchers have barely scratched the surface in trying to develop a systematic understanding of the conditions that drive status attribution for the entire community of states.<sup>2</sup> As we come to understand more about how the pursuit and maintenance of status by states contributes to patterns of cooperation and conflict in international politics, and we uncover the theoretical drivers<sup>3</sup> that may motivate state policy makers to do so, it becomes absolutely essential to probe the dynamics by which status is attributed by the community of states. A clearer understanding of the conditions under which such status attribution occurs may help explain which status pursuits are likely to succeed or fail, and to provide cues about the permeability of the status hierarchy operating in international politics.

Much of the previous work on status, including ours, has focused primarily on major powers, both in terms of status pursuits and the status attributed to them by other states in

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<sup>2</sup> For rare exceptions see: East 1972; Kinne 2013; Renshon 2013; Rhamey and Early 2013; Volgy and Mayhall 1995; Wallace 1973.

<sup>3</sup> The literature presently is divided between three views on the theoretical drivers regarding the pursuit of status by states and their policy makers. Some have argued for instrumental (e.g., soft power generation or changes in domestic support) consequences resulting from status attribution; others have argued for ideational and emotional consequences; still a third school has suggested that it is likely to be a combination of both and trying to argue for the primacy of one type of theoretical driver over the other is a relatively fruitless exercise. For a brief review of this discussion, see Onea 2013.

international politics.<sup>4</sup> To the extent that there is an integrated body of research on status attribution, status seeking, status competition, status anxiety, status inconsistency, and status deficits in international politics, it has been overwhelmingly focused on status considerations regarding major powers and those states seeking to become major powers. Undoubtedly the extent to which major powers enjoy more or less status than they deserve, or the extent to which they engage in status competition, are salient for the course of international affairs, including how they approach conflict and cooperative processes as a consequence. In this effort however we are more interested in how the larger community of states is attributed status.<sup>5</sup> If status provides both intrinsic and material payoffs to state policy makers—as the literature on status acquisition theorizes—then policy makers in Argentina or Serbia or Indonesia should be as impacted by the dynamics of status attribution as the policy makers of major powers.

One final point about what we do not do in this effort: we have labeled our work an “exploratory” one and it is far from definitive. We do so for two reasons. First, we do not have sufficient previous theoretical foundation on top of which to build additional theory to account for status attribution in international politics. Therefore, we make only an incomplete and preliminary effort in this regard. Second, there is a paucity of systematic, empirical examination of the correlates of status attribution for states that are not major powers or rising powers, and given such paucity, our intention is to contribute to the literature by constructing a base model that can allow researchers to use it as a common foundation and a starting point for focusing on a number of important, albeit contested ideas about what may be important considerations for

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<sup>4</sup> Examples include Larson and Shevchenko 2003, 2010; Nayar and Paul 2003; Onea 2013; Volgy et al. 2011; Wohlforth 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Some of the processes involved in status attribution to major powers may be relevant for our concerns, although the extent to which this is the case remains both a theoretical and empirical question, and will be investigated below.

states as they assess the status rankings of their cohorts. Thus, and although we conclude by suggesting the next steps for theory and model construction, our primary contribution here is to create a baseline model for status attribution as the critical starting point for further theoretical and empirical exploration.

### **Defining Status Attribution in International Politics**

Definitions are theoretically derived; ours is based on an agnostic approach across realist (Wohlforth 2009), structuralist (Thompson 2011), social identity theory (SIT) (Mercer 1995; Hymans 2002; Larson and Shevchenko 2010), sociological (Weber 1978) and social psychological perspectives (Hyman 1980). We define status attribution in international politics *as overtly recognized membership (recognized standing) of an entity in a group along with an overtly recognized hierarchical ranking within the group that may carry with them obligations, responsibilities, and rights, and conveys standing different from those not in the group or from those ranked differently (higher or lower) in the group.*<sup>6</sup>

Much of the theoretical construction seeking to explain patterns in international politics is based on three fundamental and contrasting assumptions about the nature of the international political system. One is the famous anarchy assumption popularized by Waltz (1979): that international politics is anarchic to the extent that it is missing the type of formal, structural governance mechanisms typically found in domestic systems, and this assumption should lead to

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<sup>6</sup> While this definition is from a compilation of perspectives on status, due credit must also go to Brodie (1996), Lake (2011) and Renshon (2013). Consistent with Defoe et al. (2013) we differentiate between status and reputation. Reputation is a first order or second order belief about a state's capabilities or its behavioral tendency (e.g., reputation for risk aversion, reputation for strength, etc.). As Defoe et al. note "reputation is an umbrella terms that refers to inference about an agent, based on that agent's past behavior that informs that agent's future behavior" (2013:7). Status for them, like our conceptualization, is more a "holding of a particular social role in a hierarchy, based on either its positional nature or its social identity." Of course the relationship between prestige and status is a complex one, and in fact seeking prestige may be one avenue toward increasing one's status.

significant consequences for how international politics operates. A contrasting assumption advanced by a number of structural theorists (e.g., Gilpin 1981; Modelski and Thompson 1988; Organski and Kugler 1980; Lake 2011) implies that the anarchy assumption is not a very useful one and opt instead for an assumption of hierarchical organization of the modern international system globally, and perhaps regionally as well (Lemke 2002). The third school, typically found in liberalism (Moravcsik 1997), selectorate theory and foreign policy studies (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2012) assumes that these distinctions are not nearly as important as domestic dynamics and various interstate processes and linkages that may be more salient than issues about anarchy or hierarchy.<sup>7</sup>

Our definition of status clearly assumes that international politics is hierarchic in nature and dominated by substantial inequalities between states. The exclusive nature of high status groupings reflect the nature of both the hierarchy and the enormous inequalities that operate across the international system. Few states have the capabilities to enter the most exclusive status groupings, and differences in rank within all status groupings (including the highly exclusive status clubs)<sup>8</sup> become salient for interstate interactions (and perhaps as well for the domestic political survival of policy elites). We have documented the extent of inequalities elsewhere (Volgy et al. 2011). Yet to underscore those here, we simply note that a Gini index of inequality on both measures of military and economic capabilities for states in international politics shows a strong, linear progression over time in systemic inequality in basic capabilities, with values

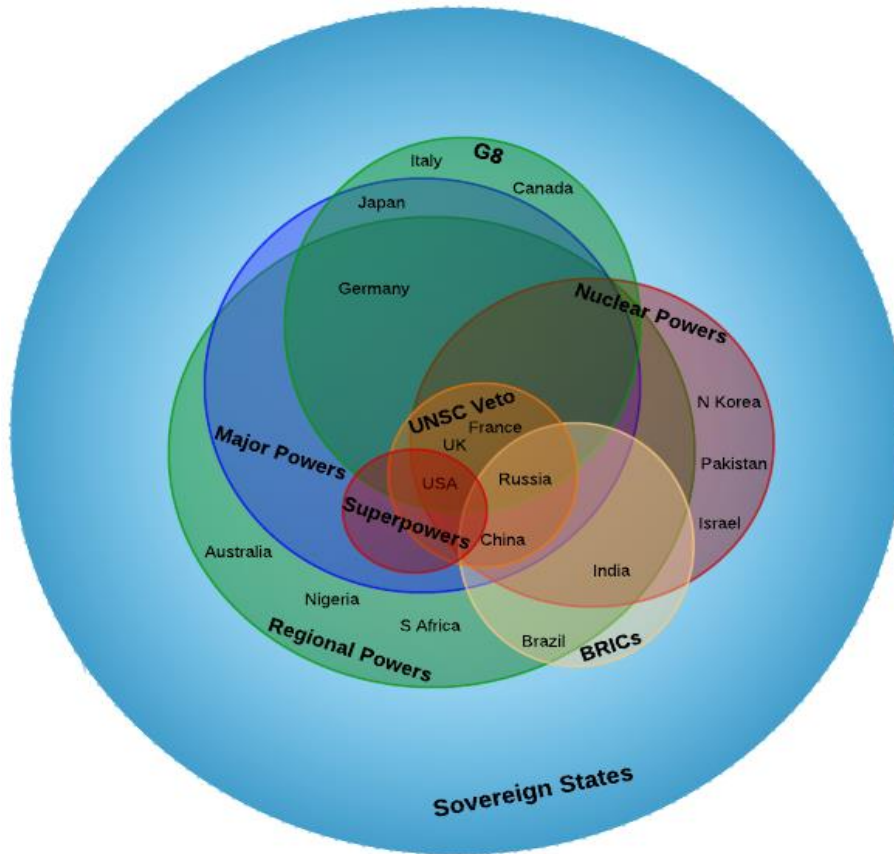
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<sup>7</sup> Although one can argue that the extent of hierarchy, in the form of dominant power, or very ample resources with which to seek to control certain outcomes between states, is certainly part of the calculus for foreign policy makers in both small and large selectorate based regimes (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2012).

<sup>8</sup> We use the terms status groups, status groupings, and status clubs interchangeably.

ranging as high as .9 for military inequality over the last five decades, and over .8 for economic inequality.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 1: Possible High Status Clubs in International Politics.**



Our definition approaches the conceptualization of status in a hierarchical system characterized by enormous inequalities in two overlapping ways. First, status attribution is partly a function of group membership. Those states that are group members have higher status than those that are not members. In this sense we have identified numerous potential high status groupings in international politics: the superpower club; the major powers club; the regional power club; the G-7(8) club; the G-20 club; the club of sovereign states (Figure 1). Some of

<sup>9</sup> The Gini index ranges from 0 (perfect inequality) to 1 (total domination by one unit in the system).



these clubs have overlapping membership, but most are highly exclusive (the superpower club ranges from a membership of one to two; the club of major powers normally ranges from three to seven states), and likely membership in some of these clubs carries more status than in others. Note that in the Figure 1 we have specified only one inclusive club—the club of sovereign states—which is the primary focus of our effort.<sup>10</sup>

Our definition however also emphasizes that status attribution is not just about club membership but is also focused on rankings *within* the club/group, reflecting the substantial inequalities that exist in international politics. Even within rather exclusive clubs, there are substantial rank differences. Not all members of the G-7(8) are equal in status; nuclear club members have all crossed one crucial threshold to membership but within the club, there are substantial inequalities, inequalities that are recognized both by members and those states that are outside the club.

Most of the status clubs in international politics are highly limited in membership, further underscoring the great inequalities characteristic of the international system, as entrance is barred to most states with limited capabilities. Likely this is why status rankings matter in the much more inclusive club—the club of states—which is widely open to those units that make a legitimate claim to being a sovereign state. It is this political club that is the focus of our analysis. Bearing these inequalities in mind, our paper seeks to address the broader question of status attribution among the community of states, and not just those states within the highest status groupings.

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<sup>10</sup> Yet even this inclusive club membership may be contested. Note the case of Taiwan, or contestation over East Germany's status during the Cold War, and recently about the status of Bosnia, Kosovo, Transdniestria, or the breakaway republics in the Caucasus.

Note several additional issues about our definition. The term “recognized” in the definition refers to the notion that status is based on perceptual and intersubjectively determined criteria rather than objectively determined attribution. We thus concur with both SIT theorists and social psychologists that status attribution is a social phenomenon resulting from perceptions and social comparisons being made by actors (both those inside and outside a status grouping) about another actor. In some cases perceptions and “objectives realities” may be the same: it is difficult to not perceive Italy as a member of the G-7 (even though its economic and political clout—and its ranking within the group—is perhaps more limited than those of other group members). It is invited to and participates in all G-7 meetings and is part of the formal membership. But these instances are typically rare, and most attributions require substantially more complex judgments by other entities engaged in social comparison. As the requirements for membership or ranking increase in complexity, the likelihood of objective and subjective rankings being the same is reduced dramatically.

Furthermore, our definition of status attribution for the community of states in international politics specifies *overt* recognition, going beyond simply perceptions and social comparison. We do so for two reasons. First, the status group of sovereign states is so inclusive and its membership so heterogeneous that in order for rankings to matter to recipients, there needs to be some public recognition of where a state stands. Otherwise, private perceptions and private social comparisons create far too much uncertainty regarding standing, making its consequences, including social obligations, rights and responsibilities, and domestic or personal benefits that come with ranking problematic. Second, we acknowledge that there may be a significant difference between private perceptions and social comparison on the one hand and overt recognition of states’ status on the other. To the extent that there are political costs for

states for publicly attributing status rankings to other states, the more salient phenomenon should be overt rather than private recognition.<sup>11</sup>

Additionally, we are suggesting that for most states in international politics the elite status groupings (superpower status, major power status, and regional power status) are unreachable, and thus the most salient status consideration is about the attribution of ranking within the inclusive club of states. Yet, what the definition fails to indicate is the appropriate social comparison within this large club. Two concerns are relevant here. First, what criteria are being used by states to make these social comparisons (and to what extent are they influenced by very strong states<sup>12</sup> seeking to influence the contours of international politics)? Second, is it a state's global ranking that is most salient, or is it more appropriate to focus on the extent to which states make status comparisons and rank each other primarily within their own regions or neighborhoods? There is some evidence for the value of the global approach (Kinne 2013)<sup>13</sup> although some scholars have also argued strongly for the regional approach (e.g. Renshon 2013; Onea 2013:11) as being primarily relevant for status attribution in international affairs.

Our definition is silent on the appropriate group for social comparison for the community of states: it is intentionally ambiguous on the global versus regional focal point for status attribution. Valid arguments can be made regarding the salience if not the preeminence of the

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<sup>11</sup> It may matter a great deal that Chinese decision makers would believe that Russia has become a third-world oil producer of limited consequence (as one Chinese academic privately noted recently), but it is far more consequential if Chinese foreign policy makers publicly so indicate.

<sup>12</sup> See Thompson 2011.

<sup>13</sup> Kinne argues persuasively that states make social comparisons globally, orienting their diplomatic structures toward both prestigious/high status states and diplomatically salient ones, although his measure of distance (suggesting a regional focus) in the empirical analysis does have a significant effect on the diplomatic missions being sent by states.

local context of social comparison. We have no clear answers to these types of questions: Does it matter to Colombia's policy makers if its status ranking is substantially higher or lower than Indonesia's, as attributed by states outside of South America? Is the more appropriate social comparison Colombia's ranking by other South American states (and by key actors outside the region) vis-à-vis its regional reference points, such as Venezuela or Argentina?

Frankly, we are not sure, but there may be at least two reasons why global rankings may be at least as salient as regional ones. First, to the extent that states increasingly exist and "do business" in a globalized world, the status they are attributed by other states outside their immediate region may very much matter to the pursuit of their foreign policies and perhaps their domestic political well-being. Even those that do not venture much out of their regional settings may be impacted by states from outside of the region, and thus global standing likely matters. Second, the status attributed by the global community may complement and/or offset limited status attribution within the region.<sup>14</sup>

Given the limited amount of work on status attribution across the global community of states, we pursue below a strategy of focusing first on global status, but we will make comparisons as well with states' regional status attribution. Doing so, we will seek to ascertain whether or not the two patterns run in tandem and/or if there are substantial differences both in status designations and the dynamics that may drive those differences.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Note for instance Cuba, and Egypt after the Camp David accords, as illustrations of states that receive far greater status attribution globally than within their own regions (see regional tables below).

<sup>15</sup> Although we are interested in both global and regional status attribution, the central focus of this effort is the development of a baseline model from which to probe the dynamics of global status attribution. Therefore, we limit here the investigation of regional status attribution to a simple comparison with its global counterpart, and leave more complex specifications for regional status attribution for our future research agenda.

Finally, note that the definition includes reference to the *benefits* of rank: that membership in status groups or rankings within them “carry with them obligations, responsibilities, and rights”. In this sense we are suggesting that group membership, and relative rankings in the group have consequences—both positive or negative—for a state whose relative status is recognized. This aspect of the definition is similar to the Weberian notion of status (see Sylvan et al. 1998; Duque 2013) and without this dimension to status attribution, its consequences for international politics would be severely limited.<sup>16</sup>

### **Measuring Status Attribution within the Community of States**

How can researchers develop valid measures of status attribution if in fact such attribution by states toward other states is conceptualized as a perceptual phenomenon involving social comparison? States do not perceive nor make social comparisons; foreign policy makers do, and we have no access to those perceptions or comparisons. At best, we can find statements by foreign policy makers that may reflect some perceptions and a few comparisons, but even those statements are not systematically available over time, and certainly not about more than a handful of other states. Therefore, short of conducting experimental studies, researchers need to rely on measurable, systematically observable behaviors (and consistent with the idea of overt recognition) that are most likely to be tied to such perceptions and social comparisons.

To the extent that prior research has sought to systematically operationalize the status rankings of states in international politics—consistent with our definitional approach,

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<sup>16</sup> And in this sense we return to the distinction between materialist and ideational drivers behind status. Our definition does not preclude the latter but is suggestive that at the minimum, the former is highly salient.

emphasizing articulated perceptual and social phenomenon<sup>17</sup>—virtually all the literature has focused on diplomatic exchanges<sup>18</sup> as behavioral, overt manifestations of perceptual status rankings (East 1972; Kinne 2013; Renshon 2013; Singer and Small 1966; Small and Singer 1973; Volgy and Mayhall 1995; Wallace 1971, 1973). Kinne (2013:1) for instance also argues that states engage in “[e]xtensive reliance on diplomatic missions as a source of prestige or status,” thus using the missions they receive as perhaps a major measure of their own status achievement.<sup>19</sup>

Large-n analyses of status attribution surrounding the more exclusive clubs of regional and major powers have used more complex indicators but those operational strategies are not available for the more inclusive club that numbers its membership over time between sixty and 195 members, as does the club of sovereign states. For instance, the Correlates of War (COW) approach to empirically identifying members of the major powers status club relies on a survey of diplomatic historians who are asked to identify not states with major power status, but states that policy makers of other states perceive to have major power status (Singer 1988). While this strategy may be valid for a handful of states (the club ranges between five and seven members), it is likely a strategy of highly questionable validity when applied to all states in international

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<sup>17</sup> For sociologists, who focus on status as an objective phenomenon, the operational classification is approached quite differently. For example, operating out of a world systems perspective, Olzak and Tsutsui (1998) classify status simply as membership in the core, semi-periphery, or the periphery, based on economic attributes.

<sup>18</sup> For one intriguing exception, see Maoz (2011) who uses network centrality measures of three dimensions of international participation to classify the relative status of states in the international system by treating centrality as status.

<sup>19</sup> To the extent that there is also some reciprocity involved, note that the Palestinian effort at recognition in the UN General Assembly was preceded with opening as many embassies as possible prior to the General Assembly meeting in 2011.

politics.<sup>20</sup> Furthermore, while it is useful for a few major powers where public recognition may not be crucial,<sup>21</sup> its application to a very large number of states without public recognition would become problematic.

A second approach to identifying major power (and regional power) status club membership—and ranking within the club—has used a combination of diplomatic missions received complemented by high volumes of symbolic state visits received by states with substantial capabilities (Volgy et al. 2011). While this strategy has been fruitful and met several tests of face validity, its reliance on events data to generate high levels of state visits received by major and regional powers depends on events data archives that are less reliable in capturing the occurrence of state visits to the large majority of states that are routinely not covered by the media on which those archives are based.<sup>22</sup>

Thus, the default option for measuring the behavioral manifestations of status perceptions and social comparisons between states in international politics has become the volume of diplomatic contacts sent by states to each other, and it is the strategy utilized in our effort.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> And even these judgments about major power status appear at times to be somewhat questionable. For instance, virtually all states that gain major power status never lose it permanently (with Italy being the lone exception), while some states are designated by COW as having major power status for decades before their policy makers actually seek such status or have the capabilities with which to seek it (e.g. China between 1950 and 1985).

<sup>21</sup> This is so because for a handful of major powers, the public communication about their status is attained through a variety of mechanisms, including elite status in organizations (e.g. veto power in the UN Security Council), periodic high level group meetings, large numbers of symbolic state visits, etc.

<sup>22</sup> As part of this effort we combed the IDEA events data base (Bond et al. 2003) for state visits to most states and found it to be relatively insensitive to these activities for states that are not major powers, regional powers, or engaged in rivalries or long-term conflicts.

<sup>23</sup> We have investigated a number of additional measures that would complement diplomatic contacts, including elected office holding in the United Nations, but have found severe shortcomings associated with each approach, including problems involving structural distortions (quotas, lack of universal opportunity, various procedural restrictions), longitudinal breaks, etc.

Although diplomatic contacts have been the measure of choice for almost all large-n systematic analyses of status attribution in the literature, we recognize that the indicator carries some significant drawbacks, distortions, and “noise” in the data.<sup>24</sup> For instance, Belgium ranks much higher in formal embassies received than its status likely warrants, and likely its ranking would be far lower if the EU’s headquarters were not located in Brussels. Furthermore, the diplomatic norm of reciprocity between states (Kinne 2013) adds further noise to the data, reflecting not necessarily just status perceptions and social comparisons.<sup>25</sup>

Despite such problems, the establishment of diplomatic missions in one state by other states tends to create observable, overt manifestations that appear to reflect perceptions of status on the part of the sending states (Barston 2006), an argument that has persisted in the literature over time (Singer and Small 1966; Small and Singer 1973; Kinne 2013). A significant part of the argument for its validity as a status measure is utilitarian: “states face resource constraints and must be selective in choosing diplomatic partners” (Neumayer 2008), and this is an issue even for states endowed with substantial economic capabilities and resources.<sup>26</sup> States then are likely to invest in substantial diplomatic missions in other states based on decisional criteria that are in

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<sup>24</sup> We sought to minimize the level of “noise” in the data by eliminating all contacts that were not directly in the capitals of the state targeted with a diplomatic contact, and eliminating as well those diplomatic contacts that did not include an ambassador (or higher) in residence (see below on the coding of diplomatic contacts).

<sup>25</sup> Clearly such reciprocity does not create isomorphic relationships, yet to the extent that reciprocity exists, it is a plausible distortion in the data if the data are meant to reflect only a perceptually based social comparison between states. That they are not is discussed below.

<sup>26</sup> Note that even the strongest of states in the system—the United States—has struggled with such resource constraints, and especially in terms of providing sufficient security for its range of embassies, an issue that was highlighted with the attacks on its embassies in Uganda and Kenya, and most recently through the domestic politics that whirled around the killing of the U.S. Ambassador in Benghazi, Libya. Even aspiring major powers such as Brazil and India have had difficulties investing in sufficient capabilities to create a large enough diplomatic corps that is able to staff Indian and Brazilian desires to conduct extensive diplomatic operations across Africa (see “India in Africa: Catching Up.” *The Economist*, May 28, 2011:7; and “On Indian Foreign Policy Infrastructure: Can India Become a Great Power?” *The Economist*, March 30<sup>th</sup>, 2013.)



*good measure*<sup>27</sup> linked to perceptions of relative rankings from the pool of all such possible diplomatic missions that could be sent.

Yet, note the qualifier of “good measure”; we anticipate that the behavioral manifestation of status attribution in international politics is not solely a reflection of perceptions of status based on social comparisons. If status attributed is of value to the recipient (and we assume that it is) then it is also likely to be contested by certain states in conflict with each other, and such contestation may add to the costs of manifesting status attribution. As others have noted (Kinne 2013; Renshon 2013), establishing diplomatic relations with some states can carry significant costs, as states engaged in rivalries for instance seek to prevent the conferral of additional status and legitimacy on their antagonists and perhaps seek to induce additional status and legitimacy on their allies. This was certainly the case during the Cold War (over the divided Germany and Korea) and is still the case over Taiwan<sup>28</sup> and some of the contested republics stemming from the end of the Cold War and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. We raise this issue as a cautionary

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<sup>27</sup> Note again that we are not trying to identify an “objective” measure of status. To the extent that these social comparisons are driven by perceptions, the theoretical focus needs to be on what drives perceptions and social comparisons. Some perceptions are based on views of the capabilities of the recipient state; some may be in response to the recipient state actively seeking to conform to widely shared norms (democracies, freedom loving states) that are valued, while these perceptions may be mediated by other states actively seeking to restrict manifestations of social comparison for a variety of political reasons. It comes as no surprise to students of the Cold War for instance about the bitter battles by major powers and Cold War antagonists to influence perceptions and/or behavioral manifestations of those perceptions over East Germany, West Germany, North Korea, South Korea, Taiwan after the acceptance of the PRC as the legitimate official entity for China, or the breakaway republics around Georgia. Thus, the manifestations of social comparison through diplomatic rankings are likely to be mediated by other factors that have not been systematically specified, including potential negative consequences for recognizing one side over another (or even both sides) when two states or groups of states are engaged in major conflicts or rivalries.

<sup>28</sup> The PRC has used its considerable resources to place enormous pressures on states not to recognize and send embassies to Taipei; in turn, Taiwan has used some of its economic strength to woo recognition and embassies, particularly from smaller states. As recently as 2013, academic bureaucrats in China informed the International Studies Association (ISA) that China could not participate in a joint conference unless ISA changed the designation of its Taiwanese members as academics coming from “Chinese Taipei”.

note about diplomatic contacts; while we argue that it is reflective of overt status rankings, it is also a behavioral manifestation of status based on more (or less) than simply perception of ranking based on social comparisons. We will return to this point below as we seek to construct a theory and model of status attribution.

Nearly all of the literature using diplomatic contacts as a status measure relies on the COW diplomatic contacts data base (Bayer 2006). This source has been modified in a number of ways. Rhamey et al (2010) have recreated the data for the 1965-2005 timeframe, and added to the data base diplomatic contacts for 2010 using the same source (*Europa Yearbook*). We use the Rhamey et al. database with slight modifications (Rhamey et al 2013), restricting the data to states with populations in excess of 250,000<sup>29</sup> and with some minor modifications where the original source may have provided information inconsistent with some events. Both the original Rhamey et al. data collection and the latter modifications differ from the COW data in the following ways:

- 1) Only those instances are coded when the original source indicates an *embassy* in the *capital* of another state; an embassy that is also accredited to a state when it is not located in its capital is eliminated from the data.
- 2) The coding rule requires that the staffing of the embassy be headed by a diplomat in residence with at least the ranking of an ambassador or its equivalent; when the ambassador's position is vacant, or the highest ranking diplomat is below the ambassadorial level, the embassy is not coded as a status relevant diplomatic contact.

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<sup>29</sup> The Rhamey et al 2013 version of the data base can be accessed at: <http://www.u.arizona.edu/~volgy/data.html> .

- 3) Where there are ambiguities in the original source (*Europa Yearbook*) previous and subsequent years are searched to determine the reliability of the information.
- 4) We eliminated from the database all microstates (those with populations of 250,000 or smaller), and all states that neither receive nor send embassies.<sup>30</sup>

We have taken these steps in an effort to ensure that the measure reflects overt status attribution as much as possible and to reduce as much noise as possible in the data. Nevertheless, it is clear that we are still dependent on the original source for the indicator and there may be errors either in the source or in our categorizations.<sup>31</sup>

There are numerous options for assembling the diplomatic status variable and previous research has varied in approaching this issue. We have looked at a variety of alternatives. One is to create a simple ranking of states, from those receiving the most to those receiving the least number of contacts (e.g., East 1972; Volgy and Mayhall 1995). Another obvious alternative is to simply use the actual counts of embassies being accredited to any state at a particular point in time (Rhamey and Early 2013). A third approach is to create a network measure for each state in the diplomatic network (Kinne 2013; Maoz 2010; Renshon 2013), by using one of a number of

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<sup>30</sup> We eliminate states for the years when they neither send nor receive in order to minimize noise in the data. Virtually all of these states are brand new and are constructing their foreign policy architecture. Thus, for instance an entity that becomes a sovereign state in 1964 or 1965 may not receive nor send embassies until at least one year after independence in several cases, and would increase the noise in the data had we listed it as having actual zero values. Compare for instance the ability of the new Russian Federation to the Ukraine in recreating and staffing a diplomatic corps after the breakup of the Soviet Union. Rhamey et al (2010) and our later alterations seek to maximize reliability to the extent possible. For example, ten percent samples of each five-year period were recoded and the threshold of 96% inter-coder reliability was used as a minimum before accepting the data for any specific year. We encourage other investigators to make us aware of any errors or omissions.

<sup>31</sup> Note that prior to 1965 the original source (and the COW data) does not provide sufficient information to create the differentiation across missions we require. As Kinne (2013) notes, all diplomatic ties are coded equally prior to 1965, including one embassy being accredited to more than one country, and there is very limited information on the status of the actual diplomatic staffing being sent. Therefore, our analysis begins in 1965.

network centrality measures and ranking states on the basis of their values on the appropriate measure.<sup>32</sup>

Since we are interested in assessing how status attribution may be changing over time as the *opportunity* to receive embassies also changes over time (since the number of states in the system increases over time), we want to focus on a measure that takes into account the opportunity of receiving embassies versus their actual receipt. For us this is crucial as we seek to observe changes across both Cold War and post-Cold War years and during periods of substantial expansion in the community of states in international politics. Therefore, the measure we develop is a percentage indicator of embassies received: the numerator is the number of embassies received, and the denominator is the number of states in the system in the year that states send their embassies to other states.

It is plausible that the results of our base model could vary substantially as a function of these choices being made. In order to probe for this possibility, we correlated all of these options with each other (Table 1). The results show extremely high correlations between the various versions of the dependent variable including a high correlation between one network measure and the percentage indicator we use below.

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**Table 1: Correlation Matrix of Dependent Variable Options for Diplomatic Contacts**

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<sup>32</sup> Renshon (2013) makes a strong argument for using the network centrality measure PageRank (a variant of eigenvector centrality) to assess not only the number of ties (diplomatic contacts) received but also the centrality of the sender. We avoided making judgments, empirical or conceptual, about the nature of the “senders”, relying on the degree of consensus instead among the community of states regarding the status of a single state. For us status attribution is a function of the extent of consensus about a state’s rankings rather than consensus only among influential states. Thus, we would not use network measures that are not based on directed data. Network measures that allow for directed ties (degree centrality/in-degree centrality) correspond closely to the measure we use to weigh diplomatic contacts received by states; when not normalized, the correlations are virtually identical to that measure. The relative face validity between our measure and Renshon’s is discussed below.

**(Dipcon) Measure.**

	Dipcon Count	Dipcon Ranking	Dipcon Percentage
Dipcon Count*	1.000	-0.823	0.971
Dipcon Ranking	0.823	1.000	0.885
Dipcon Percentage	0.971	0.885	1.000

\* Note: the Dipcon Count variable is equivalent to the network measure of in-degree centrality

We create observations for all states in the system at five-year intervals for time periods when data are available on diplomatic missions, essentially yielding data over ten time frames between 1965 and 2010. Four of the ten time frames allow us to observe post-Cold War changes as well. For illustrative purposes, Table 2 provides descriptive statistics on the dependent variable for all years and at ten-year increments.<sup>33</sup>

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics on Global Status Attribution (in percentages), for total years and by decades, 1970-2010.**

<b>Time Frame</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
1965 - 2010	0.585	98.276	23.847	18.547
1970	0.763	77.099	21.481	17.096
1980	0.676	77.027	24.169	18.097
1990	1.316	81.579	25.216	18.227
2000	0.585	84.211	22.352	18.585
2010	1.724	98.276	26.873	21.181

Table 3 is created to illustrate the extent of face validity in the data by comparing the distribution of status attribution values for states across two time periods: 1980 and 2010. We list the top fifty states for each period. As can be seen from this listing, the status attribution measure appears to correspond strongly with past analyses of at least major power status<sup>34</sup> and

<sup>33</sup> A one-way ANOVA test for the table indicates that the groupings are not significantly different from each other across the time frames, indicating that changes in the number of states in the system does not appear to significantly impact on status rankings.

<sup>34</sup> For 1980, all four states with major power status (Volgy et al. 2011) are in the top six of the rankings, and if Belgium represents the collective of the EU, then the only one in the top six without major power status is Germany.

also with more recent assessments of the status rankings of regional powers that are members of the BRICS club. For instance, we would normally expect the U.S. and the Soviet Union—as the two superpowers—to rank near the top in 1980 but since both states contested status rankings and pressured their allies accordingly during the highly polarized Cold War era, neither state, in fact, is on top of the rankings.<sup>35</sup> Note which state has the highest ranking: France, a major Western power, but one that had created some distance between itself and the U.S. during the Cold War, and as a consequence, its status was less contested outside the West.<sup>36</sup>

After the end of the Cold War, and in the age of unipolarity we would expect the U.S. to receive top ranking, and in fact not only does it do so, but gains an almost perfect score. China moves from 10<sup>th</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> place between 1980 and 2010, consistent with its post-Cold War rise in at least economic capabilities. The combination of the end of bipolarity and changing economic capabilities also appear to drive the change in status rankings for South Korea, which did not appear in the top 50 in 1980 but moved into 21<sup>st</sup> place by 2010.

**Table 3: A Comparison of States Based on the Percentage of Diplomatic Contacts Received, for the Fifty Highest Ranked States, 1980 and 2010.**

1980		2010	
State	Percentage	State	Percentage
France	77.03	United States	98.28
German Federal Republic	75.68	Belgium	88.51
United Kingdom	75.00	China	87.36
United States	75.00	France	83.33
Belgium	72.30	United Kingdom	82.76
USSR	67.57	Germany	80.46

In 2010, all seven states with major power status are in the top ten (and eight if we include the EU/Belgium designation).

<sup>35</sup> Had we included the microstates as part of the sovereign state population (presumably most of those were in the “Western” camp), the U.S. ranking would vault to the top in 1980, while the USSR ranking would remain roughly the same.

<sup>36</sup> Note as well that West Germany’s high status ranking comes on the heels of Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* policies, seeking rapprochement with East Germany and to a limited extent the Soviet Union, prior to the 1980 status rankings.

Italy	62.16	Russia	79.89
Japan	61.49	India	79.89
Canada	59.46	Italy	71.84
China	58.11	Japan	71.84
India	55.41	Canada	71.26
Egypt	54.05	Egypt	70.69
Algeria	50.68	Brazil	66.09
Brazil	49.32	South Africa	63.22
Yugoslavia	47.97	Spain	61.49
Sweden	47.30	Austria	60.34
Spain	47.30	Netherlands	57.47
Romania	47.30	Sweden	56.32
Nigeria	47.30	Saudi Arabia	55.75
Austria	43.92	Switzerland	54.02
Switzerland	41.89	South Korea	53.45
Mexico	41.22	Australia	52.30
German Democratic Republic	40.54	Turkey	50.57
Saudi Arabia	40.54	Cuba	50.57
Argentina	39.86	Malaysia	48.85
Libya	39.86	Poland	48.28
Iran	39.19	Iran	47.70
Netherlands	38.51	Indonesia	47.13
Venezuela	37.84	Ethiopia	45.98
Poland	36.49	Greece	44.83
Iraq	36.49	Nigeria	44.25
Australia	36.49	Pakistan	44.25
Portugal	35.81	United Arab Emirates	42.53
Democratic Republic of Congo	35.81	Israel	42.53
Morocco	35.81	Hungary	41.95
Pakistan	35.81	Morocco	41.95
Greece	35.14	Czech Republic	41.38
Kuwait	35.14	Romania	41.38
Lebanon	35.14	Argentina	41.38
Peru	34.46	Mexico	40.80
Denmark	33.78	Algeria	40.80
Turkey	33.78	Denmark	40.23
Senegal	33.78	Portugal	40.23
Ethiopia	33.11	Libya	39.66
Czechoslovakia	32.43	Thailand	38.51
Kenya	32.43	Kenya	37.93
Indonesia	31.76	Qatar	37.36
Syria	31.76	Kuwait	36.78
Cuba	31.76	Ukraine	36.21
Tunisia	31.08	Jordan	35.63

There is, however, also some of the “noise” in the data to which we had earlier referred. For instance, note the prominence of Belgium; its ranking is of highly questionable face validity unless we accept the idea that the ranking is a function of the EU’s headquarters in Brussels, and therefore the status it appears to receive makes sense more as a “place marker” for the EU’s

status ranking rather than Belgium's. Note also that states within large regions and with high levels of integration and reciprocity in diplomatic contacts should rank better: this is likely one of two reasons why Austria ranks substantially higher than Australia.<sup>37</sup>

How does our measure compare with a network-based measure in terms of face validity? Renshon (2013:57) provides snapshots of the top and bottom status rankings in four time periods, based on network-based PageRank scores, which are a function of both diplomatic contacts received and the centrality of the senders. There are two snapshots during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, a time of clear UK global leadership, which should correspond to the UK holding the highest status ranking in the system. Yet in 1817 the highest rank goes to Germany<sup>38</sup> while the two contenders (Onea 2013) for global dominance and top status ranking (the UK and France) rank only 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>. However, on the measure closest to ours (Renshon also provides numbers of ties, which corresponds to our Dipcon Count measure), they rank first and second. In 1874 the distortion is not as severe, but the UK still fails to reach first place despite its second cycle of global leadership (Thompson 2006). The snapshot in 1950 illustrates data that closely mirror the number of diplomatic ties with the PageRank measure, suggesting a rough equivalence between our measure and the network approach. However, by 2005 there again appears to be a severe distortion on the PageRank ranking: despite China trailing substantially the U.S. (receiving 34 fewer ties) on the measure closest to ours, China's ranking on PageRank shows it to be the highest in the system, surpassing the U.S. in status even during an era of American-based unipolarity.

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<sup>37</sup> Europe, Austria's home region, has 45 states in the region in 2010, with an average in-region attribution value of 0.675; Oceania, Australia's home region has 7 states in the region with an average in-region attribution of 0.45. For the second reason, see below.

<sup>38</sup> From the standpoint of long cycle theory, Germany does not attain global power status until some sixty years after this ranking; see Rasler and Thompson 1994:28.



We look once more at our status measure by comparing patterns of status attribution within regions versus globally. One possible comparison of interest is to observe the degree of similarity in global versus regional status attribution. We illustrate two ways of observing these distinctions. One is a pattern of correlations between status attributed within a region versus status attributed globally to the same state. As Table 4 illustrates, the correlations (both during and after the Cold War) are very high between status attributed to a state by other states within its own region versus the status attributed to it globally.<sup>39</sup> The one clear—and fascinating exception—appears to be the Middle East both during and after the Cold War.<sup>40</sup>

**Table 4: Descriptive Statistics for Selected Regions on Status Attribution within Regions, and Correlations (r) Between Regional and Global Status Attribution Scores, 1980 and 2010.**

	1980				2010			
	N	Mean	SD	r	N	Mean	SD	r
Europe	30	0.713	0.231	0.821	45	0.675	0.214	0.869
Southern Africa*	26	0.126	0.120	0.921	28	0.253	0.211	0.946
<b>Middle East</b>	15	0.453	0.228	<b>0.238</b>	14	0.709	0.214	<b>0.181</b>
East Asia	18	0.386	0.213	0.763	19	0.601	0.262	0.655
South America	12	0.569	0.221	0.831	12	0.632	0.202	0.773

\*The designation excludes West African and Maghreb states

A second comparison between regional versus global status attribution is illustrated in Tables 5 through 9. We compare the status attributed to each state only by its region versus the

<sup>39</sup> Note as well that there is a remarkable amount of stability in Table 4 across the two time frames within most of these regions, even though the composition of some of those regions had changed dramatically between 1980 and 2010, suggesting that substantial differences exist in status attribution between regions. We test below to see where region does become significant in the baseline model.

<sup>40</sup> Clearly the Middle East exception is not a function of regional size. For instance, our groupings contain fewer South American states (12) than Middle Eastern ones (15/14); the correlations between regional versus global status attribution for states in the South American region and the European region are very similar even though the latter region contains more than twice as many states.

status attributed to it globally, and again compare two time periods: in 1980 during the Cold War and in 2010, some twenty years after the end of the Cold War. As the tables illustrate, the primary differences between regional versus global status attribution appear to be for the Middle East region, even if Israel is excluded from the calculations. For instance, Egypt's status attribution well illustrates the lingering effects of Camp David as its status positioning globally dwarfs its regional status attribution. Note as well (Table 4) that status attribution in that region (noted by its standard deviation) becomes less diverse after the end of the Cold War.

**Table 5: Comparison of South American States Based on the Percentage of Diplomatic Contacts Received Regionally and Globally, 1980 and 2010.**

1980				2010			
State	Regional	State	Global	State	Regional	State	Global
Brazil	91.67	Brazil	49.32	Brazil	91.67	Brazil	66.09
Peru	75.00	Argentina	39.86	Argentina	75.00	Argentina	41.38
Venezuela	75.00	Venezuela	37.84	Colombia	75.00	Chile	35.63
Chile	66.67	Peru	34.46	Paraguay	75.00	Venezuela	34.48
Uruguay	66.67	Colombia	29.73	Venezuela	75.00	Peru	27.59
Argentina	58.33	Chile	26.35	Chile	66.67	Colombia	25.86
Ecuador	58.33	Uruguay	25.00	Ecuador	66.67	Uruguay	19.54
Paraguay	58.33	Ecuador	20.27	Peru	66.67	Ecuador	17.82
Bolivia	50.00	Bolivia	18.24	Uruguay	66.67	Paraguay	13.79
Colombia	50.00	Paraguay	12.84	Bolivia	50.00	Bolivia	12.64
Guyana	16.67	Guyana	9.46	Guyana	25.00	Suriname	6.90
Suriname	16.67	Suriname	6.08	Suriname	25.00	Guyana	5.75

**Table 6: Comparison of Middle Eastern States Based on the Percentage of Diplomatic Contacts Received Regionally and Globally, 1980 and 2010.**

1980				2010			
State	Regional	State	Global	State	Regional	State	Global
Iraq	73.33	Egypt	54.05	Jordan	92.86	Egypt	70.69
Iran	66.67	Saudi Arabia	40.54	Kuwait	85.71	Saudi Arabia	55.75
Jordan	66.67	Iran	39.19	Oman	85.71	Iran	47.70
Kuwait	66.67	Iraq	36.49	Qatar	85.71	Israel	42.53
Saudi Arabia	60.00	Kuwait	35.14	Saudi Arabia	85.71	United Arab Emirates	42.53
Lebanon	53.33	Lebanon	35.14	United Arab Emirates	85.71	Qatar	37.36
United Arab Emirates	53.33	Syria	31.76	Egypt	78.57	Kuwait	36.78
Yemen Arab Rep.	53.33	Israel	24.32	Yemen	78.57	Jordan	35.63
Oman	46.67	Jordan	23.65	Iran	71.43	Lebanon	32.18

Syria	46.67	United Arab Emirates	18.24	Bahrain	64.29	Oman	22.99
Qatar	40.00	Yemen Arab Rep.	15.54	Lebanon	64.29	Syria	22.41
Bahrain	33.33	Qatar	13.51	Iraq	57.14	Yemen	22.41
Egypt	13.33	Oman	10.81	Syria	42.86	Iraq	20.69
Israel	6.67	Yemen People's Rep.	9.46	Israel	14.29	Bahrain	17.24
Yemen People's Rep.	0.00	Bahrain	8.11				

**Table 7: Comparative Ranking of Sub-Saharan African States Based on the Percentage of Diplomatic Contacts Received Regionally and Globally, 1980 and 2010.**

1980				2010			
State	Regional	State	Global	State	Regional	State	Global
DR Congo	42.31	DR Congo	35.81	Ethiopia	82.14	South Africa	63.22
Ethiopia	34.62	Ethiopia	33.11	South Africa	82.14	Ethiopia	45.98
Kenya	30.77	Kenya	32.43	Kenya	50.00	Kenya	37.93
Mozambique	26.92	Tanzania	29.73	DR Congo	42.86	Zimbabwe	25.86
Zambia	26.92	Sudan	26.35	Tanzania	42.86	DR Congo	24.71
Sudan	23.08	Zambia	22.30	Zambia	42.86	Sudan	24.14
Tanzania	19.23	Mozambique	20.95	Zimbabwe	42.86	Angola	21.84
Uganda	19.23	Gabon	18.24	Mozambique	32.14	Tanzania	21.84
Congo	15.38	Uganda	14.19	Angola	28.57	Mozambique	19.54
Gabon	15.38	Congo	12.84	Namibia	28.57	Zambia	18.39
Burundi	11.54	Somalia	12.16	Botswana	25.00	Gabon	17.24
C. African Rep.	11.54	South Africa	11.49	Sudan	25.00	Uganda	16.67
Djibouti	11.54	C. African Rep.	10.81	Congo	21.43	Namibia	13.79
Malawi	7.69	Angola	10.14	Uganda	21.43	Congo	10.34
Angola	3.85	Madagascar	9.46	Gabon	17.86	Botswana	9.77
Botswana	3.85	Burundi	8.11	Malawi	17.86	Eritrea	9.77
Equatorial Guinea	3.85	Djibouti	8.11	Equatorial Guinea	14.29	Equatorial Guinea	9.20
Lesotho	3.85	Botswana	6.08	Rwanda	14.29	Madagascar	9.20
Mauritius	3.85	Malawi	6.08	Burundi	10.71	Rwanda	9.20
Rwanda	3.85	Mauritius	6.08	C. African Rep.	10.71	C. African Rep.	7.47
Somalia	3.85	Rwanda	6.08	Eritrea	10.71	Burundi	6.90
South Africa	3.85	Equatorial Guinea	4.05	Madagascar	10.71	Malawi	6.90
Comoros	0.00	Lesotho	2.70	Djibouti	7.14	Djibouti	6.32
Madagascar	0.00	Swaziland	2.70	Somalia	7.14	Mauritius	5.17
Swaziland	0.00	Zimbabwe	2.03	Swaziland	7.14	Lesotho	2.87
Zimbabwe	0.00	Comoros	1.35	Comoros	3.57	Somalia	2.87
				Lesotho	3.57	Swaziland	2.30
				Mauritius	3.57	Comoros	1.72

**Table 8: Comparison Ranking of East Asian States Based on the Percentage of Diplomatic Contacts Received Regionally and Globally, 1980 and 2010.**

1980				2010			
State	Regional	State	Global	State	Regional	State	Global
Japan	66.67	Japan	61.49	Thailand	89.47	China	87.36

Malaysia	61.11	China	58.11	China	84.21	Japan	71.84
Thailand	61.11	Indonesia	31.76	Japan	78.95	South Korea	53.45
Bangladesh	55.56	Philippines	27.70	South Korea	78.95	Malaysia	48.85
China	55.56	Malaysia	27.03	Vietnam	78.95	Indonesia	47.13
Myanmar	55.56	Thailand	27.03	Indonesia	73.68	Thailand	38.51
Indonesia	50.00	Bangladesh	23.65	Laos	73.68	Vietnam	35.06
Philippines	50.00	Vietnam	19.59	Malaysia	73.68	Singapore	32.76
Vietnam	50.00	Myanmar	18.92	Myanmar	73.68	Philippines	29.89
Laos	44.44	Singapore	18.92	Brunei	68.42	Bangladesh	20.11
Singapore	38.89	South Korea	16.22	Cambodia	68.42	Myanmar	14.94
Nepal	27.78	Laos	14.19	Philippines	68.42	Brunei	14.37
Mongolia	22.22	North Korea	13.51	Singapore	68.42	Cambodia	13.22
North Korea	22.22	Mongolia	10.81	Bangladesh	57.89	Nepal	12.64
South Korea	22.22	Nepal	9.46	Nepal	36.84	Laos	12.07
Cambodia	5.56	Taiwan	6.76	Mongolia	31.58	Mongolia	10.92
Taiwan	5.56	Cambodia	4.05	North Korea	31.58	North Korea	10.92
Bhutan	0.00	Bhutan	0.68	Bhutan	5.26	Taiwan	6.32
				Taiwan	0.00	Bhutan	1.72

**Table 9: Comparative Ranking of European States Based on the Percentage of Diplomatic Contacts Received Regionally and Globally, 1980 and 2010.**

1980				2010			
State	Regional	State	Global	State	Regional	State	Global
France	93.33	France	77.03	Austria	95.56	Belgium	88.51
Belgium	90.00	German F.R.	75.68	France	95.56	France	83.33
Russia	90.00	United Kingdom	75.00	Italy	95.56	United Kingdom	82.76
United Kingdom	90.00	Belgium	72.30	United Kingdom	95.56	Germany	80.46
Austria	86.67	Russia	67.57	Germany	93.33	Russia	79.89
German F.R.	86.67	Italy	62.16	Poland	93.33	Italy	71.84
Greece	86.67	Yugoslavia	47.97	Netherlands	91.11	Spain	61.49
Italy	86.67	Romania	47.30	Russia	91.11	Austria	60.34
Sweden	86.67	Spain	47.30	Belgium	88.89	Netherlands	57.47
Denmark	83.33	Sweden	47.30	Hungary	86.67	Sweden	56.32
Netherlands	83.33	Austria	43.92	Sweden	86.67	Switzerland	54.02
Portugal	83.33	Switzerland	41.89	Denmark	84.44	Turkey	50.57
Switzerland	83.33	German D.R.	40.54	Spain	84.44	Poland	48.28
Yugoslavia	83.33	Netherlands	38.51	Czech Republic	82.22	Greece	44.83
Romania	80.00	Poland	36.49	Turkey	82.22	Hungary	41.95
Spain	80.00	Portugal	35.81	Greece	80.00	Czech Republic	41.38
Turkey	80.00	Greece	35.14	Romania	80.00	Romania	41.38
German D.R.	76.67	Denmark	33.78	Bulgaria	77.78	Denmark	40.23
Norway	76.67	Turkey	33.78	Slovenia	75.56	Portugal	40.23
Poland	76.67	Czech Republic	32.43	Switzerland	75.56	Ukraine	36.21
Finland	73.33	Hungary	29.73	Portugal	73.33	Bulgaria	34.48
Hungary	73.33	Bulgaria	27.03	Ukraine	71.11	Serbia	32.76
Czech Republic	70.00	Finland	27.03	Croatia	68.89	Norway	32.18
Bulgaria	66.67	Norway	25.00	Norway	68.89	Ireland	30.46

Ireland	50.00	Ireland	14.86	Serbia	68.89	Finland	28.74
Luxembourg	40.00	Luxembourg	8.78	Slovakia	66.67	Croatia	25.86
Iceland	26.67	Albania	8.11	Finland	64.44	Azerbaijan	25.29
Albania	20.00	Cyprus	7.43	Ireland	62.22	Slovakia	24.71
Cyprus	20.00	Iceland	6.76	Latvia	62.22	Slovenia	23.56
Malta	16.67	Malta	6.76	Lithuania	62.22	Belarus	20.69
				Estonia	60.00	Bosnia-Herzegov.	19.54
				Azerbaijan	53.33	Cyprus	19.54
				Bosnia-Herzegov.	53.33	Latvia	18.97
				Cyprus	51.11	Lithuania	18.39
				Macedonia	51.11	Estonia	17.24
				Albania	48.89	Albania	16.67
				Belarus	46.67	Georgia	15.52
				Georgia	44.44	Macedonia	14.94
				Luxembourg	40.00	Armenia	13.22
				Montenegro	40.00	Montenegro	12.07
				Kosovo	37.78	Luxembourg	11.49
				Moldova	33.33	Kosovo	10.34
				Armenia	28.89	Moldova	10.34
				Malta	26.67	Malta	9.77
				Iceland	15.56	Iceland	6.90

Meanwhile, Table 7 illustrates the more limited regional status attribution of African states towards each other, presumably driven in part by scarce resources needed to staff large numbers of embassies. The region's own status attribution is reflected by the global community; Table 4 shows the highest correlations between regional and global attribution for this region across both points in time (.92 and .95 respectively).

For Europe, the pattern of regional versus global status attribution over time appears a bit complex, and should be, given the substantial changes that occur with the end of the Cold War. Regional versus global status attribution roughly parallel each other for 1980, but are more distorted by 2010, as new states and "rebuilt" states come to be more recognized within the region. The most interesting case is Austria, which received the highest ranking regionally in 2010, corresponding to its assertive and active bridge-building relationships with its neighbors in

the new Central European neighborhood (see Volgy et al. 2013), linking the EU more closely to previous European communist states.

For Latin America, Africa to a certain degree, and East Asia as well, there seems to be noticeable parallels between regional and global status, particularly regarding which states are at the top of the hierarchy. However, the noticeable distinctions between regional and global status in the Middle East, in Africa, and East Asia indicate that the attribution of status globally is not identical to the attribution of status regionally. These differences lead us to suspect that while some of these discrepancies may be due to regional dynamics, there may also be other dynamics at work<sup>41</sup> and are important to keep in mind as we build a model of explanatory factors that influence both the global and the regional attribution of status.

### **Constructing a base model of status attribution**

Initially, we are interested in constructing a base model for status attribution, similar to base models used in the literature on conflict and militarized interstate disputes (MIDs). Such base models provide the useful function of creating theoretical and methodological baselines from which to build more complex and more controversial explanations of the phenomenon under investigation.

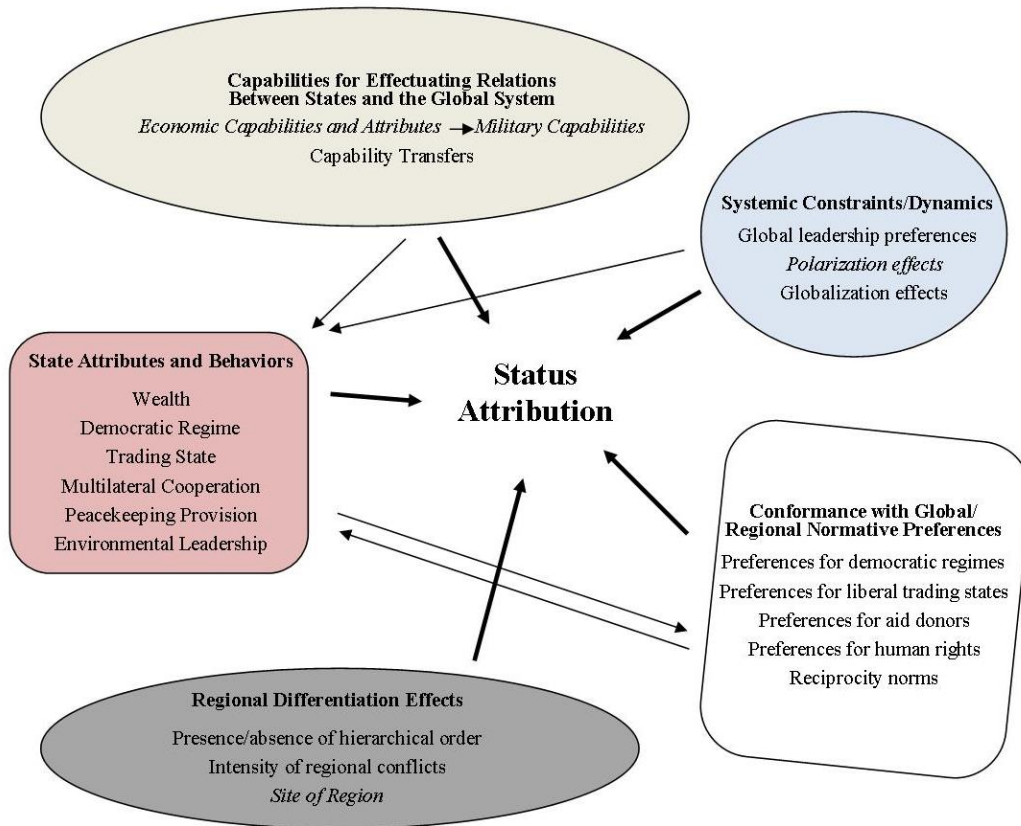
We begin with a broad theoretical framework described in Figure 2. It is admittedly a bare-bones framework, very roughly illustrating a variety of factors that may impact on status attribution. Nonetheless, the framework contains two different approaches to accounting for the status rankings of states. The first approach contains what we expect would be relatively

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<sup>41</sup> Note for instance the improvement in status rankings between 1980 and 2010 of oil-producing Gulf States in the Middle East.

uncontroversial factors associated with the attribution of status, given the varied empirical literature that links these variables to most forms of behaviors. These form the core of our baseline model. The second approach contains the more speculative, theoretically controversial possibilities. These will be the concerns that will be tested once there is some finalization to the base model.

**Figure 2: A Framework for Status Attribution within the Community of States in International Politics.**



Regarding the first approach, there is fairly widespread agreement that regardless of theoretical perspective and regardless of varying assumptions about anarchy versus hierarchy operating in international affairs, the capabilities of states—both economic and military—matter

for numerous phenomena in international affairs. We assume that this should be of major consequence as states make social comparisons about each other's status rankings.<sup>42</sup> Thus, we begin by integrating economic size (GDP) and military capability (military spending) into the base model.<sup>43</sup> In doing so, we immediately encounter a significant problem: the issue of multicollinearity between the two capabilities. A simple correlation indicates that GDP and military spending are highly correlated ( $r = .89$ ), and both appear to be significantly (and similarly) predictive of status rankings.<sup>44</sup> Therefore, we alter our approach slightly by entering economic size into the equation and then creating a separate variable for military capabilities that is a function of over or under military spending compared to the size of a state's GDP.<sup>45</sup> We label this variable as Military (over/under) Performance.<sup>46</sup>

There are two other phenomena contained in Figure 2 over which there is widespread agreement. One is that the dynamic of the Cold War—bipolar in nature and highly polarized—was relatively unique to the history of modern international politics (e.g. Vasquez 2007). Thus whether or not we are observing status attribution during the Cold War or after its end should matter. This distinction acknowledges the role that bipolarity and rivalry between the U.S. and the Soviet Union played in the attribution of status by the community of states. We expect that status attribution would be granted partly based on alliances with either NATO or the Warsaw

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<sup>42</sup> This is certainly evident in work regarding great powers and global status considerations (Wohlforth 2009; Larson and Shevchenko 2010; Renshon 2013).

<sup>43</sup> See Appendix A for concepts, their measurements, and sources used.

<sup>44</sup> Spearman's rho correlations between status rankings and the ranking of states on GDP and military spending respectively yield very similar correlations in a very high range around an average of .8.

<sup>45</sup> The over/under performance of military capabilities was generated by taking the proportion of a state's GDP to total global GDP and then subtracting the ratio of a state's military expenditures to global military expenditures.

<sup>46</sup> The correlation between GDP and Military over/under performance is only .105.



Pact during the Cold War,<sup>47</sup> but this division should diminish greatly after the Cold War's end. Thus, we introduce a Cold War dummy variable into the base model.

Second, there is a persistent trend in both qualitative analyses and large-N empirical studies to note the varying effects of region on the phenomenon under investigation (Katzenstein 2005; Acharya and Johnston 2007; Narang and Nelsen 2009). Most empirical models, when specifying regional variation, find significant effects for some or all regions (Lemke 2002; Solingen 2007; Johnston 2012), depending on the empirical identification of these geopolitical spaces.<sup>48</sup> Thus, we add to the base model dummy variables for the larger regions, including Europe, North America (including the Caribbean), South America, West Africa, South Africa, East Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East.

There are potentially other variables that could be included in the base model. We had investigated a number of these, focused primarily on state capability attributes. For instance, it is plausible to argue that it is variation in the wealth of states (GDP per capita) rather than economic size, or military reach (military spending/size of the military) rather than military spending that are salient as state attributes for global status attribution. Yet, when we added these variables to our base model, they were not significant and did not add to the explanatory power of the model.

## **A Baseline Model of Status Attribution**

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<sup>47</sup> Less clear is whether or not actual non-alignment was granted status recognition by states minimally involved in bipolar division. It is a subject we will investigate later.

<sup>48</sup> There is huge diversity in conceptual definitions and empirical delineations of regions, ranging from meta-regional designations (Europe, Asia, etc.) to more sophisticated versions. We use a regional classification based on whether or not states are contiguous, have the capability of reaching each other, engage in minimal interactions, and have some cultural/linguistic similarity (see Cline et al. 2011).

To model the dynamics of status attribution, we first assembled the panel data as described earlier. This resulted in 1614 observations of state-years across all of the time periods.<sup>49</sup> As this is an exploratory analysis, we began by simply specifying a linear time-series regression model utilizing the variables described above. To account for the fact that some of the variables, namely the material factors of GDP and military over/underperformance, are weighed in the status attribution process only after they are known, we lag these measures.<sup>50</sup> Accounting for these lagged factors as well as time components,<sup>51</sup> and the possibility of regional effects,<sup>52</sup> we use the following equation:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Global Status Attribution} = & \beta_1 \text{GDP}_{t-5} + \beta_2 \text{MilOver/Underperformance}_{t-5} + \beta_3 \text{ColdWar}(\text{dummy}) \\ & + \beta_4 \text{TimeCounter} + \beta_5 \text{Region} + \varepsilon \end{aligned}$$

We are very much aware of the fact that other factors are likely to influence the attribution of status, but as we have noted earlier, we are only attempting first to assemble a baseline model. Therefore, what we have listed above should be considered a starting point rather than the final baseline specification for global status attribution.

### ***Statistical Results***

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<sup>49</sup> These observations include data from 1960 to account for the lagged independent variables; however, the results listed here do not include the status attributions from any point prior to 1965.

<sup>50</sup> The lag for both GDP and military over/underperformance is 5 years, which corresponds to the structure of the status attribution dependent variable.

<sup>51</sup> To account for trends in the data, which may be sources of unmodeled heterogeneity, we have incorporated a time counter. Further examination of the time dynamics may be undertaken in subsequent analyses but at this early stage we are more interested in examining specific material and intangible factors.

<sup>52</sup> We model regional effects as a dummy variable for each region, omitting those regions with very few member states (Maghreb, Oceania) or ones that had virtually no members during the Cold War (Central Asia).

The results of this initial specification are listed in Table 9.<sup>53</sup> As the table illustrates, economic size (GDP) is an important predictor of global status attribution. We had noted earlier that military and economic capabilities are so highly correlated that it is difficult to parse out their independent effects on status rankings. Therefore, our measure of military capability is only the extent of over/under performance relative to economic capability. Yet, even under such restrictive observations, military capacity beyond economic capability still registers as significant in the model, albeit clearly not as significant as pure economic or military capacity.

**Table 9: A Baseline model of Global Status Attribution.**

GDP <sub>t-5</sub>	0.0000446 <sup>**</sup>	(0.0000173)
Military Performance <sub>t-5</sub>	0.731 <sup>†</sup>	(0.443)
Cold War dummy	0.0388 <sup>***</sup>	(0.00601)
Time Counter	0.0117 <sup>***</sup>	(0.00146)
Europe	0.130 <sup>**</sup>	(0.0451)
West Africa	-0.0358	(0.0416)
South Africa	-0.0269	(0.0384)
Middle East	0.138 <sup>**</sup>	(0.0468)
East Asia	0.0461	(0.0459)
South Asia	0.101	(0.106)
South America	0.0746	(0.0481)
North America	0.0267	(0.0536)
Constant	0.0702 <sup>*</sup>	(0.0341)
Observations	1276	
Adjusted $R^2$	0.3164	

Standard errors in parentheses

<sup>†</sup>  $p < 0.1$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

In addition, the model underscores that status attribution processes are clearly affected by large system dynamics such as whether or not status attribution is occurring during the Cold War. Note also the substantial significance of the time counter, underscoring significant path

<sup>53</sup> The model specification for this examination utilizes random effects with robust standard errors. Results from the fixed effects specification of this model produced identical results. The Hausman test comparing the fixed and random estimates indicated that the fixed effects model specification is appropriate for modeling status attribution. However, as noted in Clark and Linzer (2012), for data where the correlation between the regressor and unit effects is small, the estimates produced in the random effects specification actually exhibit only limited bias and greater efficiency than estimates produced in the fixed effects specification.

dependency in the attribution of status. Furthermore, regional differences appear to matter, but not uniformly across regions: the dummy variables in the equation are significant for Europe and the Middle East (even when controlling for the Cold War time frame), but not for the other large regions.<sup>54</sup> Thus, the results in Table 9 suggest that global status attribution is neither uniform nor region-specific but rather that the process falls somewhere between these two extremes.

**Table 10: Global Status Attribution Model Performance for Selected Regions.**

	Europe	Sub-Saharan Africa	Middle East	East Asia	South America
GDP <sub>t-5</sub>	0.0000665 <sup>*</sup>	0.00354 <sup>***</sup>	0.000812 <sup>*</sup>	0.0000601 <sup>**</sup>	0.000239 <sup>***</sup>
Mil. Performance <sub>t-5</sub>	0.338 <sup>*</sup>	-19.78 <sup>*</sup>	-0.422	2.399 <sup>***</sup>	-0.0828
Cold War dummy	0.0394 <sup>**</sup>	0.0362 <sup>**</sup>	0.00820	0.0563 <sup>**</sup>	0.0306 <sup>***</sup>
Time Counter	0.0135 <sup>***</sup>	0.00340	0.00451	0.0244 <sup>***</sup>	-0.000255
Constant	0.179 <sup>***</sup>	0.0726 <sup>**</sup>	0.240 <sup>***</sup>	0.00622	0.217 <sup>***</sup>
Observations	302	197	98	139	110
Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	0.258	0.185	0.212	0.298	0.532

Standard errors in parentheses

\*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$

The model specification in Table 9 does not examine whether this base model applies uniformly to various regions but rather makes that assumption and allows for the regional dummies to resolve any remaining heterogeneity issues. In creating a base model, we do not wish to make this assumption without an investigation into whether the effects are fairly consistent across each of the regions examined. Therefore, Table 10 provides the results of the baseline model broken down according to region for five of the largest regions in the data. The table yields several, clear outcomes. First, economic capability is uniformly relevant for global status attribution in all regions. Second, military over/under performance does not appear to be significant for either South American or Middle Eastern states, and while it is positively related to status attribution in East Asia and Europe, it is negatively related to status attribution in the

<sup>54</sup> That is not to say that there are other regional dynamics at work that are not captured by the dummy variable in the equation. See Table 10 below.

South African region. The Cold War effect is nearly uniform, except for the Middle East, a region that appears to diverge from the model most consistently (see also Table 4). Path dependency appears to vary by region as well, being strongest in East Asia and Europe.

Finally, the clearest finding in Table 10 appears to be the variation in the extent to which these indicators account for status across regions: South American global status attribution is modeled quite well with only economic size and the Cold War control while for South Africa these factors do not have nearly as much explanatory power; the total amount of variance accounted for by the model ranges substantially from around 53 percent (South America) to 19 percent (South Africa) of the variance explained. In essence, while we have confidence in our baseline model, Table 10 suggests that as we move beyond it to more extensive explanations of status attribution, we will need to keep in mind that either states integrate into their status rankings the nature of different regions, and/or that the similarities common to states in a certain region reflect additional dynamics that will need to be integrated into a more comprehensive theory of status attribution.

We proceed to the next steps with the knowledge that both the overall base model and its regional variants do not offer anywhere near comprehensive predictions regarding status attribution. The overall model results in an adjusted R squared that is no greater than 32 percent of the variance explained by the base model, while the variance accounted for by the regional models are typically below 30 percent.

### **The Next Steps**

The baseline model we have created is useful to test alternative explanations for status attribution by the community of states. On its own, however, it does not reflect (nor was it

expected to) a theoretically challenging approach to status attribution. We expect that capabilities matter and so do systemic changes. We also expect, as the time counter in the base model suggests, that status attribution does not change quickly and there is some path dependency in how states rank other states. Nor would it come as a great surprise to area studies scholars or to students of conflict that the Middle East region creates unique explanatory challenges compared to other regions. None of these results are unexpected, and it is exactly in the absence of such surprises that we make a claim to its legitimacy as a useful base model.<sup>55</sup>

The salient question facing us now is: how and where to proceed from here? The framework in Figure 2 is suggestive of three broad streams of factors that may influence the overt manifestations of social comparisons that result in global status attribution within the community of states. These include the following:

- 1) An evaluation of states' potential (capabilities) that may be used to pursue foreign policy objectives. These considerations form the backbone of our baseline model.

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<sup>55</sup> As of this writing, we are aware of only one other attempt to create a baseline model for status attribution (all states) in international politics (Rhamey and Early 2013). That model uses change in diplomatic contacts as the dependent variable. The baseline model for testing Olympic performance and Olympic "hosting" as independent variables for status attribution are compared to a baseline consisting of change in GDP, change in military expenditures, and domestic political regime type. Given the multicollinearity between GDP and military expenditures, only one (GDP) of these two variables shows to be consistently significant across their three models. The polity indicator varies between significance and insignificance, depending on the dependent variable in question. In all three models, using the baseline variables and Olympic success, the adjusted R squared values never surpass 18 percent of the explained variance produced by the models.

2) An evaluation of states' actions, both domestic (democratic forms of activity in the political system) and external,<sup>56</sup> as they conform to broadly held global norms of appropriate behavior.

3) Global and regional conditions that may create contestation over both norms and the manifestations of social comparisons that lead to status attribution, including attempts by very strong actors to attempt to influence patterns of status attribution.

We plan to expand our base model by focusing on propositions associated with the second and third streams. We propose to pursue the following key research questions as the next steps for our analysis:

- ***Democracy, Democratization, and Status Attribution:*** Democratization has become a substantial norm in international politics and has been actively promoted by the lead global power in the international system (Rasler and Thompson 2005). This is consistent with our view of the hierarchical nature of international politics, with the lead global power having significant influence over which global norms matter (Thompson 2006).<sup>57</sup> Of course the U.S. has not been the only state to press for democratization of regimes, nor is it the only one to value democracies. Nor is this norm uncontested; it is in fact actively

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<sup>56</sup> These include not only behaviors that have consequences for status attribution (e.g., commitments to pursue multilateral instruments of foreign policy), but also direct attempt to increase a state's status (e.g., Rhamey and Early 2013).

<sup>57</sup> While the U.S. role in democracy promotion was highly uneven during the Cold War, its democracy promotion worldwide since the end of the Cold War (Mansfield and Snyder 2002), as well as the emphasis placed on election monitoring by the U.S. and other Western powers (Kelley 2008) suggests that this consideration may appear more salient after Cold War's end.

challenged.<sup>58</sup> We will pursue the question of: to what extent are states with democratic regimes, and equally importantly states that are democratizing—all else being equal—attributed more status than states that are not democracies?

- ***Foreign Aid Disbursements:*** The number of foreign aid-providing states has steadily increased in the post-WWII era; however, the study of its impacts has not. One convincing school of thought holds that foreign aid is given by states for strategic and political reasons (Bueno de Mesquita and Smith 2007, 2009). Regardless of whether or not this is an accurate description of motivation for all aid-providing states, the linkage in the literature between aid provision and increased status attribution as one such motivation remains absent. Thus, we wish to probe the question: are states that provide foreign aid – all else being equal – attributed more status than states that do not?

Note that this issue is not completely independent of the previous one, as democratization has been linked by some states in providing aid internationally. Since the 1990s, developed states have linked their international aid to a recipient state's regime type, or making eligibility conditional on movement toward a democratic government (Nelson and Eglinton 1992; Stoke 1995). We will need to parse out—to the extent possible—the independent effects of foreign aid giving and the democratic attributes of the givers, particularly since the overwhelming numbers of states providing such aid are democracies.

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<sup>58</sup> The European Union has been extremely active in democracy promotion, first in Europe but as well outside the continent. It has made democracy a prerequisite for accession, and has even reached into parts of Europe where democracy is far from the norm with states that are unlikely to join the EU in the foreseeable future. In turn, the Russian Federation has promoted a greater Eurasian Union to counter the EU and to provide an alternative vision and set of norms for states in its geopolitical neighborhood. See “The Eurasian Tug of War,” *The Economist*, July 6, 2013:51.



- ***Human Rights and State Motives:*** The literature on human rights is rife with debate about whether commitments to rights on paper have any significance in practice; one key question in this debate is why states bother to sign agreements if they are indeed meaningless (Hathaway 2007), particularly if they provide openings for domestic factions to demand change from their leadership (Simmons 2009)?<sup>59</sup> We will pursue the following questions: Are specific human rights activities, such as signing treaties, tied to higher levels of status attribution? Do states differentiate between those that sign such treaties but fail to live by them versus those states that change their behaviors regarding domestic human rights?
- ***Conflict and Status:*** We would expect that status rankings would have effects on conflicts in a number of ways, as states pursue greater status, or use status as a component of their arsenal of means with which to pursue their foreign policies. However, we are interested in ascertaining as well whether or not the extent to which they engage in conflicts has an impact on their status rankings. We will seek to answer the following questions: Is the norm of peaceful states awarded status by the global community? To what extent is status affected by states involved in conflicts? Further, is there a differential impact on states involved in conflicts in which the state is either the initiator or the target? Finally, do those states that are willing to support peacekeeping efforts rewarded with additional status in international politics?
- ***Club Memberships:*** We noted earlier that there are a number of highly restricted, exclusive clubs in international politics. Requirements for membership are quite onerous, and it is plausible that the base model and the additional considerations noted above may

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<sup>59</sup> For a thorough overview of the human rights regime literature, see Hafner-Burton 2012.

account for the conditions that require membership in these clubs. We are interested in uncovering whether or not membership in these clubs has additional status effects, above and beyond the criteria that allow entry into those clubs. For instance, South Africa is a member of the BRICS and the regional power club; South Korea, with substantially greater economic and military capabilities, but lacking regional power status is not a member of either club. Does South Africa's club memberships and regional leadership role impact on its global status attribution more so than the status awarded to South Korea, or does the latter's edge in capabilities offset its lack of exclusive club membership?

Answering this puzzle (along with most of the previous ones) will likely require us to not only test these notions in the aggregate using our baseline model, but to move beyond our baseline model and to engage in research designs that are based on matched samples and similar system comparisons. We will need to do so in order to control for a substantial variety of other considerations impacting on status attribution, and thus zeroing in on research designs that help to give substantive meaning to "all else being equal".

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## APPENDIX

### Appendix A: Concepts, Measures and Sources.

CONCEPT	MEASUREMENT	SOURCE
<b>Global Status Attribution</b>	Measured as the total number of embassies a state receives / all states in the system (except for microstates)	COW Diplomatic contacts data and DIPCON database see: <a href="http://www.u.arizona.edu/~volgy/data.html">http://www.u.arizona.edu/~volgy/data.html</a>
<b>Regional Status Attribution</b>	Measured as the total number of embassies a state receives from its region/all states existing in the region	Same as above
<b>Cold War</b>	Measured as a dummy variable, with 1 = 1965-1990, and 0 = 1995-2010	
<b>Regions</b>	Measured as a series of dummy variables separately identifying the regions of Europe, North America (including the Caribbean), South America, West Africa, South Africa, Central Asia, East Asia, South Asia, Oceania, Maghreb and the Middle East.	For the rationale and source of classifications, see Cline et al, 2011
<b>Economic Size</b>	GDP	For 1960 and 1965 data from World Bank; from 1970-2010 data from USDA
<b>Military Capability</b>	Military Spending	Data for 1960-1990 from ACDA; data from 1990-2010 from SIPRI
<b>Wealth</b>	Gdp/capita	Penn World Tables: <a href="https://pwt.sas.upenn.edu/">https://pwt.sas.upenn.edu/</a>
<b>Military Reach</b>	Military spending/capita	Calculated by military spending/size of military