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Introduction by William C. Wohlforth, Dartmouth College

Anyone interested in getting up to speed on the state of status research in international politics should read this roundtable review. It is a testimony not only to the quality of Steven Ward's book but also to the great distance research on this fundamental human motivation and international politics has come since the 1990s and 2000's. No longer can scholars write articles and books with introductions lamenting the neglect of this topic. It has become mainstream. It has gone global. Contributions to the literature on status now embrace pretty much all of the methodologies and theoretical schools in international politics, and tackle nearly all subjects of interest from foreign aid and environmental cooperation to international sports.

In this roundtable, we get an illuminating discussion of the state of the field on one of the oldest and still most popular questions of interest in this research program, namely the interaction between status concerns and great power war. If you thought most of what could be said had been said on this fundamental question, think again. Ward tackles the enduring puzzle of why states become intensely dissatisfied with global orders under which they are actually attaining prosperity and security. He brings to bear an important facet of the issue that is understudied in previous accounts: what he calls status 'glass ceilings' that thwart status aspirations for what seem to the dissatisfied state to be fundamentally tawdry, unjust, or indefensible reasons. In an especially auspicious new departure, he demonstrates how this blockage reverberates through domestic political processes to empower factions which are most hell-bent on extreme responses. This careful analysis of how fundamentally social psychological processes play out between the systemic and the domestic levels represents an important new direction in status research.

Everyone in this forum takes their role extremely seriously. As a result, we are treated to three splendid reviews that respectfully and accurately describe Ward's fundamental purposes and contributions, and then proceed to raise incisive questions. Kanti Bajpai draws attention to what might be called the classic questions of research design, evidence and sources, and the hoary but I think still fundamental challenge of distinguishing the status motivation from more prosaic material aims that are focused on security or welfare. Anne Clunan's richly sourced and learned essay hones in on another long-standing and critical issue: the translation and adaptation of social identity theory from its home in social psychology to the context of great power politics. She questions Ward's criticism of the way international relations scholars have tended to make use of the insights of research associated with social identity theory. Even if you don't have a dog in this fight, reading the exchange between Clunan and Ward on this matter is likely to make you much smarter on this important body of scholarship. Xiaoyu Pu helpfully zeroes in on how all this matters for the great power issue of the day, China and the United States. In his response, Ward clarifies how his research fits into the larger picture, and proceeds to address the critical questions in an effective, constructive manner.

In all, this a win-win-win forum. The reviewers won by getting an excellent book to discuss. Ward won by getting smart and serious reviewers who pay him the complement of engaging very deeply with his work. And the rest of us win by getting this fascinating discussion of cutting-edge research in a crucial and growing field.

Participants:

Steven Ward is an Assistant Professor in the Government Department and the Associate Director of the Judith Reppy Institute for Peace and Conflict Studies at Cornell University in Ithaca, New York. His work

has appeared in *International Studies Quarterly*, *Security Studies*, *International Theory*, the *Review of International Studies*, and the *Journal of Global Security Studies*. He holds a Ph.D. in Government and an MA in Security Studies from Georgetown University.

William C. Wohlforth is the Daniel Webster Professor at Dartmouth College, where he teaches in the Department of Government. His most recent publications related to status in international politics are “Status-Seeking and Nation-Building: The ‘Piedmont Principle’ Revisited,” with Simone Paci & Nicholas Sambanis, forthcoming in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*; and “Moral Authority and Status in International Relations: Good States and the Social Dimension of Status-Seeking” with Benjamin de Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and Iver B. Neumann in *Review of International Studies* (online first).

Anne L. Clunan is Associate Professor of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California. Her work focuses on status aspirations and identity politics of great and emerging powers, globalization and sovereignty, and threat definition. Her recent publications on status include “Russia’s Pursuit of Great Power Status and Security,” in Roger Kanet, ed., *Routledge Handbook of Russian Security Studies* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2019): 3-16; “Russia and the Liberal World Order,” *Ethics & International Affairs* 32:1 (Spring 2018): 45-59; “Historical Aspirations and Russia’s Pursuit of International Status,” *Journal of Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 473:4 (September 2014): 281-290, and *The Social Construction of Russia’s Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009). She earned her Ph.D. in political science from the University of California, Berkeley.

Kanti Bajpai is Wilmar Professor of Asian Studies and Director of the Centre on Asia and Globalisation, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore. His research areas are strategic culture, Asian security, India’s foreign policy, and South Asian politics. He is currently working on a book on China-India relations and his most recent publications on the subject have appeared in *International Affairs* (2017) and *Pacific Affairs* (2018).

Xiaoyu Pu teaches political science at University of Nevada Reno. He is recently promoted to rank of associate professor with tenure and serves as Director of Graduate Studies. He is also a nonresident senior fellow at Inter-American Dialogue in Washington DC. He is the author of *Rebranding China: Contested Status Signaling in the Changing Global Order* (Stanford University Press, 2019). His research has appeared in *International Security*, *International Affairs*, *The China Quarterly*, and *The Chinese Journal of International Politics*. He is an editor of *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* and an editorial board member of *Foreign Affairs Review* (Beijing). He received his Ph.D. from Ohio State University.

Review by Kanti Bajpai, National University of Singapore

This slim, densely-written book is a study of status-seeking revisionism among rising powers. In five case studies, Steven Ward traces the links between status seeking, revisionism, thwarted ambition, and great-power conflict. The book is a stimulating contribution to the growing literature on international status as well as the writings on rising powers, power transitions, and war. My review begins by recapping the main lines of argumentation and situating the work within status scholarship. It proceeds to identify the main theoretical-conceptual strengths of the book, while raising some questions on the nature of the empirics and, most importantly, the interpretive logic. My overall view is that the book scores high on the theory-concept dimension and less so on the empirical-interpretive. I end by raising some questions on how to interpret China's behaviour.

The book's central question is why revisionist rising powers persist with radical challenges to the prevailing order when they risk humiliation and defeat by the dominant power(s). Ward's answer is the stubborn opposition to change among the established power(s) and the insistence on change among hardliners in the rising power who gradually gain ground at home. Hardliners push the claimant state from "distributive" to "radical" revisionism – from demanding change in the distribution of valued resources to insisting on distributive but also fundamental change in the norms and institutions of the international order. When their radical demands are rejected, the result is 'status immobility.' Status immobility is a deep psychological pessimism over the perceived unwillingness of the dominant power(s) to accommodate the rising power. Status pessimism leads to the replacement of moderate leaders or the conversion of moderates to confrontation. In the end, calls for increasingly radical revisionism, combined with the obduracy of the dominant power, can result in war.

This logic is traced in detail in four historical cases of rising powers and more tentatively for contemporary China. The historical cases are Wilhelmine Germany, militarist Japan, Weimar Germany, and America in the 1890s. While the first three challenges ended in great-power war, America's challenge to Britain ended peacefully and is the exception that proves the rule: while the established powers resisted calls for changes in international order and became embroiled in war in the first three cases, Britain chose the path of accommodation and peace. In the case of contemporary China, Ward is understandably agnostic but suggests that the portents are not good.

Each case chapter is structured around the main lines of argumentation developed in the conceptual chapters. This entails first of all describing the prevailing norms and institutions of the international order and the rising power's challenge. Second, Ward questions the view that security concerns were at the heart of the rising power's revisionism: the rising power might well have been more secure if it had not proceeded with its radical challenge. The third part of each chapter then presents the established powers' rejection of the challenger's claims. The final substantive section deals with the domestic politics of the revisionist power and the shift from distributive to radical revisionism. Crucial to this argument is the demonstration that hardliners more or less inevitably prevailed in a domestic environment where public opinion and political groups evinced strong psychological resentment towards the existing order.

The three main cases in the book are all well-known historical instances of rising powers that challenged the status quo and went to war. That the U.S. and Britain engineered a peaceful transition is the frequently cited

exception.¹ The rise of China over the past three decades may be the most widely-debated issue in contemporary international relations; indeed, power transition may be the single most discussed topic. Clearly, too, the discipline is turning its attention to the role status plays in international politics. In short, Ward's book enters intellectual realms that are busy and vibrant.

Where does Ward's work fit in the emerging literature on status? One stream of research deals with status seeking generally, attempting to show that virtually all states, great and small, seek status within a relevant "status community" and that this generates conflict. The most recent major work in this stream is Jonathan Renshon's *Fighting for Status*.² A second line of research concerns itself with status seeking among rising powers. This is typified by the 2014 edited volume by T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William A. Wohlforth which features in its case studies the key rising powers. Those writing in this stream, including votaries of Social Identity Theory (SIT), focus on various forms and strategies of status seeking.³ A third stream is primarily about status seeking among great powers and the link to war. The classic is Robert Gilpin's *War and Change in World Politics*. David A. Welch's *Justice and the Genesis of War* also deserves mention; his justice motive leading to great power war could well be read as a status motive (equally, status seeking could be read as justice seeking).⁴ Ward's study is located in this stream given its exclusive focus on status and great power war.

Amidst a complex theoretical apparatus at least three theoretical-conceptual contributions stand out as the key contributions of *Status and the Challenge of Rising States*

First, the book scores in presenting an alternative perspective on power transitions and great power wars. Transition is usually depicted in terms of the shift in material sources of power. Ward contests this reading, arguing that while material shifts may account for transitions and war, status *qua* 'status immobility' matters too. While a rising power may be accommodated in an existing order if what it seeks is admission to the great powers club (based on its growing material capabilities), accommodation is far more difficult when it seeks a change in the foundations of the status quo as well: change in the system (of great powers) may be relatively easy to effect; change of the system (of norms and institutions) is far more fraught.

A second contribution is Ward's insistence on the psychological drivers of radical revisionism as against a more instrumentalist understanding. Underlying the increasing insistence on radical change in international order, in his view, is not instrumental but rather intrinsic status motivations in the revisionist power.

¹ Most recently, see Kori Schake *Safe Passage: The Transition from British to American Hegemony* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017). Also see Feng Yongping, "The Peaceful Transition of Power from the UK to the US," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 1.1 (July 2006): 83-108.

² Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

³ T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William A. Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Larson and Alexei Shevchenko's chapter in this volume apply SIT to various rising powers.

⁴ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983); David A. Welch, *Justice and the Genesis of War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993, 1995).

Individuals, social and political groups, and, indeed, society at large come to be emotionally invested in achieving a change in international order commensurate with their sense of the rights and respect owed their country. This emotional push persists despite an understanding of the individual privations and collective suffering that may result. In short, Ward suggests that rationalist-instrumentalist accounts of the pursuit of status must at least be supplemented if not supplanted by psychological-intrinsic analyses. It is important to note that in tracing through radical revisionism the book insists that it is not status seeking or even status inconsistency/dissatisfaction as a motive that is of interest *per se*. Instead, it is the persistent psychological consequences of status immobility – the deep emotional determination to overthrow and replace the existing order when status claims are denied – that is important.

Third, Ward's notion of status immobility encompasses a dialectic between the international and the domestic. International Relations scholarship has for years picked and scratched at itself over the international-domestic link. Ward's conceptualization addresses the intellectual itch, arguing that in a power transition dominant powers will stand firmly behind the established order (to maintain their own status and for domestic and cognitive reasons) whereas rising powers will more or less ineluctably challenge the status quo because ultimately "identity claims" trump "expediency claims" (58).

The argument is that it is the reciprocal, intensifying, and indeed inextricable interaction between the prevailing international order and domestic political dynamics that exacerbates conflict and brings on war. International norms and institutions are perceived to deny rising powers the rights and respect they feel they are owed; this energizes nationalist hardliners against quiescent moderate leaders; as hardliners press for more obstreperous responses, the guardians of order insist on preserving the status quo; as a result, hardliner opinion intensifies—to the point of overthrowing domestic moderates or pushing moderates towards immoderation. Eventually, a lack of accommodation by the established power(s) and increasing political polarization and emotional disaffection in the rising power, which feed off each other, culminate in a transition war. It is worth underlining that, for Ward, hardliner revisionism is not hyper-nationalist "outbidding" in the service of electoral and political self-advancement as in Jack Snyder's formulation.⁵ It is affect-driven.

If these are the book's key contributions, what works less well in *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*? The weaknesses, I suggest, relate to case selection, sources, and interpretation.

First, does Ward's choice of cases stand up? Clearly, his five cases – if contemporary China is allowed as a case – are historic instances and cry out for inclusion. Yet Graham Allison's work on power transitions lists sixteen cases from the late-fifteenth century to the present.⁶ Ward notes that he deliberately left out revolutionary

⁵ Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

⁶ Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape the Thucydides Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017), 244. Another interesting case of transition is China surpassing the Soviet Union/Russia to become the predominant Eurasian power.

France and the early Soviet Union, arguing that in both cases the challenge to normative order preceded their clear rise to power. This may be correct, yet Ward's one-paragraph rationale is not satisfactory (66).

What of the other cases in Allison's list? Going back to the fifteenth century, there were challenges by Spain, the Habsburgs, the Ottomans, Sweden, Great Britain, France, nineteenth-century Russia, Prussia, Japan in 1904-1905, and the Soviet Union from 1945 until the late 1970s.⁷ In the East Asian international system, did the Japanese decision to invade Korea in the late-sixteenth century constitute a rising power's challenge to Chinese hegemony, and did status immobility play a role?⁸ Similarly, in the Indic international system, was the rise of the Marathas in the seventeenth century a case of status immobility-driven conflict against the dominant Mughals? The point here is not that Ward's study should have incorporated all possible cases (which would be monumental); or that other European and Asian cases are worthier of inclusion than his chosen five. It is rather that Ward does not note other candidates or explain even sketchily why he left them out. Given the meticulousness of the book on many scores, this is anomalous.

A second methodological issue relates to evidence and sources. Since the book argues that psychological anger over status denial actuated radical revisionism, providing strong evidence of the attitudes, arguments, and actions of key domestic actors is vital. It is not that the book is in this respect altogether unsatisfactory: select quotes and secondary interpretations are marshalled to show that status concerns were expressed in contemporary rhetoric and psychological hurt over status denial was present. Yet, as Ward insists on being rigorous on matters of evidence (63-65), it would have strengthened his claims to have relied more on primary sources that substantiate the depth of moderate and hardliner feelings and motives, their public reasoning, and the reception of their ideas and actions.

Accessing primary sources is challenging, especially in the Japanese and Chinese cases, since language expertise is vital. Having said that, for inter-war Japan, a corpus of translations is available. Additional evidence might have been garnered from Western diplomatic archives, which would include assessments of Japanese domestic opinion and debates. For contemporary China, primary sources in English abound. By primary sources, I mean official statements and speeches, memoirs and personal papers, commentary by influential analysts and academics, and even polling data, all of which can be mined for attitudes on status denial. In short, the book would have been stronger had it been based upon more primary materials: on a quick count, across all the cases, the bibliography contained less than twenty such sources. Ward is not the first scholar to adopt this research approach, but his book illustrates a larger problem within the discipline.

Finally, and most importantly, do the empirics sustain Ward's status immobility interpretation of events? The book notes that aiming for military capabilities, ambitions of colonial expansion or recovery of territory, and acquiring economic rights were motivations for the rising powers even if non-material concerns were also at issue (the desire for recognition as a leading/world power, racial equality). If so, material factors and power/security arguments could as well account for much of the behaviour of rising powers. Here Ward's

⁷ Allison, *Destined for War*, 244.

⁸ Ward refers to this case, briefly, as exemplifying normative revisionism absent a desire for distributive revisionism (19) because in the end Japan withdrew from Korea and went into isolation. Yet the question is: was the Korean invasion *at the start* prompted by status immobility/radical revisionism? In seeking to conquer China were Japanese leaders seeking to merely take over China's hegemonic role or to install an entirely new order?

argument contains some contradictions: in each case, as a way of making the argument for status immobility as the causal variable, he casts doubt on material factors and power/security explanations of rising power motives and actions (see in particular 75-78, 103-106, 134-136, 161-163); and yet by the end of each case, he admits that factors other than status immobility including material factors and power/security factors also likely played a significant role (see 99, 128, 180, 190 and 197). As he notes, he is unable to say how much causal weight should be assigned to status/psychological factors and how much to other factors (65).

This points to an enduring and familiar problem with status studies: when is status seeking an instrumental motivation that can be assimilated to power seeking (since status *qua* prestige can be a power resource⁹); and when is it an intrinsic psychological-emotional drive that has little or nothing to do with power? When is it strategic/rational and when is it psychological/deontic? How can analysts (and rival governments) tell the difference?

The case of China illustrates the interpretive difficulties. Is its greater assertiveness in East Asia over the South China Sea, Senkaku/Diaoyu Islands, and Taiwan motivated by 'core' security concerns, or is it a sign that China is trying to arrogate to itself a sphere of influence driven by great power status concerns? Is China building a carrier fleet in order to protect its security, or is it striving for recognition as a great power? When President Xi Jinping unveiled the "New Type of Great Power Relations" framework, was this driven by a desire for confidence building to tamp down possible military tensions with the United States, or was it an expression of international equality and China's attempt to be a norm shaper and not just a norm taker? Is its much-trumpeted Belt and Route Initiative (BRI), and allied Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), part of a contest for influence with the U.S., a way of acquiring military bases abroad, a desire to access resources for the next stage of its economic development, or an outlet for its capital and excess capacities? Is the China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), the biggest project in BRI, an investment in preventing further religious radicalization in a brittle society abutting its unstable western borderlands and therefore connected to concerns over internal security? Is BRI in totality to be regarded as a genuine desire by a cosmopolitan, globally-responsible China to play its part in development and peace around the world, and if so, is this status mongering? Overall, is BRI a gigantic Chinese vanity project designed to (over)awe the world, a massive status initiative which is part of Xi's "China Dream" of being the Number One nation in the world? If status is at issue in all these instances, is China simply breaking into the club of great powers, or is it reacting to status denial and seeking to reshape the international order more radically into a giant neo-tributary system?

The China story is breaking news, to be sure, and interpretive closure would be premature. But clearly it is proving difficult for analysts and governments to tell the difference between China as (merely) defending/advancing its security and China as a revisionist power strutting about the world stage. Ward's compact but ambitious study brings theory and evidence to bear to help us know the difference. It is an energizing contribution to the steadily growing debate on status and world politics.

⁹ See Yuen Foong Khong, "Power as Prestige in World Politics," *International Affairs* 95.1 (January 2019): 119-142.

Review by Anne L. Clunan, Naval Postgraduate School

This is an ambitious and excellent book that takes up the central question of contemporary international politics: can the United States manage the peaceful rise of China? Through a careful research design and set of historical case studies of Germany, Japan, and the United States, Steven Ward demonstrates persuasively that a country's desire for a particular international status and the presence or absence of "status immobility" are the critical variables determining whether it will seek to overthrow the existing international order or rise within its constraints. There are several things that stand out in this book: its theoretical ambition; its methodological rigor; and its empirical depth. While others will likely critique the details of the specific cases, after examining Ward's contribution I instead discuss ways in which Ward overstates a bit the novelty of his approach to status. This arises primarily from incomplete fealty to the underlying social psychological literature and overstatement of the importance of nationalists as transmission belts of status into domestic politics.

Contribution: The Role of Status in World and Domestic Politics

Ward's book is situated in the growing body of recent international relations (IR) scholarship that takes seriously the role of status ambitions in international affairs.¹ This work mainly includes realist and

¹ Anne L. Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity and Security Interests* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009); Anne L. Clunan, "Historical Aspirations and the Domestic Politics of Russia's Pursuit of International Status," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47:3-4 (September-December 2014), 281-290, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.002>; Anne L. Clunan, "Why Status Matters in World Politics," in T. V. Paul, Deborah W. Larson, and William Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics*, 273-296 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014). <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781107444409.017>; Yong Deng, *China's Struggle for Status: the Realignment of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Marina G Duque, "Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach," *International Studies Quarterly* 62:3 (September 2018): 577-592, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqy001>; Tuomas Forsberg, "Status Conflicts Between Russia and the West: Perceptions and Emotional Biases," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 47:3-4 (September-December 2014): 323-331, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.006>; Tuomas Forsberg, Regina Heller, and Reinhard Wolf, "Status and emotions in Russian foreign policy," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47:3-4 (September-December 2014), 261-268, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.007>; Regina Heller, "Russia's Quest for Respect in the International Conflict Management of Kosovo," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 47:3-4 (September-December 2014): 333-343, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.001>; Lena Jaschob, *Status im Internationalen System: Das Deutsche Reich und Sein Statusstreben in Europa 1890-1914* (Baden-Baden: Tectum Verlag, 2018); Andrej Krickovic and Yuval Weber, "What Can Russia Teach Us about Change? Status-Seeking as a Catalyst for Transformation in International Politics," *International Studies Review* 20:2 (June 2018): 292-300, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ist/viy024>; Deborah W. Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses To U.S. Primacy," *International Security* 34:4 (Spring 2010): 63-95. <https://doi.org/10.1162/isec.2010.34.4.63>; Deborah W. Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Russia Says No: Power, Status, and Emotions in Foreign Policy," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47:3-4 (September-December 2014): 269-279, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.003>; Deborah W. Larson, and Alexei Shevchenko, *Quest for Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019); Olga Malinova, "Obsession with Status and Ressentiment: Historical Backgrounds of the Russian Discursive Identity Construction," *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47:3-4 (September-December 2014): 291-303, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.07.001>; Michelle Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); T. V. Paul, Deborah W. Larson, and William Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics*

constructivist scholars. Realists emphasize the material consequences of status-attainment (increased influence) that is achieved through acquiring high-status markers, such as aircraft carriers, battleships, nuclear weapons, and space capabilities, as well as the propensity for status-driven competition to spiral into war.² For realists, status matters in world politics because of its consequences. Status produces more influence and authority internationally, and is therefore a desirable power resource.³ Additionally, the material markers or characteristics—battleships, nuclear weapons, spheres of influence—that make up a particular status in and of themselves increase the material capabilities of states. Finally, this consequentialist approach considers status-seeking behavior to be dangerous if it produces status competitions that are misunderstood and spiral into war.

In contrast, constructivists, emphasize the psychological, emotional, and identity origins of status-attainment and subsequent behaviors.⁴ Some of this work emphasizes the ways in which states that seek status attempt to attain international recognition of their desired status through attainment of internationally recognized status markers—largely material capabilities and characteristics.⁵ Others focus on the necessary condition for status

(Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Xiaoyu Pu, *Rebranding China: Contested Status Signaling In the Changing Global Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019); Jonathan Renshon, “Status Deficits and War,” *International Organization* 70:3 (Summer 2016): 513-550, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818316000163>; Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017); Hanna Smith, “Russia as a Great Power: Status Inconsistency and the Two Chechen Wars,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47:3-4 (September-December 2014): 355-363, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.005>; Andrei Tsygankov, “The Frustrating Partnership: Honor, Status, and Emotions in Russia’s Discourses of the West,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 47:3-4 (September-December 2014): 345-354, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2014.09.004>; Andrei P. Tsygankov, *Russia and the West From Alexander to Putin: Honor in International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Thomas J. Volgy, Renato Corbetta, Keith Grant, and Ryan Baird, Eds., *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011); William C. Wohlforth, “Unipolarity, Status Competition and Great Power War,” *World Politics* 61:1 (January 2009): 28-57, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887109000021>; William C. Wohlforth, Benjamin De Carvalho, Halvard Leira, and Iver B. Neumann, “Moral Authority and Status in International Relations: Good States and the Social Dimension of Status Seeking,” *Review of International Studies* 44:3 (July 2018): 526-546, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0260210517000560>; Reinhard Wolf, “Respect and Disrespect in International Politics: the Significance of Status Recognition,” *International Theory* 3:1 (February 2011): 105-142, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1752971910000308>; Ayşe Zarakol, *After Defeat: How the East Learned To Live with the West* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

² Xiaoyu Pu and Randall L. Schweller, “Status Signaling, Multiple Audiences, and China’s Blue-Water Naval Ambition,” in Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, eds., 141-162, <https://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781107444409.009>; Pu, Wohlforth, and Renshon, *Fighting for Status*.

³ Volgy et al.

⁴ Deborah W. Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, “Russia Says No”; Clunan, “Historical Aspirations,” Zarakol, Wolf, and Murray.

⁵ Larson and Shevchenko, “Status Seekers,” and Zarakol.

satisfaction—social recognition—and the consequences of its absence,⁶ or on the domestic identity politics that make aspirations to a particular status a determinant of a state's foreign policy, locating the origins of these ambitions in domestic discourses of shared history and memory as well as those of foreign affairs.⁷ Still others emphasize the emotional aspects of status, highlighting its connection to feelings of anger, resentment, dishonor and pride.⁸ All of these, accounts, like Ward's, note the outside-in elements of foreign behavior that plays into domestic discourses regarding status.

Ward's book adds to both broad accounts. It fills gaps left in consequentialist and realist arguments that are unable to explain why in his historical cases rising states did not pursue a rational strategy of cautious rise within an existing international status hierarchy, and instead opted for much riskier strategies of overthrowing that order. Ward introduces the notion of "status immobility" as a key factor determining a state's turn toward radical revisionism. Stemming from perceived "status denial" on the part of existing great powers, status immobility sets in motion domestic dynamics that lead nationalists to rise in order to dictate foreign policy. The addition of these dynamics offers the book's most compelling gains in explanatory power over consequentialist theories. In particular, Ward carefully demonstrates in each case study that leaders did not face the dire security conditions that realists argue would warrant great power war to overthrow the current order. For instance, Ward refutes the offensive-realist account of expansionist German behavior as the cause of WWI that argues that Germany either feared the increasing military capabilities of Russia or sought windows of opportunity to assert hegemony. He notes that the realist account depends heavily on the infamous December 1912 War Council as evidence of this rationalist account. However, rather than this meeting having been called "in response to news that Russian military capabilities were growing unexpectedly quickly, or to new evidence that a German bid for European hegemony might be cheaper and easier than expected," (76), Kaiser Wilhelm's "resentment at a reminder of British obstructionism" (94) was the trigger. What is commendable is how carefully Ward reads the historical record against the competing explanations as he lays out their inability to account for the actual historical record and timing in each case.

Another of the gains Ward offers is conceptual. IR has long noted that some states are revisionist, while others are status quo-oriented, but there has never been a satisfactory systematic answer for why states fall into one group or the other. Ward sets out to answer exactly this question. He notes that any international order has distributive and normative dimensions with which states may be dissatisfied. The distributive dimension has largely been the focus of realist and other consequentialist theories that are focused on power. Much of the literature has focused on states' efforts to attain a different allocation of resources within the existing order, and Ward claims that both the realist and the "standard model" of social identity theory (49)—as put forward by Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko—has largely focused on this dimension. The normative dimension is largely the realm of constructivists and English School theorists, who would agree with Ward

⁶ Wolf, Murray, Tsygankov, "Frustrating Partnership," Smith, and Erik Ringmar, "Recognition and the Origins of International Society," *Global Discourse* 4:4 (June 2014): 446-458, <https://doi.org/10.1080/23269995.2014.917031>.

⁷ Iver B. Neumann, "Status Is Cultural: Durkheimian Poles and Weberian Russians Seek Great-Power Status," in Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth, 85-112, <http://doi.org/10.1017/cbo9781107444409.006>, Clunan, *Social Construction*, Malinova.

⁸ Forsberg, Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, Malinova, Smith, Wolf, and Heller.

when he writes that, “norms, rules and institutions produce and sustain social hierarchies by generating intersubjective bases for social comparisons between actors, and by constituting actors with different statuses and bundles of rights,” (13) which form the “basis for legitimate action” (13) and “regulate interactions between states” (13).

Using these two dimensions, Ward is able to flesh out more fully what distinguishes status quo-oriented status-seeking behavior from revisionist status-seeking behavior. States that seek to revise the status quo distribution of resources are not necessarily seeking to overthrow the system, and states challenging the normative dimension of the system do not always seek to challenge the status quo distribution of its resources (18-21). States may challenge the status-quo order on either distributive or normative grounds, or both, yielding three types of revisionism: normative, distributive, and radical (18). This is a more intuitive typology than that offered by Stacie Goddard, for example, who focuses on institutional power (access) and entrepreneurial power (brokerage) in an institutional network as the key factors shaping revisionist types.⁹ While Goddard claims that it is insufficient to rest our understanding of revisionism on preferences, her focus on institutions as enablers or constrainers of revisionism leaves unexplained states such as Wilhelmine Germany that did prefer to overthrow the status quo even when they were neither lacking in institutional nor entrepreneurial power. Here, Ward’s emphasis on status immobility is able to fill in gaps that a focus on positionality, capabilities, and the security dilemma cannot.

Although Ward develops a general typology of revisionism, he limits his enquiry to “radical revisionism” and to rising states (21). While his theory has the potential to apply to declining powers and less radical forms of revisionism, he carefully limits his analysis in this book to rising states. This allows for a much more fine-grained examination of the role of status immobility in his case studies, one that makes the work persuasive and compelling. He is able to show more concretely how status matters in shaping the resulting behavior because he has chosen to limit his scope.

The second contribution is Ward’s integration of social psychology with domestic political dynamics to produce three paths to the outcome of radical revisionism. Here Ward contributes to the growing constructivist literature on status and foreign policy that offers a psychologically grounded explanation for why and how status affects domestic politics and thereby state behavior. Ward’s book is a welcome addition to the literature that considers how desire for positive national self-esteem comes to shape domestic debates about foreign policy, as he carefully demonstrates the limits of rationalist and materialist accounts. His clear depiction of a domestic mechanism that brings international status to bear on domestic politics and state behavior will make this a much emulated work.

Internally, Ward argues, nationalists will use evidence of status denial to declare their state’s inability to attain its deserved and desired international status—status immobility—and to advocate for a rejection of the existing international order in favor of one in which their country is a or the top dog. Ward clearly outlines a domestic dynamic in which nationalists use evidence of international status immobility to delegitimize more moderate policymakers seeking accommodation with the existing order. The critical variable is foreign

⁹ Stacie E. Goddard, *Embedded Revisionism: Networks, Institutions, and Challenges To World Order*,” *International Organization* 72:4 (Fall 2018), 763-797, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818318000206>.

behavior that confirms or legitimates the nationalists' arguments about status immobility and makes more legitimate their claim that only rejection of the status quo will lead to their desired status. Status immobility

“makes it harder to legitimate moderate foreign policies and easier to legitimate aggressive ones, especially policies that seem to reject status quo norms, rules, and institutions. Put concretely, widespread concerns about status immobility reflect and contribute to the production and prominence of discourse of the injustice of the status quo order. These make it harder to publicly justify participation in and respect for status quo institutions, rules, and norms, and easier to publicly justify policies that seem to lash out at the status quo” (56).

Nationalists succeed through one of three pathways: leaders change preferences in favor of rejection; status-quo politicians change policy to appease hardliners and maintain political power; or status-quo decisionmakers are replaced by hardliners (58-61). Ward does a beautiful job in demonstrating this argument in each of his cases, carefully and pointedly tracing out the pathway of how status immobility operates through nationalists in each case. The counter-factual analysis of the United States does leave one wondering whether the reason Britain cared less about the rise of the United States than Germany was less its Anglo-Saxon identity and more that being the ‘offshore balancer’ was of greater importance to Britain’s role identity as the global hegemon than policing the Western Hemisphere. The research design and its application are excellent.

Critique: The logic of rejection and the second-image reversed are not so novel

Underpinning his account is Ward’s reliance on the social psychology of group identity. In laying out the microfoundations for and domestic mechanisms of how status can shape state behavior, Ward claims to advance beyond the constructivist “standard model” (49) that relies on social identity theory (SIT). Here he primarily means the work of Larson and Shevchenko, who relate social identity theory to international relations through identity management strategies that Russian and Chinese leaders employed to promote positive self-esteem through the attainment of great power status.¹⁰ Ward makes two claims against their “standard model”: first, that it omits an identity-management strategy of rejection of the social order, and second, that it focuses on states as unitary actors, rather than individuals and domestic politics (48-51).¹¹ As someone whose own work draws on social identity theory to explain the effect of status on state behavior, my critique concerns both Ward’s depiction of the SIT literature and the constructivist work that has built off of it. There are three points on which I wish Ward more accurately depicted the social psychological and IR literature on identity and status upon which he builds.

First, Ward claims that the SIT “standard model” offers only a “logic of recognition” (49) for states dissatisfied with their position in the social order. Consequently, he argues that the “standard model” can only explain strategies that are aimed at enhanced position within the status-quo order, rather than strategies that

¹⁰ Larson and Shevchenko, “Status Seekers”.

¹¹ Steven Ward, “Lost in Translation: Social Identity Theory and the Study of Status in World Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61:4 (December 2017), <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqx042>.

reject it. This is central to his first claim regarding the novelty of his theory (4-5).¹² His first theoretical contribution—the “logic of rejection” (49)—hangs on the prior claim that SIT only offers social-order-reinforcing identity management strategies. These identity management strategies—of mobility/assimilation, competition and creativity—are ways in which individuals seek to raise group self-esteem by enacting a higher or more positive status. Ward argues that according to the “standard model,” a state is only able to “resolve a condition of status dissatisfaction by convincing relevant others to recognize the rising state’s claims, and ... thereby ratifying and perpetuating... the rules, institutions and social hierarchy that constitute the status quo” (50). He claims to rectify this gap by incorporating insights from relative deprivation theory to propose a “logic of rejection”—where other states reject or deny, rather than recognize, a state’s claim to a status equal to or higher than theirs. This rejection by other states—or “status denial” in his framework—is the key cause that enhances or creates perceptions of his central variable, status immobility. Ward argues that SIT needs to be embellished with relative deprivation theory and the five-stage model (FSM) to link status denial with revisionism (non-normative action, in the language of FSM, in contrast to normative action that does not reject the social order). Yet FSM’s main contribution to social psychology is to demonstrate that dissatisfied but highly able members of low-status groups will do everything thing they can *leave* that group, before they are likely to attempt to increase the collective status of their group. This would seem to run counter to the logic that it is nationalists who are most likely to be revisionists. Moreover, it is not clear that Ward’s inferences follow from FSM: according to tests of the model, members of low-status groups “preferred normative reactions, both collective and individual, to nonnormative ones. Nonnormative action, especially collective nonnormative action, was only favoured by talented subjects confronted with a completely closed high status group.”¹³ Much of the FSM contribution is about individual *ability*, rather than dissatisfaction. Ward’s inclusion of relative deprivation theory also cannot explain how individuals will take action on behalf of a collective.¹⁴

Ward’s argument that SIT only offers status-quo enhancing strategies is inaccurate. The ontological error Ward makes is to claim that SIT is largely about others’ acts (recognition by others) rather than self-perceptions (self-identification) of an intergroup comparison. SIT is inherently a subjective theory, in that it focuses on an individual’s perceptions of her/his group’s social situation and her/his ability to enact a positive social identity. In SIT, what is critical for one’s positive self-esteem is one’s *self*-perceptions (or self-recognition) of where one’s group sits vis-à-vis a high status group, not the other group’s recognition of one’s

¹² For the purposes of this review, I will limit myself to a discussion of group identity management strategies for group members rather than individual identity management strategies. SIT addresses both.

¹³ Filip Boen and Norbert Vanbeselaere, “Reactions Upon a Failed Attempt To Enter a High Status Group: an Experimental Test of the Five-Stage Model,” *European Journal of Social Psychology* 28:5: (December 2018): 689-696. [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-0992\(199809/10\)28:5<689::AID-EJSP888>3.0.CO;2-3](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199809/10)28:5<689::AID-EJSP888>3.0.CO;2-3).

¹⁴ Stephen G. Brush, “Dynamics of Theory Change In the Social Sciences: Relative Deprivation and Collective Violence,” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40:4 (December 1996): 523-545, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002796040004001>; Joan Neff Gurney, and Kathleen J. Tierney, “Relative Deprivation and Social Movements: a Critical Look At Twenty Years of Theory and Research.” *The Sociological Quarterly* 23:1 (Spring 1982): 33-47; <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1533-8525.1982.tb02218.x>, Kelly Bergstrand, “The Mobilizing Power of Grievances: Applying Loss Aversion and Omission Bias To Social Movements,” *Mobilization: an International Quarterly* 19:2 (June 2014): 123-142, <http://mobilizationjournal.org/doi/pdf/10.17813/maiq.19.2.247753433p8k6643>.

membership in or one's position relative to itself. SIT is not based on how one group objectively treats another or on how the treatment of an individual by others objectively conveys to that individual his or her social status. Too often, Ward portrays status denial as having such an objective effect, Ward's caveats about leaders' beliefs and rationality notwithstanding (55-56).

What matters for this review is the fact that SIT already incorporates what Ward calls the "logic of rejection" within its identity management strategies of competition and creativity.¹⁵ For SIT, in terms of groups, one of two causes is usually sufficient to determine whether members of a group change (via strategies of competition or creativity) their group's low position relative to another group's high social position or do nothing: whether the status of the two groups is stable or not; and whether the different social position of the groups is legitimate or not.¹⁶ This sounds very similar to Ward's depiction of a status hierarchy having distributive and normative dimensions. Group members' perceptions that the relative social position of their group and another group is unstable and/or illegitimate are what SIT says will move them from passivity to enacting an identity management strategy at all. When the relative status between groups is both unstable and seen as illegitimate by one group, the dissatisfied group (who in Ward's framework, would be radically revisionist) is most likely to attempt an identity the management strategy of competition. Using competition, the dissatisfied group, or one of its members, seeks to reverse the relative position of its own group and the other group, which in turn leads to heightened intergroup conflict and discrimination between them. The dissatisfied group might also use a strategy of creativity to displace the other group from its social position, which will also likely increase intergroup conflict.¹⁷ These strategies are consistent with being revisionist. Stability in the two groups' positions, however, is less likely to lead members of the dissatisfied group to try to revise their group's relative position through competition. Stability combined with legitimacy is more likely to lead to an identity management strategy of creativity, which is indeterminate in its consequences for

¹⁵ Heather J. Smith, Thomas F. Pettigrew, Gina M. Pippin, and Silvana Bialosiewicz, "Relative Deprivation: A Theoretical and Meta-Analytic Review," *Personal and Social Psychological Review* 16:3 (August 2012): 203-232, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1088868311430825>.

¹⁶ Naomi Ellemers, Ad Van Knippenburg and Henk Winke, "The Influence of Permeability of Group Boundaries and Stability of Group Status on Strategies of Individual Mobility and Social Change," *British Journal of Social Psychology* 29:3 (September 1990): 233-246, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2044-8309.1990.tb00902.x>; Naomi Ellemers, Henk Wilke, and Ad Van Knippenberg, "Effects of the Legitimacy of Low Group Or Individual Status on Individual and Collective Status-Enhancement Strategies," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 64:5 (May 1993): 766-778, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.64.5.766>. SIT has tested some of Henri Tajfel's hypotheses about group permeability and found that stability of the intergroup situation is more determinative of behavior than permeability. This research has also found that perceptions that an intergroup relationship is stable or is legitimate lead to either to inaction—no attempt to use an identity management strategy to improve self-esteem or to social creativity strategies. Ellemers, Van Knippenburg, and Winke.

¹⁷ Sarah-Elisabeth Martiny, "Managing One's Group Image – Dynamics of Group-Based Self-Esteem and Identity Management Strategies," Doctoral Dissertation, Friedrich-Schiller-Universität, Jena, Germany, 2009, 15-16.

intergroup conflict and bias.¹⁸ These variables—status stability and legitimacy—are precisely the triggers for revisionism that Ward claims is missing in SIT. SIT is a theory of identity change, after all.

This matters because the underlying social psychology does not support the claim that rejection by others, what Ward terms status denial, is needed to trigger a turn to revisionism. Revisionism, which is precisely what the identity management strategies of competition and creativity seek, can be triggered without such acts. Perceptions of instability or illegitimacy of the status quo can be trigger revisionism, irrespective of what high-status group members do.

To make this concept concrete, one can point to the example of German elites, who perceive Britain as having a higher status than Germany and were not able suddenly to become British to improve their self-esteem. For these elites, their perceptions of the stability or legitimacy of the relative status between Germany and Britain determined whether or not they opted to attempt to challenge Britain's status. Some Germans may have seen the British-German status relationship as stable, meaning that they did not attempt to improve their national self-esteem through a challenge to Britain. Other Germans may have perceived Britain's higher status as legitimate, and again would not have acted to challenge Britain's status. Other Germans may have seen the British-German relationship as unstable and/or illegitimate, and acted to improve German self-esteem through challenging Britain's high status. The latter case certainly would seem to apply to the hardline nationalists who play such an important role in Ward's theory. In other words, a German person did not have to experience rejection from Britain in order to conclude that the British would not accept Germany's great power status. S/he simply had to perceive that Britain's high status was in question (unstable) and/or illegitimate. Perceptions of an illegitimate or unstable high social status are precisely what lead a group or its members to seek to improve group self-esteem through social and realistic competition strategies or creativity strategies. Hardline nationalists are the most likely to promote these strategies because they are already convinced that another country's high status is unstable or undeserved.

In sum, SIT already incorporates the psychological dynamic of relative deprivation that Ward claims to add: "social identity research shows that people will experience GRD (group relative deprivation) if the intergroup situation is viewed as illegitimate and unlikely to improve without collective challenge and group boundaries are seen as impermeable."¹⁹ What is needed then, is a better understanding of when those who are not nationalists will view their country's status vis-à-vis another country as unstable and illegitimate. Ward claims that status denial by the high-status country provides objective evidence of status immobility, which in turn enables nationalists to pressure those who are less predisposed into pursuing radical revisionism. But nationalists are not the antiheroes in every story of revisionism.

¹⁸ Amélie Mummendey, Andreas Klink, Rosemarie Mielke, Michael Wenzel, Mathias Blanz, "Socio-Structural Characteristics of Intergroup Relations and Identity Management Strategies: Results From a Field Study in East Germany," *European Journal of Social Psychology* 29:2-3 (February 1999): 259-285, [https://doi.org/10.1002/\(SICI\)1099-0992\(199903/05\)29:2/3<259::AID-EJSP927>3.0.CO;2-F](https://doi.org/10.1002/(SICI)1099-0992(199903/05)29:2/3<259::AID-EJSP927>3.0.CO;2-F); Amélie Mummendey, Thomas Kessler, Andreas Klink, Rosemarie Mielke, "Strategies To Cope with Negative Social Identity: Predictions By Social Identity Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 76:2 (February 1999): 229-245, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.76.2.229>.

¹⁹ Smith, Pettigrew, Pippin, Bialosiewicz, 204.

This leads to my second point of disagreement. Ward argues that his work is novel because it depicts status as “an international political force that influences domestic contests over the direction of foreign policy” (6). Yet much of the constructivist work on status and the attendant literature on identity dwells on the internal, and not only the external, politics it generates.²⁰ Ward’s claim of originality in developing a “second-image reversed” theory stems from his positioning of Larson and Shevchenko’s work as the foil for his own. Ward claims that their “standard model” treats states as unitary actors, and ignores the role status plays domestically in pressuring decisionmakers. While this critique is somewhat true of Larson’s and Shevchenko’s work, as much of it focuses on state leaders, it is not true of other work that very much includes domestic political dynamics, including the very discourses that Ward himself uses to such great effect in his case studies.²¹

My own work on Russia emphasizes that shared status aspirations and domestic debates about foreign behavior help legitimate proponents of particular national self-images and foreign policies, elevate them to decision-making positions, and de-legitimate other national self-images and their proponents.²² What is different is that I emphasize that a broad consensus on a particular status is necessary to place such pressure on politicians, while Ward argues that acts that can be interpreted by nationalists as evidence of status denial are sufficient. From my perspective, nationalists in Ward’s account do too much causal work in explaining how status immobility triggers revisionism (without the concept of ‘nationalist’ being properly unpacked—there can be quite different types of nationalists). There must be a broad-based agreement across elites on what status their country should have before any such dynamic can occur. A central SIT lesson is that to have positive self-esteem, an individual or group must be able to feel that it successfully enact a desired identity or status. For a national group, that requires playing to the international audience, but far more importantly, performing to the domestic one. It is only in this context that we can understand how social creativity strategies can actually improve the self-esteem of low-status groups even when their social position remains the same.²³

To be fair, Ward does not ignore this lesson. However, the book overestimates the impact of external behavior—acts of status denial, and underestimates the importance of domestic acts that enact or fail to enact a particular status. And because the domestic politics of status are so very much about policymakers proving to their elites and publics that they are performing a declared status, Ward overestimates the role that long-standing nationalists need play in pushing for revision. If state policymakers fail to persuade centrists and doves that they can enact a commonly desired status, the entire foreign policy spectrum can shift away from accommodation toward revisionism, as it did in post-Soviet Russia. Hardliners or nationalists need not even be central figures in domestic debates, and they were not significant players in the post-Soviet Russian turn

²⁰ Tsygankov, *Russia and the West*, Clunan, *Social Construction*, and Malinova.

²¹ Zarakol Malinova and Peter H. Gries, *China’s New Nationalism: Pride, Politics and Diplomacy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005).

²² Clunan, *Social Construction* and Clunan, “Historical Aspirations”.

²³ Marilyn B. Brewer, “The Many Faces of Social Identity: Implications for Political Psychology,” *Political Psychology* 22:1 (March 2001): 115-25, <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00229>.

away from accommodation in the mid-1990s.²⁴ There, the damning rhetoric came from former doves and centrists less concerned about U.S. treatment of Russia than of their own leaders' inability to perform their historical great power status; it was their defection to—not their defeat by—great power nationalism that changed official Russian behavior. Ward's account relies too much on a logic of non-recognition by other countries for the logic of rejection to take effect domestically. A sense of status immobility, in other words, can arise from predominantly internal dynamics and performance, and not only through second-image reversed effects of foreign countries' behavior.

The final way in which Ward's book diverges from an account consistent with SIT is in that SIT acknowledges that one of the factors mediating behavior is the various ingroups and outgroups an individual or group identifies with and against, and which ones are most salient at a particular point in time. People usually categorize themselves as belonging to more than one social group, and this creates the potential for cross-cutting or reinforcing behavioral orientations. Cross-cutting group memberships entail cases in which a person identifies others as belonging to an outgroup on one dimension but an ingroup on another dimension. Reinforcing group memberships exist when a person sees herself as an ingroup member on two or more dimensions—or conversely sees others as outgroup members on two or more dimensions.²⁵ In cases where people feel that they belong to multiple cross-cutting groups, social identity theory expects people to try to reconcile the differences amongst the groups, with the behavioral consequence that they are more tolerant of both and reduce actions that would hurt one identity or another.²⁶ “Cross-cutting memberships also make the distinction between ingroups and outgroups less pronounced.”²⁷ Cross-cutting group memberships are therefore expected to produce pressures for the self to moderate its views and compromise with partial outgroup members: This seems to be precisely what Britain did with the United States in Ward's account.

On the other hand, if a person constructs others as a double outgroup, she is more likely to display favoritism towards double ingroup and partial ingroup members and more bias towards double outgroup members.²⁸ Ward does a lovely job of demonstrating the importance of racism in two of his case studies—the first, of imperial Japan and its exclusion from the great power club of white nations, and the second, of how Anglo-Saxon racism ameliorated Britain's sensitivity to losing ground to a rising United States. His findings line up completely with SIT's expectations that overlapping and cross-cutting ingroup identification, as was the case with Britain identifying with the United States as both a rising power and an Anglo-Saxon country, lead to positive bias towards the other group. Conversely, double-outgroup identification in the case of Japan leads to discrimination, status denial and conflict. Ward is right that we always must be careful inferring causality from the historical record when using social psychology to explain behavior. Much more, however, could be made of these more nuanced applications of SIT to the cases he studies, and might lead to deeper

²⁴ Clunan, *Social Construction*.

²⁵ Clunan, *Social Construction*, 523-524.

²⁶ Marilyn B. Brewer, “The Many Faces.”

²⁷ Jeff Spinner-Halev and Elizabeth Theiss-Morse, “National Identity and Self-Esteem,” *Perspectives on Politics* 1:3 (September 2003): 515-532, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1537592703000379>.

²⁸ Spinner-Halev and Theiss-Morse, 524.

understanding of when in fact revisionist identity management strategies turn from denigration and discrimination to violence.

Review by Xiaoyu Pu, University of Nevada, Reno

Status matters in world politics. The question is how and why.¹ Steven Ward's book makes significant contributions to the growing number of studies on the subject. First, while most studies examine the motivation of status-seeking behaviors,² Ward primarily examines the political consequences of status concerns in international politics. In particular, Ward examines how status ambitions and status denial can drive rising powers to pursue radical revisionist behaviors. Status is not just treated as a motivation for state behaviors. Ward treats status as "an international political force that influences domestic contests over the direction of foreign policy" (6). This is an innovative modification of the "second image reversed" framework in international relations.³

Second, while most studies ignore domestic politics of status concerns in world politics, Ward puts domestic politics front and center in his research agenda. In particular, his analytical framework combines both psychological and domestic political factors. The core concept is "status immobility," which refers to "the belief that a state's status ambitions face an obstacle that is fundamental to the status quo order and cannot be overcome from inside of it" (42).

Finally, by analyzing rising powers in history and in contemporary world, Ward deepens the research on revisionism and rising powers in international relations. The rise of new great powers is significant in world history and international politics. Ward identifies an interesting puzzle: why would some rising powers pursue radical revisionism even when the status quo largely benefits them? Ward moves beyond the conventional focus on material capabilities in power transition and international change, and conceptualizes three types of revisionism: distributive revisionism, normative revisionism, and radical revisionism. With this new framework, Ward provides an insightful explanation of rising powers' revisionist behaviors.

While recognizing strengths of the book, I have the following questions.

First, is revisionism of rising powers often driven by status denial or denial of their interests? In some historical examples such as Wilhelmine Germany, revisionism was driven both by interest denial and status denial. In the contemporary era, Chinese elites actively debate whether the current U.S.-led order still serves

¹ T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds. *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

² For instance, Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to US primacy." *International Security* 34:4 (2010): 63-95; Yong Deng. *China's Struggle For Status: the Realignment of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008);

Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting For Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

³ Peter Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed: the International Sources of Domestic Politics," *International Organization* 32:4 (1978): 881-912.

China's interests.⁴ China's sense of vulnerability has increased in the context of recent Sino-U.S. trade war. As Chinese worry about the United States' technological containment, they might somewhat decouple with the U.S.-led economic system and build an alternative economic order.⁵ In these scenarios, it appears that interest denial instead of status denial might be more significant in shaping possible revisionist turn of a rising power.

Second, is contemporary China always concerned about status immobility? Since status is fundamentally social, rising powers might not always face the problem of status denial or status immobility. After all, states might not necessarily strive for the same status markers all the time. Furthermore, China is not just a rising power, and it is also an established great power. According to some studies, China has already become a "status-overachiever."⁶ Is there any significant "glass ceiling" for China in the twenty-first century? While the conventional wisdom often assumes that a rising China wants to have more status, China sends contradictory signals about its status and role in the twenty-first century.⁷ China continues to struggle for more recognition as a rising great power; it also worries, however, about the over-recognition of its rising status.

Finally, Ward analyzes the difficulties for the U.S. of accommodating China's status aspirations. I agree that there are important trade-offs between accommodating China and confronting China. However, I wonder if Ward has overestimated the contrasting choices between accommodating and confronting China. According to Thomas Christensen, the United States should deter China from destabilizing East Asia while encouraging China to contribute to multilateral global governance.⁸ It might be necessary to differentiate between China's regional status aspirations and its global status aspirations. At the regional level in East Asia, China strives for higher status and there might be increasing competitions between the U.S. and China. At global level, however, China's potential to replace the U.S. as a global leader is often exaggerated. According to Jeffrey Bader, "in the East Asian region, China's policies and ambitions increasingly conflict with US interests and threaten the region's equilibrium. On the global stage, China's actions and role are less potentially disruptive, even stabilizing."⁹ Most of China's global projects are not in conflict with those of the United States. If China

⁴ Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu, "After Unipolarity: China's Visions of International Order in an Era of US Decline," *International Security* 36:1 (2011): 41-72.

⁵ Edward Luce, "The New Era of US-China Decoupling," *Financial Times* (20 December 2018), <https://www.ft.com/content/019b1856-03c0-11e9-99df-6183d3002ee1>.

⁶ Thomas J. Volgy, Corbetta Renato, Patrick Rhamey, Ryan Baird, and Keith A. Grant, "Status considerations in international politics and the rise of regional powers," in T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, eds, *Status in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 58-84.

⁷ Xiaoyu Pu, "Controversial Identity of a Rising China," *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 10:2 (2017): 131-149.

⁸ Thomas J. Christensen. *The China Challenge: Shaping the Choices of a Rising Power* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2015).

⁹ Jeffrey A. Bader, "A Framework for U.S. Policy toward China," Asian Working Group Paper 3, Brookings Institution, Washington, March 2016, <http://www.brookings.edu/-/media/research/files/papers/2016/03/us-policy-toward-china-framework-bader/us-china-policy-framework-bader.pdf>.

shares more responsibilities in global governance, it will not necessarily jeopardize America's national interest. Even if there are some competitive elements between the U.S. and China at the global level, international competitions are not zero-sum games, and some benign competition might generate more incentives for the two countries to provide global public goods in Africa and other regions.¹⁰

¹⁰ Larry Hanauer and Lyle J. Morris, "Chinese Engagement in Africa: Drivers, Reactions, and Implications for U.S. Policy," Rand Corporation, 2014, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR521.html.

Author's Response by Steven Ward, Cornell University

Why do rising powers sometimes adopt foreign policies that aim to overthrow central elements of the international order? Why were elites in Wilhelmine Germany so dissatisfied with the European status quo that they saw major war as an attractive option by 1914? Why did Japan withdraw from the League of Nations in 1933—thereby signaling a deep rejection of the terms of the interwar order—when it stood to gain nothing concrete by doing so? What drove Weimar Germany's radical and reckless departure from grand strategic caution during the late 1920s and early 1930s?

In *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*, I argue that an indispensable but unappreciated part of the explanation for these kinds of deeply revisionist foreign policy orientations involves the appearance of “glass ceilings” that seem to permanently and unjustly disqualify states from holding status positions that leaders, elites, and parts of the public think they deserve. Widespread perceptions of status immobility—which partially flow from the manner in which foreign actors treat status claims—influence foreign policy by both motivating some actors to favor policies that lash out in protest against status quo institutions and their defenders, and by advantaging hardliners in domestic contests against moderates and doves.

I want to thank Kanti Bajpai, Anne Clunan, and Xiaoyu Pu for engaging so thoughtfully with the arguments that I make and the evidence that I present. I am especially gratified that the reviewers identify what I see as the book's most significant contributions. Pu usefully highlights the ways in which my treatment of status diverges from existing research. Most work, as he notes, treats status as a motive and investigates the ways in which its pursuit influences state behavior. By contrast, I argue that status concerns have social psychological and domestic political implications that existing work does not fully appreciate, and show that the treatment of status claims influences foreign policy by changing the domestic political environment inside states. By putting “domestic politics front and center” (an approach that Pu has also taken recently, to great effect),¹ I develop “an innovative” second-image reversed theoretical framework for understanding the link between status concerns and foreign policy. Bajpai similarly notes as a significant contribution the centrality in the argument of “a dialectic between the international and the domestic.” He aptly describes the core of the theoretical framework: “it is the reciprocal, intensifying, and indeed inextricable interaction between the international order and domestic political dynamics that exacerbates conflict and brings on war.” Along the same lines, Clunan points as a core strength to the book's “clear depiction of a domestic mechanism that brings international status to bear on domestic and state behavior.”

Both Pu and Clunan highlight a second important contribution: the book's novel multi-dimensional conceptualization of revisionism. While most analysts treat revisionism as a uni-dimensional variable that captures the intensity of dissatisfaction with an undifferentiated status quo, I argue that we can usefully distinguish between dissatisfaction with the *distribution of resources* in a system, and with the system's *rules, norms, and institutions*. This suggests that we can identify four ideal-typical orientations toward international order. Status quo states are satisfied along both dimensions; distributive revisionists want to adjust the distribution of some resource in their favor, but are satisfied with the order's normative component; normative revisionists are satisfied with the order's distributive dimension but are dissatisfied with the system's norms, rules, and institutions; and radical revisionists are dissatisfied along both dimensions. The

¹ Xiaoyu Pu, *Rebranding China: Contested Status Signaling in the Changing Global Order* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019).

focus of my argument is on shifts toward this last form of revisionism among rising powers: these are especially puzzling, and especially dangerous. Pu notes that this framework “provides an insightful explanation of rising powers’ revisionist behaviors,” and Clunan argues that it helps “flesh out more fully what distinguishes status quo-oriented status-seeking behavior from revisionist status-seeking behavior.”

Finally, Clunan highlights the book’s empirical contributions. Although, as Bajpai notes, the cases that I investigate are well-known, I argue that IR scholars have offered incomplete accounts of the sources of foreign policy change in these episodes. Attending to the ways in which status concerns influenced the attitudes of elites toward international order and domestic political debates about the direction of foreign policy yields substantially different interpretations. Clunan points to the role of status concerns in the attitudes of Wilhelmine German elites as an example. While other scholars have invoked the December 1912 “War Council” as evidence that German leaders had become committed to major war, they have ignored the significance of what led the Kaiser to call that meeting.² The catalyst was not the perception of a newly dire strategic situation, or evidence that a major war would be easier to win than leaders had previously calculated. Rather, it was the Kaiser’s anger at the reminder that the British refused to take seriously Germany’s claim to status equality. Status concerns played similarly critical—but unappreciated—roles in Japan’s decision to withdraw from the League of Nations in 1933, and in Weimar Germany’s shift away from strategic caution during the late 1920s and early 1930s. As Clunan notes, my reading of the historical record leads to novel insights about the ways in which status concerns influenced foreign policy change in these familiar episodes.

Bajpai, Clunan, and Pu also raise important questions about the book’s conceptual and theoretical framework, its research design, and its implications for how we should think about the rise of China as a potential challenge to international order. In the remainder of this response I address their central concerns, hoping in the process to stimulate future investigations of how status matters in world politics.

Research Design, Inferential Logics, and Evidence

While Clunan notes that “the research design and its application are excellent,” Bajpai raises three concerns. First, why did I select the cases that I did, and why did I exclude other potentially relevant cases? In particular, Bajpai suggests that Graham Allison’s universe of sixteen cases are more comprehensive.³ Why, he asks, did I not analyze some of the other cases on Allison’s list—like those involving Hapsburg Spain, the Ottoman Empire, Sweden, or nineteenth-century Russia.

Part of the answer is that the logic of inference that I rely on throughout the book involves causal process observation, not controlled comparison. For studies that rely on causal process observation, the most important problem is not selection bias. Inferences are not made by comparing cases that are ostensibly similar along all relevant dimensions except for those implicated by the theory. Rather, inferences are made by carefully specifying and then observing the operation of sets of mechanisms or causal processes proposed by different potential explanations. In this context, the most important problem is generalizability. While a particular set of mechanisms may be clearly visible and important in one case, this might be because the case is

² See, for instance, Dale Copeland, *The Origins of Major War* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 65.

³ Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2017).

especially favorable to those mechanisms. How do we know if these mechanisms operate in significant ways more broadly? My solution to this problem is to select cases that other prominent accounts claim to explain well. If I can show that status immobility plays a crucial role even in cases where we think other factors are likely sufficient to explain significant outcomes, then we can infer that in all likelihood status immobility is more broadly important.

Compare this approach with Allison's in *Destined for War*—whose research design Bajpai prefers. Allison claims to have identified all of the cases in which a rising power challenged an established power, and explicitly argues that this is valuable because it eliminates the problem of selection bias. According to him, this means that he can make a meaningful estimate of the strength of the association between these kinds of challenges and war: 75% of the time (in 12 out of 16 cases), power transitions led to major war.⁴ But it is far from clear what that number means if, indeed, it means anything at all. These sixteen cases vary widely along dimensions that likely confound or influence the relationship between power shifts and war, but that simply cannot plausibly be held constant. As a result, it is not possible to draw reliable inferences about the causal effect of power shifts on conflict by comparing these cases and observing variation on the independent and dependent variables.⁵ In my view, a better approach when faced with these limitations is to carefully specify mechanisms and look for evidence of their operation in cases that maximize the ability to argue that they may be important outside the bounds of the investigation. My case selection thus differs from that of Allison because of our different purposes (developing and identifying mechanisms versus identifying sweeping historical patterns), the different inferential logics these imply (causal process observation versus controlled comparison), and the distinct problems these inferential logics face (generalizability versus selection bias).

Another part of the answer—which I should have more fully articulated in the book—is that my account relies heavily on the idea that the state is widely understood as a powerful and significant social identity category. This means that cases from before the industrial era and the emergence and spread of nationalism (for example, the decline of the Habsburg Empire) are likely not the most appropriate contexts in which to observe the mechanisms at the heart of the theory.⁶

Second, Bajpai suggests that the book should have made more use of more archival and primary material, rather than relying mostly on the secondary historical literature. In my view, though, analysts do not always need to rely heavily on archival or primary material to build case studies. In well-known cases—like those that I analyze—trained historians have already painstakingly pored over and interpreted available documents. It is not clear that repeating that exercise as a political scientist would add much to the analysis. Moreover,

⁴ Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides' Trap?* (Boston and New York: Mariner Books, 2017), Kindle locations 181-192.

⁵ For similar critiques, see Ian Buruma, "Are China and the United States Headed for War?" *The New Yorker* (19 June 2017); Van Jackson, Rosemary Foot, Neville Morley, Mira Rapp-Hooper, and Hugh White, "Book Review Roundtable: Is War with China Coming? Contrasting Visions," *Texas National Security Review* (1 November 2017). Allison also gets important parts of the interpretation of Thucydides' narrative of the Peloponnesian War wrong. See Jonathan Kirshner, "Handle Him with Care: The Importance of Getting Thucydides Right," *Security Studies* (forthcoming).

⁶ Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 43.

appealing directly to documentary evidence to decide longstanding historiographical disputes (as would be the case if, for instance, I had attempted to say whether Thomas Otte's and Christopher Clark's interpretations of German intentions in July 1914 were more accurate than John Rohl's interpretation) can contribute to misleading inferences and estimates of uncertainty.⁷ The upshot is that I disagree with Bajpai's complaint that relying primarily on secondary sources to test competing theoretical frameworks constitutes "a larger problem with the discipline" of political science. *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* is hardly the only recent work that takes this approach. Many excellent and productive studies do so.⁸

Third, Bajpai notes that the empirical analysis in the book leaves open the possibility that non-status factors—in particular concerns about material security—played important roles in the cases that I analyze, and that I have made no claim about the causal weight of various factors. This—Bajpai suggests—is unsatisfying and "an enduring and familiar problem with status studies." Here, Bajpai has accurately captured the essence of the empirical argument but mischaracterized my purpose and methodological approach. It is not possible—or, in my view, necessary—to exclude security or wealth as a motivation for, say, Japan's interest in acquiring a sphere of influence in Manchuria. The book does not attempt to attribute to status concerns all (or even most) of the variation in Japanese (or German, or American) foreign policy behavior during the periods in question. Rather, my focus is on explaining important *shifts* toward radical revisionist policy orientations by rising powers that had incentives to pursue expansion more cautiously. This is why—instead of trying to somehow estimate the causal weight of various factors on the foreign policies of rising powers—I proceed empirically by identifying critical junctures during which states abandoned what I call the logic of institutional restraint, and explaining how these specific shifts happened. Within these limited bounds, I explicitly consider and reject alternative explanations rooted in other kinds of concerns (like security). So, for instance, the book clearly attributes Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations to changes in the domestic environment that arose as a result of the political salience of beliefs about status immobility in the wake of the publication of the Lytton Report (in which the League rejected Tokyo's claim that Japan's intervention in Manchuria following the 1931 Mukden Incident was legitimate). Readers may disagree about the ultimate significance of this move (though contemporary Japanese elites—and some foreign observers—saw it as enormously significant, and I provide suggestive evidence that leaving the League further advantaged hardliners in subsequent debates over Japanese foreign policy). But the book firmly argues that status immobility—not strategic or economic concerns—explains it.

Social Identity Theory and the Study of Status in World Politics

Clunan's primary critique is that my argument is not as novel as I claim it is. She says this is the case for two reasons. The first involves my treatment of Social Identity Theory (SIT). The problem is, Clunan argues,

⁷ Thomas Otte, *July Crisis: The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (New York: Harper, 2012); John Rohl, "Goodbye to All That (Again)? The Fischer Thesis, the New Revisionism, and the Meaning of the First World War," *International Affairs* 91:1 (2015): 153-166.

⁸ See, for example, David Edelstein, *Over the Horizon: Time, Uncertainty, and the Rise of Great Powers* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2017); Paul MacDonald and Joseph Parent, *Twilight of the Titans: Great Power Decline and Retrenchment* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2018).

“incomplete fealty to the underlying social psychological literature.” I want to thank Clunan for raising this issue because, in my view, we badly need to rethink the way that we use social psychological insights—and especially the SIT framework—to analyze how status matters in world politics. My response, in a nutshell, is that Clunan is partially right here. My framework does indeed demonstrate incomplete fealty to the most prominent approaches to studying status in IR that are rooted in social psychology.⁹ But these approaches have actually deviated in consequential ways from what social psychological frameworks and insights tell us about status. My departure from the conventional wisdom among IR scholars who study status and root their claims in social psychology is thus more faithful to the ways in which social psychological models like SIT encourage us to think about group status and intergroup relations.

The standard application of SIT to international status-seeking identifies three strategies by which states can improve their standing in the world. They can pursue social mobility, which involves emulating the values and practices of high-status states in order to join elite clubs. They can pursue social creativity, which involves promoting new dimensions of comparison as valuable markers of status. Or they can pursue social competition, which involves aiming to equal or surpass a higher status state in terms of geopolitically significant dimensions of comparison—which typically involves behaviors like empire-building, arms-racing, or military conflict. Strategic choices are driven by international social conditions. The most important claim, for my purposes here, is that states choose social competition when they face the condition of ‘impermeability’—which approximates what I call status immobility. When elite clubs—like the ‘great powers’ or the ‘West’—seem to be closed to new members due to the unwillingness of existing members to accommodate or recognize rising powers, status-seekers will abandon peaceful strategies like mobility and creativity and favor geopolitical competition.¹⁰

This conventional framework is rooted in insights from SIT, but it mistranslates them in important ways. I do not make this argument as explicitly as perhaps I should have in the book, but I do in an article that was recently published in *International Studies Quarterly*.¹¹ The most important error—in the context of this discussion—is that SIT does not suggest or provide evidence that impermeability (understood as an obstacle stopping a group from joining an elite club) drives groups to pursue social competition. Rather, SIT understands impermeability as an obstacle that prevents individuals from leaving disadvantaged social groups and joining advantaged ones (this is what SIT understands as ‘mobility’). The condition—as social psychologists understand it—thus leads only to efforts aimed at improving the position of a disadvantaged group as a whole (which SIT calls a ‘social change’ orientation). When this is the case, SIT suggests that groups have two options available to them: social competition (understood as efforts to improve the group’s position along consensually valued dimensions of comparison) and social creativity (an effort to shift

⁹ These approaches follow the influential model developed by Deborah Larson and Alexei Shevchenko. See Larson and Shevchenko, “Shortcut to Greatness: The New Thinking and the Revolution in Soviet Foreign Policy,” *International Organization* 57:1 (2003): 77-109; “Status Seekers: Chinese and Russian Responses to U.S. Primacy,” *International Security* 34:4 (2010): 63-95; and “Managing Rising Powers: The Role of Status Concerns,” in T.V. Paul, Deborah Larson, and William Wohlforth, eds., *Status in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014)

¹⁰ Larson and Shevchenko, “Status Seekers,” 72; “Managing Rising Powers,” 39, 56-57.

¹¹ Steven Ward, “Lost in Translation: Social Identity Theory and the Study of Status in World Politics,” *International Studies Quarterly* 61:4 (2017): 821-834.

collective perceptions of other dimensions that are not currently consensually valued or admirable). Variation between these two strategies is driven primarily by beliefs about whether acquiring resources that are already consensually valued—thereby meaningfully changing the status hierarchy—seems feasible (and thus constitutes a plausible “cognitive alternative”) or not.¹²

This mistranslation has serious consequences for how we understand status-seeking in IR, on which I elaborate in an article that is forthcoming in *International Theory*.¹³ One of the most important problems is that prominent approaches do not actually provide a persuasive account of what happens when rising states face status ‘glass ceilings.’ The conventional wisdom in IR suggests that the result is geopolitically competitive behavior, but geopolitically competitive status-seeking behavior often precedes widespread perceptions of status immobility. Germany’s *Weltpolitik*—an effort to raise German status by acquiring battleships and an empire—began during the 1890s, but German elites did not become deeply pessimistic about London’s willingness to accommodate their demands until almost two decades later. Japan’s attempt to improve its status led to an empire-building project as early as the 1890s, but perceptions of status immobility did not emerge until much later, after a series of crises over race and the treatment of Japanese immigrants abroad.¹⁴ So, if status immobility does not drive geopolitically competitive status-seeking, then what *are* its effects?

I argue that status immobility leads to pressure for policies that *reject* central institutional and normative elements of international orders as a means of protesting, weakening, and delegitimizing the status quo. This argument is informed in part by social psychological insights about “non-normative” responses to unjust and permanent denials of status among individuals. It is also informed by the notion, which is common among researchers working with Relative Deprivation Theory, that disadvantaged groups without plausible means of redressing grievances legitimately are likely to favor efforts aimed at protest or secession.¹⁵

Addressing some of Clunan’s more specific contentions helps to bring the issues at stake into higher relief. For instance, Clunan claims that “SIT already incorporates...the logic of rejection within its identity management strategies of competition and creativity.” But rejection is clearly distinct from competition or creativity. Competition and creativity are *status-seeking* strategies. This means that they must succeed, ultimately, by convincing relevant others to recognize the state’s claims to higher status (perhaps by admitting the state into an elite club). Rejection does not aim directly at persuading relevant others to recognize or accommodate claims to higher status—this would make little sense, since rejection is informed by the belief that other states are fundamentally unable or unwilling to accommodate the status seeker’s claims. Rather, rejection works by venting or expressing anger and frustration produced by unjust and apparently permanent status denial. Its function is to satisfy the emotional drive and corresponding domestic political incentives for policies that lash

¹² See Henri Tajfel and John Turner, “An Integrative Theory of Group Conflict,” in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations* eds. William Austin and Stephen Worchel (Monterey: Brooks/Cole Publishing Co., 1979), 45-46.

¹³ Steven Ward, “Logics of Stratified Identity Management in World Politics,” *International Theory* (forthcoming).

¹⁴ See Ward, “Lost in Translation,” 827-830.

¹⁵ For citations and a more extensive discussion, see Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*, 50-52. For an application of similar insights to the domestic political context, see Justin Gest, *The New Minority: White Working Class Politics in an Age of Immigration and Inequality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016).

out against a status quo order that appears to be hopelessly rigged against a rising power that feels that it deserves better treatment. Rejection, competition, and creativity operate according to different logics, are analytically distinguishable, and have different consequences when pursued by rising powers. In particular, I argue and show that a prominent drive to protest, withdraw from, or delegitimize the central elements of order makes a state more dangerous than does a drive to improve its status within the boundaries of the status quo.

Clunan also argues that I commit an “ontological error” by suggesting that SIT is fundamentally concerned with recognition, rather than simply with “self-perceptions.” In other words, I place too much weight on the significance of the ways in which foreign actors treat status claims. What really matters is how the state (and relevant domestic audiences) perceives itself. This is a potentially important point: if recognition does not really matter, then my critique of the conventional translation of SIT into IR would lose much of its force. So would my own account, premised as it is on the idea that domestic actors pay attention to, care about, and make political use of foreign behavior that sends signals about the legitimacy of status claims.

But Clunan’s position here is at odds with the way that prominent IR scholarship and SIT understand what status is. Deborah Larson, T.V. Paul, and William Wohlforth write that status “is recognized through voluntary deference by others,” and that “status accommodation occurs when higher-status actors acknowledge the state’s enhanced responsibilities, privileges, or rights.”¹⁶ Larson and Alexei Shevchenko write (of social mobility, social creativity, and social competition) that “to be successful, each of the identity management strategies requires that the higher-status groups accept and recognize the aspiring group’s improved position.”¹⁷ Wohlforth’s analysis of the “status dilemma” implies that what others think matters critically: the “status dilemma occurs when two states would be satisfied with their status if they had perfect information about each other’s beliefs. But in the absence of such certainty, a state’s leadership may conclude that its status is under challenge even when it is not. Mixed signals, botched communications, or misinterpretation of the meanings underlying action may generate misplaced status dissonance.”¹⁸ Jonathan Renshon defines status as “‘common’ or ‘shared beliefs’” about an actor’s importance, and measures status dissatisfaction in a manner that highlights the significance of the relationship between the status that a state *should* enjoy and the status that other states attribute to it.¹⁹ Marina Duque writes that “status involves ‘an effective claim’: for an actor to achieve a particular status, others need to recognize it.”²⁰

¹⁶ Deborah Larson, T.V. Paul, and William Wohlforth, “Status and World Order,” in *Status in World Politics*, eds. T.V. Paul, Deborah Larson, and William Wohlforth (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 8, 11.

¹⁷ Larson and Shevchenko, “Managing Rising Powers,” 41.

¹⁸ William Wohlforth, “Status Dilemmas and Interstate Conflict,” in *Status in World Politics* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 118-119.

¹⁹ Jonathan Renshon, “Status Deficits and War,” *International Organization* 70:3 (2016): 513-550; *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017).

²⁰ Marina Duque, “Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach,” *International Studies Quarterly* 62:3 (2018), 580.

SIT also centers on the concept of status, and it also understands status in terms that highlight the significance of recognition. In one of the seminal early articulations of the framework, Henri Tajfel described efforts to improve group status in terms that clearly suggest that what relevant others think is critically important.²¹ Status seeking at the group level involves, for Tajfel, efforts to achieve new characteristics for a group in order to change the way that significant audiences evaluate the group's value. This process entails "two stages...which, ideally, both need to be successfully realized. The first (which is a condition *sine qua non* for the success of the enterprise) is the positive evaluation by the ingroup of its newly created characteristics. The second stage consists of the acceptance by the outgroup of this evaluation." Both social competition and social creativity—as they are understood by Tajfel—require recognition by relevant others in order to succeed. Social competition involves an effort "to shift the evaluation of a group on certain existing dimensions. The social comparison problem for the inferior group is: will the others acknowledge the new image, separate but equal or superior, on consensually valued dimensions?" Social creativity involves "situations in which the new characteristics of an inferior group are not consensually valued, to begin with. The social comparison problem of the second case for the inferior group then becomes: will the others acknowledge the new image, *different* but equal or superior?"²²

Thus, while Clunan is right to stress that what members of the ingroup think matters, recognition by relevant outgroups is also critical—both according to SIT, and according to analysts of status in world politics. Indeed, if recognition did not matter, then status would not be much of a source of conflict at all: actors could simply unilaterally declare that they had achieved a positively distinctive position in the world, regardless of what anyone else thought or how anyone else behaved toward them. This, unfortunately, is not usually how status works: claims to position depend on recognition, which means that actors do care what relevant others think and how they act.²³ Highlighting the simultaneous and interactive significance of these elements is one of *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*' core theoretical and empirical contributions: what domestic audiences think about the state's status in the world and the adequacy of its leadership and foreign policy depends crucially (and in ways that prior scholarship has not fully appreciated) on how foreign actors treat claims to status.

On the basis of these two points—that standard accounts already incorporate the logic of rejection, and that recognition is unimportant—Clunan challenges my central theoretical claim: "Revisionism" she writes, "which is precisely what the identity management strategies of competition and creativity seek, can be triggered without [acts of status denial]." To illustrate this point, Clunan notes that German attempts to

²¹ Henri Tajfel, "The Achievement of Group Differentiation," in *Differentiation between Social Groups* ed. Henri Tajfel (New York: Academic Press Inc., 1978), 95-97.

²² Tajfel, "The Achievement of Group Differentiation," 96.

²³ For more treatments of the importance of and problems associated with status accommodation or recognition, see T.V. Paul, ed., *Accommodating Rising Powers: Past, Present, and Future* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); 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, eds., *The International Politics of Recognition* (New York: Routledge, 2016); Christopher Daase, Caroline Fehl, Anna Geis, and Georgios Koliarakis, eds., *Recognition in International Relations: Rethinking a Political Concept in a Global Context* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015); Steven Ward, "Status, Stratified Rights, and Accommodation in International Relations," *Journal of Global Security Studies* (forthcoming).

improve Germany's status vis-à-vis Great Britain in the decades before World War I required only the belief that Germany *deserved* higher status, and that changing the status hierarchy was feasible.

This interpretation is actually entirely consistent with my argument, but ignores a critically important element. One of the book's central conceptual innovations—as Clunan highlights earlier in her review—is to distinguish between various kinds of revisionist foreign policy orientations. An effort to improve status (whether via social competition or social creativity) counts as distributive revisionism. This is what German empire-building and naval arms-racing—*Weltpolitik*—were aimed at: improving Germany's position in the status quo order by advancing along consensually valued dimensions of comparison. And Clunan is right that we do not need to invoke either status immobility or the logic of rejection to adequately understand *Weltpolitik*—or distributive forms of revisionism aimed at status seeking more generally. The beliefs that the status hierarchy is illegitimate and can feasibly be changed are sufficient.

But the focus of my theoretical argument is not distributive revisionism.²⁴ It is, rather, shifts toward radical revisionism: policy orientations that aim simultaneously at acquiring more of some valuable resource (like territory, power, or status) and at protesting, rejecting, delegitimizing, or overthrowing central institutional or normative elements of the status quo order. And my empirical focus in Chapter 3 (which analyzes the pre-World War I Germany case) is not on explaining *Weltpolitik* but rather Germany's shift from a focus on achieving “world power” status toward centrally challenging the European balance of power—a crucial pre-war institution. I interpret this as a shift from distributive to radical revisionism, and argue that it cannot fully be understood without invoking increasing pessimism among German elites about the possibility of being treated by Great Britain as a full and equal member of the ‘world power’ club. In short, increasing evidence that Germany faced a status ‘glass ceiling’ during the years leading up to World War I prompted some elites to conclude that the European status quo order was hopelessly rigged against Berlin and had to be overthrown. That, in turn, increased support for major war. Clunan herself—earlier in her review—points toward one of the pieces of evidence that I cite as support for this interpretation: Kaiser Wilhelm II called the December 1912 War Council after being reminded of (and angered by) British obstructionism.

Clunan's second main critique is to question the novelty of my “second-image reversed” framework. There is nothing new, she suggests, about depicting “status as ‘an international political force that influences domestic contests over the direction of foreign policy.’” Clunan then notes that others—including herself—have developed theoretical stories about how domestic political debates that implicate international status play out.

Clunan has indeed made significant contributions to our understanding of how states seek status, especially by looking inside the state and analyzing the domestic politics of national identity and status ambitions. In fact, in my view Clunan undersells the importance of her work here: in a research area dominated by models

²⁴ See, for instance, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*, 19, where I note that “distributive revisionism” is a common policy combination and that “states are frequently dissatisfied with how much of some resource they have;” 21, where I note that I do “not propose a universal theory of revisionism;” and 22 where I note that rising states may pursue distributive forms of revisionism for a variety of reasons: “They may require economic expansion in order to continue growing; they may redefine their security requirements as they grow in ways that push toward territorial expansion; and their leaders and populations may demand increases in status and influence concomitant with their new strength.” In short, the book explicitly and intentionally *avoids* making the claim that Clunan appears to attribute to it: that all forms of revisionism are driven by status immobility.

that treat states (either implicitly or explicitly) as unitary actors, Clunan's work stands out as a critical signpost pointing toward more productive—but thus far largely unexploited—ways of thinking about status in IR that take domestic politics seriously.²⁵

But my theoretical framework differs from Clunan's in a crucial way. Clunan's work downplays the importance of international political factors in driving the outcomes of domestic debates over foreign policy. Her critique of my focus on recognition highlights this difference: for Clunan, the manner in which foreign actors treat claims to status is of limited significance. Other factors—like dominant domestic narratives about the state's proper foreign policy role—matter more. As Clunan notes, in her view *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* “overestimates the impact of external behavior.”

Of course, I disagree with Clunan that I overestimate the influence of foreign behavior on domestic debates over the direction of foreign policy. She cites for support the example of post-Soviet Russia, but it is not obvious that the dynamics at the center of my theoretical framework—which is about rising powers facing apparent status ‘glass ceilings’—should work exactly the same way in a state facing decline from great power status. Nor is it necessarily true that foreign behavior played an insignificant role in the evolution of late Soviet and post-Soviet Russian foreign policy. Kimberly Marten, for instance, argues that NATO's interventions in the Balkans during the 1990s seemed to signal that Russia's aspiration to remain a great power was incompatible with the new status quo and pushed Moscow toward confrontation with Washington, and Matthew Evangelista has argued that American accommodation played a critical role in strengthening moderate forces in Moscow as the Cold War ended.²⁶

But regardless of whose theoretical framework is more accurate, our accounts are clearly different. Clunan adopts a *second-image* approach: foreign policy is driven by factors and processes located at the domestic level.²⁷ International political factors do not significantly influence these dynamics. By contrast, my second-image *reversed* model *highlights* the role of international political factors—in particular, the signals that foreign behavior send about the legitimacy of status claims—as resources that advantage some kinds of domestic actors and disadvantage others.²⁸ This, I maintain, fills an important gap in our understanding of the concrete ways in which concerns about international status influence foreign policy.

²⁵ See especially Anne Clunan, *The Social Construction of Russia's Resurgence: Aspirations, Identity, and Security Interests* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009).

²⁶ Kimberly Marten, “Reconsidering NATO expansion: a counterfactual analysis of Russian and the West in the 1990s,” *European Journal of International Security* 3.2 (2018): 135-161; Matthew Evangelista, “Internal and External Constraints on Foreign Policy: The Soviet Case,” in Richard Rosecrance and Arthur Stein, eds., *The Domestic Bases of Grand Strategy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993).

²⁷ Much like the models described as “liberal” by Andrew Moravcsik, “Taking Preferences Seriously: A Liberal Theory of International Politics,” *International Organization* 51:4 (1997): 513-553, or like domestic-level constructivist accounts that focus primarily on how state-level identities or domestic political identity contestation drive policy.

²⁸ Thus, my framework is more like the approaches described in Peter Gourevitch, “The Second Image Reversed: The International Sources of Domestic Politics,” *International Organization* 32:4 (1978): 881-912.

Status Immobility and the Rise of China

The argument that I develop has clear potential relevance for the contemporary world. I argue that China has outstanding status ambitions, and that the processes that I develop and analyze could, under the wrong conditions, push Beijing toward a much more deeply revisionist foreign policy orientation that fundamentally rejects the core elements of what Ikenberry and others have called the “liberal international order.”²⁹ Pu raises three thought-provoking questions about the applicability of my framework to contemporary China.

First, Pu wonders whether revisionism among rising powers is more frequently “driven by status denial or denial of their interests.” What drives Pu to ask this question is the observation that Chinese elites may be more concerned about “whether the current U.S.-led order still serves China’s interests,” than about whether it accords China proper status. At a theoretical level, I am skeptical that obstructed material interests themselves are sufficient to drive states toward radical revisionist foreign policy orientations. Radically challenging—versus attempting to reform—the status quo order is costly and risks disaster for a rising power. These costs may easily outstrip any material gains that the rising power stands to enjoy from destroying the old order and substituting a new one. This, I argue, is the fundamental problem with Gilpin’s well-known account of how rising powers sometimes go from demanding ‘incremental’ change to ‘revolutionary’ change. It is not obvious why an instrumentally rational rising power would court disaster in order to satisfy demands for increased material advantage whose value may be destroyed (possibly more than once over) as a result of its pursuit.³⁰ Status concerns help to solve this theoretical problem in part because they are often indivisible, and in part because they have the potential to activate social psychological and domestic political dynamics that can interfere with the pursuit strategically optimal foreign policy. In short, status concerns have properties that are especially (if not uniquely) well-suited to explaining the pursuit of sub-optimally provocative policies.

Empirically, of course, Pu may well be right. The jury is still out, as contemporary China is a case in progress. I do not think that Beijing is currently pursuing a set of policies that approximates a radical revisionist orientation. Perhaps it will shift towards one, and perhaps that shift will be driven most importantly by the belief that China’s material interests are fundamentally incompatible with the U.S.-led status quo order. But, in my view, that outcome would imply that there is some factor (or set of factors) that distinguishes China from historical rising powers in ways that reduce the social psychological and domestic political salience of Chinese status concerns. I am not aware of any analysis that implies that this is the case—on the contrary, prominent observers suggest that China is especially sensitive to international status concerns in ways that may actually exacerbate the dynamics that I highlight in *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*.³¹

²⁹ G. John Ikenberry, *Liberal Leviathan: The Origins, Crisis, and Transformation of the American World Order* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011).

³⁰ Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 45-46. For a similar critique of Gilpin, see Jonathan Kirshner, “Gilpin Approaches War and Change: A Classical Realist in Structural Drag,” in G. John Ikenberry, ed., *Power, Order, and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

³¹ Yong Deng, *China’s Struggle for Status: The Realignment of International Relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Reinhard Wolf, “Rising Powers, Status Ambitions, and the Need to Reassure: What China Could Learn from Imperial Germany’s Failures,” *The Chinese Journal of International Politics* 7:2 (2014): 185-219; Peter

Second, Pu asks whether “contemporary China [is] always concerned about status immobility.” Pu notes that rising powers have countervailing strategic incentives and multiple identities. China is “not just a rising power, and it is also an established great power.” Moreover, some studies suggest that “China has already become a “status-overachiever.” While China “continues to struggle for more recognition as a rising great power; it also worries...about the over-recognition of its rising status.”

Pu is right to remind us that Beijing has contrasting incentives as it rises. Indeed, this is what makes shifts toward radical revisionism puzzling. Rising powers have strategic incentives to behave cautiously and avoid sending signals to established powers that they harbor deeply revisionist ambitions. They also have incentives to pass themselves off as ‘developing’ powers in order to shirk some of the responsibilities that may come along with higher status.

The argument that I make throughout the book is not that rising powers (and domestic actors within rising powers) are or should always be obsessed with their status. Rather they should often disregard status concerns. Doing so would in many cases make for better foreign policy, and leaders often understand that this is the case. For instance, Gustav Stresemann would have had a much easier time as Germany’s foreign minister during the 1920s if he had been able to ignore anxiety about whether Germany was being treated appropriately by other powers. Instead, he had to accommodate the status concerns of German nationalists, which nearly scuttled a beneficial renegotiation of the German reparations bill in 1924, and made *détente* with France and the other allies at Locarno (which indisputably enhanced German security) more difficult.³²

Thus, the key question to ask about Chinese status concerns is not whether China or Chinese elites are always or uniformly concerned with China’s position in the international hierarchy. Rather, the question is whether there are important actors that are concerned about Chinese status, and whether they have the capacity to influence Chinese foreign policy. Here, I follow David Shambaugh and Ren Xiao’s categorization of Chinese foreign policy worldviews.³³ There are, to be sure, some groups that do not seem to care much about Chinese status (for instance, what Shambaugh and Xiao call the “Globalists” seem much more interested in the material benefits that China stands to enjoy from integrating within the liberal order). But some groups—especially what Shambaugh and Xiao refer to as the “Nativists”—do seem highly sensitive to China’s status in the world. The Nativists are “hyper-nationalists” who “regularly harp on the nationalist theme of the ‘century of shame and humiliation’ and argue that China is entitled to global respect (particularly by those powers that previously humiliated China).”³⁴ Liu Mingfu—whose influential book *The China Dream* has reportedly

Hays Gries, Qingmin Zhang, H. Michael Crowson, and Huajian Cai, “Patriotism, Nationalism, and China’s U.S. Policy: Structures and Consequences of Chinese National Identity,” *The China Quarterly* 205 (2011): 1-17; Joshua Freedman, “Status Insecurity and Temporality in World Politics,” *European Journal of International Relations* 22:4 (2016): 797-822.

³² See *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers*, chapter 5, for this discussion.

³³ David Shambaugh and Ren Xiao, “China: The Conflicted Rising Power,” in *Worldviews of Aspiring Powers: Domestic Foreign Policy Debates in China, India, Iran, Japan, and Russia* eds. Henry Nau and Deep Ollapally (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

³⁴ Shambaugh and Xiao, “China: The Conflicted Rising Power,” Kindle locations 1025-1265.

informed Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s worldview—is another example. Liu complains about the United States’ “monopolization of its status as champion” and calls for China to “create a new world order that prefers peace, development, freedom, and cooperative civilization.” Importantly, Liu appears to oppose extensive cooperation with the United States because doing so would actually *strengthen* what he sees as a fundamentally unjust status quo order: “China can be promoted to copilot to help the United States cope with risks, but this will only help America maintain its position as pilot.”³⁵ There is also evidence that parts of the Chinese public (especially some “netizens”) may be prone to mobilization by issues related to China’s status.³⁶

I speculate that these kinds of actors could be motivated and strengthened by acts that seem to deny Chinese status claims. I might be wrong. Again, there may be something about the Chinese case that makes it unusually easy for cautious or moderate leaders in Beijing to resist pressure to lash out against the status quo order as a response to signals that China does not—and cannot—enjoy equality of status alongside the United States. But I have not yet seen a compelling argument that this is the case. In short, I am not persuaded that China is uniquely immune to the social psychological and domestic political consequences of status sensitivity that afflicted the rising powers that I analyze in the book.

Pu’s final question is the most illuminating. While China aspires to leadership in East Asia, its global “actions and roles are less potentially disruptive, even stabilizing.” China’s “global projects are not in conflict with those of the United States. If China shares more responsibilities in global governance, it will not necessarily jeopardize America’s national interest.” In short, Pu notes, both Beijing and Washington stand to gain a great deal by cooperating with one another. So why wouldn’t they?

The problem, in my view, is that Beijing’s ambitions for regional leadership conflict with Washington’s understanding of the role that the United States plays in the world. What if the United States refuses to accommodate China’s status-implicated claim to leadership in East Asia? Pu’s question implies that Beijing will still have incentives to cooperate with Washington in other areas. This is surely true, but incentives to avoid conflict are not always enough to prevent conflict—especially when status is implicated. A Sino-American dispute over China’s role and rights in East Asia may make Sino-American cooperation much more difficult, regardless of the arena. Thus, while China may not be aiming to replace the United States as the “global leader,” if Washington refuses to accommodate Beijing’s aspirations in East Asia, the result may still be wide-ranging Sino-American rivalry and deeply-rooted contestation over the shape of the international order. China and the United States will be at loggerheads as long as the former demands a role in the world that the latter is not willing to recognize.

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³⁵ Liu Mingfu, *The China Dream: Great Power Thinking and Strategic Posture in the Post-American Era* (New York: CN Times Books, Inc., 2015), Kindle locations 953, 3890.

³⁶ Shaun Breslin and Simon Shen, “Online Chinese Nationalism(s): Comparisons and Findings,” in *Online Chinese Nationalism and China’s Bilateral Relations* eds. Simon Shen and Shaun Breslin (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2010).

Wohlforth for agreeing to introduce it. As Pu notes, status matters in world politics—on that, a diverse range of scholars agree. What we do not understand well enough is why and how status concerns matter, and with what consequences. While *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* aims to provide partial answers to these questions, much more—particularly about the ways in which international status and domestic politics may be linked, and how these connections influence foreign policy and international political outcomes—remains to be explored.³⁷

³⁷ For a promising analysis along these lines, see Nicholas Sambanis, Stergios Skaperdas, and William Wohlforth, “Nation-Building through War,” *American Political Science Review* 109:2 (2015): 279-296.