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A Dual Model of How States Attain Status and Influence in International Relations

#### Introduction

Intuition has long held that there are two main ways to acquire influence over human groups. One way is with the stick, via brutish Machiavellian stratagems. The other with the carrot, or a saint like virtue. Jesus and Confucius, or Machiavelli and Han Fei. This intuitionist approach to achieving social rank and influence in human groups has, in fact, been increasingly refined, empirically grounded, and achieved predictive utility in the life sciences. From evolutionary anthropology to neurobiology, findings are mounting that support a 'Dual Model' interpretation for how actors achieve status rank and influence in human social groups. One can become a 'Big Man'—as the phrasing goes¹—via strategies of 'prestige' or 'power'.

A review of the literature on achieving status in both international relations and the life sciences reveals a major disconnect between these two academic areas. Whereas the life sciences have made sizeable strides on a coherent research paradigm, furthering our understanding of how and why actors pursue and achieve status rank and influence, the work in international relations remains, by contrast, disjointed. Furthermore, most of the existing scholarship and theorizing in international relations does not draw upon work in the life sciences. International relations thus appears far from establishing a framework that coheres research on status and unifies the field's many differing definitions of the term.

As questions in international relations invariably involve the human element, scholarly theory ought to be informed and updated with respect to work in the life sciences. This article seeks to apply the life science's now well-developed 'Dual Model' of status rank pursuit—involving dual strategic typologies for status attainment, termed 'prestige' and 'power'— to the international relations field. In particular, seeking to synthesize international relations with work in the life sciences to further analytic understanding of 'status' and 'status competition' in the international system. The article also advocates for centering the study of status, and status

competition among states, in the international relations field. The article argues that status should be considered more encompassing than most of the literature thus far considers it to be.

### Status Hierarchies in the Life Sciences

Status, while related to tangible attributes, is an inherently social, perceptual, relative, and positional rank ordering of individuals within a social grouping. Status hierarchies among social mammals, including primates, are ubiquitous features of organization that pre-date the emergence of our genus, homo, by many millions of years. Indeed, most social mammals exhibit some sort of formal or informal social status hierarchy. Amidst competing definitions in related fields (see *Appendix 1*), the simplest, operationalized, definition of status is simply "social rank in terms of social influence (i.e. the ability to modify others' behaviors, thoughts, and feelings)."<sup>2</sup>

Relevant research on social status hierarchies in the life sciences focuses on why and how individuals within status hierarchies achieve and pursue high rank. From an evolutionary perspective, the incentives for 'why' individuals strive for high social status ranking include: preferential access to mates, preferential access to contested resources, and extra influence in group decisions.<sup>3</sup> As understood in the evolutionary psychology literature, 'status' thus tends to refer to the "relative degree to which an individual receives relatively unchallenged deference, influence, social attention, and access to valued resources." Fields including neuro-biology<sup>5</sup>, neuroscience<sup>6</sup>, primatology<sup>7</sup>, evolutionary anthropology<sup>8</sup>, evolutionary psychology<sup>9</sup>, and cultural evolution<sup>10</sup> converge in finding markers indicating that social animals—including humans—have an evolved cognitive and behavioral machinery that preferentially gears individuals, particularly males, to pursue relative social status ranking.<sup>11</sup> Findings on a wide range of animal and human subjects show that individuals of higher social rank demonstrate signs of superior mental health and physical wellbeing and achieve higher rates of reproduction.<sup>12</sup>

From an ultimate, evolutionary perspective status hierarchies appear to solve group coordination problems and, as groups grow larger, hierarchies—very often informal ones—become increasingly necessary as group coordination problems intensify. Hierarchical organization allowed groups, and the individuals within them, to out-compete and thus preferentially survive and reproduce, ingratiating into our evolved psychology a predisposition for operating in hierarchies. He ubiquitous presence of status hierarchies in our species and their important role in mediating who gets priority access to reproductive and fitness relevant resources indicates that evolutionary selection pressures are likely to have given rise to cognitive and physiological mechanisms that:

"a) motivate individuals to advance their positions in status hierarchies (status improvement), b) convert advantageous status positions into fitness benefits (status capitalization), c) assess and monitor others' positions in status hierarchies (status assessment) and d) manage and cope with changes in status positions in social hierarchies, both gains and losses (status management). These mechanisms are instantiated as coordinated interactions between hormonal, cognitive, emotional, and behavioral systems and they need not be consciously motivated." <sup>15</sup>

Although the widespread presence of social status hierarchies—and the desire for, and benefits accruing to, high social status rank—among social mammals is well established, recent research has homed in on a systematic paradigm for how hierarchies vary between and within species. In 2001, Joseph Henrich and Francisco Gil-White wrote a paper titled 'The Evolution of Prestige.' This paper initiated a new research framework on social status hierarchies by identifying and differentiating between two distinct strategic typologies for attaining social rank, namely 'prestige' and 'dominance'. Humans, the authors argue, have uniquely evolved a form of social hierarchy predicated on prestige. The authors define prestige-based status as the willing

deference of subordinates, out of respect and desire to learn, to individuals who display and possess valued competencies and skills. According to Henrich et al, this stands in stark contrast to all other species—including social mammal species—whose sole form of hierarchical arrangement is predicated upon dominance, which they define as the use of force, coercion and threat to obtain obedience (forced deference) from subordinates. Because of our species unique penchant for social learning, the authors argue that humans uniquely adapted to favor this novel form of status based upon prestige. While more recent research has shed doubt on the idea that prestige hierarchies are, in-kind, a novel aspect of homo sapiens social organization—there is evidence, for example, of prestige in other pseudo-cultural species, such as orca whales, dolphins, elephants, and chimpanzees<sup>17</sup>—there is no question that, in degree, the prevalence of prestige-based strategies in human status hierarchies is unique.<sup>18</sup>

Our historical heritage as hunter-gatherers is particularly important. As Boehm argues, amongst our ancestors weaker group members often banded together to prohibit—often by killing—powerful individuals from using dominance strategies to achieve status rank and influence (aided in particular both by evolutionary adaptions for social learning and an evolved ability to effectively use ranged weapons. <sup>19</sup> This enabled informal and ad-hoc (i.e. prestige) hierarchies to become increasingly prevalent features in hunter-gatherer groups. <sup>20</sup> Social norms, though, did and still do play an important role in determining whether prestige or dominance-based strategies are more or less likely to succeed: "in groups and societies that have developed strong norms that may either place a premium on prestige, or sanction dominance, the relationship that dominance has with social rank may be muted, whilst in groups and societies that lack these norms, dominance may remain an effective route to social rank." <sup>21</sup>

Scholars employing the Dual Model's typological distinction in status-attainment strategies have thus far largely confirmed Henrich et al's framework.<sup>22</sup> The dominance vs

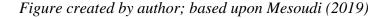
prestige typology has facilitated novel hypotheses and provided explanations for many behaviors that had formerly been difficult or impossible to consistently account for under the nondifferentiated framework.<sup>23</sup> While there is ongoing research and potential contestations or additions (e.g. competence as the sole role and moral virtue as a separate pathway)<sup>24</sup>, the findings thus far consistently and robustly support the utility of employing a typological distinction between prestige and dominance-based strategies as means for achieving status rank and influence [see Appendix 2 for figure]. In their 2019 review of the literature, Van Vugt and Smith conclude that "recognition of a dual model of leadership provides an answer to an old philosophical debate about the nature of leadership as either setting the right example or being an effective ruler. Due to a unique evolutionary legacy of being primates with a relatively steep dominance hierarchy and hunter-gatherers with a flatter, more egalitarian social hierarchy, humans have been able to create large cooperative communities around inspirational, charismatic, prestige-style leaders who are backed up by (physical) force and coercion whenever there was a substantial danger of coordination failures in the face of intra- or intergroup conflicts."

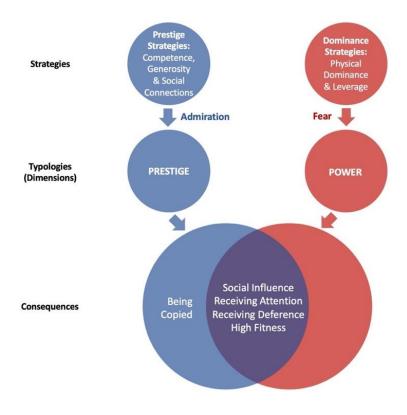
While scholarship is and will remain ongoing, the evidentiary base substantiating the Dual Model is significant. Individuals following dominance and prestige strategies attracted more attention<sup>25</sup>, individuals following both strategies achieved much greater reproductive success<sup>26</sup>, and both dominant and prestigious individuals received greater deference than low social rank individuals<sup>27</sup>. Similarly, important findings validate the differences in the two typologies.

Dominant individuals are more likely than prestigious individuals to be aggressive<sup>28</sup>; dominant individuals are more likely to demonstrate Machiavellian personality traits<sup>29</sup>; prestigious individuals were more likely to demonstrate 'authentic' pride whereas dominant individuals were more likely to demonstrate 'hubristic' pride<sup>30</sup>; and prestigious individuals are more likely to be

copied and watched as models of social learning.<sup>31</sup> Importantly, though, scholars make clear that while dominance-strategies occur both in formal and informal hierarchical settings, prestige is only operative in informal hierarchies.<sup>32</sup>

The graphic below thus shows prestige and dominance strategies as distinct typologies for achieving similar ends. Following Mesoudi (2019), I classify dominance strategies and prestige strategies as representing distinct typologies, or dimensions, labelled 'prestige' and 'power' respectively. Thus, while heeding Henrich et al (Henrich 2013) in holding to their definitions regarding dominance and prestige strategies, I employ Mesoudi's application of a higher-level nominative 'dimension' to characterize prestige-based and dominance-based strategies as typologies termed 'prestige' and 'power' respectively. The utility of a 'typological' dimension is in its potential to foster synthesis with the international relations field, which widely utilizes—though with disjointed and unclear definitions—the terms prestige and power.





Individuals who favor utilizing one strategic typology over the other tend to have distinct cognitive and behavioral dispositions, "i.e., suites of subjective feelings, cognitions, motivations, and behavioral patterns that together produce certain outcomes" [see *Appendix 3* for table].<sup>33</sup>

This is likely due to the fact that these two strategic typologies entail reliance on very different means to achieve similar ends. Whereas the *sine qua non* of dominance strategies is inducing fear and obedience via coercion, force, threats, and leverage, prestige strategies rely upon inducing respect and willing deference via competence, altruism, and social connectedness (i.e. network building). Uniquely, only high-status individuals utilizing prestige strategies induce emulation from subordinates. Yet, whether one utilizes dominance or prestige type strategies, the ultimate aims are similar: deference (willing or coerced) from subordinates, increased mating opportunities, and priority access to fitness-relevant resources. Put simply: influence in and over human groups.

### Status Hierarchies in International Relations

### Hierarchy in International Relations

In order to understand the international relations literature on status, one first needs to review how hierarchy has been conceptualized in the discipline. Owing to a widely shared assumption in international relation—stemming from the historically dominant fields of realism and liberal internationalism—that the international system is fundamentally anarchic, scholarly research regarding the complexities of hierarchy has been limited. Recently, though, the field has seen a growth in focus on hierarchy.

Writing in 1996, David Lake argued that "the discipline of international relations has focused too much on the fact of systemic anarchy and has been insufficiently attentive to variations in hierarchy among polities." Within the field of international relations, the already limited analysis of hierarchy tended to focus narrowly on either alliances or empires.<sup>34</sup> Yet, as

Lake argues, order in the international system is more complex than pure anarchy or hierarchy; than either unalloyed coequality and sovereignty of states or pure subjugation under empire. Lake shifts this dualistic view of flat vs pure hierarchies into a spectrum (see *Appendix 5*). However, Lake's, and much of the recent work on hierarchy in international relations, scholarship is undergirded by: "theories of relational contracting, first developed in economics but now finding increasing application in political science, to examine the alternative relations available to all states." 35

Recent work on hierarchy in international relations thus relies upon a rationalist, contractual bargaining understanding, drawn from economics, of why states in hierarchical systems sacrifice autonomy—for Lake, as a way of ensuring security. However, as Nexon & Musgrave (2018) note in their review of the international relations research on hierarchy, Lake's differentiation between anarchy and hierarchy may risk "mistaking the distinction between 'formal' and 'informal' [hierarchy] for one between consequential and inconsequential." In other words, Lake may mistake informal hierarchy as being an inconsequential, or anarchic, form when in fact informal hierarchies can themselves have very distinctive and important consequences (and as the life sciences literature makes clear, prestige-strategies operate uniquely within informal hierarchies). Importantly, though, Lake and Nexon et al align in agreement that "scholars often allow juridical sovereignty to obscure actual practices and relations of investiture." When studying states, scholars recognize that governance operates through a wide variety of mechanisms: norms, practices, orchestration, delegation, coercion, and the channeling of collective mobilization, to name only a few. Yet many still shy away from seeing the same mechanisms in international politics as evidence of governance hierarchy... the field lacks almost any systematic theoretical inquiry outside of the study of empires."<sup>36</sup>

Developing theories of hierarchy in international relations are thus transgressing and updating the foundations of the neorealist and neoliberal paradigm. These theories attempt to explain what traditional anarchic theories have struggled to explain, namely how and why states allow, or are forced to allow, other states to exert influence over their decision making—i.e. on their sovereign and autonomous prerogatives. The recent literature on hierarchy in international relations has gone a long way in remedying a substantial lacuna in the field, and simultaneously helping seed the study of status in the international system(s).<sup>37</sup> Yet, there has been no explicit attempt to incorporate into this burgeoning study of hierarchy in international relations a life science's Dual Model, wherein prestige (respect and willing deference) is understood to operate via informal hierarchy and power (fear and coerced obedience) to operate via both informal and formal hierarchies.

#### Status in International Relations

In 1963, David J. Singer wrote:

"Without laboring the need for an empirically based theory of inter-nation influence, it should not be amiss to note that its lack is both a cause of intellectual embarrassment to political science and a menace to the human race ... And as long as the nations continue to base their policies on so flimsy a foundation, our understanding will be incomplete, our predictions unreliable, and our policies deficient."

In that article, Singer attempted to further international relation's understanding of the term 'power' in world politics, which he believed did not provide operational utility. Singer believed that the goal of amassing power is ultimately to enact influence, thus coming to define power as "the capacity for influence." Singer's analysis, nonetheless, completely neglected status as an avenue through which states attain and enact influence in international affairs.

The international relations field would experience a minor pique in interest in status during the 1960s and 70s. A lull, however, would soon set in just at the time when research on status in the life sciences was beginning to blossom. A paucity of frameworks for studying status competition in international relations was a notable consequence. This was specifically due to the fact "[r]esearch on the international politics of status-seeking simply did not fit the field-shaping debates of the 1980s and 1990s, which featured the "paradigm wars" of neorealism, liberal institutionalism, and constructivism…".<sup>38</sup> More recently, international relations scholarship on status, status competition, and social status hierarchies has undergone a somewhat disjointed expansion. The two primary research paradigms involving status revolve around the 'power transition paradigm' in the realist school and 'status dissatisfaction' theory that brings in constructivist perspectives.<sup>39</sup>

As a starting point, the status-focused literature in international relations is terminologically confused. Terms like status, prestige, reputation, and power are reliably used interchangeably. To borrow from David Singer, the international relations literature on status rests on a 'flimsy foundation.' Steve Wood notes the muddled terminological landscape in his 2013 review of prestige:

"Prestige belongs to an extended conceptual family that includes honour (O'Neill, 1999; Joshi, 2008; Lebow, 2008), status (Weber, 1922; Reinhold, 1969), reputation (Tang, 2005; Sharman, 2007; Wylie, 2009), respect (Wolf, 2008), glory (Slomp, 2000), credibility, pride and legitimacy...These terms are not synonymous but have abundant, intergenerational connections. They frequently evoke the same underlying sentiment, for which prestige signifies the upper echelon."<sup>40</sup>

The most routine—and for the purpose of applying a Dual Model framework, consequential—terminological confusion in the international relations literature is the conflation of status with

prestige. Following closely, the next most common, particularly in realist literature, is for prestige—and thus status—to be considered a mere by-product of a state's material power and capabilities. Wood notes this, saying:

"Most commonly, prestige is [seen as] an epiphenomenon of material power. Wealth, advanced technology and military strength are among the resources that can endow this type of prestige (Niebuhr, 1962; Morgenthau, 1978; Gilpin, 1981). Wanting it stimulates the acquisition of relevant assets. Various states and populations consider having a nuclear arsenal to be very prestigious (Kinsella and Chima, 2001; O'Neill, 2006; Frey, 2007; Baktiari, 2010). Political actors will, sooner or later, attempt to correct imbalances between their material power and their imputed prestige quotient."

Marina Duque, working via a constructivist approach, concurs, finding that conventional views of status in international relations tend to reduce status to a by-product of material attributes (Duque provides a typology of attributes that international relations scholars often view as indicative of a state's status (see table in *Appendix 4*)). In her view, this degrades the analytic utility of status as a concept, saying:

"Conventional approaches define status as a state's ranking on attributes, especially material attributes like wealth and military capability. In this view, status is a function of a state's attributes: the richer or militarily stronger a state is, the higher standing it achieves (Gilpin 1981, 31; Wohlforth 2009, 39). This approach contrasts with research on status in the social sciences more broadly, which considers status to be fundamentally social. The conventional international-relations approach does not deny that status is social. But it substantively conflates social relations with the attributes of actors, leads to material reductionism, and separates status from state practices. As such, the concept of status does not differ enough from material capabilities to prove analytically useful. 42

Duque's constructivism sees traditional materialist views as too reductionist, arguing that status cannot be reduced to 'attributes' but rather that "status recognition depends on a state's relations and only indirectly on its attributes [while] the relevance of a given attribute for status recognition is socially defined." The constructivist view of status thus privileges the social, relational, and contextual elements of status. Indeed, the constructivist literature highly discounts the role that attributes and tangible capacities (economic and military strength) play in determining status, focusing intently on discursive norms and social power (in particular social networks).

Other authors have noted that international relations scholarship on status had largely ignored the social aspect of status. As Paul, Larson, Wohlforth et al lament, a constructivist update was likely necessary, for while "Mid-twentieth-century classical realists considered prestige [i.e. status] a key factor in interstate relations but generally treated it as a reflection of a state's military capabilities, especially as demonstrated in war, precluding any investigation into nonmaterial determinants of status."<sup>44</sup>

However, the recent surge in influence of social constructivism in international relations—Alexander Wendt, for example, is considered the 'most influential' thinker amongst international relations scholars (Avey 2014)—means there is no longer a lacuna of work on status from a constructivist lens. Indeed, perhaps the most widely utilized definition of status in international relations follows a constructivist framing:

"We define status as collective beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout). In international politics, status manifests itself in two distinct but related ways: as membership in a defined club of actors, and as relative standing within such a club." (Woflforth Larson et al 2014)

Such a definition may in fact be indicative of an overemphasis on constructivism in the field. This definition, while not contradicting the life science's definition a priori, is incomplete. While dealing with the social, subjective, and relative ranking aspects, it does not directly engage the "relative degree to which an individual [in this case a state] receives relatively unchallenged deference, influence, social attention, and access to valued resources". Insofar as the authors engage this explicitly, they submit that "status is manifested in voluntary deference directed toward the higher-status actor". This view, however, offers only a limited understanding of status, as it cannot adequately countenance a Dual Model's prestige and power dimensions. The international relations definition, as is routine in international relations, conflates status with the life science's definition of prestige and thereby focuses solely on inducing voluntary deference. This effectively forestalls consideration of how power can lead to status by inducing obedience via fear. The most widely used definition in international relations thus incidentally precludes a Dual Model framework for understanding how states attain status rank and influence. This is a fundamental issue in the literature.

#### Singular Models of Status

While status is widely recognized as a fundamental motivation—both for individuals and for states in the international system—there is only very limited engagement with the mushrooming and extremely promising life sciences literature. <sup>47</sup> International relations scholars are thus missing potentially important insights and clarifying frameworks. An emergent problem, as a result, is that status in international relations is typically conceptualized as unidimensional, i.e. in a way that accords with only the prestige or, as is most often the case, the power typology in the life science's Dual Model.

Larson and Shevchenko (2010), for example, discuss status dissatisfaction theory in a way consonant only with the life science's definition of prestige. The authors identify three

"strategies" that status disaffected powers can use to increase their status (framing status via identity), saying:

"When a group's identity is no longer favorable, it may pursue one of several strategies: social mobility, social competition, or social creativity. Social mobility emulates the values and practices of the higher-status group with the goal of gaining admission into elite clubs. Social competition tries to equal or surpass the dominant group in the area on which its claims to superior status rest. Finally, social creativity reframes a negative attribute as positive or stresses achievement in a different domain. Applied to international relations, SIT suggests that states may improve their status by joining elite clubs, trying to best the dominant states, or achieving preeminence outside the arena of geopolitical competition."

These distinctive "strategies" for increasing social status ranking effectively presuppose a prestige-based typology. The authors focus on either emulating 'high-status' groups (mobility) or attempting to demonstrate superior competence (via competition & creativity). Indeed, the authors focus is explicitly on how Russia and China are trying to "develop new, more positive images by contributing to global governance while maintaining distinctive identities." Such an analysis presupposes status competition occurs via a prestige-biased paradigm. As previously noted, this is the same issue present in the definition of status from Paul, Larson, Wohlforth et al.

In juxtaposition, other work on status competition views the route to status in international relations as operating singularly via the power dimension. In his book *Fighting for Status*, Jonathan Renshon demonstrates how states suffering from 'status dissatisfaction'—i.e. unhappy with their perceived status vis-à-vis their desired status—have, historically, resorted to violence and conflict to increase their status-rank. Focusing singularly on increasing status via

force, though, implies a singular power-based status attainment strategy for increasing social rank.

Similarly, Youngho Kim, as with much of the literature in the realist paradigm, similarly falls into a singular power-based view of status attainment. Kim provides a useful etymological run-down of the realist view (similar to Wood 2013), saying:

"Practitioners such as Richelieu, Bismarck, Stalin, Kennan, and Acheson take prestige seriously. Acheson, for example, defines prestige as the "shadow cast by power."

Theorists in the realist tradition also take questions of prestige seriously (Thucydydes; Machiavelli, Hobbes, Weber; Carr; Nicolson; Aron; Gilpin). Reinhold Neibuhr conceives of prestige as an "indispensable source of power." Martin Wight calls it the "halo round power."

Kim makes a case, for instance, that "prestige as reputation for strength may even forestall war" (Kim 2004). Similarly to Wood (2013) and Kunz (2010), Kim argues that there are both positive and negative sources of prestige wherein "positive ones include past achievements or success" and "negative sources of prestige involve deception and trickery." But such an argument simply compounds a conflation of terms, as prestige—already synonymous with status—now becomes tantamount to one's reputation. Kim's view of prestige as power thus not only demonstrates a conflation of terms typical in the international relations literature on status, but importantly also further exemplifies the tendency to see strategies for attaining status as unidimensional.

Yuen Khong's 2019 article 'Prestige as Power in World Politics' is one additional, and prominent, example of singular models of status attainment in international relations. Khong deploys Robert Gilpin's famous phraseology regarding "prestige as a reputation for power."

Using this unitary definition, Khong describes competition in contemporary international relations thusly:

"China seeks the top seat in the hierarchy of prestige, and the United States will do everything in its power to avoid yielding that seat, because the state with the greatest reputation for power is the one that will govern the region: it will attract more followers, regional powers will defer to and accommodate it, and it will play a decisive role in shaping the rules and institutions of international relations. In a word, the state at the top of the prestige hierarchy is able to translate its power into the political outcomes it desires with minimal resistance and maximum flexibility."<sup>49</sup>

Such a singular view of prestige is incapable of countenancing important nuances captured in the life science's Dual Model, wherein willing deference occurs out of respect and admiration, while obedience comes out of fear and coercion.

Overall, where Larson and Schevchenko and Paul, Larson, Wohlforth et al see peaceful ways in which 'status inconsistency' can be resolved, Khong joins with "Renshon, Gilpin and others [in finding that] 'status inconsistency' is usually not settled by negotiations; it tends to be resolved through war." Although neither perspective is wrong, both are incomplete. The existing literature does not appear to posit anything approaching a framework similar to that of the Dual Model of prestige and power. Returning to Singer, it appears that international relations is still missing out on an "empirically based theory of international influence" inclusive of the important variable of status.

A 2014 study of practitioners and policymakers found that: "[while] policymakers do want scholarly expertise ... they also call into question when and how often the techniques of the modern science of international relations are directly useful to policymakers." Might the disconnect between policy and scholarship in international relations be improved by learning from the life sciences? This article, in the spirit of Goddard and Nexon, seeks to apply a unifying framework of analysis that transcends parochial paradigms and "misleading baseline"

assumption[s]."<sup>51</sup> In particular, it looks toward the life science's Dual Model as a framework for thinking about how states pursue status rank and influence that is both intuitive, empirically grounded, and capacious enough to be inclusive of the various international relations paradigms.

## Power vs Prestige: The Dual Model for International Relations

As Henrich argued, status should not be conflated with either prestige or power (Henrich used 'dominance' but keep in mind we are using Mesoudi's framework). Rather, as Mesoudi contends, prestige and power are two distinct strategic typologies that actors can use to attain status—they are distinct means states can use to achieve the ultimate end of status rank and influence. Status is thus an umbrella term denoting one's pursuit of, desire for, and capacity to enact influence. Power and prestige are distinct dimensions through which actors attain status.

Power refers to a state's use of force, coercion, threats, and leverage to attain, maintain, and achieve status rank and influence. Power can be conceptualized as the 'negative' strategic typology through which states pursue status rank and enact influence. Prestige, by contrast, is defined as a state's use of competence, altruism, and social connectivity to pursue status rank and enact influence. Prestige can be conceptualized as the 'positive' strategic typology (i.e. dimension) through which states may pursue status rank and enact influence. There are, within the dimensions of power and prestige, a multitude of strategies (see *Appendix 6* for table of dominance and prestige strategy examples). Gilpin's well-known quote "prestige is the reputation for power" precisely conflates prestige and power and is unfortunately prevalent in the international relations literature on status. It is necessary to jettison this phrase and analytically separate power and prestige, just as dominance and prestige are separated in the life science's literature.

In the context of modern international relations, increasing one's influence reflects upon one's ability to shape the norms and institutions that prevail in the international system (whether

via power or prestige), the ability to influence other states to take actions in accordance with one's preferences (whether by obedience or deference), and the ability to have priority access to mutually desired and contested resources (whether out of fear or respect). From a consequentialist perspective (i.e. observable outcomes), the most salient empirical difference we should expect to observe is that states primarily employing dominance-based strategies will not induce emulation from others whereas states primarily employing prestige-based strategies should routinely induce wide-ranging emulation. As Henrich et al write:

"The influence of Prestigious individuals is unique in that subordinates shift their views and opinions closer to those of the Prestigious (an example of emulation) and heed their wishes out of deference even when they do not agree with them (an example of seeking favor, in order to be granted greater access to Prestigious leaders to facilitate their own copying or learning)."52

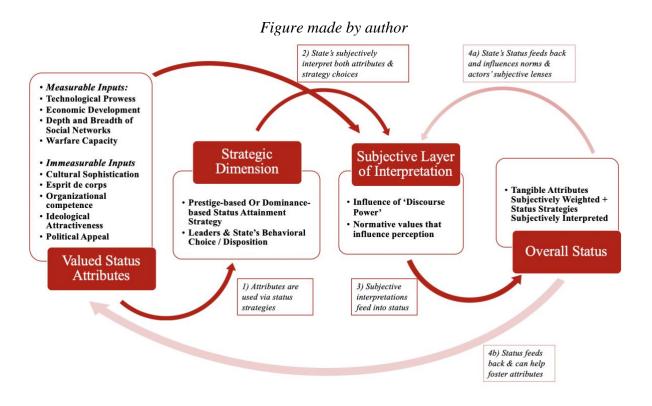
Differentiation of status-seekers along the lines of power and prestige must therefore occur via analysis of means used, intended, and perceived, and not via the consequences (except for emulation, which should uniquely arise via prestige).

#### Dual Model Framework

Drawing on Singer, I argue that status may be best understood as the highest-level umbrella term referring to a state's ability to enact influence in the international arena. Status, as Duque pointed out, must be understood more broadly than merely an 'epiphenomena' of material capabilities. It must include the social dynamic of how states relate, ascribe value, cooperate with, resist, and defer to one another. Yet, status ought not be construed merely as a social construct. While status is indeed inherently social and perceptual, and not merely reducible to material capacity, the social and the material are intrinsically interrelated. While material resources have tangible and unequivocal real-world impact, how they are used, and how others

perceive their use, is a social phenomenon. Thus, status ought to be construed as encapsulating the totality of a state's material and social influence capacity. This involves amalgamating 'material power' and 'social power' (or as Chinese policymakers and scholars aptly call it, 'discourse power')<sup>53</sup> into a single dimension of 'influence'. Under such a unified metric, a state with objectively low material power may have high status—that is, greater overall influence—if its discourse' power (via ideology, social connections and groupings, and overall normative influence) is great.

Status rank in international relations, therefore, should refer to a state's ordinal capacity to broadly enact influence, i.e. the ability to instantiate one's preferences. This accords with the life science's broad definition of status as "social influence (i.e., the ability to modify others' behaviors, thoughts, and feelings)". <sup>54</sup> Combining materialist, rationalist, and constructivist literature with that of the life sciences, this diagram proposes a status framework for international relations.



This framework accounts for attributes that a state possesses, whether material such as economic capacity or immaterial such as cultural sophistication. In accordance with the Dual Model, the framework also recognizes that states can utilize power-based strategies and/or prestige-based to gain status via fear and coercion (power) or respect and admiration (prestige). In turn, states subjectively interpret both the attributes and the status attainment strategies of other states. This subjective interpretation of a state's relevant attributes by other actors, as well as the means the state is perceived as using to further its influence, culminates in a state's overall status. Status also operates via feedback loop such that acquiring status can help actors improve their attribute endowments, as well as influence the way in which other actors perceive and interpret those attributes (i.e. via instantiating new norms, values, and ideologies into a system).

Importantly, while overall status rank and concomitant influence capacity is a discernible feature in its own right, as Musgrave and Nexon recognize with respect to hierarchies, a state's status and influence will also vary situationally. Sha status is a social, perceptual, and comparative feature of social groups, who one compares oneself with is of great importance. Thus, as identified by Renshon, status communities are an important aspect of status in international relations. It must be recognized that state's do not all share the same relevant communities. The major powers, middle powers, and regional powers will have distinctive status communities—even a matrix of status communities—within which they will respectively strive to gain higher rank and influence. Network based analyses can help inform precisely how state's might view their relevant status community.

Additionally, a state's status and influence will vary depending upon how such things as functional area (e.g. technological prowess), geographic region (e.g. Southeast Asia), the institutional setting (e.g. within the UN), and normative features (e.g. with respect to human rights) intersect in any given situation. These varied sub-domains will, nonetheless, intrinsically

interconnect with a state's overall status such that one's influence in a single domain cannot be analyzed entirely independently of aggregate capacity for influence. Status hierarchies can form an interwoven, matrix like structure, involving feedback mechanisms between sub-domains and aggregate status (see *Appendix 7* for graphic representation).

With all this in mind, questions arise regarding how states choose which status attainment strategies, or mix of strategies, to utilize. A major challenge awaiting research in this area in international relations will be empirically and analytically identifying whether states are disproportionately inclined, due to intrinsic and/or extrinsic factors, to favor the use of power or prestige-based strategies to acquire influence. As with individuals, we should not expect states to exclusively deploy dominance or prestige strategies. Rather, we will likely find that states' status enhancement strategies fall along a spectrum, wherein some states hew more toward dominance/power-based strategies for achieving status rank and influence, and others hew more toward prestige-based strategies (see *Appendix 8*). Understanding where states fall along this spectrum will both require an understanding of, and offer predictive information about, how states' leaders think, behave, and enact influence in the international system and in various subdomains.

At the same time, we have to consider how individual politicians, diplomats, and leaders impact the status and status-enhancement strategies of their states. Individual leaders bring personalities, behavioral dispositions, and identities that may correspond with pursuing and favoring one status enhancement strategy over another, or may foster a perception of their country as pursuing one more than another. Henrich and Cheng utilize a self and peer reporting scale that can be used to determine an actor's prestige versus dominance orientation (see *Appendix 9* for questionnaire).<sup>57</sup> Future research in international relations may profit from analyzing cohorts of policymakers and leaders in various countries via such questionnaires to

understand their status-attainment dispositions. In a similar vein, Zhaotian Luo and Jingyan Jiang use a unique dataset drawn from the Chinese Communist Party's Central Organization

Department to analyze a cohort of Chinese Provincial Party Secretaries leadership styles. The authors find an emergent statistical best-fit that roughly proxies the distinction between dominance and prestige drawn by Henrich et al. Further work in this vein explicitly utilizing tools drawn from the power vs prestige framework may prove fruitful in analyzing and predicting state behaviors.

Additionally, we should heed Jonathan Mercer's challenge to the field to think more creatively about how we measure status rank and influence in international relations.<sup>59</sup> While a few studies in the 1960s attempted to comprehensively undertake such an endeavor, there has been a noticeable lacuna since. 60 And, as Mercer also pointed out, those scholars that have undertaken status ordering work tend to rely upon analyses of diplomats, which may not offer an especially clear way to measure status as influence. 61 Drawing from the life sciences, there may be a better way to measure status in the international system. It is well established that those with higher status attract attention—typically measured via markers of visual attention—from subordinates.<sup>62</sup> Utilizing natural language processing (NLP), we can analyze each country's local media ecosystem (as well as official government documents) to establish a rank order of which countries receive the most coverage and attention in aggregate. Such an analysis would be concordant with attention-mediated signals of status from the life sciences and arguably track status rank and influence more accurately than an analysis of diplomats. Furthermore, in conjunction with the aforementioned questionnaires, we might also use NLP, via word associations, to ascertain whether states tend to be perceived as using power or prestige-based status-attainment strategies. We can also use NLP to contextualize when and how states are discussed to establish status rank across various sub-domains of status.

Finally, an extremely important element relevant to application in international relations, and still being explored at the life sciences level, is what environmental, sociological, and geopolitical conditions incentivize power versus prestige strategies. Several studies have been done indicating that high levels of inequality and threatening external environments induce preferences in populations for group leaders to exhibit dominance-oriented strategies. Others note that intergroup competition interplays with the prestige-dominance framework such that dominance-oriented leaders are increasingly favored. A recent volume on peaceful change in the international system brings into relief the characteristics that incentivize certain statusattainment strategies at the international level. In particular, Pu Xiaoyu's article on *Status Quest and Peaceful Change* submits that "to fundamentally transform the international system into a more peaceful one, great powers must promote new norms and a new culture of status symbols in the international system." This begs the questions: has an evolution within the international system already occurred such that positive status-attainment strategies have become not only increasingly plausible but, in fact, incentivized?

More work will have to be done, but one interesting extension to international relations may be in considering how, over the last two-hundred years, the overall international system has evolved away from geopolitics and toward geo-economics. As globalization has increasingly united the world into one community, economic and technological development has made acquiring land by force a relatively less lucrative—and potentially existentially costly given the existence of nuclear weapons—enterprise from a material perspective, at the same time global normative opinion has evolved such that colonization and imperialism are increasingly anathema. Similarly, lower-tier nation states may be, more than ever before, empowered and internally coherent actors with greater ability to fend off would-be dominators—in a manner not dissimilar to the evolution of our own species as recounted by Boehm. Has the international system

changed in such a way that incentives today, perhaps for the first time, disproportionately favor prestige-based rather than dominance-based strategies for acquiring status rank?

## Conclusion

While it has been widely agreed that states desire status in international relations, the field still lacks a clear framework to understand how states pursue, achieve, and maintain their status. The life science's prestige and dominance Dual Model, developed mostly within the last two decades, offers a robust and empirically grounded reprieve. This paper has argued that the field of international relations can gain analytic purchase and clarity by utilizing this framework and adopting the definitions and terminology set forth within it. This perspective appreciates that policymakers and scholars need both useful scholarship but are also humans who rely upon intuitive heuristics to make decisions in complex circumstances. Thinking of prestige and power as two distinct ways to gain and enact status rank and influence in the international system may be of utility in this regard to both scholars and practitioners.

Although most people, and most states, endeavor to increase their status rank and influence, the means by which people and states do so can be quite different. Applying the power versus prestige framework to status-rank pursuit in international relations has important implications for our ability to understand and predict how states will behave in the international arena. Will a state operate principally by inducing fear via force, threats, and coercive leverage? Or will a state primarily strive to induce respect and admiration via demonstrations of competence, altruism, and loyalty? In other words, will the status-enhancement strategy rely upon primarily positive or negative means? How will the status-pursuing state go about changing the norms, values, institutions, and overall relational characteristics of the global, social order?

This article has attempted to offer scholars and policymakers in international relations a common-sensical heuristic, grounded in empiricism, for analyzing these questions.

# **Appendices**

# Appendix 1

# Table from Henrich et al (2013)

Table 1
Definitions of Hierarchy-Related Concepts in Psychology and Related Fields

Concept	Social psychology/sociology <sup>a</sup>	Personality psychology	Sociobiology/biology	Evolutionary psychology
Dominance	Not a core concept	The tendency to behave in assertive, forceful, and self-assured ways; the desire for control and influence <sup>b</sup>	An individual's relatively stable position in a social hierarchy resulting from his or her relative success in previous agonistic or competitive encounters with conspecifics <sup>c</sup>	The relative degree of deference, respect, and attention an individual receives from others as a consequence of his or her perceived ability to use coercion, intimidation, and imposition (control costs and benefits) <sup>d</sup>
Prestige	Generally not a core concept; if used, tends to be interchanged with status	Not a core concept	The relative degree of deference, respect, and attention an individual receives from others <sup>e</sup>	The relative degree of deference, respect, and attention an individual receives from others as consequence of one's perceived attractiveness as a cultural model or coalition partner <sup>f</sup>
Power	The relative degree of asymmetric control or influence an individual possesses over resources, often despite resistance <sup>g</sup>	Used interchangeably with Dominance and status	Not a core concept	Not a core concept
Status	The relative degree to which an individual is respected or admired by others <sup>h</sup>	Used interchangeably with Dominance and power	Used interchangeably with Dominance, but also infrequently with Prestige	The relative degree to which an individual receives (relatively) unchallenged deference, influence, social attention, and access to valued resources (Prestige and Dominance are types of status)

**Appendix 2**Table from Van Vugt and Smith (2019)

Aspect of leadership	Prestige style	Dominance style
Philosophical tradition	Confucius	Machiavelli
Influence	Passive	Active
Mechanism of influence	Provision of benefits to followers (e.g., knowledge)	Inflicting costs on nonfollowers (e.g., sanctions)
Primary evolutionary function	Collective movement, foraging	Conflict resolution, warfare
Nature of decision-making hierarchy	Relatively flat, domain specific, based on expertise	Relatively steep, more generalized power
Source of deference	Information asymmetry	Power asymmetry
Followers	Active, respectful	Passive, fearful
Key emotional affiliations between leaders and followers	Primarily positive affect (liking, love, admiration, identification)	Mix of negative affect (anger, fear) and positive affect (respect, relief)
Role in group	Role model	Alpha
Phylogenetic history	Hunter-gatherers, non-human foraging animals	Primate dominance hierarchy negotiation
Potential costs for followers	Risk of coordination failure, difficulty delegating and scaling up groups	Risk of exploitation, succession problems

Table 1. Differentiating between Prestige-Style versus Dominance-Style Leadership: Mechanisms, Functions, History, and Phenotypes

## Table from Manor 2017

Table 1. Profiles that characterize dominance and prestige, which represent dual strategies for navigating social hierarchies.

	Dominance	Prestige
When did the strategy evolve?	Phylogenetically ancient, dating back to common ancestors of humans and other non-human primate species	Unique to humans; emerged with the rise of cultural communities, when humans lived in small hunter-gatherer societies
What are the personality profiles associated with dominance and prestige?	High in narcissism, hubristic pride, aggressiveness, disagreeableness, Machiavellianism, psychopathy	High in agreeableness, self- esteem, need for affiliation, social monitoring, fear of negative evaluation, and conscientiousness
How do people gain and exert social influence?	Coercion, intimidation, aggression, power, manipulation of reward and punishment	Admiration, respect, liking, social modeling, freely conferred deference
What are the pitfalls in leadership behavior?	Leaders prioritize power over group goals; view other talented group members as threats	Leaders sometimes prioritize social approval over group goals

Table from Duque (2018)

Table 1. Status attributes in the literature

Nature of attribute	Attribute	Author
Material resources	Economic capability	Gilpin (1981) Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Larson et al. (2014) Luard (1976) Neumann (2008, 2014) Schweller (1999) Wohlforth (2009)
	Military capability*	Gilpin (1981) Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Larson et al. (2014) Luard (1976) Neumann (2008, 2014) Schweller (1999) Thompson (2014) Wohlforth (2009)
	Technological capability	Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Luard (1976) Schweller (1999) Wohlforth (2009)
	Nuclear weapons	Art (1980) O'Neill (2006)
Fundamental values	Political system or ideology	Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Larson et al. (2014) Luard (1976) Neumann (2008, 2014) Schweller (1999)
	Culture or civilization†	Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Larson et al. (2014) Luard (1976) Neumann (2014) Schweller (1999)
	Moral superiority	Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Neumann (2008)

*Notes*: (1) \*We can include in this category attributes such as territory (Luard 1976; Schweller 1999) and population (Larson et al. 2014; Luard 1976; Schweller 1999). (2) †We can include in this category attributes such as religion (Luard 1976; Schweller 1999) and education (Larson and Shevchenko 2003, 2010).

Figure from Lake (1996)

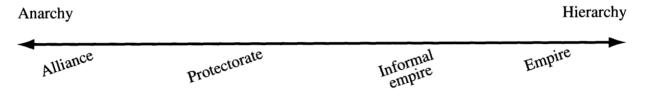


FIGURE 1. A continuum of security relations

# Figure made by author

Power: Dominance Strategies	Prestige: Prestige Strategies
Economic Leverage	Economic Benefits
<ul> <li>Financial and Economic Sanctions</li> <li>Trade Embargoes &amp; Isolation</li> <li>Cutting off technology transfers</li> <li>Leveraging multilaterals to economically isolate other</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Provide Development Assistance</li> <li>Display Economic Dynamism</li> <li>Demonstrate Technological Superiority</li> <li>Utilize multilaterals to provide assistance, know how, and benefits</li> </ul>
Military Force	Military Assistance
<ul><li>Coercive cyber attacks</li><li>War and kinetic attacks</li><li>Grey zone operations</li></ul>	<ul><li>UN Peacekeeping</li><li>Prevent non-state terrorism</li><li>Assist with Natural Disasters</li></ul>
Social Coercion	Social Altruism
<ul><li>Publicize negative information</li><li>Social exclusion</li></ul>	<ul><li>Publicize positive information</li><li>Social inclusion</li></ul>
Ideological & Civilizational Coercion	Ideological & Civilizational Attraction
<ul> <li>Exclude others from groupings based on beliefs</li> <li>Criticize others' beliefs and cultures</li> <li>Penalize others for adopting other's systems</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Publicize positive information of one's self</li> <li>Socially include others</li> <li>Demonstrate vivacity, depth, and richness of culture and beliefs</li> <li>Provide inducements to adopt your system</li> </ul>

Appendix 7

Figure made by author



Appendix 8

Figure made by author



Dominance-Prestige Scales. From UBC Emotion & Self Lab. <a href="http://ubc-emotionlab.ca/research-tools/dominance-prestige-scales/">http://ubc-emotionlab.ca/research-tools/dominance-prestige-scales/</a>



#### **Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> Henrich 2015

- <sup>2</sup> Henrich 2013; see also Mesoudi 2019; Redhead 2018
- <sup>3</sup> Von Vugt 2015; Sapolsky 2004 & 2005
- <sup>4</sup> Henrich 2013
- <sup>5</sup> Zink 2008
- <sup>6</sup> Mattan 2017
- <sup>7</sup> Sapolsky 2004 & 2005
- <sup>8</sup> Henrich 2001 and 2013
- 9 Von Vugt 2015
- 10 Boyd 1985; Richerson 2003
- <sup>11</sup> Anderson 2015; Smith 2016; von Reuden 2016
- <sup>12</sup> Zink 2008; Majolo 2012; Smith 2016; Mesoudi 2019; Redhead 2019
- <sup>13</sup> Henrich 2015; von Reuden 2015
- <sup>14</sup> Boehm 1999; Anderson et al 2015; Ronay 2012; Smith 2016; Maner 2017; Mattan 2017
- 15 Van Vugt 2014
- <sup>16</sup> Henrich 2001
- <sup>17</sup> Waal 2010; Henrich 2016
- <sup>18</sup> Cheng 2020
- <sup>19</sup> Bohem 1999; see also Hippel 2018
- <sup>20</sup> Henrich 2015
- <sup>21</sup> From Pandit & van Schaik 2003 quoted in Redhead 2019
- <sup>22</sup> See Mesoudi 2019, Van Vugt 2019, Redhead 2019
- <sup>23</sup> Mesoudi 2019
- <sup>24</sup> On competence see Chapais 2015, on moral virtue see Bai 2017
- <sup>25</sup> Cheng 2013; Redhead 2018
- <sup>26</sup> Von Reuden 2016, Redhead 2018, Cheng 2013
- <sup>27</sup> Mesoudi 2019
- <sup>28</sup> Mesoudi 2019
- <sup>29</sup> Manor 2017
- <sup>30</sup> Bollo 2018
- <sup>31</sup> Henrich 2010, Redhead 2019
- 32 Henrich 2013 and Mesoudi 2019
- <sup>33</sup> Henrich 2013
- <sup>34</sup> Lake 1996
- <sup>35</sup> Lake 1996; see Mattern 2016 for a further critique along these lines
- <sup>36</sup> Nexon et al 2018
- <sup>37</sup> Nexon 2018; Lake 1996, 2003, 2007, 2020; Messer 2016; Kwan 2016; Cooley 2008; Kang 2010; Buzan 1996
- <sup>38</sup> Paul, Larson, Wohlforth et al 2014
- <sup>39</sup> On the first see: Allison 2017, Pu 2020, Khong 2019. On the second see: Paul, Larson, Wohlforth et al 2014; Duque 2018; Laveschenko 2010; Pu 2020
- <sup>40</sup> Wood 2013
- <sup>41</sup> Wood 2013
- <sup>42</sup> Duque 2018
- <sup>43</sup> Duque 2018
- <sup>44</sup> Paul, Larson, Wohlforth et al 2014
- <sup>45</sup> Henrich 2013
- <sup>46</sup> Paul, Larson, Wohlforth et al 2014
- <sup>47</sup> As evidence, see: Wohlforth 2009; Renshon 2014, 2017; Mercer 2017; Wood 2013; Larson Schevchenko 2010; Paul, Larson, Wohlforth et al 2014; Wang 2019; Pu 2014, 2020
- <sup>48</sup> Kim 2004
- <sup>49</sup> Khong 2019
- <sup>50</sup> Khong 2019
- <sup>51</sup> Goddard and Nexon 2016
- <sup>52</sup> Henrich 2013

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> Rolland 2020

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> Henrich 2013

<sup>Henrich 2013
Musgrave and Nexon 2018
Renshon 2017
Henrich 2010
Luo and jiang 2019
Mercer 2017
Shimboria et al 1963; Singer and Small 1966
See for example Renshon 2017 and Duque 2018
Henrich 2013
Ronay, Maddux, von Hippel 2020
Halevy et al 2012</sup> 

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