Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach

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How do states achieve status? Although we rely on status to explain important phenomena in international politics—such as wars and the foreign policy of emerging powers—we still do not understand what status is or where it comes from. Previous research treats status as a function of state attributes, such as wealth and military capability. Following Weber, I argue that status depends on social recognition: it concerns identification processes in which an actor gains admission into a club once they follow the rules of membership. Therefore, systematic social processes, which cannot be reduced to state attributes, influence status. In particular, status is self-reinforcing. Moreover, social closure influences status—which implies that (i) a state's existing relations influence its ability to achieve status, and (ii) states recognize similar states rather than states with the largest portfolio of certain attributes. To investigate the determinants of international status, I move beyond ranking states based on attributes to examine quantitatively how status emerges from state relations. Leveraging inferential network analysis, I examine state practices that express recognition—specifically, the network of embassies. The analysis indicates that self-reinforcing dynamics and social closure, rather than state attributes directly, drive status recognition.

Status is a fundamental aspect of life in society, which influences interactions among actors and groups (Bourdieu and Passeron 1990; Fiske and Markus 2012; Veblen 2007; Weber 1978). When it comes to interaction among states, matters of status often take on particular importance. Whereas a central government rules domestic societies, in international politics no clear authority stands above states. This makes status much more important in determining who gets what, when, and how in international relations than in domestic politics. As Gilpin (1981, 31) puts it, status is the "everyday currency of international relations."

Indeed, international-relations scholarship across multiple research traditions sees status as a critical element of international politics (Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth, 2014; Paul and Shankar, 2014). Previous work indicates that status is a fundamental state motivation, especially because of the inherent privileges—material, social, or psychological—that come with high status (Gilpin 1981; Lebow 2008; Morgenthau 1948; Wolf 2011). Moreover, cumulative evidence suggests that states take actions to change their status, which may involve, for example, military assertiveness, joining international organizations, or hosting the Olympics (Larson and Shevchenko 2003, 2010; Pu and Schweller 2014). In fact, actions taken to improve a state's status may even compromise other important goals, such as security (Barnhart 2016; Murray 2010). In addition, a growing body of research suggests that status-dissatisfied states are more likely to engage in conflict (Lebow, 2010; Lindemann, 2011; Renshon, 2015, 2016; Schweller, 1999; Wohlforth, 2009).

Yet, though we rely on status to explain important phenomena in international politics—such as wars and the foreign policy of emerging powers—we still do not understand it very well. 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.[1] 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. Once stripped of its distinctive feature, status has limited usefulness for theories of international relations.

The assumption that status is a function of one's attributes makes intuitive sense, since it is consistent with how most of us experience status in our everyday lives. However, international-relations scholars often fail to examine this assumption systematically. They traditionally assume that certain attributes drive status,

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[1]See, for example, Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth 2014, 373-76; Larson and Shevchenko 2014, 13.

but rarely test if those attributes actually shape status.[2] So how can we know if states value the same attributes we consider important—or if state attributes determine status to begin with? Rather than assume the determinants of status a priori, we need to treat them as an analytical category separate from the experiences of observers.

Indeed, a number of considerations call into question an automatic or exact translation between attributes and status. Take the example of North Korea. Even though we usually think of nuclear weapons as one of the accoutrements of great-power status, acquiring these weapons gave North Korea the status of a rogue state, rather than membership in the great power club. North Korea may receive attention, and even gain leverage in negotiations, because of its weapons. But great powers do not invite it to sit at the main table and decide on the contours of the international order. Instead, the attention given to North Korea looks more like the attention given to a low-status actor who misbehaves.[3] In addition, we find a mismatch between a state's level of material resources and the recognition it receives from other states (see Volgy et al., 2011, 14-15). So what explains that? What is international status, and where does it come from?

To address this puzzle, I adopt a relational approach. To begin, I propose a theory that focuses on state relations rather than state attributes. Following Weber's (1978, 305) classical definition, I conceptualize status as an effective claim to social esteem in terms of privileges. I argue that status depends on recognition: it concerns identification processes in which an actor receives admission into a club once they are considered to follow the rules of membership. Therefore, status emerges from systematic social processes—in particular, relational processes that cannot be reduced to state attributes.[4] Specifically, two relational processes affect status. First, because status results from peer attribution, it is self-reinforcing: the more a state is receives recognition, the more others deem it worthy of recognition.[5]

Second, social closure—the establishment of a boundary between the group and outsiders (Weber, 1978, 43-46)—shapes status relations. Social closure has two aspects. First, high-status states share dense relations among themselves and relatively sparse relations with outsiders (Abbott, 1995; Lamont and Fournier, 1992; Lamont, 2002). Therefore, a state's existing relations influence the state's ability to achieve status. Second, high-status groups differentiate themselves from the rest of society by adopting distinctive values and

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[2]Miller et al. (2015) is a rare exception. Other studies shown in Table 1 use an inductive approach to recover status attributes, though the criteria used for induction are often unclear.

[3]See Magee and Galinsky (2008, 360-61) for a more detailed differentiation between status and attention.

[4]Previous work suggests the existence of relational patterns in status relations. For example, Miller et al. (2015, 786-87) acknowledge that status attribution is path-dependent and interdependent. However, previous research does not systematically investigate relational patterns.

[5]See Correll et al. (2017); Ridgeway (2014).

consuming distinctive goods (Elias and Scotson, 1994; Merton, 1972; Tilly, 2005). Therefore, states do not necessarily recognize the states with the most resources. Rather, they recognize states with similar values and resources. That is, the relevance of a given attribute for status recognition is socially defined: attributes matter because of their symbolic—rather than intrinsic—value (Mark, Smith-Lovin, and Ridgeway, 2009; Ridgeway, 1991; Ridgeway and Correll, 2006).

To investigate the determinants of international status, I adopt a relational empirical strategy. Because status depends on recognition, we need to investigate the factors that produce such recognition to understand where status comes from. To measure status recognition, I employ diplomatic exchange data. But instead of using these data to measure status at the state level, as previous studies do, I use a relational measure: the network of embassies. This allows me to incorporate important information about the structure of diplomatic relations that previous studies discard. To investigate why states send embassies where they send them, I employ inferential network analysis—an approach that allows me to test the observable implications of my relational theory of status.[6] I control for alternative explanations by taking into account states' levels of attributes, in line with traditional approaches.

I show that we miss crucial aspects of international status by focusing on state attributes. Compared to conventional explanations, the relational model performs much better in explaining the establishment of embassies. The results indicate that status recognition depends on a state's relations, and only indirectly on its attributes. States recognize similar states rather than the states with the largest share of certain attributes. In addition, status is self-reinforcing: the more a state receives recognition, the more it attracts additional recognition. Moreover, a state's existing relations affect its ability to achieve status: states prove more likely to recognize states that recognize them in return, or that share diplomatic partners with them. Finally, although military capability does play a role in recognition, fundamental values—such as democracy, human rights, and economic liberalism—are important drivers of recognition in the contemporary status order.

Furthermore, this article demonstrates the benefits of integrating a relational ontology (Goddard, 2009; McCourt, 2016) with a relational methodology (Hafner-Burton, Kahler, and Montgomery, 2009, 584-85). I treat recognition as a necessary condition for status. This implies a switch from a substantialist to a relational perspective—as I take as units of inquiry not self-subsistent or preformed entities, but rather unfolding, dynamic relations whose changing meaning affects the very identity of actors (Emirbayer, 1997, 282-91). In

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[6]Two previous studies use diplomatic exchange data as a dependent variable (Kinne, 2014; Neumayer, 2008), though not with the purpose of investigating the determinants of international status.

a relational perspective, relations come before states: status emerges from the way state relations are configured over time (Jackson and Nexon, 1999, 304-7). Accordingly, social network analysis starts with the anticategorical imperative—the rejection of explanations based exclusively on the categorical attributes of actors (Emirbayer and Goodwin, 1994, 1414). Key to network theory is the notion that the structure matters; that is, the patterns of relationships among actors affect outcomes of interest (Borgatti et al., 2009, 893-94). In network analysis, social structures emerge not only from the distribution of attributes among actors, but also from dynamics of interaction (Goodreau, Kitts, and Morris 2009, 103; Mische 2011).

In both theoretical and methodological terms, this article brings the study of status in international-relations scholarship in line with the study of status in the social sciences more broadly.[7] It shows that status is distinguishable from material capabilities both conceptually and empirically—and, as such, is a useful concept for international-relations theories. The concept of status can achieve its full potential in international-relations scholarship when we give due attention to its distinctive feature—its social nature. By doing so, we can consider how status may affect not only international conflict, as many prior studies do, but also international cooperation.

Existing Definitions of Status

Conventional approaches in international-relations scholarship 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 higher a state scores on certain attributes, the more status it achieves. For example, Larson and Shevchenko (2014, 7) define status as "collective beliefs about a given state's ranking in valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout)." Table 1 shows the status attributes mentioned in the literature. Scholars of international relations most commonly list as status attributes material resources—economic, military, or technological capabilities, and nuclear weapons. Some scholars also consider as status attributes fundamental values—such as political system or ideology, culture or civilization, and moral superiority.

Because it emphasizes state attributes, this approach is inconsistent with its own understanding of status as a social phenomenon. First, it leads to generalized fetishism—the act of mistaking social relations for actors' properties (Elster, 1976, 252). By defining status in terms of state attributes, scholars equate status with the

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[7]Sociologists often use network analysis to investigate status in domestic societies (see Bottero, 2005, 8-10).

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Table 1. Status Attributes in the Literature

Nature of Attribute	Type of Attribute	Author
Material Resources	Economic capability	Gilpin (1981) Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Larson and Shevchenko (2014) Luard (1976) Neumann (2008, 2014) Schweller (1999) Wohlforth (2009)
	Military capability*	Gilpin (1981) Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Larson and Shevchenko (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 and Shevchenko (2014) Luard (1976) Neumann (2008, 2014) Schweller (1999)
	Culture or civilization†	Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Larson and Shevchenko (2014) Luard (1976) Neumann (2014) Schweller (1999)
	Moral superiority	Larson and Shevchenko (2003, 2010) Neumann (2008)

*We can include in this category attributes such as territory (Luard, 1976; Schweller, 1999) and population (Larson and Shevchenko, 2014; Luard, 1976; Schweller, 1999).

†We can include in this category attributes such as religion (Luard, 1976; Schweller, 1999) and education (Larson and Shevchenko, 2003, 2010).

consumption or possession of status symbols. However, status is not reducible to symbols. A symbol is an entity that stands for another entity, but should not be mistaken for it (Dittmar, 1992, 6; Goffman, 1951, 294-95). For instance, although a flag represents a country, no one would claim that it is the country. In fact, attributes have no intrinsic symbolic value apart from social relations. A given attribute only confers status if actors share the belief that it symbolizes higher social standing (Dittmar, 1992, 6,79; Goffman, 1951, 294-95). Status symbols are thus part of a social, communicative process that involves not only self and object, but also the other; that is, they work as symbolic mediators between self and other (Dittmar, 1992, 9).

Second, this approach leads to material reductionism, as it emphasizes material resources as status attributes. For example, some scholars draw from Morgenthau (1948, 52,55) to define prestige more narrowly as a reputation for military power (Gilpin, 1981, 31; Wohlforth, 2009, 39). This definition reduces status to a problem of incomplete information about military capability. But because scholars do not differentiate status from military capability, it is unclear why we need the concept of status in the first place (Clunan, 2014, 274). In fact, in this case a term like "estimated military capability" would be more accurate than status, which is a social phenomenon.[8] The act of reducing status to material resources—or to state attributes more generally—strips away the very aspects that make the concept useful analytically.

Finally, this approach reifies the social structure, because it sees the status order as external to states. If status is a function of attributes, the best way to improve one's status is to invest in attributes. As such, status achievement becomes an autonomous act, and the social aspect of status recognition becomes epiphenomenal. For example, research on status inconsistency draws from Galtung (1964) to examine the disequilibrium between ascribed status—indelible dimensions known at one's birth—and achieved status, or "delible" dimensions that allow for social mobility. Scholars usually measure achieved status using material resources, and ascribed status using the number of diplomatic representations a state receives (East, 1972; Midlarsky, 1975; Volgy et al., 2011; Wallace, 1971). That is, scholars see the number of representations as an indelible feature of a state's status. However, diplomatic representations are relations among states, rather than external to states or carved in stone. By defining status in terms of state attributes, scholars separate status from state relations, and reduce status to a state-level phenomenon.

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[8] One might argue that this definition has a social element because military capability is estimated collectively. However, this element is not substantively interesting but rather a nuisance—ideally, we would prefer estimates to be as accurate as possible. Moreover, this element is more cognitive than social per se

A Relational Ontology of Status

To conceptualize status, I use Weber's classical definition, which sociologists use extensively to investigate status in domestic societies (Bottero, 2005; Lamont, 2001; Scott, 1996). Weber defines status as "an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges" (Weber, 1978, 305). This conceptualization avoids the problems discussed above because it emphasizes the fundamentally social nature of status in four key dimensions.[9] First, status involves "an effective claim:" for an actor to achieve a particular status, others need to recognize it (Murray, 2010; Ringmar, 2002; Wendt, 2003). The mere aspiration for a given status is not enough to achieve it; a successful claim requires recognition.[10] For example, a state may claim to be a great power, but great power status depends on whether other states—especially the great powers—consider that claim as legitimate (Levy, 1983, 17).[11]

Because status depends on recognition, it concerns identification processes in which an actor gains admission into a club once members deem that the actor follows the rules of membership. The principal expression of status refers to the identification with the distinctive lifestyle—a set of behaviors and practices (Weber, 1978, 538)—expected from a group's members (Scott 1996, 31; Weber 1978, 305,932). Status is "to be considered a true bearer of some valued attributes that are distinguishing and place one in a socially constructed group" (Clunan, 2014, 279). For example, admission into international clubs like the European Union and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) depends on criteria such as democracy, human rights, and economic liberalism. Indeed, clubs may revoke membership when an actor's behavior violates the rules of membership. In 2014, the G7 suspended Russia from the group, claiming that Russia's annexation of Crimea contradicted the group's "shared beliefs and responsibilities."[12]

Second, status is founded on social esteem—a "social estimation of honor" that may be connected with any symbol (Weber, 1978, 932).[13] Weber's definition is agnostic about which attributes matter for status. The

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[9]Some scholars of international relations draw boundaries among status and related terms such as prestige, honor, and respect (for example, Lebow 2008, 62-69; O'Neill 2001, 152, 193-94; Wolf 2011, 114-16). However, fine-grained distinctions among status and related terms cause conceptual confusion because they tend to be hard to comprehend and recall. Excessive differentiation compromises other desirable features in the concept—such as familiarity, parsimony, depth, and theoretical and field utility (Gerring, 1999). To avoid conceptual fragmentation, I do not differentiate among status and related terms. Instead, I conceive of status as a complex phenomenon with four deeply interrelated dimensions. Each dimension is a necessary condition of status (Goertz, 2006, 86-87).

[10]The intuition behind this argument appears in previous international-relations scholarship on status (for example Larson and Shevchenko, 2014, 10), though it is not explored in depth.

[11]Recognition of great power status can be informal—expressed by equal treatment or frequent political consultations—or formal, as in the institution of permanent membership in the UN Security Council.

[12]*G7*. "The Hague Declaration." 24 March 2014. https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/03/24/hague-declaration.

[13]Social esteem does not imply approval or friendship. That is, the conceptualization is agnostic about whether other actors perceive high-status actors as warm, considerate, or authentic.

nature and value of symbols depend on inter-subjective understandings. Therefore, symbols vary over time and across societies. Status attributes can be material—things that actors have—or ideational—norms that actors follow (Clunan 2014, 274; Miller et al. 2015). By supplying yardsticks for differentiating and ranking states, norms provide actors with the raw material to estimate social honor and establish distinctiveness (Kelley, 2017; Towns, 2012; Towns and Rumelili, 2017). For example, members of the contemporary international society are expected to conform to a "standard of civilization" based on human rights, democracy, and capitalism (Buzan, 2014; Gong, 1984).

Importantly, material resources do not determine status, even though the two often correlate in practice (Weber, 1978, 926). The status order is analytically distinct from class relations: whereas wealth is the currency in the latter, social honor is the currency in the former. High-status groups adamantly oppose claims to base social ranking exclusively on material resources, as the fulfillment of these claims would undermine the status order (Weber, 1978, 936). If material resources determined status, the status order would collapse into class relations, and the nouveau riche would have access to the same privileges as old money. In international politics, we can see the importance of non-material symbols in then-Deputy Secretary of State Robert Zoellick's 2005 call for China to become a responsible stakeholder—a state that matches its economic growth with a commitment to the principles of capitalism, human rights, and democracy (Zoellick, 2005).

Third, the status order is a social hierarchy: depending on a group's level of social esteem, its members acquire "positive or negative privileges." That is, the international status order is a hierarchy in the broad conception (Mattern and Zarakol, 2016, 629), or a system in which units are arranged into unequal relationships. To Weber, effective claims to status entail social closure—the establishment of a boundary between the group and outsiders (Weber, 1978, 43-46). Social closure has two aspects. First, members of high-status groups share dense relations among themselves and relatively sparse relations with outsiders (Weber, 1978, 932). Second, high-status groups differentiate themselves from the rest of society by adopting distinctive values and consuming distinctive goods (Weber, 1978, 933). Based on its distinctiveness, the club justifies exclusive access to certain privileges (Scott 1996, 31-32; Weber 1978, 43-46,935).

In international politics, we can observe social closure in the creation of the UN and the institution of the nonproliferation regime. In both cases, the great power club legitimized exclusive access to resources like veto power and nuclear weapons. Great powers justified their privileges in terms of their status; that is, they were entitled to privileges on account of being great powers. Although great powers' material capabilities likely contributed to the monopolization of resources, coercion alone cannot explain monopolization. Over

time, the distinction between great powers and other states became a convention. As a result, great powers' exclusive access to privileges relies less and less on coercion.

While high status involves privileges, low status brings disadvantage (Adler-Nissen, 2014; Zarakol, 2011, 2014). For instance, semi-sovereignty practices exist since Westphalia. The international community restricts the sovereignty of states recognized as "outlaw" states—those deemed to violate international norms, such as Iraq in the Gulf War; and subjects to forms of protection or guarantee states seen as less than states due to their perceived weakness, backwardness, or decay—such as Kosovo, Bosnia, and Afghanistan (Donnelly, 2006, 146-51). Recently, the Responsibility to Protect doctrine legitimized intervention in states deemed unable to protect their nationals. As the examples indicate, states need to uphold a certain lifestyle to receive recognition as sovereign and enjoy the corresponding privileges. For states that fail to meet these conditions, restrictions to sovereignty may be seen as legitimate and even necessary.

Finally, conventions—norms that determine the lifestyle corresponding to a given identity or the club's rules of membership (Weber, 1978, 34,307,319-24)—regulate the status order. Actors' practices constitute conventions, which in turn constitute actors' positions in the status order. Therefore, the status order is not external to states, but rather emerges from their practices. From a theoretical standpoint, conventions are the most interesting feature of status. To Weber, the search for the ultimate status marker—the attribute that would lie at the root of status distinctions—is of little interest. Status markers vary across societies, are frequently chosen in an arbitrary fashion, and may become less relevant over time. What is puzzling, instead, is how conventions can perpetuate social divisions, even after actors forget the initial reasons for status distinctions (Scott 1996, 32; Weber 1978, 387).

A Relational Theory of Status

Having defined status, let us consider the other question: where does international status come from? In other words, how do states achieve status? Conventional explanations define status as a state's ranking on (material) attributes. In this view, the largest a state's share of certain attributes—for example, the richer or more militarily powerful it is—the higher standing it achieves. In contrast, I conceptualize status as an effective claim to social esteem in terms of privileges. Therefore, I argue that status depends on recognition: a successful claim to status requires recognition. This implies that systematic social processes, which cannot be reduced to state attributes, influence status. Specifically, two relational processes affect status.

First, status results from peer attribution. That is, high-status states are those their peers recognize as such. This makes status is self-reinforcing: the more a state receives recognition, the more others deem it worthy of recognition.[14] High-status states not only influence more the choice of criteria for social esteem (or the definition of status attributes), but also enjoy privileges they can use to access more privileges. Therefore, the dynamic of increasing returns that defines path dependence (Pierson, 2000) influences status recognition. For example, the inclusion of France in the P5 mostly resulted from France's previous status as a great power, rather than from its material capabilities after World War II (Heimann, 2015). The observable implication of this argument is that *high-status states should receive more recognition simply because of their position in the social structure, rather than because of the possession of status attributes*. In other words, this effect is purely structural: it emerges from the way status relations are configured (Jackson and Nexon, 1999, 304-7), rather than from state characteristics.

Second, social closure shapes status relations. As discussed above, effective claims to status typically entail the establishment of a boundary between the group and outsiders based on the group's distinctiveness. Social closure implies that, when we examine status relations, we should see the formation of tightly knit groups of mind-like states. That is, social closure has two observable implications. First, connectedness or sharing relational ties, especially with high-status actors, brings status. Having connections with club members increases the odds of club admission. Identification with a status group imposes restrictions on social intercourse, as relations become dense within the group and relatively sparse with outsiders (Weber, 1978, 932). Therefore, *a state's existing relations should influence the state's ability to achieve status*. Again, this is a purely structural effect, which emerges from the structure of state relations rather than from state attributes.

Social closure has a second observable implication: similarity in both fundamental values and material resources fosters status recognition. High-status groups differentiate themselves from the rest of society by adopting distinctive values and consuming distinctive goods that symbolize the group's unique lifestyle. That is, similar states share denser relations. Therefore, contrary to what conventional explanations argue, states do not necessarily recognize the states with the most resources. Rather, *states should recognize states that have similar values and resources as them*. While this observable implication involves state attributes, it does so

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[14]The intuition behind this argument appears in previous international-relations scholarship on status, though it is not explored in depth. For example, Singer and Small (1966, 238) note that an actor's status originates from a shifting consensus in the community regarding the actor's qualities, which makes status "perceptual in the collective sense." Similarly, the self-reinforcing nature of recognition is evident when scholars describe status in terms of second-order beliefs (beliefs about beliefs) and higher-order beliefs (common beliefs) about a state's quality (Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth 2014, 374; O'Neill 2001, 193).

in the context of state relations. The relevance of a given attribute for status recognition is socially defined: attributes matter not because of their intrinsic value, but rather because of their symbolic value or socially-ascribed meaning.

In sum, I argue that existing explanations of status are incomplete. To understand where status comes from, we need to examine recognition dynamics, rather than solely state attributes. Status concerns identification processes in which a state gains admission into a club once members consider that it follows the rules of membership. Following a club's rules of membership—having certain attributes—does not automatically grant membership. Social recognition is a necessary condition for club admission. To be sure, attributes do play a role in the status order, though an indirect one. Because status is hard to ascertain, attributes help identify the status of actors; that is, club members examine a state's attributes to assess if the state fits the club's lifestyle (Goffman, 1951, 294-95).[15] But although attributes still play a role in my theory of status, the focus shifts from attributes to relations. That is, I adopt a relational rather than a substantialist perspective (Emirbayer, 1997; Jackson and Nexon, 1999).

A Relational Empirical Strategy

The empirical analysis aims to identify the determinants of international status, rather than to come up with a new ranking of states based on specific attributes. Because status depends on recognition, investigating the foundations of status requires understanding why states receive recognition rather than simply what they possess. That is, the focus of the empirical analysis also needs to switch from state attributes to state relations. Therefore, the first question the empirical strategy must address is: how do we measure status relations?

An intuitive approach would be to measure how states perceive each other's status. However, status perceptions are not directly observable. It would be impractical to get state leaders to sincerely fill out a survey about the status of every other state in the world. But most importantly, status is not merely perceptual; it is about state practices. Status emerges from practices such as granting recognition, attaching esteem to attributes, and assigning privileges to clubs. We should thus look at state practices to measure status relations (Pouliot, 2014, 192-200).

Specifically, because status depends on recognition, recognition practices should provide the best measure of status relations. Some studies use states' complaints about the way they are treated to measure the

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[15] We can think of this in terms of necessary and sufficient conditions. Separately, recognition or attributes are necessary but insufficient conditions for status. Together, recognition and attributes are jointly sufficient conditions for status.

lack of recognition, whereas the lack of complaints would denote recognition (for example, Wolf, 2011, 113-114). However, this approach conflates observed causes and effects, as it identifies recognition by proxy of recognition's assumed effects. That is, this approach measures recognition ex post, based on the reaction of the (mis)recognized state. To be empirically meaningful, acts of recognition need instead to be specified ex ante, independently of their alleged effects (Agné et al., 2013, 101).

Moreover, since the status order involves all states, an ideal measure of status relations should cover all states. Some studies look only at great powers to identify status attributes (for example, Heimann, 2015; Neumann, 2008; Volgy et al., 2011). However, it is unclear how one could generalize the analysis of a specific group of states to all states. Other potential measures of recognition also involve only a portion of states.[16] For example, measures such as membership in international clubs like the G7 provide information about the top of the status hierarchy, but neglect most states. The same limitations apply to leadership positions in international governmental organizations. Most organizations do not cover all states to begin with. In addition, organization-specific criteria (Pouliot, 2016) or a geographic rotation principle often determine the assignment of leadership positions. As such, it would be difficult to generalize from the findings.

The best existing measure of status relations that satisfies the criteria above is diplomatic representation—a recognition practice that involves all sovereign states.[17] Under international law, three acts of recognition by states create status distinctions, and could therefore serve to measure status relations: the recognition of states, the establishment of diplomatic relations, and the establishment of diplomatic representation.[18] While diplomatic representation creates distinctions among sovereign states, the other two acts create distinctions between states and non-state actors. Therefore, diplomatic representation is the best measure of status relations for this article's purpose.[19]

Unlike states' potential reactions to perceived (mis)recognition, acts of recognition under international law—such as diplomatic representation—are clearly specified and thus directly observable (Agné et al., 2013, 101). Unlike other potential measures of recognition such as membership in international clubs, diplomatic

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[16] In this category we can include practices such as "choices of language and style in diplomatic communication; respect for national codes of conduct regarding for instance dressing at official visits; attention to national memorial days and monuments of international partners; invitations to international meetings and organizations" (Agné et al., 2013, 100-101).

[17] Other practices such as official visits and visa policies also satisfy the criteria, but comprehensive data on them are not available.

[18] Recognition is defined broadly in international law as the "acknowledgement of the existence of an entity or situation indicating that full consequences of that existence will be respected" (Peterson, 1997, 1). International legal jurisprudence and doctrine interpret both diplomatic relations and diplomatic representation as acts of recognition (Brown 1936; Kelsen 1941, 605).

[19] The three acts are distinct but share key features, most importantly their discretionary nature (Wouters, Duquet, and Meuwissen, 2013, 511). Each of these acts implies the previous one: diplomatic representation implies the existence of diplomatic relations, and diplomatic relations imply state recognition. However, each act does not imply the next: states can recognize a state without establishing diplomatic relations, or maintain diplomatic relations without establishing diplomatic representation.

representation involves all states, allowing us to map the entire status order. To be sure, diplomatic representation provides an imperfect measure of status relations because factors external to status, such as geographical proximity, influence the establishment and maintenance of representations. But since we know what these factors are, we can control for them statistically, as I discuss below.

Previous studies use diplomatic representations to measure status (East, 1972; Miller et al., 2015; Renshon, 2016; Singer and Small, 1966; Volgy et al., 2011; Wallace, 1971). I share with these studies a couple of assumptions. First, an embassy is only established if the sending state considers the receiving state as an important player across multiple dimensions (Brams 1966; East 1972, 305; Nierop 1994, Ch. 4; Singer and Small 1966, 241; Small and Singer 1973, 581-82; Wallace 1971, 26). Embassies are expensive—they imply financial and personnel costs (Vogeler, 1995, 324-27) that are significant not only to developing states, but also to developed ones.[20] Because embassies are costly, states cannot establish an embassy in every other state in the world; rather, they must prioritize. In fact, states periodically revise their embassy portfolios to reallocate resources from low to high priority areas (Oliver, 2016). By choosing to send an embassy to state j, state i reveals that it considers j more important than other states that do not host i's embassies; in other words, it recognizes j.

Second, embassies have an important symbolic role, which may even take precedence over strategic interests or functional reasons (Kinne 2014, 2-3; MacRae 1989; Small and Singer 1973, 581-82). For example, during the last wave of decolonization, many states opened embassies in the newly independent states to express solidarity, rather than because a previous relationship existed (Malone, 2013, 124). Therefore, I share with previous studies the assumption that the number of embassies sent to a state provides an aggregate measure of the state's status (East 1972, 305; Renshon 2016, 527; Singer and Small 1966, 238, 241; Wallace 1971, 26). The more embassies a state receives, the more legitimacy it enjoys. Legitimacy, in turn, increases a state's ability to enter into legal contracts, and to engage in financial or military transactions (Christopher 1994; Kinne 2014, 2-3; Singer and Small 1966, 239; Small and Singer 1973, 581-82). Not fortuitously, exchanging embassies is one of the first practices newly-established states engage in (Newnham, 2000). In sum, exchanging embassies is a recognition practice that signifies social esteem and implies privileges.

While I use the same data as previous studies, I also propose an innovation. Previous studies use diplomatic representation data at the state level: to measure a state's status, they count the number of representa-

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[20]Over the last decade, more than half of the developed states in the OECD reduced their diplomatic footprint due to shrinking budgets. See Oliver 2016

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tions the state receives.[21] By doing so, these studies throw away important information about the structure of status relations—for example, who sends an embassy to whom. Without this information, it is not possible to investigate relational patterns in status relations.[22] Given my relational theory of status, I am interested precisely in the information about the structure of relations that previous studies discard. Instead of measuring status at the state level, I thus use a relational measure: the network of embassies.[23] My basic unit of analysis is the network of embassies, rather than the state. This choice of unit allows me to investigate empirically the observable implications of my theory, which involve relational patterns.

Data: The Network of Embassies

Using data from the Diplomatic Contacts Database (Rhamey et al., 2013), I obtain a directed network in which the nodes are states, and state i sends a tie to state j when it establishes an embassy at state j headed by an ambassador or high commissioner.[24] I distinguish between embassies headed by an ambassador or high commissioner and other types of diplomatic representation because the former unambiguously signify recognition and imply costs.[25] Embassies headed by a chargé d'affaires indicate deteriorating relations (Berridge and James 2003, 36; Malone 2013, 123). Interest sections maintain communication in the absence of diplomatic relations (Berridge and James, 2003, 138). Consulates perform a limited function (Berridge and James, 2003, 55). States use side accreditations to reduce costs (Berridge and James, 2003, 177), which results in only occasional bilateral interactions (Malone, 2013, 124).

Figure 1 shows the network in 2005, with nodes representing states and lines representing embassies.[26] Node size is proportional to in-degree, d (the number of embassies received). That is, larger nodes at the center host the most embassies. Scholars see some of the states located at the center—such as the United States ($d = 166$), Germany ($d = 141$), and the United Kingdom ($d = 139$)—as high-status states. But the figure also shows intriguing cases that attributes alone cannot explain. For instance, Brazil ($d = 83$) and Cuba ($d = 74$), despite their vastly different levels of material capabilities, receive almost the same number of

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[21]Scholars use the number of diplomatic representations a state hosts (East, 1972; Singer and Small, 1966; Volgy et al., 2011; Wallace, 1971), the proportion of embassies a state receives (Miller et al., 2015), or a state's centrality in the diplomatic network (Renshon, 2016) to measure the state's status.

[22]This approach contrasts with the way diplomats see their own craft. Diplomats typically subscribe to a "folk relationalism," as they think in terms of processes and relations rather than substances or rigid notions such as the national interest (Adler-Nissen, 2015, 287-90).

[23]Social network analysts define a network as a set of actors and the ties (or relationships) among them (Wasserman and Faust, 1994, 9).

[24]Following network notation, i denotes the sending state and j denotes the receiving state.

[25]Ambassadors and high commissioners hold equal rank in diplomatic protocol (Malone, 2013, fn 2).

[26]The original data cover the period from 1970 to 2010. See the online appendix for a more detailed description of the network.
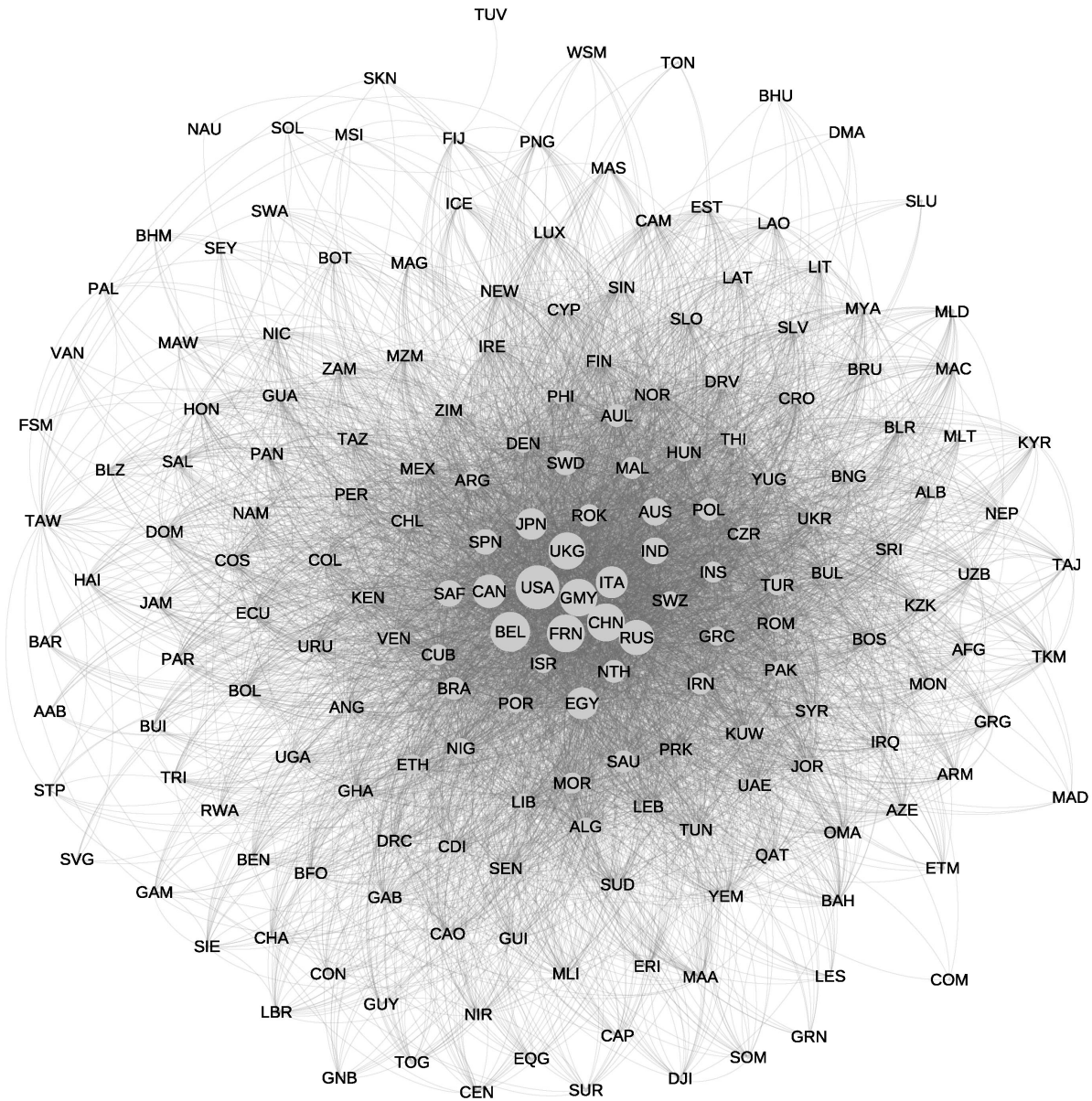
Figure 1. Diplomatic Network in 2005

Note: Nodes represent states, and lines represent embassies. Node size proportional to the number of embassies received.

embassies. Italy ($d = 119$) occupies a central position in the network, even though its time as a major power passed decades ago.

Figure 2 shows the relationship between material capability, measured by the CINC score (Singer, 1988), and the number of embassies received or a state's in-degree centrality. Although embassies and material capability correlate, material capability cannot explain much of the variance in the number of embassies, especially as material capability increases. Above the line, states such as Italy ($d = 119$) and Egypt ($d = 119$)
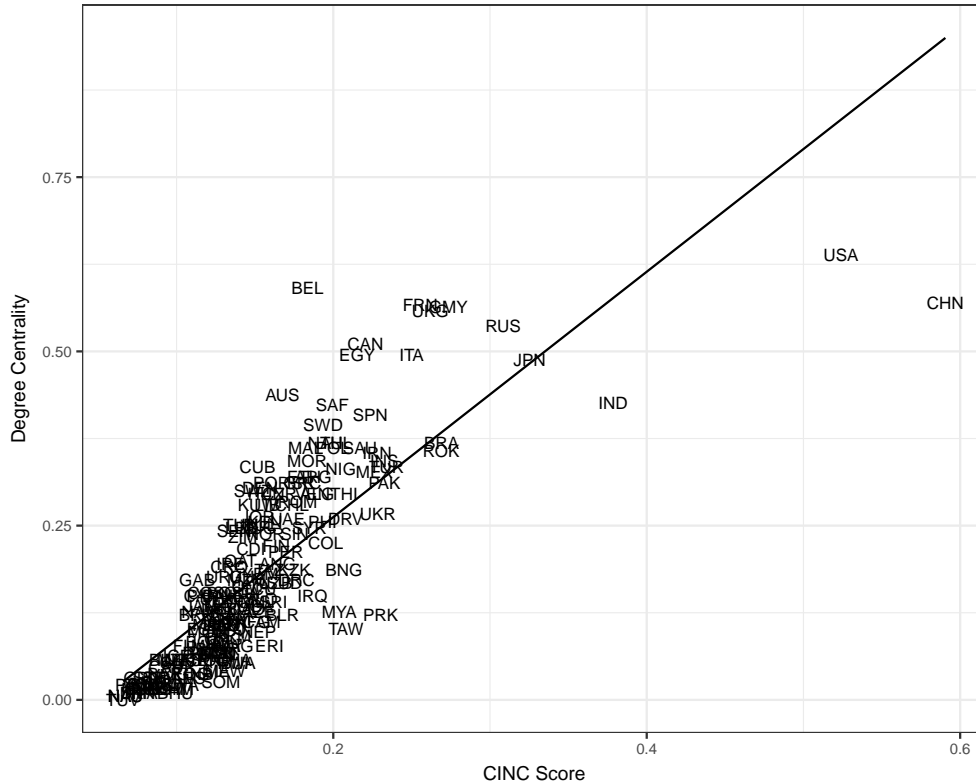
Figure 2. Relationship between material capability and embassies received (2005)
Note: Material capability measured by the log-transformed CINC Score, and embassies received measured by the log-transformed normalized in-degree centrality in the diplomatic network.

receive more embassies than their material capabilities would warrant. Below the line, states such as North Korea ($d = 24$) and Taiwan ($d = 20$) receive fewer embassies than their capabilities would warrant. So what explains the overall distribution of embassies? Why do states send embassies where they send them?

Before delving into the analysis, let us consider some basic features of the network. First, the distribution of embassies is uneven: a few states receive many embassies, but most states receive only a few embassies. While the number of embassies received ranges from 0 (Tuvalu) to 166 (United States), the median state receives only 27 embassies. Second, on average states send only one out of the five potential embassies they could send. That is, only 20% of all embassies that we could observe actually exist. This confirms the intuition that the establishment of embassies is costly—and therefore informative as an act of recognition. Finally, in a five-year interval, states close on average 12% of the existing embassies, and open 23% more new embassies. This shows that the network is not static; rather, there is variation over time to be explained.

A Relational Method

The empirical analysis aims to explain how the diplomatic network emerges. To model network formation, I use an exponential random graph model (ERGM), which estimates the probability of observing the network we observe given all the possible networks that we could observe. ERGM has some properties that fit very well with my purposes.

First, ERGM allows us to assess the possibility that a network emerges not only from actors' attributes or exogenous effects, but also from structural dynamics or endogenous effects—whereby the network structure itself influences the establishment of ties. I argue that the diplomatic network emerges not only from state attributes, but also from relational dynamics. Accordingly, ERGM allows me to directly specify the endogenous effects I want to investigate empirically.

Second, ERGM avoids the bias that likely results when we use conventional regression models to examine relational data (Cranmer, Desmarais, and Kirkland 2012, 282-83; Cranmer et al. 2016, 358-61). Because diplomatic ties influence one another, conventional regression models would likely yield biased estimates. ERGM avoids this problem because it does not assume that network ties are independent and identically distributed. ERGM treats the network as a single multivariate observation, rather than as a collection of independent dyadic observations (Cranmer and Desmarais, 2011, 67-69).

Finally, since embassies tend to remain open once established, I use a temporal extension of ERGM—Temporal ERGM or TERGM (Desmarais and Cranmer, 2012)—that allows me account for the persistence of embassies over time. Specifically, I estimate a TERGM for a time series of networks from 1995 to 2005 at five-year intervals. Because of covariate availability, the main analysis uses data from 1995 to 2005. As discussed below, robustness checks include data from 1970 to 2005 to ensure that the results from the main analysis are not specific to the 1995-2005 period.

Model Specification

I expect the diplomatic network to emerge not only from state attributes but also from endogenous effects, whereby the network structure influences the establishment of embassies. Specifically, three endogenous effects should shape the diplomatic network. To begin, because status depends on peer attribution, I argue that it is self-reinforcing: the more a state receives recognition, the more others deem it worthy of recognition. Therefore, I expect to observe a popularity effect: the more embassies a state already hosts, the more it should

attract additional embassies. To assess this effect, the *Popularity* term counts the number of distinct 2-instars in the network, where a 2-instar is defined as a node i and two incoming ties (j, i) and (k, i). I expect to find a positive coefficient for the *Popularity* term, which would indicate that states with more embassies are more likely to receive additional embassies.

Moreover, I argue that social closure characterizes status. The first dimension of social closure involves the structure of relations: high-status actors share dense relations among themselves but sparse relations with outsiders. That is, a state's existing relations affect the state's tendency to receive recognition. I thus expect to observe two additional endogenous effects in the network. The first effect is reciprocity: states should reciprocate embassies. This effect captures the notion that status requires an effective claim. While reciprocal recognition is mutually gratifying, asymmetric recognition is inherently unstable because it tends to be costly and ultimately worthless (Wendt, 2003, 512-14). Indeed, a refusal to reciprocate an embassy denotes "a marked sense of material or moral superiority (or both) on the part of the receiving state," which compromises bilateral relations (Berridge and James, 2003, 82). To assess this effect, the *Reciprocity* term counts the number of dyads for which mutual ties exist. I expect to find a positive coefficient for the *Reciprocity* term, which would indicate that states prefer to send embassies to states that send embassies in return.

The second endogenous effect associated with social closure is transitivity: states should be more likely to establish embassies where their diplomatic partners send embassies. That is, the more diplomatic partners any two states share, the higher their tendency to exchange embassies. This effect captures the notion that connectedness, especially with high-status actors, brings status. Although recognition is a discretionary act, states routinely coordinate acts of recognition to ensure legitimacy (Crawford 1996; Kelsen 1941; Kinne 2014, 5-6). High-status states occupy a central position in status relations, which makes them particularly influential in determining who gets recognition. For example, Western states with close ties to the United States rarely recognize the State of Palestine, while states with ties to China rarely recognize Taiwan.[27] To assess this effect, the *Transitivity* term counts the number of closed triads—any set of ties (i, j) and (j, k) for which either (k, i) or (i, k) also exist. I expect to find a positive coefficient for the *Transitivity* term, which would indicate that states are more likely to exchange embassies the more diplomatic partners they share.

The second dimension of social closure involves actor (or exogenous) attributes. Status groups differentiate themselves by adopting distinctive values and consuming distinctive goods. Therefore, I expect states to recognize states with similar values and resources, rather than the states with the most resources, as tra-

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[27] *BBC News.* "Sweden to recognise Palestinian state." October 3, 2014. http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-29479418.

ditional approaches argue. Homophily effects shape the diplomatic network: similar states should be more likely to exchange embassies. To test this claim, I specify the status attributes considered in the literature as dyadic attributes, by measuring the absolute difference between the states in every network dyad. The more two states differ along attributes such as military capability or democracy, the smaller their tendency to exchange embassies. I thus expect to find negative coefficients for the homophily effects.

In contrast, conventional explanations expect status to increase as states increase their share of certain attributes. For example, the more economic or military capabilities a state has, the higher standing it should achieve. According to this approach, states with higher levels of attributes such as wealth or military capability should attract more embassies. To assess conventional explanations, I specify status attributes at the state level, by measuring how much each state has of that attribute.

I use the state attributes considered in the status literature, which include both material resources and fundamental values. Material resources include wealth, military capability, and nuclear weapons. I use three variables to assess the effects of material resources: *GDP per capita* measures the log-transformed real GDP per capita in 2005 US dollars (Gleditsch, 2002); *Military Spending* measures the log-transformed military expenditure in current US dollars (Singer, 1988); and *Nuclear Weapons* indicates whether a state has nuclear weapons and an ongoing nuclear program (Singh and Way, 2004).

Previous studies consider regime type, as well as more abstract notions such as civilization and moral superiority, to affect status (see Table 1). Scholars argue that, besides democracy, the standard of civilization today includes capitalism and human rights (Buzan, 2014, Neumann, 2014, 111). Therefore, I estimate the effects of the three fundamental values on recognition: democracy, human rights, and economic liberalism. Specifically, I use three variables: the modified Polity IV score (Gleditsch and Ward, 1997) measures *Democracy*; the Political Terror Scale based on U.S. State Department reports measures *Human Rights* (Gibney et al., 2015)[28]; and the Index of Economic Freedom measures *Economic Freedom* (Heritage Foundation, 2015).

I control for other factors that may influence the establishment of embassies, both at the dyadic and monadic levels (Kinne, 2014; Neumayer, 2008). *Alliance* records whether i and j share an alliance (Leeds et al., 2002), and *Trade* measures the log-transformed total trade between i and j in 2000 US dollars (Barbieri, Keshk, and Pollins, 2009). To control for geographical proximity, *Contiguity* measures whether i and j share a river, land, or maritime border (up to 24 nmi) (Stinnett et al., 2002); and *Same Region* measures whether i and j are in the same geographical sub-region. Since states that host IGO headquarters attract more embassies

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[28]To facilitate interpretation, I inverted the scale so that higher levels indicate a better human rights record.

Table 2. Model Specification Summary

Approach	Effect Type	Variable	Expectation
Relational (relations → status)	Endogenous	Popularity Reciprocity Transitivity	+
	Homophily (dyadic)	Democracy Human rights Economic liberalism Wealth Military capability Nuclear weapons	−
Conventional (attributes → status)	State attributes (monadic)	Democracy Human rights Economic liberalism Wealth Military capability Nuclear weapons	+

due to economies of scale for sending states, *IGO Headquarters$_j$* records whether j hosts IGO headquarters (Rohn, 1997). Since richer states can send embassies abroad, *GDP per capita$_i$* controls for the sending state's wealth (Gleditsch, 2002).[29]

I use a *Tie Stability* term to control for the persistence of embassies over time. This term acts like a lag of the dependent variable in a time series model, conditioning effects on the previous year. Because I include this term in the model, the effects observed are net of past network structure. Finally, I use a *Sociality* term to control for the possibility that states that already send many embassies are more likely to establish additional embassies due to increasing returns to scale. Since the act of opening embassies has high fixed costs in bureaucratic terms, the marginal cost of opening an additional embassy should decrease as the overall number of embassies increases. To account for this, the *Sociality* term counts the number of distinct 2-outstars in the network, where a 2-outstar is a node i and two outgoing ties (i, j) and (i, k).

To recap, Table 2 compares the empirical expectations from my relational model of status with expectations from the conventional approach. I use a TERGM to model the probability of tie formation in the diplomatic network over time as a function of both state attributes (exogenous effects) and network structure (endogenous effects). Specifically, I expect to observe three endogenous or structural effects in the network: popularity, reciprocity, and transitivity. The coefficient for each of these effects should be positive. Moreover, I expect to observe homophily effects in the network: the more similar any two states, the higher their

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[29]See the online appendix for a more detailed description of the data.

tendency to exchange embassies. In other words, I expect to observe negative coefficients for the homophily effects. In contrast, the conventional approach expects status to increase with state attributes: richer or more democratic should achieve higher social standing. According to the conventional approach, state attributes should thus correlate positively with the establishment of embassies.

Results

Figure 3 presents the estimated parameters, which we can interpret at the network or dyad levels (Cranmer and Desmarais, 2011, 71-73). At the network level, we can use parameters to estimate the impact of changes in specific network configurations—such as an increase in the number of reciprocal dyads or in the level of a state attribute—on the predicted probability of observing a given network. At the dyad level, we can use parameters to estimate the impact of changes in specific network configurations on the odds of observing a tie between i and j. The dyadic level of interpretation is more intuitive because it closely resembles how we interpret logistic regression estimates. I thus interpret the results at the dyad level, in terms of the odds of observing a tie between two states.

Because the variables have different scales, Figure 3 does not provide information about the size of the effects, which I discuss below. First, let us consider the direction and statistical significance of the coefficients. Filled circles in Figure 3 denote statistically significant coefficient estimates, while empty circles denote insignificant estimates. I divide the variables into categories that reflect either my relational model of status, which involves endogenous effects and homophily, or conventional explanations based on state attributes.

Conventional explanations argue that status is proportional to a state's share of certain attributes: for example, the richer or militarily stronger a state is, the higher its tendency to receive an embassy. Based on these explanations, we should expect to find positive coefficients for state attributes, which would indicate that state attributes determine status. However, the impact of attributes on the establishment of embassies is mixed: we find positive signs for half of the coefficients, but a negative sign for the other half. Although previous research prioritizes material resources as status attributes, among material resources only military capability has a positive effect on tie formation. Against expectations from previous research that state attributes should bring recognition, attributes only sometimes increase the odds of receiving an embassy.

I derive two expectations from my relational model of status involving endogenous effects. First, I argue that status is self-reinforcing: the more a state receives recognition, the more others deem it worthy of recog-
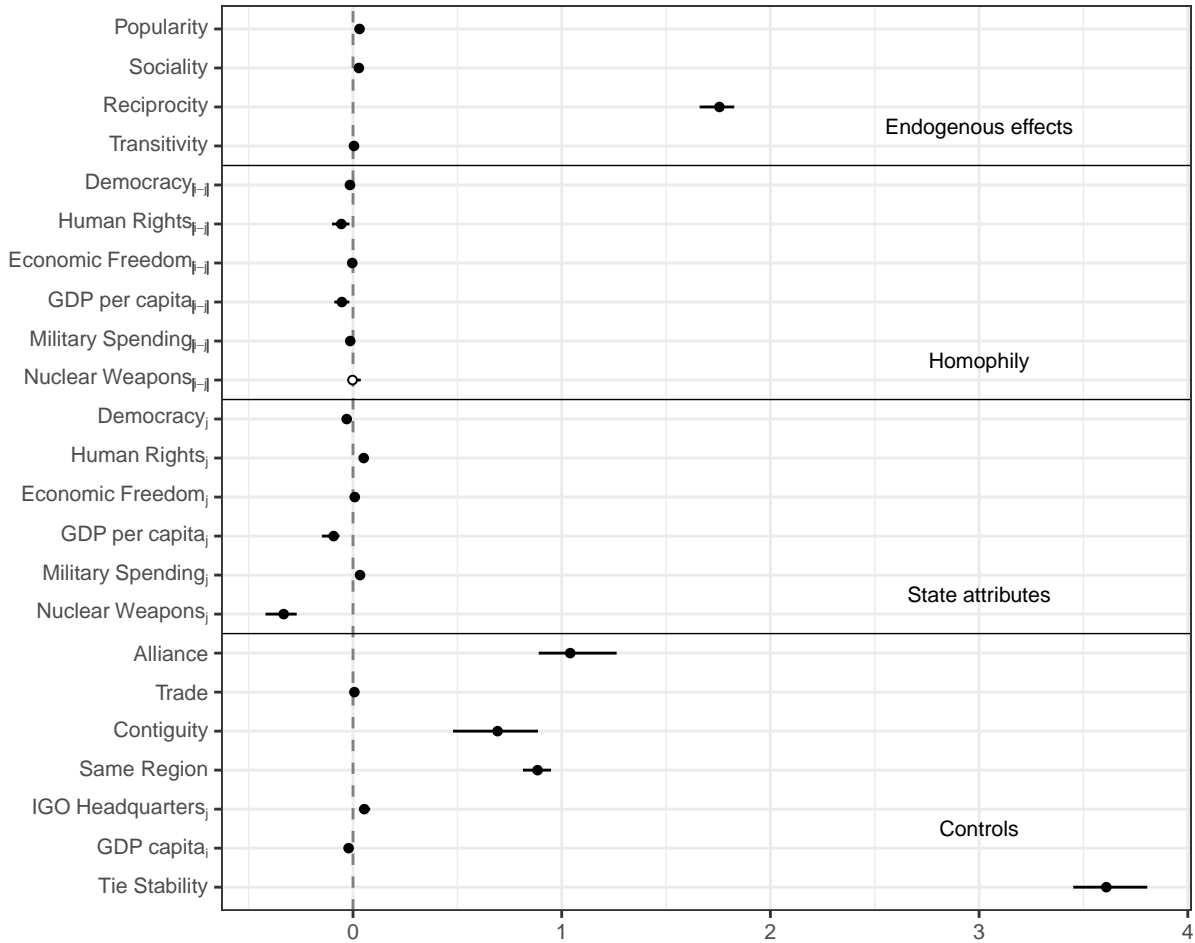
Figure 3. Temporal exponential random graph model of diplomatic ties for 1995-2005.
Notes: $N_{1995} = 123$ and $N_{2005} = 132$. Bars denote 95% confidence intervals based on 1,000 bootstrap replications. Filled circles indicate statistically significant coefficient estimates, and empty circles indicate insignificant estimates. Following network notation, i denotes the sending state and j denotes the receiving state.

nition. Therefore, I expect to find a positive coefficient for popularity. This is what we observe: states that already host many embassies attract additional embassies. Second, I argue that social closure—through the formation of tightly-knit groups that sparingly interact with outsiders—shapes status relations. Therefore, I expect to find positive coefficients for reciprocity and transitivity. The analysis supports this expectation: states are more likely to send embassies to states that send embassies in return; in addition, states are more likely to exchange embassies the more diplomatic partners they share. Together, these effects indicate that a state's existing relations affect its propensity to receive recognition.

I derive one expectation from my relational model of status involving state attributes. Social closure implies that status groups differentiate themselves from outsiders by adopting distinctive values and consuming

distinctive goods. Therefore, I expect to observe homophily effects in the diplomatic network: similar states should be more likely to recognize each other. Accordingly, I expect to find negative coefficients for the variables that measure differences between states. This is what we observe: two states are less likely to exchange embassies the more different they are. That is, similar states are more likely to recognize each other. I find homophily effects for all state attributes except nuclear weapons. These results indicate that status is not just a matter of being rich or democratic. Rather, status is relational: similarity begets recognition.

Compared to conventional explanations that begin and end with state attributes, the relational model performs much better in explaining the establishment of embassies. As expected, relational dynamics influence tie formation in the diplomatic network. States recognize similar states, rather than the states with the highest levels of attributes. Moreover, a state's existing relations affect the state's ability to achieve status. Traditional approaches cannot explain homophily or endogenous effects, which nonetheless influence the establishment of embassies. Importantly, the observed endogenous effects are purely structural dynamics that come from the structure of the network itself, rather than from state attributes. Since the analysis controls for factors such as geographical proximity and the wealth of the sending state, these factors cannot account for the observed endogenous effects.

Finally, most of the controls have statistically significant effects in the expected direction. States that send many embassies are more likely to send additional embassies (sociality effect). States are more likely to exchange embassies if they share an alliance, trade more, share a border, or are in the same region. States that host IGO headquarters attract more embassies. Richer states are less likely to send embassies. The positive tie stability effect indicates that embassies tend to persist over time.

Size of the Effects

Figure 3 shows log odds ratios, which we can exponentiate to obtain odds ratios. In particular, to assess the size of the effects, one can compute the odds ratio associated with a one-standard deviation change around the mean for each variable. For popularity, a one-standard deviation around the mean number of embassies received in 2000 increases the odds of receiving an additional embassy by a factor of 2.40. For example, Cuba, who hosts 51 embassies, is 2.40 times more likely to receive an additional embassy than Bolivia, who hosts 23 embassies. For reciprocity, a tie is 5.79 times more likely to exist if it is mutual. That is, an embassy is almost six times more likely to exist if both states in a dyad exchange embassies. For transitivity, a tie is 1.005 times more likely if it closes one additional triangle in the network. For example, Hungary is 1.14 times more likely

Table 3. Change in Odds of Tie from Typical Change in Variable*

Homophily effects	
Democracy	9%
Human rights	11%
Economic liberalism	4%
GDP/capita	6%
Military spending	2%
Nuclear weapons	-
State attributes	
Democracy	-18%
Human rights	12%
Economic liberalism	10%
GDP/capita	-11%
Military spending	7%
Nuclear weapons	-28%

* One-standard deviation for continuous variables
and the interquartile range for discrete ones.

to send a tie to Libya, which would close 36 triangles, than to Chad, which would close 9 triangles. In sum, strong endogenous effects shape the diplomatic network.

To assess the size of effects involving state attributes, Table 3 shows the effect of a typical change in each variable on the odds that an embassy will be established. The table tells us two things that conventional approaches cannot explain. First, attribute similarity has a substantively significant impact on the establishment of embassies. Although conventional approaches see status as a function of attributes, the importance of attributes is socially defined: similar states are more likely to recognize each other. Second, the effect of fundamental values on the establishment of embassies is substantively significant. For both homophily and monadic effects, fundamental values have a large (and mostly positive) impact on the odds of observing an embassy. Contrary to approaches that prioritize material resources as status attributes, fundamental values are at least as important for recognition.

Model Fit and Robustness Checks

To assess model fit, I conduct goodness of fit tests (Figure A3) and degeneracy checks (Table A12), shown in the online appendix. Both diagnostics indicate that the model fits the data very well. To assess the robustness of the results, I employ alternative model specifications, shown in the online appendix. First, I estimate two models without endogenous effects—equivalent to logit models (Cranmer and Desmarais, 2011, 79)— including either only state attributes, or both state and dyad attributes (Table A13). I also estimate models

with alternative measures for wealth and military capability, such as GDP and population (Table A15). As I discuss in more detail below, the results are robust to model specification.

To account for possible high collinearity among the fundamental values variables, I estimate baseline models for each of the variables, including one of the variables but excluding the other two. These models confer the added advantage of covering longer periods starting in 1970. Since the total number of embassies in the world more than doubled between 1970 and 2005, the models capture longer-term dynamics. Therefore, they address the potential concern that factors that precede the period of estimation may affect the main model's results. As shown in Table A14, results are robust to these changes in specification. This indicates that potentially omitted longer-term dynamics do not drive the results, and that the findings are not specific to the 1995-2005 period.

The comparison of results across specifications attests to the robustness of the main findings, and indicates that results reflect the underlying data generating process. Regardless of specification, I find consistently significant and positive coefficients for all endogenous effects. Moreover, while homophily effects for fundamental values are robust, homophily effects for material resources are somewhat sensitive to model specification. Across specifications, state attributes only sometimes increase the odds of receiving an embassy. Importantly, the negative effects for both wealth and nuclear weapons are robust to model specification. The possession of wealth or nuclear weapons consistently reduces the odds of receiving an embassy—which indicates that the results are not an artifact of model specification.

Conclusion

This article offers three new findings about status in international politics. First, status results from systematic social processes that cannot be reduced to state attributes. Because status depends on recognition, scholarly attempts to rank states based on attributes provide a poor representation of the international status order. Overall, the results indicate that status recognition depends on a state's relations, and only indirectly on its attributes. The relevance of a given attribute for status recognition is socially defined: states recognize states that share similar values and resources, rather than the states with the largest portfolio of certain attributes. Moreover, states prove more likely to recognize states that already enjoy recognition, that recognize them in return, or that already share diplomatic partners with them. This might explain, for example, why Egypt occupies a more central position in the diplomatic network than we would expect if we only looked at its

material capabilities. Recognized by other states as a leader in the Non-Aligned Movement, and as a hub at the crossroads of the Middle East and North Africa, Egypt gets status from its relations with other states.

Second, social closure shapes the international status order. That is, a state's existing relations affect the state's propensity to achieve higher standing. Moreover, status is self-reinforcing: the more a state receives recognition, the more others deem it worthy of recognition. These relational dynamics have opposite implications for high- and low-status states. High-status states enjoy considerable advantage in the status game—which originates from their position in status relations rather than from the possession of attributes per se. This might explain, for example, why Italy maintains a central position in the diplomatic network even though its time as a major power passed decades ago. For emerging powers, on the other hand, relational dynamics imply that moving up the status ladder is very difficult. States that lack close connections with a club's members are much less likely to gain admission into the club.

Finally, although traditional approaches emphasize material resources as status attributes, I find that fundamental values, such as democracy and human rights, are at least equally important for status. Both material and ideational attributes help confer status. This suggests that the role of status in international politics may be broader, and more complex, than often assumed in the literature, which associates status-seeking behavior with aggressive behavior. Because fundamental values, such as democracy, are relevant for status recognition, there may be structural incentives for states to adopt prevailing international norms. This carries with it important implications. Among them: status-seeking behavior may also be cooperative behavior. Status may thus contribute to the maintenance of international order. Existing research neglects this because it usually sees status as a cause of (hegemonic) war. Therefore, this finding opens a new direction for research on status in international-relations scholarship.

Compared to conventional approaches that begin and end with state attributes, the relational approach advanced confers some advantages. First, it provides a more complete explanation of the foundations of international status. The relational ontology of status provides a unified model with multiple observable implications. These involve not only state attributes, but also relational dynamics. The empirical results demonstrate the analytical leverage my relational model of status provides. Compared to conventional approaches based on state attributes, the relational model performs much better in explaining the formation of the diplomatic network. Importantly, conventional approaches—those based on state attributes—cannot explain the main findings, which involve both endogenous effects and homophily. That is, a relational perspective reveals important patterns in status relations that a substantialist perspective cannot accommodate.

Moreover, the approach advanced here is consistently relational: it uses a relational empirical strategy in the service of a relational theory of status. Previous studies of status in international-relations scholarship allude to relational patterns but do not investigate these patterns systematically. Given its relational nature, my empirical strategy can assess higher-order patterns in status relations that are not observable when the analysis only includes dyads or the major powers. As the results show, these patterns are substantively significant, and therefore should not be neglected in studies of status. Furthermore, the empirical strategy tests hypotheses about the determinants of status, instead of imposing on observations a set of status attributes chosen a priori. Because it does not rely on strict assumptions about status attributes or the international status ranking, the empirical strategy introduced here provides a flexible approach that scholars can use to investigate the determinants of international status during any historical period.

Supplemental Information

The online appendix contains a descriptive analysis of the data, goodness-of-fit tests, degeneracy checks, and robustness checks. The online appendix and replication materials are available at www.marinagduque.com and the *International Studies Quarterly* data archive.

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