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32

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STATUS, IDENTITY, AND RISING POWERS

**Project on:
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Status, Identity, and Rising Powers

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Status, Identity, and Rising Powers

In the current era, the most striking development is the appearance of rising powers. These include Brazil, Russia, India, and China but also South Africa, Mexico, and South Korea. No longer can a small group of advanced states, the Group of Seven (G-7), manage the world economy. The G-7 has for all practical purposes been replaced by the G-20, which includes China, India, South Korea, Indonesia, and Australia. The emerging powers in Asia account for a growing share of the world's global domestic product. These powers are spending more on their military—India already has an aircraft carrier and plans to procure two more. China's growing navy is a major concern to the United States military.¹

The rising powers will influence international institutions and interactions for decades to come. Will the new powers become responsible stakeholders in the global system? Or will they pursue their individual interests at the cost of global stability? Will the world witness a return to competition over spheres of influence and military power?

Scholars and analysts disagree over how the rise of new powers will affect global stability.² The emerging powers do not necessarily share the United States agenda on nonproliferation, global warming, currency management, or human rights. India and China, for example, have been reluctant to put pressure on Burma or Sudan to refrain from human rights abuses. These two Asian giants are unconcerned about Iran's nuclear program. Russia has

¹ For discussion of recent trends, see David Pilling, "Poised for a Shift," *Financial Times*, November 23, 2010, p. 9.

² For opposing views, see Jorge G. Castañeda, "Not Ready for Prime Time," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 5 (September/October 2010), pp. 109-23; and Stewart Patrick, "Irresponsible Stakeholders?" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 89, No. 6 (November/December 2010), pp. 44-53.

refused to withdraw its troops from parts of Georgia that it occupied in the 2008 war. Russia has sold arms to Venezuela and recently offered to construct a nuclear power plant for that country.³

For insights into the policies of rising powers, we draw on social identity theory (SIT), which explores how social groups strive to achieve a positively distinctive identity. SIT is a well established theoretical framework tested in numerous experiments and field studies.⁴ 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 by achieving preeminence outside the arena of geopolitical competition.⁵

We begin by discussing the basic propositions of SIT, showing why groups are motivated to achieve positive distinctiveness. We then elaborate and conceptualize the SIT typology of identity management strategies, providing applications to international relations. This theoretical

³ Andre E. Kramer, "Russia Says It Will Build Nuclear Plant for Venezuela," *New York Times*, October 16, 2010, p. 6

⁴ For the seminal works on social identity theory, see Henri Tajfel, "The Psychological Structure of Intergroup Relations," in *Differentiation between Social Groups: Studies in the Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (London: Academic Press, 1978); Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, eds. William G. Austin and Stephen Worchel, (Monterey, Ca.: Brooks/Cole, 1979), 33-47; Henri Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Ad F.M. Van Knippenberg, "Intergroup Differences in Group Perceptions," in *The Social Dimension: European Developments in Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, ed. Henri Tajfel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984); Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams, *Social Identifications: A Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations and Group Processes* (London: Routledge, 1988). For applications of social identity theory to international relations, see Jonathan Mercer, "Anarchy and Identity," *International Organization*, Vol. 49, No. 2 (Spring 1995), 299-52; and Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, "Shortcut to Greatness: The New Thinking and the Revolution in Soviet Foreign Policy," *International Organization*, Vol. 57, No. 1 (Winter 2003), 77-109.

⁵ Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict."

framework will be used in subsequent chapters to explain major shifts in Chinese and Soviet/Russian grand strategy and especially their adoption of more cooperative policies.

Identity, Status, and Power

Social identity theory posits that people derive part of their identity from membership in various social groups—nation, ethnicity, religion, political party, gender, or occupation. Because membership reflects back on the self, people want their group to have a positive identity.⁶

In SIT, people compare their group's achievements and qualities to a reference group, one that is equal or slightly superior.⁷ The propensity toward upward comparison is found in the choice of reference groups in international relations, where the Chinese compare their achievements to those of Japan, the United States, and Russia;⁸ Indians look at China;⁹ and Russians judge their accomplishments relative to those of the United States.¹⁰

Groups strive for positive distinctiveness—to be not only different but better.¹¹ Evidence for this motive is provided by minimal group experiments where based on trivial factors such as preference for the art of Wassily Kandinsky versus Paul Klee, groups discriminate in favor of the in-group.¹² In the minimal group experiments, the groups were equal in status and power to

⁶ Tajfel, "The Psychological Structure of Intergroup Relations," 63-64; and Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," 40.

⁷ Rupert Brown and Gabi Haeger, "'Compared to What?' Comparison Choice in an International Context," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 29, No. 1 (February 1999), 31-42.

⁸ David M. Lampton, *The Three Faces of Chinese Power: Might, Money, and Minds* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 22.

⁹ Somini Sengupta, "India and China Become Friendlier Rivals," *New York Times*, November 21, 2006.

¹⁰ Bobo Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era: Reality, Illusion, and Mythmaking* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 8, 23.

¹¹ Tajfel, "The Psychological Structure of Intergroup Relations," 83-86.

¹² *Ibid.*, 77-86. For a review, see Marilynn B. Brewer, "In-Group Bias in the Minimal Intergroup Situation: A Cognitive-Motivational Analysis," *Psychological Bulletin*, Vol. 86, No. 2 (March 1979), 307-324.

control for alternative explanations for group rivalries.¹³ But SIT researchers continue to find in-group bias in settings where there are marked disparities in status or power, whether based on occupation,¹⁴ military rank,¹⁵ gender,¹⁶ or region (Northern vs. Southern Italians,¹⁷ French vs. British Canadians,¹⁸ East vs. West Germans¹⁹).

Whether status differences lead to conflict is mediated by social identity processes. SIT and constructivism in international relations share a focus on identity,²⁰ but the SIT conception of social identity, however, differs from that of constructivists.²¹ Constructivists posit that states implicitly negotiate their identities through actions and reactions and, over time, adopt a shared view of who each of them is.²² Viewing identity as formed solely through interaction slights the role of agents in establishing their own identity. The constructivist view of identity is shaped by George Herbert Mead's symbolic interactionism, which slights "I" as a creator of identity in favor of "Me." Constructivists adopt a "reflexive" view of identity, whereby people's self-image

¹³ Jacques E.C. Hymans, "Applying Social Identity Theory to the Study of International Politics: A Caution and an Agenda," paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, New Orleans, Louisiana, March 24-27, 2002, 11.

¹⁴ Richard Y. Bourhis and Peter Hill, "Intergroup Perceptions in British Higher Education: A Field Study," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Henri Tajfel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 423-468.

¹⁵ Jennifer G. Boldry and Deborah A. Kashy, "Intergroup Perception in Naturally Occurring Groups of Differential Status: A Social Relations Perspective," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 77, No. 6 (December 1999), 1200-1212.

¹⁶ Peter R. Grant, "Ethnocentrism between Groups of Unequal Power in Response to Perceived Threat to Social Identity and Valued Resources," *Canadian Journal of Behavioral Science*, Vol. 24, No. 3 (1992), 348-370.

¹⁷ Dora Capozza, Emiliana Bonaldo, and Alba Di Maggio, "Problems of Identity and Social Conflict: Research on Ethnic Groups in Italy," in *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, ed. Tajfel, , 299-325.

¹⁸ Ad F.M. Van Knippenberg, "Intergroup Differences in Group Perceptions," in *The Social Dimension: European Developments in Social Psychology*, Vol. 2, ed. Henri Tajfel (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 565-566.

¹⁹ Amélie Mummendey, Thomas Kessler, Andreas Klink, and Rosemarie Mielke, "Strategies to Cope with Negative Social Identity: Predictions by Social Identity Theory and Relative Deprivation Theory," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 76, No. 2 (February 1999), 229-245.

²⁰ For important contributions, see Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991).

²¹ For discussion, see Deborah Welch Larson, "How Identities Form and Change: Supplementing Constructivism with Social Psychology," in *Ideational Allies: Psychology, Constructivism and International Relations*, eds. Vaughn P. Shannon and Paul A. Kowert (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, forthcoming).

²² Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics*, 327-31, 334-335.

is a reflection of how they are viewed by others.²³ States, on the other hand, often do not accept how others perceive their identity, and they adopt policies to change their social identity. A state's identity is the product of history, culture, geographic location, and leadership. SIT has a typology of strategies by which groups may improve their relative status. Constructivists assume that the parties agree on their relative identities, and that this constitutes social knowledge. As a social psychological theory, SIT does not assume that there is consensus, and allows for the possibility of misperception of the other's identity claims.

In claiming an identity, groups seek to achieve a favorable comparison with a similar reference group. In SIT, status reflects a group's standing on some evaluative dimension.²⁴ Status is a positional good, meaning that one group's status can improve only if another's declines.²⁵ SIT introduces an important modification to this prevailing zero-sum conception of status by pointing out that groups have multiple traits on which to be evaluated, so that comparisons between them need not be competitive. The availability of multidimensional comparisons underlies social creativity, as is discussed below.

Status-seeking actions can be largely symbolic and aimed at influencing others' perceptions, as distinguished from the search for raw material power. For example, hosting the Olympics has traditionally been an indicator of rising power status, as illustrated by Russian President Vladimir Putin's remark that being awarded the 2014 Winter Olympics was a "judgment of our country," and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva's tearful exclamation that Rio de Janeiro's selection meant that Brazil had gone from being a second-class

²³ Erik Ringmar, "The Recognition Game: Soviet Russia Against the West," *Cooperation and Conflict*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (2002), 118-20.

²⁴ Ad van Knippenberg and Naomi Ellemers, "Strategies in Intergroup Relations," in *Group Motivation: Social Psychological Perspectives*, eds. Michael A. Hogg and Dominic Abrams (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 20-21.

²⁵ On positional goods, see Fred Hirsch, *Social Limits to Growth* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 27-28.

to a first-class country and was now beginning to “receive the respect we deserve.”²⁶ Another indicator of rising power status is chairing the Group of 20 (G-20). Recent host countries have included India (2002), Mexico (2003), China (2005), South Africa (2006), and Brazil (2008).²⁷ Upon assuming the chair position in 2010, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak Lee orchestrated a large, multifaceted international aid effort to the earthquake victims in Haiti as a sign of South Korea’s growing geopolitical stature.²⁸

International institutions are often hierarchical in their structure and functions and in that manner embody the status hierarchy. The UN Security Council was built on the premise of great power management of the system, and the permanent five members reflect the distribution of power at the end of World War II.²⁹ The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank also are hierarchical in their rights and functioning, as exemplified by the weighted voting structure. Consequently, international institutions are often arenas in which states contend for status. In the current era, smaller states expend great effort and financial resources to win election to one of the nonpermanent memberships in the Security Council even though they cannot block decisions made by the permanent members.³⁰

During the Cold War, Britain, West Germany, France, and Italy jockeyed for status within NATO. These states did not regard the alliance as a means for the United States to

²⁶ Quoted in Max Delany and Kevin O’Flynn, “As Sochi Gets Olympics, a Gold Medal for Putin,” *International Herald Tribune*, July 5, 2007; and Alexei Barrionuevo, “Dancing into the Evening, Brazil Celebrates Its Arrival on the World Stage,” *New York Times*, October 4, 2009.

²⁷ John Kirton, “The G-20 Finance Ministers: Network Governance,” in *Rising States, Rising Institutions*, eds. Alan S. Alexandroff and Andrew F. Cooper (Washington, D.C.: Brookings, 2010), 199.

²⁸ Christian Oliver and David Pilling, “Into Position,” *Financial Times*, March 17, 2010, 7.

²⁹ Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), ch. 6.

³⁰ David M. Malone, “Eyes on the Prize: The Quest for Nonpermanent Seats on the UN Security Council,” *Global Governance*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (January-March 2000), 3-24.

reassure them against abandonment,³¹ but as an arena in which to establish a distinctive role despite superpower dominance.³² In 1948, Britain reluctantly accepted an Atlantic Alliance when the option of establishing a “Third Force” of Western Europe and its colonial empire did not seem to be feasible in the short-term, given Europe’s dependence on U.S. economic assistance. Britain did not want a permanent status of junior partner of the United States.³³ In the 1950s, France sought equality with Britain in the alliance through such means as deploying advanced weapons, ignoring NATO’s strategic requirements. In 1950-51, U.S. officials tried to get France to abandon its submarine program and battleships in favor of minesweepers, a proposal that the French regarded as insulting to their identity as a great power.³⁴ Italy, on the other hand, chose to upgrade its status within the alliance by agreeing in 1959 to installation of liquid-fueled, unstable, and immobile Jupiter missiles which made the country a target for a Soviet nuclear attack.³⁵

The rising powers would like to have a more influential role in Bretton Woods institutions such as the IMF and the World Bank.³⁶ Germany, Brazil, India, and Japan launched a campaign (unsuccessful) to become permanent members of the U.N. Security Council.³⁷ The G-20 has essentially replaced the G-7 in managing the world’s economy.

³¹ G. John Ikenberry, *After Hegemony: Institutions, Strategic Restraint, and the Rebuilding of Order After Major Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

³² Beatrice Heuser and Robert O’Neill, eds., *Securing Peace in Europe, 1945-62* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1992).

³³ John Kent and John W. Young, “British Policy Overseas: The ‘Third Force’ and the Origins of NATO –in Search of a New Perspective,” in *Securing Peace in Europe*, eds. Heuser and O’Neill 41-61.

³⁴ Gérard Bossuat, “France and the Leadership of the West in the 1950s: A Story of Disenchantment,” in *Securing Peace in Europe*, eds. Heuser and O’Neill 111-12.

³⁵ Leopoldo Nuti, “Italy and the Nuclear Choices of the Atlantic Alliance, 1955-63,” in *Securing Peace in Europe*, eds. Heuser and O’Neill, 232, 237.

³⁶ Paulo Nogueira Batista, “Europe Must Make Way for a Modern IMF,” *Financial Times*, September 24, 2010, 9; James Traub, “Shaking up the Boardroom at World Government Inc.,” *New York Times*, January 4, 2009, 4.

³⁷ Stephen John Stedman, “UN Transformation in an Era of Soft Balancing,” in *Cooperating for Peace and Security: Evolving Institutions and Arrangements in a Context of Changing U.S. Security Policy*, eds. Bruce D. Jones, Shepard Forman, and Richard Gowan, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 48-49.

Indirect evidence of concern for status is provided by a state's disproportionate reaction to perceived humiliations. Weber wrote after Germany's defeat in World War I that "as a private individual one can overlook damage of one's interests, but not to one's sense of honour; so it is with a nation."³⁸ Displays of anger are often intended to restore status or dignity,³⁹ as in the violent and emotional protests among Chinese youth against the May 1999 accidental U.S. bombing of the Chinese embassy in Belgrade.⁴⁰ States may try to demonstrate their importance by engaging in obstructionist behavior, acting as spoilers. In reaction to the negative U.S. response to their attempts to mediate the Iranian nuclear dispute, Brazil and Turkey voted in the U.N. Security Council against the imposition of tougher sanctions against Iran, instead of simply abstaining. Turkish President Abdullah Gul declared that Turkey was the "only country that can have a very important contribution to the diplomatic route" with Iran.⁴¹

Status seeking is prompted by unfavorable comparisons to a reference group, stimulating the desire to improve one's position. The group may want to pursue an identity management strategy to achieve a more positive, distinctive identity.⁴²

In Search of Status: Identity Management Strategies

A group that wants to improve its standing may try to pass into a higher-status group, compete with the dominant group, or achieve preeminence in a different domain. The choice of one type of strategy over another depends on the openness of the status hierarchy as well as the values of the group. States have also pursued varying strategies for attaining status, depending

³⁸ Beetham, *Weber and Modern Politics*, 133.

³⁹ Philip Shaver, Judith Schwartz, Donald Kirson, and Cary O'Connor, "Emotion Knowledge: Further Exploration of a Prototype Approach," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 52, No. 6 (June 1987), 1078.

⁴⁰ Peter Hays Gries, "Tears of Rage: Chinese Nationalist Reactions to the Belgrade Embassy Bombing," *China Journal*, No. 46 (July 2001), 25-43.

⁴¹ Mark Landler, "At U.N., Turkey Asserts Itself on World Stage," *New York Times*, September 23, 2010, 5.

⁴² Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," 40, 43.

on the permeability of elite clubs as well as the similarity of their values with the established powers.

Social Mobility

If the boundaries of higher-status groups are permeable, a lower-status group may conform to the norms of an elite group to gain acceptance, pursuing a strategy of social mobility.⁴³ Just as individuals imitate the social norms and lifestyle of the upper class to be accepted into elite social clubs,⁴⁴ so states may adopt the political and economic norms of the dominant powers to be admitted to more prestigious institutions or clubs. The desire for status helps to explain why developing countries have adopted Western institutional forms and social policies, regardless of whether they are suited for the country's needs, as evidenced by research conducted by sociologist John Meyer and colleagues on institutional isomorphism.⁴⁵

In the nineteenth century, social mobility required conforming to the norms of European "civilized" states.⁴⁶ From 1871 to 1873, as part of the Meiji Restoration, Japan sent the Iwakura mission to Europe and the United States to learn about the domestic institutions of the more advanced states. To bring Japan up to the level of a "first-rank country (*ittō-koku*)," the Meiji

⁴³ Tajfel, "The Psychological Structure of Intergroup Relations," 93-94; and Naomi Ellemers, Ad van Knippenberg, and Henk Wilke, "The Influence of Permeability of Group Boundaries and Stability of Group Status on Strategies of Individual Mobility and Social Change," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (September 1990), 233-246.

⁴⁴ Murray Milner, Jr., *Status and Sacredness: A General Theory of Status Relations and an Analysis of Indian Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 35-36.

⁴⁵ John W. Meyer and Brian Rowan, "Institutionalized Organizations: Formal Structure as Myth and Ceremony," *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol. 83 (1977), 340-63; John Boli-Bennett and John W. Meyer, "The Ideology of Childhood and the State: Rules Distinguishing Children in National Constitutions, 1870-1970," *American Sociological Review*, Vol. 43 (1978): 797-812. For a review of this literature, see Martha Finnemore, "Norms, Culture, and World Politics: Insights from Sociology's Institutionalism," *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 2 (Spring 1996), 325-348.

⁴⁶ G. Gong, *The Standard of "Civilization" in International Society* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1984); Edward Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism, and Order in World Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

reformers adopted Western bureaucracy, education, banking, accounting methods, postal services, legal codes, dress, and even table manners.⁴⁷

Social mobility has been the strategy pursued by states in two waves of democratization since World War II. After the end of the postwar occupation, West Germany and Japan sought admission to the “civilized states” by renouncing offensive military force and accepting liberal democracy. West Germany chose to transcend its nationalist identity through European integration, whereas Japan pursued membership in the IMF, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development.⁴⁸ Since the end of the Cold War, social mobility has entailed accepting capitalism and liberal democracy, the norms of the dominant states.⁴⁹ Eastern and Central European states have adopted liberal democratic reforms and capitalism to be admitted into the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union (EU), organizations that symbolize identity as part of the West.⁵⁰ Although its economy is thriving, Turkey seeks to be admitted to the European Union because it wants to be recognized as a European power, a category bearing greater prestige.⁵¹ After being admitted to elite clubs, states may continue to pursue status but within the context of the club’s rules, as illustrated by Poland’s and the Czech Republic’s efforts to achieve a prominent role within the EU relative to more long-standing members such as France.⁵²

⁴⁷ Pyle, *Japan Rising*, 64, 82-83, 100-101.

⁴⁸ Reinhard Wolf, “Between Revisionism and Normalcy: Germany’s Foreign Policy Identity in the 20th Century,” in *Global Governance: Germany and Japan in the International System*, eds. Saori N. Katada, Hanns W. Maull, and Takashi Inoguchi (Aldershot, U.K.: Ashgate, 2004), 18-19; and Yoshiko Kojo, “Japan’s Policy Change in Multi-Layered International Economic Relations,” in *ibid.*, 144-45.

⁴⁹ Gerry Simpson, *Great Powers and Outlaw States: Unequal Sovereigns in the International Legal Order* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 281.

⁵⁰ Judith G. Kelley, *Ethnic Politics in Europe: The Power of Norms and Incentives* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004).

⁵¹ David Gardner, “Ankara Targets Political and Economic Stability,” *Financial Times*, special section on Turkey, June 28, 2010, 2; Landon Thomas Jr., “Turkey Prospers by Turning East,” *New York Times*, July 6, 2010, 1.

⁵² See, for example, the rivalry between France and the Czech Republic as successive presidents of the European Union. Steven Erlanger, “Impairing Europe, Gibe by Gibe,” *New York Times*, February 14, 2009; and Steven

A major problem with a social mobility strategy from the standpoint of the emerging power, however, is that it implies a role of tutelage that is humiliating to larger states, especially those with a long history and previous great power status.⁵³ There is always a tension for rising powers between emulating the advanced states and preserving their distinctive cultures. As a result of having slavishly imitated Western practices during the Meiji Restoration, the Japanese lost their sense of having special cultural traditions such as the Tea Ceremony and Zen Buddhism that were a major source of national pride and self-esteem. In 1911, the renowned Japanese novelist Natsume Sōseki lamented that Japan could be independent and self-respecting only if it were creating an internally generated civilization, one that was the product of its own history and values.⁵⁴ In the 1990s, Russia refused to accept NATO's instruction in civil-military relations and democratic institutions,⁵⁵ whereas middle states like the Czech Republic and Romania did not have any compunction about accepting a pupil role with NATO in the position of teacher.⁵⁶

Indicators of a social mobility strategy are a state's emulation of the institutions, values, or ideology of the dominant states. The state's leaders may adopt the goal of joining a more elite organization or club as proof of higher status. The state's adoption of new norms and practices is likely to be mostly instrumental to attaining a higher status, rather than a sign of internalization.

Erlanger and Nicholas Kulish, "Sarkozy and Merkel, Often at Odds, Try to Shape European Unity," *New York Times*, March 31, 2009.

⁵³ R. P. Dore, "The Prestige Factor in International Affairs," *International Affairs*, Vol. 51, No. 2 (April 1975), 190-207.

⁵⁴ Pyle, *Japan Rising*, 125-27.

⁵⁵ Vincent Pouliot, "Pacification Without Collective Identification: Russia and the Transatlantic Security Community in the Post-Cold War Era," *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 44 (2007), 615.

⁵⁶ Alexandera Gheciu, "Security Institutions as Agents of Socialization? NATO and the 'New Europe,'" *International Organization*, Vol. 59, No. 4 (Fall 2005), 973-1012.

Social Competition

If elite group boundaries are impermeable to new members, the lower-status group may strive for equal or superior status through a strategy of social competition. To illustrate, Japan turned to imperialism in the 1930s after the failure of the Meiji-era social mobility strategy of emulating the values and institutions of Western powers. Despite its economic and military successes, Japan was not regarded as a true member of the great power club, an exclusion made clear to the Japanese by the Paris Peace Conference's rejection of a resolution against racism that was proposed by China and Japan.⁵⁷

Groups may also turn to competition when they regard the higher-status group's position as illegitimate or unstable.⁵⁸ Groups may then engage in collective action to redistribute benefits within the system, as in labor movements or political action groups.⁵⁹ Applied to international relations, India challenged the validity of the norms underlying the nuclear nonproliferation regime, with its arbitrary distinction between nuclear and nonnuclear states based solely on whether they had nuclear weapons in 1967 when the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty was signed, culminating in its nuclear test in 1998. India's nuclear test was a "declaration that the present status hierarchy in the international system was no longer acceptable and needed to be modified by accommodating India."⁶⁰ Instability means that states can conceive of a differing ranking in which their state will achieve a higher position, perhaps because power relationships are changing. In the 1970s, emboldened by the U.S. defeat in Vietnam and the 1973 oil embargo,

⁵⁷ Richard J. Samuels, *Securing Japan: Tokyo's Grand Strategy and the Future of East Asia* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2007), 15-18, 21.

⁵⁸ J. Turner and R. Brown, "Social Status, Cognitive Alternatives, and Intergroup Relations," in *Differentiation between Social Groups*, ed. Tajfel, 201-234.

⁵⁹ Kristine Veenstra and S. Alexander Haslam, "Willingness to Participate in Industrial Protest: Exploring Social Identification in Context," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 39, (2000), 153-72; Bernd Simon and Bert Klandermans, "Politicized Collective Identity: A Social Psychological Analysis," *American Psychologist*, Vol. 56 (2001), 319-31.

developing countries lobbied for a New International Economic Order that would have redistributed benefits from the industrialized countries to the Third World.⁶¹

Social competition aims to equal or outdo the dominant group in the area on which its claim to superior status rests.⁶² In international relations, where status is in large part based on military and economic power, social competition often entails traditional geopolitical rivalry, such as competition over spheres of influence or arms racing. For example, Wilhelmine Germany competed with Britain in the size of its battleship fleet, and sought colonies and spheres of influence to attain its “place in the sun.”⁶³ Similarly, the Soviet Union invested enormous resources in the nuclear arms race with the United States to achieve recognition as a political-military equal.⁶⁴ There was no military need for the Soviet Union to keep acquiring nuclear weapons after it attained a second-strike capability in the 1960s. Instead, it was the symbolic aspects of nuclear weapons, their use as an indicator of superpower status, which mattered.⁶⁵ Détente collapsed in the 1970s over the Soviet demand to be given equal status with the United States, with corresponding right to establish overseas bases and intervene in the Third World. For the Soviet Union, what was important was not privilege of power over Third World countries but equal status.⁶⁶ Military competition in the Third World did not enhance Soviet power or security, but arguably diminished both, leading to overextension.

⁶⁰ Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul, *India in the World Order: Searching for Major-Power Status* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 173-175, 181, 211-214, 224, 227-231, at p. 231.

⁶¹ C. Raja Mohan, *Crossing the Rubicon: The Shaping of India's New Foreign Policy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 40-41.

⁶² John C. Turner, “Social Comparison and Social Identity: Some Prospects for Intergroup Behavior,” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (March 1975), 5-34.

⁶³ Robert J. Art, *The Influence of Foreign Policy on Seapower: New Weapons and Weltpolitik in Wilhelminian Germany* (Beverly Hills, Calif.: Sage, 1973), 23-24, 36-37; and Wolf, “Between Revisionism and Normalcy,” 12-13.

⁶⁴ Wohlforth, *The Elusive Balance*; and Larson and Shevchenko, “Shortcut to Greatness,” 93-95.

⁶⁵ Ringmar, “The Recognition Game,” 128; Robert Jervis, *The Meaning of the Nuclear Revolution: Statecraft and the Prospect of Armageddon* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1989).

⁶⁶ Robert Jervis, “Identity and the Cold War,” in *The Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. II, *Crises and Détente*, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), 24, 38.

Indicators of social competition include arms racing, rivalry over spheres of influence, military demonstrations aimed at one-up-manship, or military intervention against a smaller power, so long as the purpose is to influence others' perceptions rather than attain security or power. Japanese imperialism in the 1930s was driven by the desire for respect and recognition, culminating in the decision to go to war against the United States, a country that was eight to ten times more powerful than Japan. As Roberta Wohlstetter concluded from her classic study of Pearl Harbor, "war with the United States was not chosen. The decision for war was rather forced by the desire to avoid the more terrible alternative of losing status or abandoning the national objectives."⁶⁷ As the foreign minister Tōgō Shigenori recalled, Japan was "struggling to maintain her status as a Great Power."⁶⁸ When overtaking the system leader is unlikely, social competition may also be manifested in spoiler behavior, as in Russia's opposition in the 1990s to U.S. intervention in the Balkans and Iraq,⁶⁹ as well as its efforts since 2005 to eliminate the U.S. military presence in Central Asia, despite having an interest in U.S. defeat of the Taliban in Afghanistan.⁷⁰ Lower-status groups feel a sense of *Schadenfreude* when a more prestigious out-group fails.⁷¹ As Richard Pipes writes, "When the Kremlin says 'no' to Western initiatives, Russians feel that they are indeed a world power."⁷²

⁶⁷ Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor: Warning and Decision* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 353.

⁶⁸ Tōgō Shigenori, *The Cause of Japan* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1956), 186.

⁶⁹ Lo, *Russian Foreign Policy in the Post-Soviet Era*, 89-90, 142.

⁷⁰ Mark Kramer, "Russian Policy toward the Commonwealth of Independent States: Recent Trends and Future Prospects," *Problems of Post-Communism*, Vol. 55, No. 6 (November/December 2008), 5-6; and Clifford J. Levy, "At the Crossroad of Empires, a Mouse Struts," *New York Times*, July 26, 2009.

⁷¹ Colin Wayne Leach and Russell Spears, "A Vengefulness of the Impotent": The Pain of In-Group Inferiority and Schadenfreude Toward Successful Out-Groups," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 95, No. 6, (2008), 1383-1396.

⁷² Richard Pipes, "Craving to Be a Great Power," *Moscow Times*, July 15, 2009, David Johnson's Russia List, 2009-#133.

Social Creativity

When the status hierarchy is perceived as legitimate or stable, groups may seek prestige in a different area altogether, exercising social creativity. This may be done by (1) reevaluating the meaning of a negative characteristic, or (2) finding a new dimension on which their group is superior.⁷³ A supposedly negative attribute is reevaluated as positive in the African American 1960s slogan “Black is beautiful” or the term “Queer Studies” given to the study of issues related to gender identity. An example from international politics is China’s reinterpretation of Confucianism, viewed by Mao Zedong as feudal, as part of Beijing’s “soft power.”⁷⁴ The tactic of identifying a different dimension is illustrated by the Eurasianism strand of Russian intellectual thought, a school that celebrates Russia’s collectivism, spiritualism, traditionalism, and Orthodox Christianity in contrast to the West’s spiritually impoverished individualism and materialism.⁷⁵ Similarly, in response to Japan’s loss of its ranking as the number two economy to China, Norihiro Kato calmly observed that “Japan now seems to stand at the vanguard of a new downsizing movement, leading the way for countries sooner or later to follow in its wake.” Japan would “reveal what it is like to outgrow growth.”⁷⁶

In international relations, social creativity entails achieving prestige on a different dimension, such as promoting new norms or a developmental model. In contrast to social mobility, the state will underscore how its policy is unique. For example, during the height of the Cold War, Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru achieved preeminence as leader of the

⁷³ Gérard Lemaine, “Social Differentiation and Social Originality,” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 4, No. 1 (March 1974), 17-52.

⁷⁴ Peter Hays Gries, “Identity and Conflict in Sino-American Relations,” in *New Directions in the Study of China’s Foreign Policy*, eds. Alastair Iain Johnston and Robert S. Ross (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2006), 325.

⁷⁵ Dmitry Shlapentokh, “Dugin Eurasianism: A Window on the Minds of the Russian Elite or an Intellectual Ploy?” *Studies in East European Thought*, Vol. 59, No. 3 (September 2007), 215-236.

⁷⁶ Norihiro Kato, “Japan and the Ancient Art of Shrugging,” *New York Times*, Sunday Opinion, August 22, 2010, 9.

nonaligned movement and proponent of disarmament and anticolonialism.⁷⁷ At the same time, leaders of neutralist states sought respect and prestige by pursuing an independent foreign policy through the United Nations, which allowed them a higher profile than would have been warranted by their material power.⁷⁸ Beginning in the 1950s with the Yoshida Doctrine, Japan renounced offensive military capabilities and pursued a new path to status as an export nation. In 1981, political philosopher Nagai Yōnosuke argued that given the nuclear stalemate, international ranking was no longer based solely on military power but also on economic strength and technological development. Unlike Western powers, Nagai wrote, the Japanese had no need for status consistency, as they had a tradition of granting political-military power to the samurai and economic power to the merchant.⁷⁹ After the failure of the Cold War policy of geopolitical competition to achieve status for the Soviet Union as a political equal, Mikhail Gorbachev tried to achieve greatness for the Soviet Union as the moral and political leader of a new international order shaped on principles of the New Thinking such as mutual security, nonoffensive defense, and the Common European Home.⁸⁰

In contrast to social competition, social creativity does not try to change the hierarchy of status in the international system but rather tries to achieve preeminence on a different ranking system. For example, French President Charles de Gaulle pursued a social creativity strategy of emphasizing France's grandeur and independence from the United States, but he did not challenge the bipolar order.⁸¹ France did acquire nuclear weapons, but in order to improve its

⁷⁷ Nayar and Paul, *India in the World Order*, 135-144.

⁷⁸ Arnold Wolfers, *Discord and Collaboration: Essays on International Politics* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962), 224.

⁷⁹ Kenneth B. Pyle, *Japan Rising: The Resurgence of Japanese Power and Purpose* (New York: Public Affairs, 2007), 236-37, 242, 256-57, 260.

⁸⁰ Larson and Shevchenko, "Shortcut to Greatness."

⁸¹ Stanley Hoffmann, *Decline or Renewal: France since the 1930s* (New York: Viking, 1974), 94, 191, 217, 337. See also Frédéric Bozo, "France, 'Gaullism,' and the Cold War," in *Cambridge History of the Cold War*, Vol. II,

status within the NATO alliance, in accordance with de Gaulle's belief that "only those countries that possess nuclear weapons are respected."⁸² In contrast, Adolf Hitler's principal goal was world domination under a "Great German Empire," and promoting new racist criteria for international prestige was secondary.⁸³

Social creativity is especially appealing to rising powers because it allows them to achieve increased preeminence and stake out a distinctive position without directly challenging the dominant state. For a social creativity strategy to succeed, the lower-status group's proposed criteria for status must be recognized as valid and worthwhile by the dominant group. Status cannot be attained unilaterally.⁸⁴ Although status is positional, two social groups may be able to attain positive status at the same time so long as there are multiple criteria. With more than one way to attain status, two groups may be superior but in different areas.⁸⁵ State A can claim to be better on dimension X while acknowledging that State B is stronger on dimension Y. Groups may acknowledge others' achievements, thereby showing social cooperation.⁸⁶ Social cooperation is illustrated by U.S.-EU relations, where Europeans take pride in their generous social welfare benefits, cosmopolitanism, and social safety nets, while the United States emphasizes its military power, global reach, and international competitiveness.⁸⁷ Since the end of World War II, Europe has pursued social creativity to compensate for its decline in military power, referring to Europe as a "civilian power" mediating economic interdependence in the

Crises and Détente, eds. Melvyn P. Leffler and Odd Arne Westad (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 158-78.

⁸² Quoted in Kori Schake, "The Berlin Crises of 1948-49 and 1958-62," in *Securing Peace in Europe, 1945-62: Thoughts for the Post-Cold War Era*, eds. Beatrice Heuser and Robert O'Neill (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 72.

⁸³ Wolf, "Between Revisionism and Normalcy," 16-17.

⁸⁴ Tajfel, "The Psychological Structure of Intergroup Relations," 96.

⁸⁵ Amélie Mummendey and Hans-Joachim Schreiber, "'Different' Just Means 'Better': Some Obvious and Some Hidden Pathways to In-group Favouritism," *British Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (November 1984), 363-368.

⁸⁶ Van Knippenberg, "Intergroup Differences in Group Perceptions," 575.

1970s and 1980s, as a “normative power” spreading liberal democracy and human rights in the 1990s, and more recently as one of the poles in a new type of multipolar system in which states are interconnected by problems of global governance.⁸⁸

If the higher-status group refuses to acknowledge the other’s social creativity efforts, the lower-status group will react competitively,⁸⁹ and possibly take offensive action. People often react angrily and impulsively over injuries to honor, dignity, or respect.⁹⁰ A higher-status group is more likely to be generous about accepting the out-group’s achievements if it regards its own superior position as legitimate and secure.⁹¹ With the United States dominant in the Western hemisphere, President Theodore Roosevelt was delighted by Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War and approved of a spheres of influence agreement that recognized Japanese control of Korea in return for acknowledgement of U.S. interests in the Philippines.⁹² Indicators that a state is pursuing social creativity include advocacy of new international norms, regimes, institutions, or a developmental model. In contrast to social mobility, the essence of social creativity is the attempt to stake out a distinctive position, emphasizing the state’s unique values or contributions. Often social creativity is accompanied by high-profile diplomacy, with charismatic leaders who take a prominent role on the world stage, such as de Gaulle, Nehru, or

⁸⁷ Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Vintage, 2004), 120.

⁸⁸ Ian Manners, “Normative Power Europe: A Contradiction in Terms?,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 40, No. 2 (2002), 235-58; idem, “Global Europe: Mythology of the European Union in World Politics,” *Journal of Common Market Studies*, Vol. 48, No. 1 (2010), 67-87.

⁸⁹ Tajfel, “The Psychological Structure of Intergroup Relations,” 96-97; and Rupert J. Brown and Gordon F. Ross, “The Battle for Acceptance: An Investigation into the Dynamics of Intergroup Behavior,” in Tajfel, *Social Identity and Intergroup Relations*, 155-178.

⁹⁰ Diane M. Mackie, Thierry Devos, and Eliot R. Smith, “Intergroup Emotions: Explaining Offensive Action Tendencies in an Intergroup Context,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, Vol. 79, No. 4 (October 2000), 602-616.

⁹¹ Itesh Sachdev and Richard Y. Bourhis, “Power and Status Differentials in Minority and Majority Intergroup Relations,” *European Journal of Social Psychology*, Vol. 21, No. 1 (January 1991), 1-24.

⁹² James Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise* (New York: Little, Brown, 2009), chs. 7-8.

Gorbachev. Social creativity is also associated with enhancing a state's "soft power" through diplomatic mediation and playing a prominent role in international organizations.

Summary

Strategies of social mobility, social competition, and social creativity are ideal types, and elements of all three may be found in a particular country's foreign policy. Nevertheless, the strategies have different goals and tactics, so that dominance of a particular identity management strategy alters the state's entire foreign policy. Social mobility entails emulating the values and practices of the established powers to attain integration into elite clubs. Social competition, however, tries to supplant the dominant power on the geopolitical dimensions of status. Social creativity seeks a favorable position on a different ranking system, while highlighting the state's uniqueness and differences from the dominant powers. The choice of strategy depends on the state's perceptions of the permeability of elite clubs and the legitimacy and stability of the status hierarchy, factors that can be influenced by the behavior of the dominant powers, in this case, the United States and its allies.

Based on this discussion of SIT, we may now develop theoretical expectations for Chinese and Russian foreign policy. During the Cold War, China and the Soviet Union pursued a social competition strategy, trying to reorder the status hierarchy in the international system by promoting the appeal of communism. After the Cold War ended, China and Russia had to forge new identities in an international system dominated by the United States. Emphasizing the "end of history" and the triumph of democratic values, the United States encouraged former communist states to become liberal democracies with market economies. Unless China and Russia emulated Western liberal values, values at odds with their collectivist and statist

traditions, SIT would predict that both states would be denied admission into the great power club. Frustration with the lack of permeability of elite institutions would encourage both states to turn to competitive and assertive behavior, complaining of Western “double standards.” If they regarded the U.S. position at the top of the status hierarchy as stable and legitimate, both states would be prone to exercise social creativity, such as finding value in previously unappreciated aspects of their national traditions or promoting alternative norms. Whether their efforts at social creativity endured would depend on the willingness of the United States and other Western powers to accord increased recognition and respect.

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