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*Status, Maintenance of Security, and Militarized Foreign Policy**

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ABSTRACT

How does status affect foreign policy outcomes? Scholars have long argued that status is a salient foreign policy driver and that states fight for status, but there is no consensus on how to think about this relationship. I propose that unpacking the link between status and role in international relations can help scholars analyze how status shapes national security outcomes. I illustrate the usefulness of this framework on the processes leading to Australia's intervention in the Solomon Islands. An analysis of speeches by Australia's leaders reveals that concern for maintaining Australia's status as the leader of the Pacific and the role of maintainer of regional order and security affected the decision to dispatch an intervention.

KEY WORDS Status; Role; Foreign Policy; Australia; South Pacific

Political scientists have long regarded pursuit of status as a salient foreign policy motive (Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth 2014). Several books exploring status in international relations from various theoretical perspectives have been published in recent years (Larson and Shevchenko 2019; Murray 2019; Renshon 2017). One of the central claims in the literature has been that countries value status so much that they are even willing to fight for it (Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth 2014). Evidence exists that concerns about status have played a significant role in the lead-up to conflicts such as World War I (Murray 2019) and, more recently, the U.S. invasion of Iraq (Butt 2019). According to one study, more than half of all wars were fought over status (Lebow 2010). Nevertheless, beyond a consensus that status *matters*, little agreement exists on how status affects foreign policy outcomes. As one frequently cited review article noted, the importance of status is often merely asserted and the theoretical mechanisms linking status to national security decisions remain underdeveloped or vague (Dafoe et al. 2014:388). The lack of elaboration has led skeptics to conclude that status in international relations is merely an *illusion* (Mercer 2017). How should scholars think about the effect of status on foreign policy outcomes, particularly on the use of force?

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I propose that we can gain a more complete understanding of how status affects national security outcomes by exploring the link between status and role. In international relations, *role* refers to a set of behaviors that other states expect a country to follow. A country on the top of the status hierarchy is expected to take on the role of maintainer of security and order outside of its borders. When a domestic crisis in another country begins to disrupt international security, it is the responsibility of the high-status country to resolve it. I illustrate the implications of this argument on the case of Australia's 2003 intervention in the Solomon Islands. Existing scholarship on status in international relations has focused predominantly on a few historical cases involving European great powers. Consequently, less is known about the effect of status on countries located outside of Europe or not at the top of the global status hierarchy. Australia holds the status as leader of the South Pacific; nevertheless, the impact of status on Australia's foreign policy has been understudied. An examination of speeches by Australia's leaders reveals that the concern to protect Australia's status as leader of the South Pacific motivated the decision to dispatch a military intervention in the Solomon Islands.

The discussion that follows has three parts. It begins by reviewing the extant literature on status in international relations and proposing that scholars can gain a more complete understanding of how status translates into foreign policy outcomes by incorporating role as analytical category. It then explores the link between status and the role of maintainer of order and security. Finally, it shows that concerns about Australia's status and role led to the decision to dispatch an intervention in the Solomon Islands.

STATUS IN WORLD POLITICS

Conceptualizing Status

Status is a difficult concept to define, but analysts agree that it refers to rank or position occupied by a country in the international system relative to other states (Dafoe et al. 2014; Lake 2011; Renshon 2017). According to a frequently cited book chapter, status refers to "collective beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout)" (Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth 2014:7). Recently, status has been defined very similarly as "a state's position in a social hierarchy. More concretely, a state's status is equivalent to the sum of the beliefs of relevant others about how important it is relative to other states" (Ward 2020:275). Status manifests in international relations in two ways: membership in a club of states, such as the European Union (EU) or the G20, and relative standing within such a club. For example, all member states gain status from being part of the EU; nevertheless, Germany and France hold greater status than other EU members do.

Three attributes are central to conceptualizing status in international relations: status is positional, social, and subjective (Dafoe et al. 2014; Paul et al. 2014; Renshon 2017). First, status is positional—it delineates a country's standing relative to other states. To say that a country has high status therefore implies the existence of states with low status. If everyone had the same status, it would make little sense to speak of high or

low status. The positional nature of status makes holding high status desirable, which can help account for the frequency and severity of status conflicts between states. For example, Iran and Saudi Arabia have been engaged in a fierce competition to become the leader of the Middle East.

Second, status is social—it cannot be declared by a single country but can only be conferred by other states. Although all members of the international community are involved in status attribution, the states that sit on the top of the global status hierarchy have a greater say. For this reason, countries seek to gain favor with high-status states, such as the United States, in order to advance their own status (Jakobsen, Ringsmose, and LundeSaxi 2018). The collective nature of status attribution in international relations—the fact that status cannot be simply declared but has to be conferred—can make the quest for status difficult. For example, observers noted that China did not succeed in gaining the global status it sought because the United States and its allies refused to recognize China's status claims.

Third, status is subjective—a country's status is assigned based on how that country and its attributes are perceived by other states (Larson et al. 2014). Although the impact of certain attributes on status is relatively straightforward, the effect of others is less clear. For example, military power is considered a salient attribute of status. According to one estimate, the correlation between military power and status is between 0.5 and 0.75 (Renshon 2017). It is no coincidence that countries at the top of regional and global status hierarchies are usually the ones with greatest military power. Despite the strong correlation, some countries, such as Canada, New Zealand, and Vatican City, managed to obtain higher status compared to their military or economic power. In contrast, 18th-century Russia, despite its material power, was unable to obtain the status of a great power because it did not meet the moral and civilizational standards of that time (Neumann 2008). Overall, status refers to a country's rank relative to others, and political scientists agree that it is positional, social, and subjective.

In international relations literature, status is frequently discussed with reputation, which refers to “belief about a trait or behavioral tendency of an actor, which is based on that agent's past behavior” (Dafoe et al. 2014:375). Others have defined reputation similarly, as “having a good name in the world of nations” (Wang 2006:91). In international relations, countries can hold reputations for expressing resolve during international crises (Huth 1997), complying with international treaties (Simmons 2010), and behaving like good allies (Miller 2012). It is not unusual for countries to hold multiple reputations simultaneously. Developing a positive reputation might help a country gain status, whereas losing reputation can undermine a country's standing in the eyes of others (Wylie 2009). Despite the two having a close relationship, scholars have observed significant differences between status and reputation (Dafoe et al. 2014; Mercer 2017). For example, status attribution requires consensus among group members regarding everyone's rank, whereas a reputation does not require consensus. For this reason, it is more difficult for a country to obtain a new status compared to a new reputation. Despite similarities, status and reputation are different concepts and should not be used interchangeably.

Status and Foreign Policy Outcomes

While a small research program examining the role of status in international relations has existed, the past two decades have seen a sharp growth of the scholarship. Several book-long manuscripts exploring status from various theoretical perspectives have been published in recent years (Larson and Shevchenko 2019; Murray 2019; Renshon 2017). Empirical studies have provided evidence of the impact of status on Russian and Chinese foreign policies (Larson and Shevchenko 2010). Concerns about the decline of America's standing in the world were the central driver of a confrontational American foreign policy during the Trump administration (Wolf 2017). Analysts agree that conflicts over status are frequent; according to one study, more than half of all wars were fought over status (Lebow 2010). Political scientists have provided evidence that status is a salient aspect of international relations and driver of international conflict.

Despite an agreement that status *matters* in international relations, less consensus exists on how, exactly, status translates into foreign policy outcomes. Lack of clarity persists despite the growth of scholarship in recent years. For example, no consensus exists on the importance of status as a foreign policy motive. Some scholars maintain that states seek status as an end in itself, while others believed that states pursue status to obtain further material benefits (Barnhart 2016; Renshon 2017). According to a frequently cited review article, theoretical mechanisms linking status to foreign policy outcomes remain underdeveloped (Dafoe et al. 2014:388; Wolf 2020). Without a clearly articulated relationship, it is challenging to evaluate the extent to which status affects foreign policy outcomes. For skeptics, the presence of lingering questions constitutes proof that status in international relations is no more than illusion (Mercer 2017). While scholars believe that status affects how countries relate to each other, how should this relationship be conceptualized? I discuss two existing approaches and then suggest an alternative conceptualization of the link between status and foreign policy outcomes.

First, political scientists have often thought of status as closely linked to national identity, and of identity narratives as central to understanding how status translates into foreign policy outcomes (Murray 2019). Each country strives to create a national identity, which refers to a narrative capturing the country's self-image (Berenskoetter 2011). Domestically constructed identities provide foundations for how countries see themselves as well as for how other states should treat them (Subotic 2016). National identity narratives therefore generate expectations about the country's appropriate international status. The quest to obtain international recognition for status ambitions is a central part of national identity formation and of nation-building (Sambanis, Skaperdas, and Wohlforth 2015).

While countries seek status to obtain recognition of their identities, the process involves uncertainty and often tension (Gustafsson 2016). Other states might be unwilling to cooperate, which explains why countries sometimes engage in status-seeking policies even at high cost. For example, Sweden entered the Thirty Years War in defense of its identity and status (Ringmar 1996). Observers note that Russia's status disputes with Europe and the United States did little to boost the country's international standing (Larson and Shevchenko 2010; Wolf 2020). Because status is intrinsically connected to

national identity, scholars argued that identity narratives are key to understanding a country's status aspirations and why countries fight for status.

Second, political science scholarship has frequently emphasized the close connection between status and military power. Definitions maintain that status is based on multiple attributes, but military power is considered the most salient one. Empirical measures of status have drawn heavily on military capability, which has even been used as a proxy measure (Røren and Beaumont 2019; Volgy and Mayhall 1995). Various measures of military power, such as military expenditure compared to gross domestic product, five-year change in military capabilities, and aggregate military spending per year, have been utilized in large-N studies to clarify the relationship between military power and status (Duque 2018; Miller et al. 2015; Renshon 2017).

Scholars considered military power—particularly shifts in military balance in the international system—as key to understanding why countries compete, or even fight, for status (Organski and Kugler 1980; Volgy et al. 2011; Wohlforth 2009). As another country's material capabilities begin to match their own, states become more concerned about their status, and international conflict becomes more likely. For example, Great Britain and France initiated rivalries against countries whose economic and military capabilities began to match their own in order to protect their status (Onea 2014). Rising tensions between the United States and China, analysts argue, have been driven by the shrinking gap in military and economic power between the two countries (Chan 2005). Overall, scholars frequently emphasize military power as central to understanding the impact of status on foreign policy decisions, particularly the use of force.

STATUS, ROLE, AND FOREIGN POLICY OUTCOMES

Existing scholarship has proposed several ways of thinking about status and national security decisions. I do not argue that scholars have failed to explore this relationship; rather, my point is that the existing conceptualizations cannot capture the full extent to which status shapes foreign policy outcomes. I suggest that we can obtain a more complete understanding of this relationship by exploring the link between status and role in international relations. My approach builds upon the existing literature in anthropology, sociology, and social psychology, which has established a close connection between status and role (Jacobs 2018; Koenig and Eagly 2019; Linton 1936; Sarangi 2010). In international relations, *role* refers to a set of collectively constituted expectations of behavior that a country should follow, such as responsibilities, duties, and privileges (Holsti 1970). Roles prescribe appropriate conduct, extent of involvement in the international system, and foreign policy commitments. Although role does not provide a precise script of behavior to follow, it imposes constraints on how a country should behave.

Status provides the foundation for the roles a country takes on in international relations. Countries with lower status are expected to be followers and to conform to policies of high-status states. They frequently use this strategy as a way to bolster their standing (Larson and Shevchenko 2010). For example, Central and Eastern European countries as well as Scandinavian countries supported military operations by the United

States in North Africa and the Middle East in order to advance their own status (Jakobsen et al. 2018). Cyprus presented itself as a useful partner to both the United States and Russia in order to gain status (Pedi and Kouskouvelis 2019).

In contrast, states on the top of status hierarchies carry greater responsibilities and are expected to play leadership roles. These states are “thought by others to have the duty of modifying their policies in the light of the managerial responsibilities they bear” (Bull 1977:196). Members of the United Nations Security Council, in particular the five permanent members, have greater status than other countries but at the same time hold the greatest responsibility to maintain peace in the international system. The nuclear nonproliferation treaty and the Kyoto Protocol clarify the roles and responsibilities of high-status states in areas of nuclear nonproliferation and greenhouse gas-emission reductions, respectively. Even outside of the highly institutional setting of international organizations, countries with high status are expected to carry additional responsibilities, such as providing collective goods in international relations, maintaining order and security, helping allies, and giving assistance to less developed countries (Bernstein 2020; Bukovansky et al. 2012; Suzuki 2008). For example, because of its global standing, the United States has been expected by other states to take on roles as provider of global leadership, protector of human rights, and guardian of the liberal international order (Claude 1986).

Evidence exists that states with high status are aware of their roles and responsibilities. For example, commitment to allies and maintenance of peace and order in the international system have long occupied a central place in the United States’ national security discourse. Former U.S. Secretary of State Schultz stated that “as the most powerful country in the world, we have recognized our responsibility for helping to ensure international peace and stability” (quoted in Claude 1986:723). Overall, high-status states are expected by the international community to fulfill the obligations that come from their position in the international system.

While states on top of status hierarchies hold multiple roles and responsibilities, maintenance of order and security beyond their orders has been considered one of the central tasks (Bellamy 2016; Bukovansky et al. 2012; Buzan 2014; Claude 1986). When a crisis breaks out that threatens international security, other countries in the region as well as in the international community expect the high-status state to resolve that crisis. In particular, the high-status state is expected to get involved in the situation when that crisis poses harm to the security of the citizens of that country and when a country is unable to protect its citizens from harm. Documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide the foundation for the understanding that high-status states have a particular responsibility to help states suffering from governance crises and to protect populations from human rights violations. Although helping countries that are plagued by internal instability and conflict is the responsibility of the entire international community, states on the tops of status hierarchies are expected by the international community to play a leading role in such efforts.

Overall, political scientists have long agreed that status is a critical element of international relations that affects how countries relate to each other. Despite this

agreement, less consensus exists on how to conceptualize the relationship between status and foreign policy outcomes, particularly decisions regarding the use of force. I proposed that one way to gain traction in this debate is to unpack the relationship between status and role. Countries at the top of status hierarchies hold multiple roles, such as providing order and security outside of their borders. In case a crisis breaks out in one of the countries that is disrupting international security, other states expect that the country with highest status will lead efforts in addressing the crisis and restoring security. I illustrate the implications of this argument on the processes leading to Australia's intervention in the Solomon Islands.

AUSTRALIA'S INTERVENTION IN THE SOLOMON ISLANDS

Despite an increase in the scholarship, analysts have focused primarily on a handful of countries with high status, such as the United Kingdom (Barnhart 2016), Russia (Forsberg 2014; Larson and Shevchenko 2010), and China (Deng 2008). Empirical studies have frequently centered on a few historical cases, such as the outbreak of World War I (Murray 2019; Wolf 2014) and relations among European powers during the 18th and 19th centuries (Onea 2014); nevertheless, the effect of status on countries located outside of Europe and on the countries that are not global great powers has been understudied.¹ For this reason, I focus on the impact of status on Australia's foreign policy, particularly on the decision to dispatch an intervention in the Solomon Islands. I first provide background on the intervention and discuss two potential explanations of Australia's decision to dispatch an intervention in the Solomon Islands. The limiting nature of these explanations provides an opening for a status-based interpretation of Australia's decision. I show that Australia's status as the leader of the South Pacific region and its role of guarantor of security motivated the intervention.

Historical Background

The Solomon Islands are an archipelago of more than 900 islands in the South Pacific and are located east of Papua New Guinea and approximately 1,000 miles from Australia's northeast coast. Most of the inhabitants live on the two biggest islands, Guadalcanal and Malaita. After gaining independence in 1978, the Solomon Islands struggled with issues such as corruption, limited economic opportunities, and unreliable government services (Dinnen 2008; Dinnen and Allen 2013). In 1998, disputes over land use and long-standing ethnic tensions between the inhabitants of Guadalcanal and Malaita ignited a political and security crisis (Hameiri 2007). The outbreak of violence put further strain on the struggling government, effectively leaving the country in a state of paralysis. Approximately one tenth of the Solomon Islands population was displaced because of the lawlessness, and the economy was shrinking at the margin of 10 percent per year (Hameiri 2007:410). The government was unable to contain the crisis, and Prime Minister Bartholomew Ulufa'alu was removed from office. Attempts to resolve the crisis, such as the 2000 Townsville Peace Agreement and the 1999 Marau Peace Agreement, were not successful. The new government, headed by Allan Kemakeza, was unable to

stop the violence and restore order, and by 2003, the Solomon Islands were on the verge of becoming a failed state. In April 2003, the Solomon Islands government made a request to Australia to provide a military, police, and humanitarian intervention (Dinnen 2008; Wainwright 2003b).

In June of 2003, Australia responded to the request by leading an international mission to stop violence and restore order known as the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI). The goal of the mission was to bring long-term security as well as political and economic stability to the Solomon Islands. Australia dispatched 1,500 military, police, and civilian officials, which constituted the mission's backbone. The first phase of RAMSI focused on the imposition of law and order, and by the end of 2003, Australian forces collected thousands of guns and made hundreds of arrests (Fraenkel 2006). Military forces remained stationed on the Solomon Islands for 10 years, and a police contingent stayed until 2017 to train the local police force. The long-term goals of the mission focused on state-building, stabilizing the economy, and fostering good governance (Dinnen and Firth 2008). Australian forces rebuilt government ministries and reformed local political and security institutions. The total cost of the intervention has been estimated at more than 2.8 billion Australian dollars, and two Australian soldiers died while deployed (Hayward-Jones 2014). Overall, the intervention was a costly foreign policy commitment that defined Australia's foreign policy for more than a decade (Allen and Dinnen 2010).

Alternative Explanations of the Intervention

What processes could explain Australia's intervention? Did Australia dispatch an intervention because the crisis in the Solomon Islands presented a threat to Australia's physical security? Analysts agree that at the time of the intervention, the situation in the Solomon Islands did not pose a direct threat to Australia's security (Clapton 2009). There was also no credible evidence to suggest the presence of terrorists or transnational criminal groups within the Solomon Islands (Greener-Barcham and Barcham 2006). The security situation in the Solomon Islands was not markedly worse at the time when Australia intervened. In fact, the severity of violence in the Solomon Islands had been greater when the crisis first emerged than when Australia intervened. For example, the number of tension-related deaths, abductions, illegal detentions, sexual assaults, and torture and ill-treatment cases had peaked around 2000 and declined by 2003 (Solomon Islands Truth and Reconciliation Commission 2012). Overall, little evidence suggests that the decision to dispatch an intervention was driven by a threat to Australia's physical security.

Alternatively, was Australia's decision to intervene in the Solomon Islands driven by a changing domestic political environment? For example, a shift in the ruling coalition or public opinion could put pressure on the government to dispatch an intervention. During the period of crisis in the Solomon Islands, however, the Liberal/National coalition led by Prime Minister Howard kept majority. In fact, in the 2001 election, the ruling coalition gained two extra seats in the parliament. Given the size and distance from Australia, the crisis in the Solomon Islands was always a peripheral issue in Australia that

was hardly on the radar of the average citizen. Little evidence exists of a major shift in the popular perception of the crisis in Australia or in domestic preference for a military intervention. Overall, there is little to suggest that Australia's decision to intervene in the Solomon Islands was due to domestic political processes or the threat that the crisis in the Solomon Islands posed to Australia's security. The limiting nature of these explanations provides an opening for a status-based interpretation of Australia's decision to dispatch an intervention.

A STATUS-BASED INTERPRETATION OF AUSTRALIA'S INTERVENTION

Australia's Status as Leader of the South Pacific

I begin the analysis by establishing Australia's status as the leader of the South Pacific region (Schultz 2014). Australia has the greatest economic and military power in the region, and it dominates regional organizations (Carr 2014). Other South Pacific nations rely on Australia for trade, security, and humanitarian aid. Australia's status as the leader of the South Pacific is based on the recognition of other South Pacific countries as well as of states outside of the region, in particular the United States (Schultz 2014; Wallis and Wesley 2015). Based on this status, Australia holds several roles and responsibilities in the region, including the role of guarantor of order and security (Dobell 2007; Fry and Kabutaulaka 2008; Halvorson 2013; Kabutaulaka 2005). This role is codified in several foreign policy documents and international treaties, such as the Canberra Pact, the Australia–New Zealand–Malaya Agreement, and the Australia, New Zealand, United States Security Treaty (Mediansky 1987; Young 1994). Australia's 2000 defense white paper stated that "Australia's interests in a stable and secure Southwest Pacific are matched by significant responsibilities as leader" (Department of Defence 2000:43). Australia's commitment to the maintenance of security and order in the South Pacific affected the decision to dispatch a military force more than one thousand strong to Bougainville in Papua New Guinea in 1994 and again in 1997 (Breen 2016). For the same reason, Australia dispatched more than five thousand military troops to address the security situation in East Timor in 1999.

Research Methodology

Did Australia dispatch an intervention in the Solomon Islands to maintain its status as leader of the South Pacific region? Status and its impact on international relations can be challenging to measure, which creates an obstacle for analysts seeking to evaluate whether a national security decision was driven by status. For this reason, scholars frequently analyze statements by political leaders and other foreign policy elites (Hart 2020; Heimann 2015; Mantilla 2018; Smith 2014; Wolf 2014). This focus is grounded in empirical findings that leaders and foreign policy elites derive self-esteem and identity from the groups that they belong to, particularly their country (Druckman 1994; Turner, Brown, and Tajfel 1979). The status that their country has compared to other states provides a strong source of self-esteem and identity (Viskopic 2020). For this reason,

leaders and foreign policy elites often appear concerned, and even obsessed, about their country's international status (Dafoe et al. 2014). Speeches by leaders and foreign policy elites can thus serve as a valuable source of evidence regarding the effect of status on national security decisions and foreign policy outcomes.² A quote by a leader can provide smoking-gun evidence that concern over status has driven a foreign policy decision.

For this reason, the empirical analysis will focus on speeches by Australia's leaders in the legislature immediately prior to Australia's intervention in the Solomon Islands. Speeches delivered by Australia's foreign policy elites provide a window into their concern about Australia's status as leader of the South Pacific and their willingness to maintain that status. The analysis will help illustrate the presentation of and justification for dispatching an intervention in the Solomon Islands. Speeches by Australia's leaders will reveal the extent to which the intervention was justified by the concern to maintain Australia's status as leader of the South Pacific region.

Evidence

A close reading of speeches by Australia's leaders reveals a link between the country's role of stabilizer and caretaker of the South Pacific region and the decision to dispatch an intervention in the Solomon Islands. A central component of the government's narrative was an emphasis that Australia's status as the leader of the South Pacific meant that the country had a unique role in the South Pacific region. Minister of Foreign Affairs Downer acknowledged Australia's role when noting, "This country has enormous responsibilities in the South Pacific region, and we are prepared to work with our regional partners to fulfil those responsibilities" (Parliament of Australia 2003a:16263). Australia's status as leader determined that its foreign policy interests went beyond maintaining security in its own border and included the South Pacific region. For this reason, Minister Downer stated that "Australia should be in the Solomon Islands because it is in our own national interest. It is in our own national interest because national security is broader than just protecting the borders of our own country" (Parliament of Australia 2003c:18392).

A central part of the government's reasoning for dispatching an intervention was the belief that the international community expected Australia to restore order on the Solomon Islands. The government's foreign policy narrative emphasized that Australia's responsibilities were not only to other South Pacific countries but also to Western allies, particularly the United States. A report commissioned by the government in early 2003 noted this dimension of Australia's leadership in the South Pacific region:

Other countries, including major allies and friends, expect Australia to take a leading role in this part of the world, and judge us in part on how well we discharge what they tend to see as our responsibilities here. Australia's standing in the wider world—including with the United States—is therefore at stake. (Wainwright 2003a:14–15)

Prime Minister Howard underscored Australia's role as maintainer of regional security and its international obligations in a single coherent argument in declaring that "the international community understandably looks to Australia to play a leading role in the South Pacific. Our leadership of the regional assistance mission to the Solomon Islands reflects both a national interest and an international expectation" (Parliament of Australia 2003c:18198). The decision to dispatch an intervention was based on the understanding that this was not only compatible with Australia's foreign policy orientation but also something that other countries expected Australia to do. When discussing the reasoning behind Australia's intervention, Prime Minister Howard noted, "With this regional assistance mission to the Solomon Islands, Australia has signaled it is willing, in a cooperative and collegiate way, to play a supportive, stabilizing, and, if it is required, more interventionist role in the region. We will not let our friends down" (Parliament of Australia 2003a:13329). In other words, Australia had a unique responsibility to address the crisis and restore order in the Solomon Islands. The decision to dispatch an intervention was based on Australia's status and its role as guarantor of security in the South Pacific.

Australia's leaders emphasized not only the responsibility to address the crisis in the Solomon Islands but also the possibility that if Australia failed in this duty, the country's status as the leader of the South Pacific would come into question. The narrative revealed a direct link between Australia's status as leader of the South Pacific region and its role as maintainer of regional security. For this reason, not dispatching an intervention to the crisis-ridden Solomon Islands would have signaled that Australia was willing to concede its status as a leader of the South Pacific region. The government's narrative contained an urgency to respond to the crisis or else find the country's status as leader possibly coming into question. Prime Minister Howard echoed this sentiment when discussing Australia's decision to dispatch an intervention:

It is a challenge to the international community, and the international community naturally and understandably expects Australia to play a leading role. If we do nothing now and the Solomon Islands become a failed state ... [it] will make the inevitable dealing with the problem in the future more costly and more difficult, and we would pay very dearly for our indifference if we were to adopt that course now. (Parliament of Australia 2003b:17483–17484)

Overall, speeches by Australia's leaders illustrated the impact of Australia's status as the leader of the South Pacific and its role of maintainer of regional security on the decision to dispatch an intervention in the Solomon Islands. The government's narrative emphasized the importance of Australia's role of maintainer of regional security, which was owed both to the other South Pacific countries and to the United States. Australia's leaders were concerned that if they did not respond to the crisis, the nation's status as the leader of the South Pacific would come into question. The decision to dispatch an

intervention was consistent with Australia's role and secured Australia's status as the leader of the South Pacific.

CONCLUSION

This paper has contributed to the evolving debate on status in international relations. I have suggested that one way to understand how status affects foreign policy outcomes is to unpack the relationship between status and role. States on top of status hierarchies have the duty to take on additional roles in international politics, including the role of maintaining order and security beyond their borders. When a domestic crisis in a country begins to threaten international security, high-status states are expected by the international community to address the crisis and restore order. I have illustrated the implications of this argument by examining Australia's decision to dispatch an intervention in the Solomon Islands.

A number of questions remain, providing a foundation for future research. First, I used the case of Australia's intervention in the Solomon Islands to illustrate the usefulness of my approach and not to provide a definitive test. It would be simply unpersuasive to state that countries use force to maintain their status all the time. Are states sometimes simply unconcerned about their status, or are other factors at play? For example, states might be hesitant to deploy military force in the case of domestic opposition to intervention. Scholars of international law have found that political leaders often choose not to ratify international treaties because public opinion or opposition parties have been mobilized against the agreement, making the domestic costs of ratification prohibitively high (Kelley and Pevehouse 2015). Domestic opposition might discourage government from dispatching a military intervention even in instances when the country's status is at stake. Nevertheless, this hypothesis might be difficult to reconcile with the finding that citizens will negatively evaluate the government when the government fails to protect the country's status (Viskupic 2020). The development of scope conditions for the argument that states fight for status provides an opening for further research.

Second, the research scope of this paper has been narrow and has examined only one role—maintainer of order and security—that countries with high status take; nevertheless, states on top of status hierarchies hold multiple roles and responsibilities, such as stopping nuclear proliferation and managing global economy. Such roles could become sources of status concerns, and future scholarship should investigate how these responsibilities affect foreign policy decision-making and national security outcomes.

Third, this paper has illustrated how Australia's status as the leader of the South Pacific affected the decision to dispatch an intervention in the Solomon Islands. Consequently, the question of whether Australia succeeded in maintaining its status as the leader of the South Pacific is beyond the scope of this paper. Do demonstrations of military power always lead to status gains? Existing scholarship does not provide a definitive answer (Renshon 2017; Ward 2020). In some instances, such as the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2014, the use of force did little to help the country's standing and in fact might have led to status loss. It might

therefore be that the relationship between use of force and status conferral is conditional on the context: the preferences and dominant norms of the status group, which has been understudied by scholars of international relations. Emerging research in psychology suggests that social context is key to understanding what behaviors contribute to status gain (Li, Chen, and Blader 2016). It is plausible to suppose that when considered to be legitimate, the use of force leads to reinforcement of the status whereas in other instances, it might lead to status loss; nevertheless, more empirical research is needed.

ENDNOTES

1. Recently, scholars have begun to investigate how quest for status affects the foreign policies of small states, such as Qatar, Norway, and Cyprus (Baxter, Jordan, and Rubin 2018, Kamrava 2011, Pedi and Kouskouvelis 2019, Wohlforth et al. 2018). Nevertheless, the crux of the scholarship has remained focused on countries on the top of the global status hierarchy.
2. Despite its value, this approach is not without limitations. An analysis of foreign policy speeches and statements is based on interpretation and might be subject to bias. An additional challenge is that leaders and foreign policy elites do not use consistent language when referring to their country's status and seldom use the word *status* directly.

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