

**Rising Powers, Status Competition, and Global Governance: Conceptual Challenges in
Need of Further Examination.**

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Much of the literature on status and its implications for international politics has come in two broad waves. The first occurred roughly half-way through the Cold War; the second has emerged after Cold War's end as the contours of the new world order became opaque.¹ Especially over the last decade scholars, utilizing a variety of theoretical perspectives (and using a wide range of methodologies), have refocused on status considerations as a driving force in international politics.

This special issue focuses on a critical aspect of status dynamics in international politics: the intersection between rising powers, their competition over status, and the implications of such status competition for global (and regional) governance. Pursuing this task is nothing short of heroic since all three concepts—rising powers, status competition and global governance—are heavily contested by scholars. Below, we raise a number of issues regarding what is meant by rising powers, the varied conditions that may or may not generate status competition, and the consequences of status competition for global governance, with the aim of suggesting that these issues need further clarification and analysis in order for us to advance knowledge in this area.

So, what is a rising power?

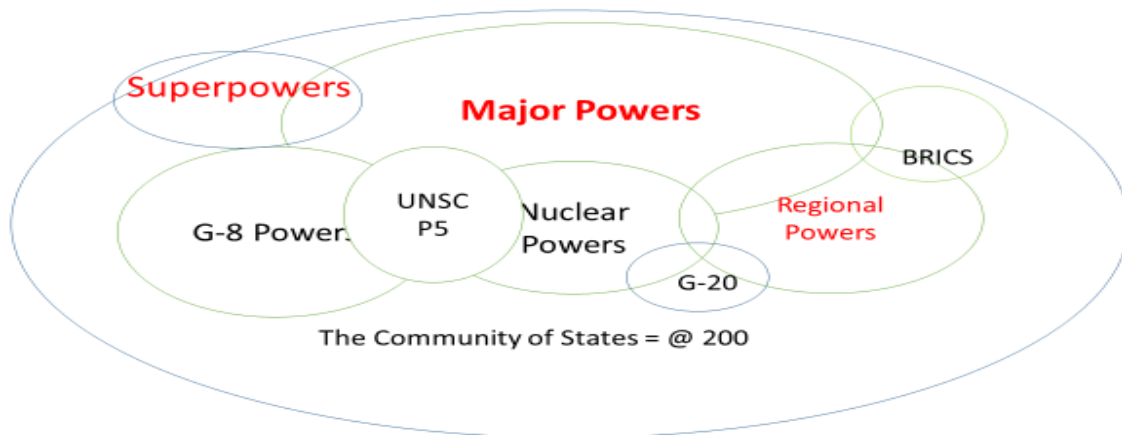
Consider the following states: Brazil, China, India, Iran, the Russian Federation, South Africa, and Turkey. All of these states are considered to be rising powers in this project.² Yet, are all these states rising powers? Have some already risen while others are actually experiencing a

¹ Excellent reviews of much of this literature can be found in Defoe et al. 2014 and Renshon 2017. Examples of the early literature include East 1972, Wallace 1973, Ray 1974, and Gochman 1980. Examples of recent post-Cold War scholarship include Larson and Shevchenko 2003 and 2010, Deng 2008, Wohlforth 2009, Kinne 2014, Paul et al. 2014, Renshon 2017, Wohlforth et al. 2017, Wohlforth 2009, Duque 2018, and Ward 2018. Of course, the focus on status considerations goes back much further and ranges from Thucydides through Morgenthau.

² Fisher-Onar (2018) classifies the Eurasian states (China, Russia, Turkey and Iran) as “resurgent” rather than rising powers to emphasize their historical status. We continue to use the term “rising” to allow comparison with “rising” powers that may not have been major powers historically.

decline? Are rising powers actually rising at a rate that will allow them to achieve a higher position, from a status perspective, other than where they are presently? Are they all seeking the same kind of status? And when they get “there”, how will we know that they have arrived?

Figure 1. A Variety of Status Clubs in International Politics.



From the standpoint of the status literature, states “earn” their status in one of two ways: by becoming members of a group that confers a certain amount of status on all of its members, *and* as well through a hierarchical ranking in the grouping (Larson 2017; Renshon 2017). With respect to membership in a status grouping—what we call membership in a status club—there are a number of such groupings available in international politics. As Figure 1 suggests, these are the typical status clubs where membership is potentially available to “rising powers”, granting them additional status from the community of states.

These clubs are not mutually exclusive; a state may be a major power, a nuclear power, and a superpower. A state may be a member of the G-8, the G-20, the UNP5, and one of the BRICS. Table 1 illustrates the overlapping distribution of these memberships.

Table 1. “Rising Powers” Membership in Various Status Clubs.

STATE	Superpower	Major Power	Regional Power	G-7/8	G-20	BRICS	Nuclear Power	UNP5
China		x			X	X	x	x
India			x		X	x	x	
Brazil			X		X	X		
S. Africa			X		X	X		
Turkey					x			
Russian Federation		X		X*	X	x	X	x
Iran								

* The Russian Federation’s membership was suspended in 2014, and it withdrew from the G8 in 2017.

The first question we ask is whether a “rising” power has already arrived by making it into one or more highly salient status clubs. Of the clubs identified in Figure 1, we suggest that the three most important ones are the clubs labeled “superpowers”, “major powers”, and “regional powers”. The first grouping is obvious: there are few if any states that are likely to receive membership into the superpower club. Superpowers receive the highest status available to states.

Major powers (also referred to as global powers) constitute an elite grouping of states that also generate high status, and while more inclusive than the first, group membership is restricted to a small handful of states. During the Cold War no more than four states qualified for this status, and no more than six to seven states during the post-Cold War era (see Volgy et al., 2011).

Finally, the regional power club, while generating less status than either of the other two, has also been quite restrictive; a recent attempt to identify empirically regional powers (Cline et al. 2011) lists no more than a handful of states achieving club membership. Regional power status is high status-generating because states identified as regional powers not only dominate politics in their own region e.g. Desrati et al. 2018), but typically, these states have also

expressed interest in moving into the major power club and most major powers have achieved their status by moving up from the regional power club .

We contend that—in the context of status club memberships—the so-called rising powers that are the subject of this project differ substantially from each other in the sense that some are perhaps “rising” while others have already made it into one of the high status clubs, and others still are declining. However, making this argument requires establishing a *threshold* above which membership is conferred in the status club. We use the thresholds established in earlier efforts. Building on Levy (1983), Volgy et al. (2011) identify criteria for major power club membership, based on three dimensions: opportunity, willingness, and status attribution by the community of states. Thus, major powers belong to that status club if:

- 1) They have unusual amounts of military and economic capabilities that would allow for them to play global roles;
- 2) They are able to use those capabilities to reach beyond their geographical regions;
- 3) They engage in foreign policies that are global (or inter-regional) rather than regional in scope; and
- 4) They are rewarded with high status by the community of states.

Using these criteria,³ we identify the Russian Federation and China as members of the major power club in post-Cold War international politics. In the sense of attaining club membership, neither of those two states should be considered “rising” powers: China has arrived, and Russia,

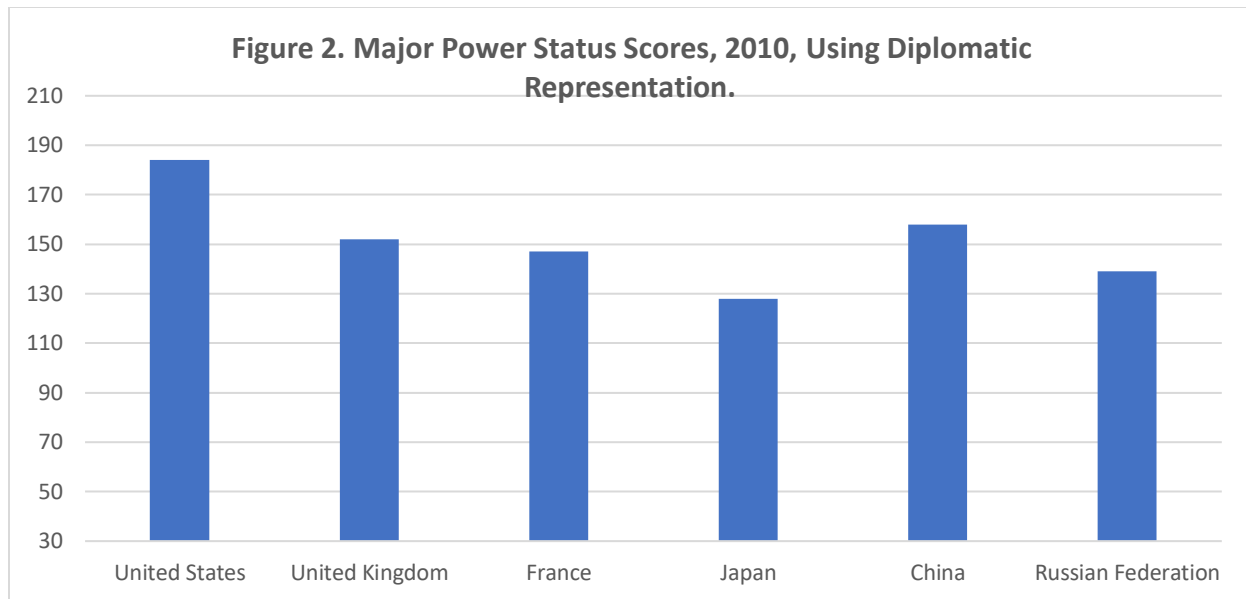
³ The operationalization of these dimensions is discussed in Volgy et al. 2011 for major powers, and in Cline et al. 2011 for regional powers. The determination for whether or not a state receives major power status is based on two measures: official state visits and high level diplomatic representation received; both of those measure require counts that are at least two standard deviation from the mean for all states in order to cross the threshold of membership in the club. Membership in the club requires high status recognition along with similar thresholds for military and economic capacity and reach, and high levels of global activity by the state in question.

while its status has declined (and it lost its membership in the superpower club), has managed to maintain its membership in the club of major powers.

A similar approach is utilized by Cline et al. (2011) to create a threshold for determining membership in the regional power club, although dominant capabilities and reach are measured in the context of the region rather than globally. Using the Cline et al.'s empirical threshold, India, Brazil, and South Africa are all regional powers and are recognized and rewarded with substantial status within their own regions and by the larger community of states.

So at least using the criterion of club membership, of the “rising states” considered in this project, our approach suggests that five of the seven have already arrived, either into the regional or the major power club. Neither of the remaining two (Turkey and Iran) share that distinction.

That, of course, is not the end of the story. While membership in these clubs provides substantial status, states are also concerned about their relative status within the hierarchy operating inside any status club. France may be accorded more status within the major power club than the United Kingdom because its policies toward international politics may be more independent of the United States. The Russian Federation may experience a status deficit (e.g. Renshon 2017), or status inconsistency (Volgy et al. 2011) even while Russia is a member of the major power club, because its status as a major power is not as high as its military and economic assets and its global reach would warrant...in the eyes of Russian policy makers. These are issues of hierarchical positioning within the same club, and “rising” in this context may refer to climbing higher within the hierarchy of the club.



One way of assessing differences in hierarchical positioning within status groups is by observing the status attributed to group members by the community of states.⁴ Using diplomatic representation,⁵ Figure 2 shows the scores for members of the major power club for 2010. Using this reference point China already receives more status than all but one other member (the U.S.) of the major power club, suggesting that it has “arrived” also in the context of hierarchical ranking within the club.

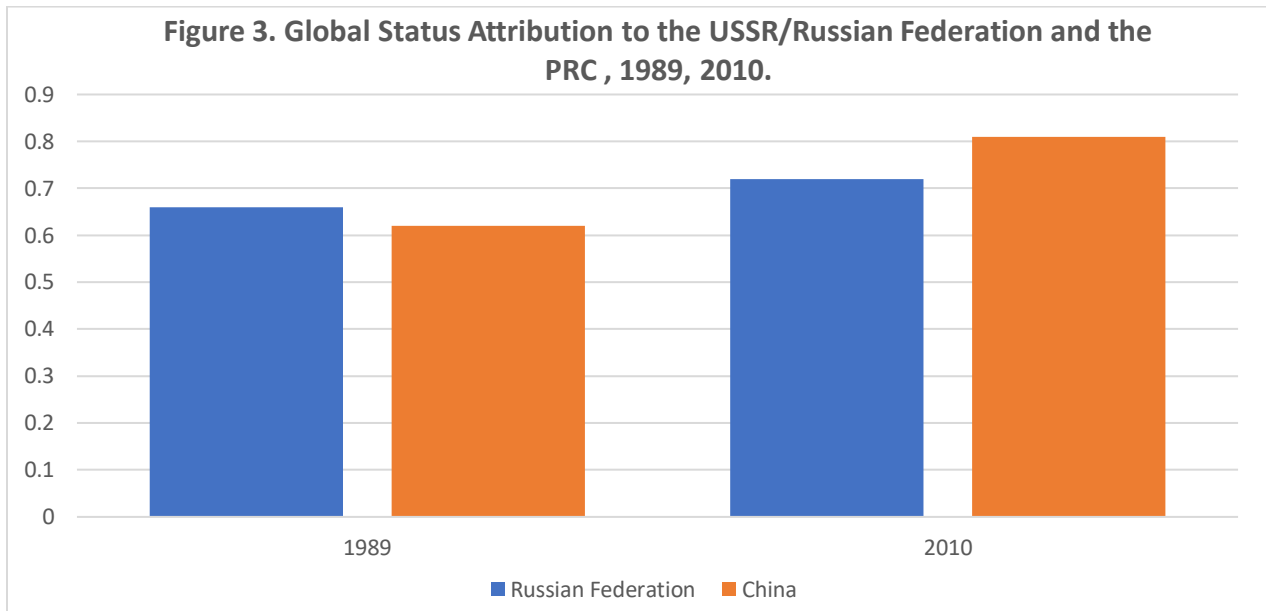
Additionally, Figure 3 suggests changes in status attribution for the Russian Federation and China since the end of the Cold War (controlling for system size). By 2010, the status attributed to China has surpassed that of the Russian Federation,⁶ suggesting that rather than being a

⁴ There is substantial disagreement in the literature over the appropriate reference group(s) for status attribution. We address this issue further below.

⁵ Here, we use a measure of status positioning based on the extent to which states receive embassies to their capitals, including only those embassies that also contain high-ranking diplomatic representatives. Data are from Ramey et al. 2013. For a similar use of diplomatic representation and its validity, see Duque 2018, Miller et al. 2015).

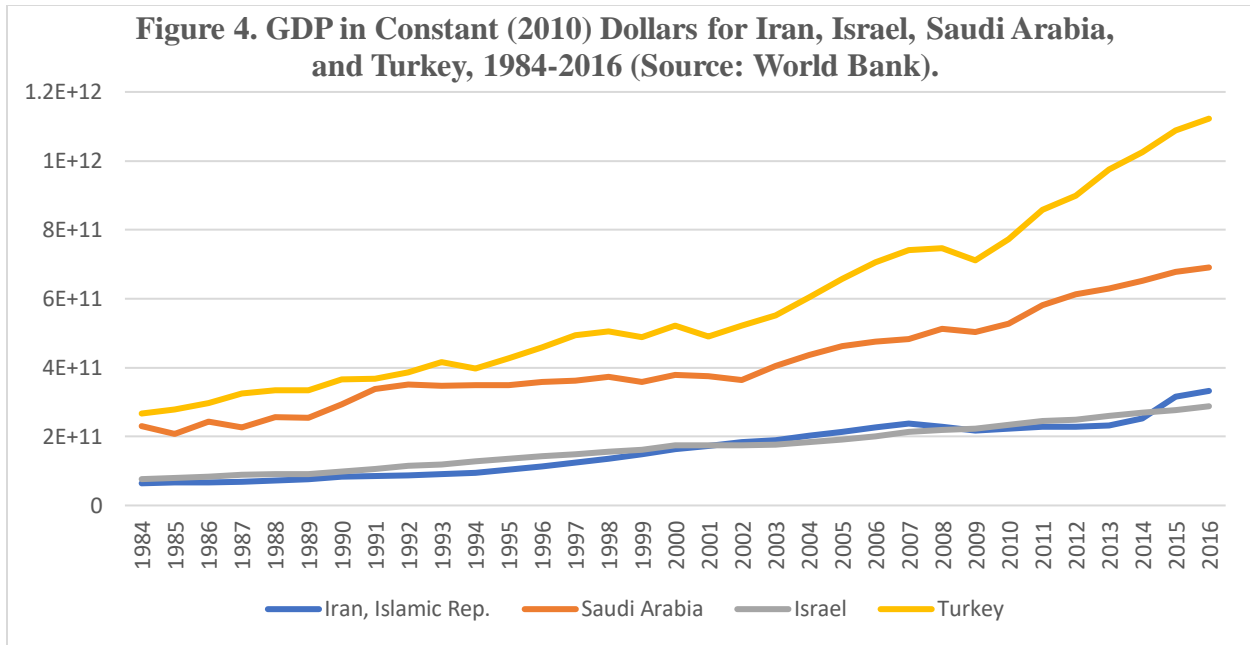
⁶ Which likely increases Russian frustration with its relative status in the major power club hierarchy.

“rising” power, the Russian Federation, compared to China, is declining in ranking within the major power club, at least using China as the reference point.



States may also be “rising” in terms of seeking to move from one high-status club (regional power club) to an even more exclusive status club (major power club). India and Brazil are two states that have demonstrated an interest in doing so (Basrur 2011, Herz 2011). In this sense they could be considered rising regional powers as they seek entrance to the club of major powers. Getting there, however, may be quite problematic. We have attempted to trace how much additional capability, global involvement, and status these states would require to exceed the thresholds needed for entry into the major power club. Under the most favorable scenario we projected that India would not gain entrance into the club until around 2060 while we find no scenario under which Brazil would surpass the club threshold in the next half century (Volgy et al. 2014).⁷

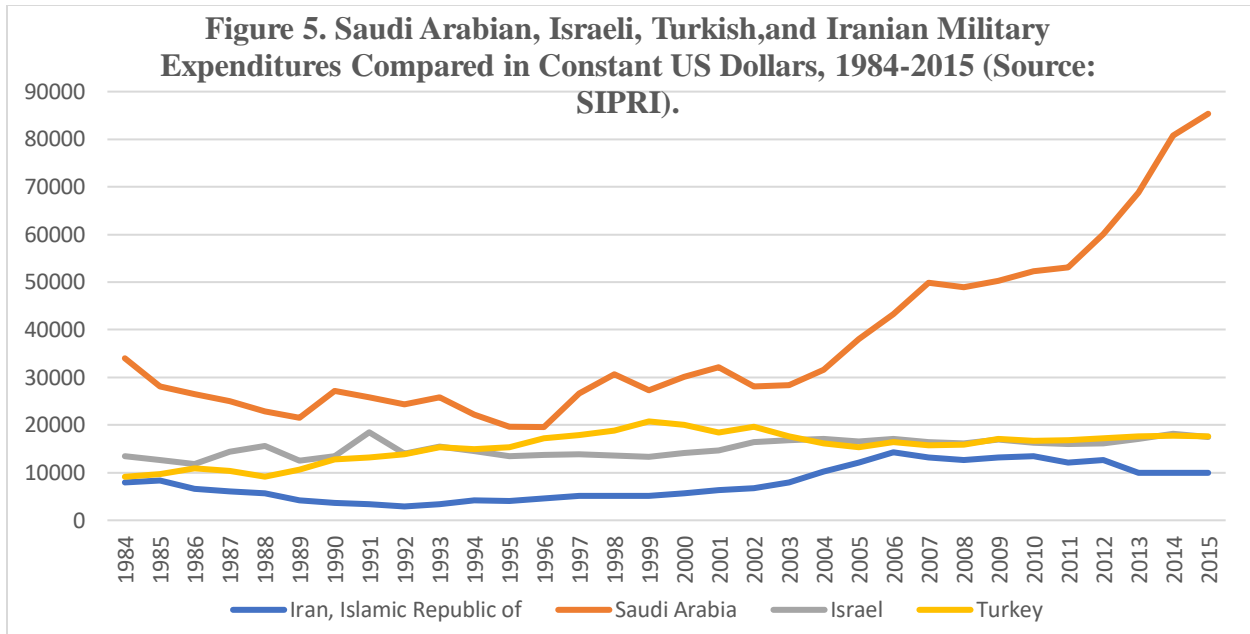
⁷ Capability does not equal destiny, but it is a necessary condition for a substantial global presence. We note that both India and Brazil have attempted to dramatically increase their presence in sub-Saharan Africa, but their



What of the prospects for Turkey and Iran to gain entrance to the regional power club?

From a geopolitical perspective, both states potentially qualify for regional power status in the Middle East. Yet, as Figures 4 and 5 illustrate, they are far from meeting the capability requirements for becoming that region’s dominant power. In Turkey’s case, it has the largest economy of the four regional states in Figure 4, and its trajectory is promising, albeit its economy does not dominate the region. Regarding military capacity, it demonstrates no unusually strong capabilities compared to other regional states (Figure 5), and in fact, its military spending is dwarfed by Saudi Arabia. Iranian capabilities, both economic and military, do not resemble the qualities associated with a dominant regional power, lagging on the size of its GDP, and substantially underspending the three other Middle Eastern states on its military capabilities.

aspirations ran aground as their foreign policy establishments lacked sufficient capacity to engage most African states. For example, both the Brazilian and Indian diplomatic corps are substantially smaller than that of Singapore’s.



Increasing state capacity may be a necessary condition for achieving major power club membership but it is not be a sufficient condition for doing so. Using the capability metric, the U.S. could have become a member of the major power club after World War I, but it chose not to engage globally until the start of World War II. Germany flirted with major power status after the Cold War but chose to remain the strong regional power in Europe (see Volgy et al. 2011).

We suggest that in order for a state to “rise” in terms of either gaining membership into a higher status club or rising in the hierarchy of a high status club requires *opportunity* (capabilities) to do so, the *willingness* to do so (e.g., systematically engaging in global affairs), and the *ability/competence* to successfully translate capabilities into a creative and effective strategy. The last of these requirements we call *governmental effectiveness*.

Having the capability to become a major power is insufficient without the willingness and the competence to do so. And even if the willingness is there, the competence to do so may not be extensive. What do we mean by competence? We suggest that one critical part of the

competence equation is the effectiveness with which policy makers can translate their capabilities into successful policy outcomes. On this dimension, the variation between states aspiring to enter the major power club and states already in the major power club is substantial. Figures 6 (governmental effectiveness index) and 7 (control of corruption index), based on the World Bank measures of governmental efficiency, illustrate some of these differences.

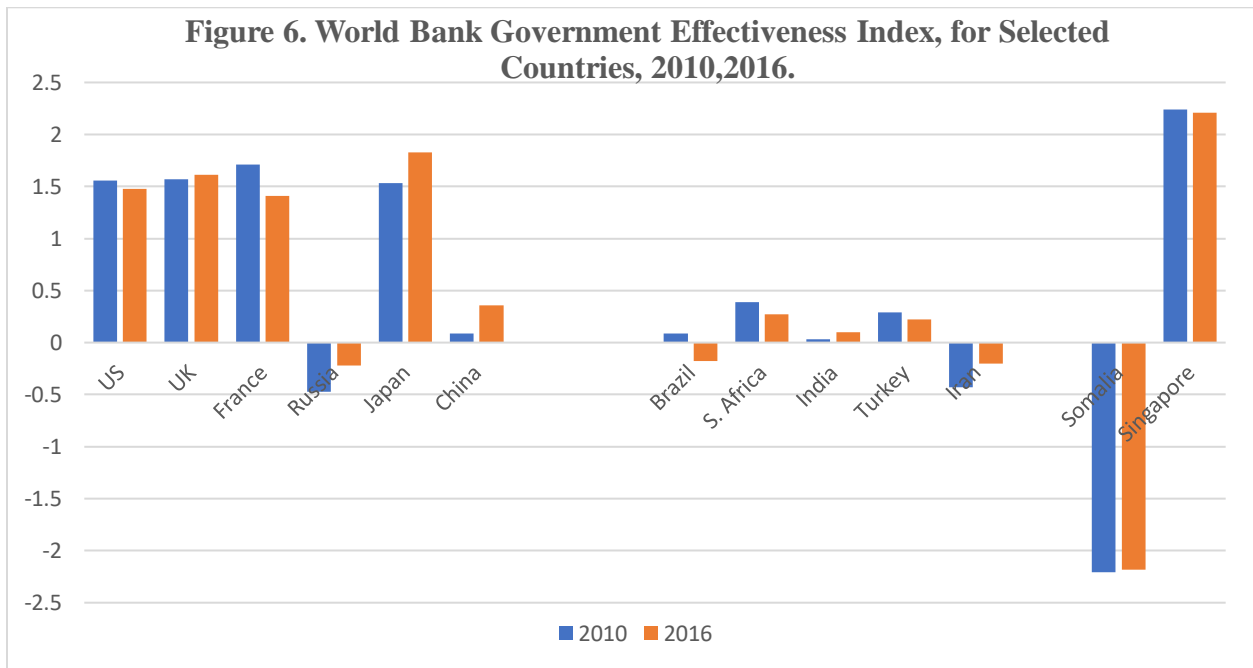
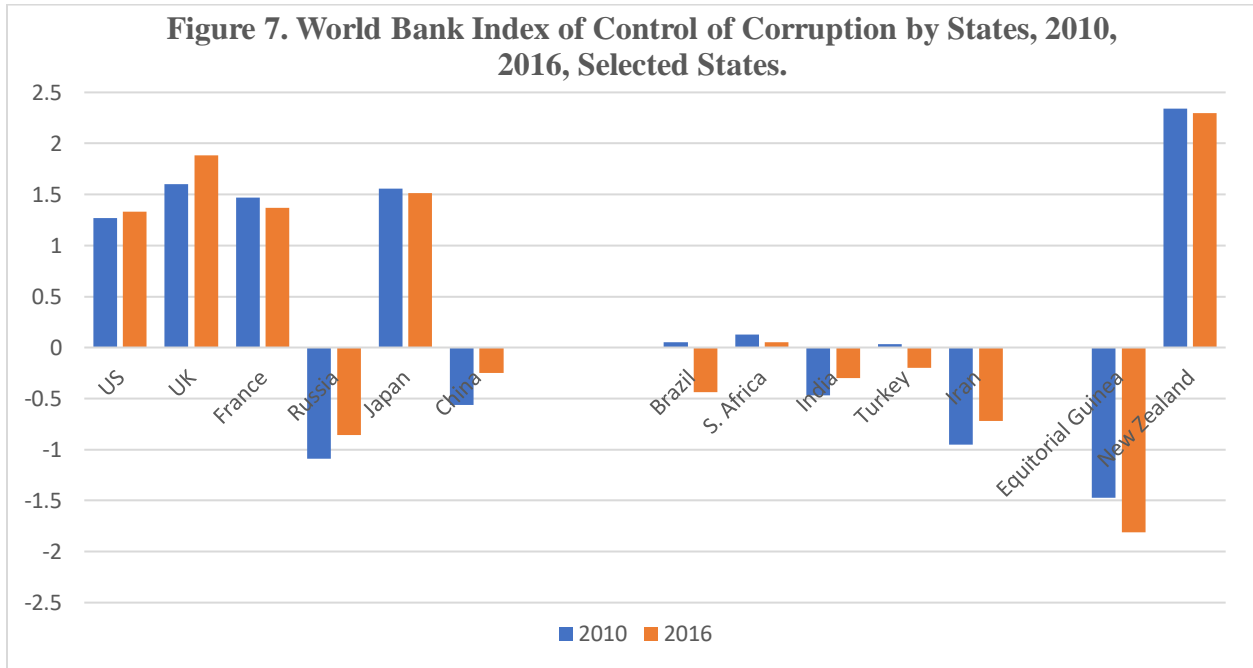


Figure 6 compares the World Bank’s index of governmental effectiveness scores of states in the major power club with regional and “rising” powers designated in this project, and compares them with the most and least effective states. The data illustrate quite a mixed picture here for “rising” powers. The good news for Russia and China is that they are in the major power club despite negative rankings (Russia) or barely positive rankings (China) on the World Bank measure of governmental effectiveness. That is, it is plausible to overcome effectiveness issues with either a dramatic expansion in military and/or economic capabilities, or global activism, but

the possible asymmetry between status aspirations and governmental effectiveness will make status acquisition far more costly and difficult for less efficient states.



Figures 6 and 7 also suggests that it is plausible for states (India, Brazil and South Africa) to enter the regional power club without extensive governmental effectiveness, but it is likely to be difficult for those still seeking such membership (Turkey, Iran) without very significant increases in their military and economic capabilities and without a very strong leadership role in global and regional governance affairs.⁸

Overall, of the seven states considered in this project to be “rising” powers, our perspective suggests a diverse categorization (see Figure 8). Three of the seven states (Brazil, India, and South Africa) have already arrived, at least as regional powers, while two (China and

⁸ Note the Russian exception: it is the only state in the major power club with negative values on governmental effectiveness. Its status however is likely a part of the halo effect left over from the Cold War era during which its governmental effectiveness was also substantially higher. It is also the only other state besides the US with very substantial strategic nuclear capabilities, providing it with a highly destructive global reach.

the Russian Federation) are already members of the more prestigious major power club. If lack of major power/regional power club membership is a shorthand for those that are still rising to achieve membership in either of these two status clubs, only Turkey and Iran would qualify as “rising powers”, but with governmental effectiveness scores that suggest that they will struggle to enter either club cost-effectively.

Figure 8. Reclassifying “Rising” Powers.

State	Club Membership	Trajectory
China	Major Power Club	Arrived
Russian Fed.	Major Power Club	Declining in club’s hierarchy
Brazil	Regional Power Club	Arrived/seeking Major power club
India	Regional Power Club	Arrived/seeking Major power club
South Africa	Regional Power Club	Arrived
Turkey	“Rising”	?
Iran	“Rising”	?

If, however, we consider rising or falling within the hierarchy of club membership, then a more plausible case can be made for China and Russia moving within the major power club hierarchy, with the former seeking more status to bring it closer to the U.S. and the latter seeking to recoup its earlier positioning in the club. For Brazil, India, and South Africa “rising” may denote instead seeking to change status clubs from regional to major power. For Turkey and Iran, “rising” may suggest attempts to become members of the regional power club. How policy makers in these seven states approach status seeking, given different status club memberships and different capability and status trajectories, should lead to differing consequences for status competition in international politics, as we discuss below.

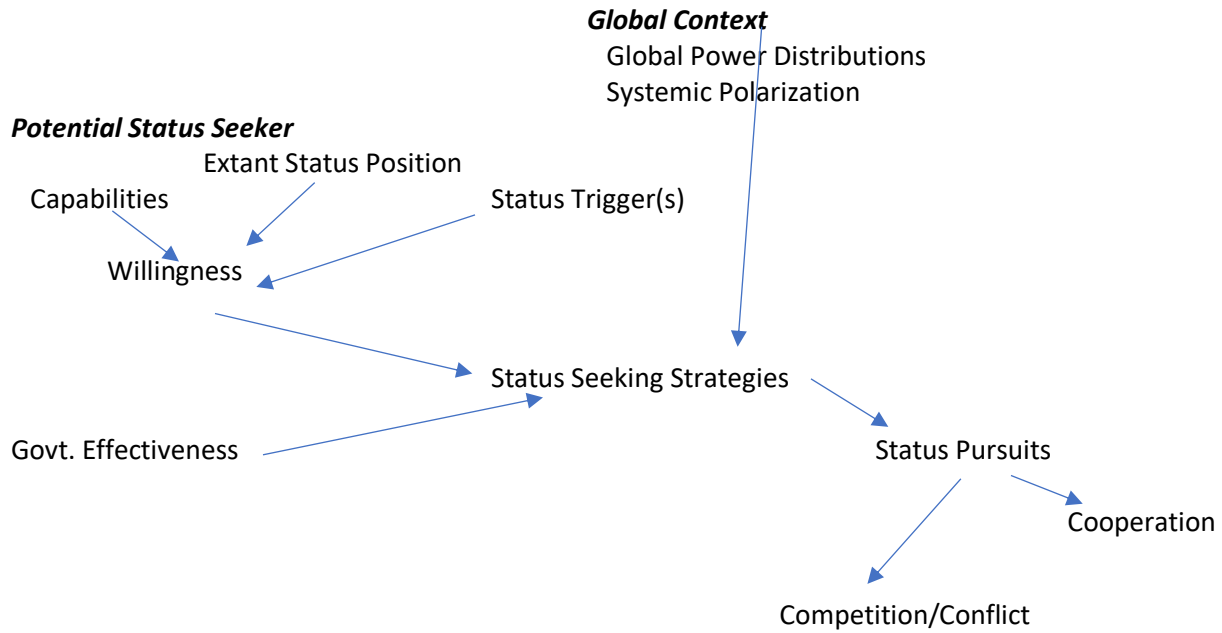
When do States engage in Status Competition?

The renewed emphasis within the international relations literature on status, status attribution, and status competition is a welcome trend. It is clear that states care about their status and foreign policy makers perceive that high status attribution is salient for them, for both domestic political and foreign policy reasons. However, we raise five warnings about how scholars address status seeking and status competition.

First, we suggest that it is dangerous to conflate competition and conflict between states as driven exclusively or primarily by status considerations. Policy makers' desire to maintain or enhance their status may be a "fundamental state motivation" (Duque 2018: 1) but status concerns likely constitute a variable condition rather than a constant state of affairs for most states. If so, then we need to specify conditions under which policy makers are motivated to engage in international politics as a function of their need for greater status, or fear of not being able to maintain the status they have.⁹ It is a distorting academic exercise to assume that almost all foreign policy activity is motivated by status considerations, any more than solely by security concerns or domestic political advantages. Sometimes the desire to acquire a naval carrier is based on perceived security needs rather than the need to acquire a "status toy."

⁹ Renshon (2016) identifies conditions under which status "dissatisfaction may occur". Likewise, Volgy et al. (2011) note that within the major power club's hierarchy, some states are status consistent (and less likely to be dissatisfied with their status) while others are either overachievers or underachievers, and are more likely to be concerned about their standing in the club.

Figure 9. Status Seeking Considerations.



Second, we do not believe that the pursuit of greater status, or the need to maintain extant status, should automatically equate to status competition and conflict between states. In fact, the conditions and constraints involved for states potentially engaging in status-seeking policies are complex (as suggested in Figure 9), and do not automatically lead to extensive competition or conflict. As we had noted earlier, status-seeking strategies may depend in substantial part on where states are positioned, and the extent of their dissatisfaction with their positioning. States on a strong upward status trajectory (e.g., China) are likely to behave differently, and likely to take fewer risks than states in danger of losing their status, as their status is declining in the group hierarchy, or if they may be in danger altogether of falling out of the status club (Russia).

Additionally, it is unlikely that different types of status-seeking strategies produce similar levels of inter-state competition or conflict. Larson’s work (Larson and Shevchenko 2003, 2010, Larson 2017) applying SIT theory to status seeking suggests that there are three broad, non-mutually exclusive strategies available to states seeking higher status or for trying to keep the

status they have. These include social mobility (emulating the values of higher-status states), social competition (striving to equal or surpass the dominant group), and social creativity (revaluing a negative characteristic as positive, or, identifying a new dimension on which the state may demonstrate superiority). While all three strategies can generate substantial conflict between states, social mobility and social creativity generate fewer conflicts than social competition.¹⁰ Which of these strategies will be pursued by states seeking additional status, and the conditions under which status seeking generates substantial inter-state conflict and competition requires substantial additional theoretical and empirical work.

Third, too much of the extant scholarship ignores the premise that the global context in which states operate are also likely to impact on the status seeking options. For example, Wohlforth (2009) argues that the more stratified the distribution of capabilities in international politics, the less the ambiguity about positioning, and the ability of states to do something about their positioning. The more unambiguous and highly stratified the international system, the less likely that states will engage in status competition as especially membership in the most prestigious of status clubs is exceedingly difficult to attain for states not already part of the grouping. Wohlforth's warning is important: it suggests that the structure of the international system can significantly constrain additional status seeking by states, even when policy makers prefer to change their status positioning in international politics.¹¹ We have yet to assess systematically how these systemic considerations impact on the extent to which foreign policy makers will prioritize their status concerns, and engage in further status seeking.

¹⁰ Duque (2018:18) similarly argues, based on a network analysis of status recognition, that contrary to the assumption in much of the literature, status-seeking behavior "may also be cooperative behavior. Status may thus contribute to the maintenance of international order."

¹¹ Wohlforth's arguments are about major powers, but they may apply to both regional powers and "rising" powers.

Fourth, there is substantial, unresolved controversy in the status literature regarding the relevant reference point for status seekers. Status is inherently both a relational and a perceptual concept. When policy makers assess their own status, whether in terms of group membership or a hierarchical ordering, what is the relevant reference group? The literature has offered at least three competing answers to this question. One is that status is assessed in terms of “aspiration”: unless one has already achieved positioning at the apex of a hierarchy, states always seek entrance to status groups with higher standing, and in terms of hierarchical ordering, are always seeking a higher position than what they perceive to have been attributed to them.¹²

A second approach suggests that, at least for major and regional powers, it is the global attribution of status by the global community of states that matters (Miller et al. 2015, Bezerra et al. 2015). A third perspective suggests that it is *primarily* the “relevant reference group” that matters to policy makers, and there are two candidates: status attribution in the hierarchy by other club members (e.g. other members of the major power club), or, attribution by those other states that are deemed most relevant to the state in question (Renshon 2017). Which states are relevant reference points? For most states status attribution may be regional: their relative status compared to those states with which they most often interact, and typically those would be other states in the region.¹³ For rising powers, the relevant states could be both the club members where they are seeking entrance, and, depending on whether or not such status seeking constitutes a zero-sum game, other rising powers seeking membership in the same club.

The appropriate reference group matters to policy makers, and it should matter as well for our central question of the extent to which status seeking by “rising” powers equals status

¹² This would be the case for rising powers; for declining powers the objective would be to maintain both club membership and the relative ranking within the club.

¹³ For a different conceptualization of the “relevant” other, see Renshon 2017.

competition amongst them. Clearly, such status seeking does not have to result in status competition. Both India and Brazil could join the major power club without directly competing against each other for additional status, unless the status marker is one of gaining a permanent seat in the UN Security Council. China and Russia can both increase their ranking in the major power hierarchy and need not define such outcomes as constituting a zero-sum process. Of course, the extent to which such status seeking leads to substantial competition and conflict also depends on the type of status seeking strategy the two states would adopt.

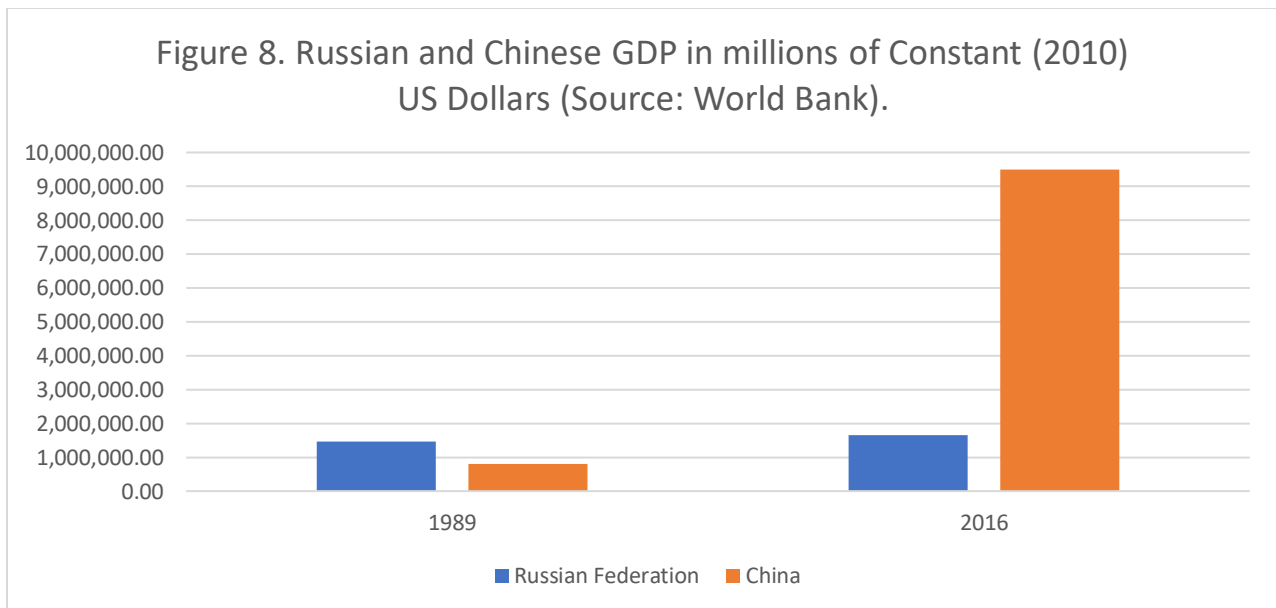
Status competition and conflict is much more likely for states that seek to become regional powers in the same region. Two or more states seeking to be recognized as the dominant power in a geopolitical space makes for both competition and conflict; Turkish and Iranian regional status aspirations in the Middle East are unlikely to be played out in any manner short of a zero-sum context.

Fifth, we caution that status seeking strategies will differ depending on the status trajectories and capability trajectories of status aspiring states (e.g., Onea 2014, Krickovic 2017, Krickovic and Weber 2018). For instance, the Russian Federation—a state that lost its status in the superpower club and for a while had difficulty maintaining its membership in the major power club during the 1990s—has engaged in a series of status seeking strategies (Lewis 2018, Larson and Schevchencko 2003, 2010) that are dramatically different from that of China, a rising power that entered the major power club after the Cold War's end and continues developing rapidly its economic and military capabilities.

It is understandable that as the Soviet Union disintegrated, the resulting Russian Federation lost its predecessor's status as a superpower. What is more interesting is that it somehow maintained its status as a major power, especially during the 1990s when its economy

was in shambles, its military beaten internally by a weak Chechen rebellion, and its political system in disarray.¹⁴ Such a halo effect for a declining power is likely to cause substantial worry for its policy makers as its status increasingly depends on its historical positioning (and the path dependency associated with status attribution, a point also underscored by Duque 2018) while its capabilities to sustain global activity and influence are in decline.

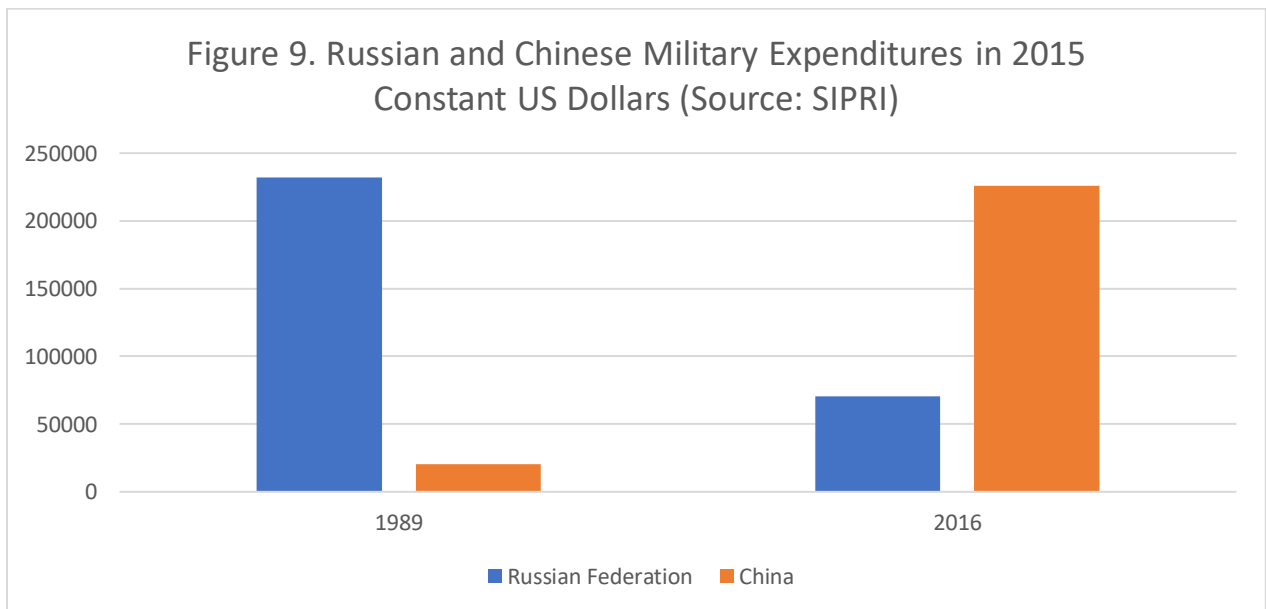
Again, a comparison between the Russian Federation and China (which emerged into the major power club around 1990 and with capabilities in an upward trajectory) is a useful illustration regarding divergent paths and difficulties associated with declining versus upward trajectories in capabilities, status, and status strategies.



The differences in relative capability trajectories for these two states are fairly obvious, as indicated in Figures 8 and 9. In 1989, the Chinese economy was a bit smaller than that of the

¹⁴ Albeit its membership in the major power club was contested after the Cold War's end. Note for instance American President Obama's now famous remark that Russia is a regional power using coercion as a sign of weakness in response to its loss of status as a superpower (The Guardian 2014). Similarly, at the Track II six-power talks in Seoul, where one of us represented U.S. academia, the Chinese delegation characterized the Russian Federation as a "third world oil producer."

Soviet Union; today it is roughly more than five times larger than that of the Russian Federation (Figure 8). At the end of the Cold War Chinese military spending was roughly ten percent of the Soviet Union; by 2016, China's military spending was more than three times that of the Russian Federation (Figure 9). On relative capabilities alone, and as well on the trajectory of their capabilities, these two states have dramatically different capacities to influence the course of international affairs. To the extent that such capability trajectories constrain status seeking strategies, these two states may not be comparable; to the extent that the growth of capabilities may impact on satisfaction with the status quo, they also signal substantial differences in risk-taking by these two states as they seek to maintain or increase their status in international affairs.



The ebb and flow of recent current events underscore the substantial differences between Russian risk-taking versus Chinese caution. The capture of Crimea and the continued underwriting of tensions in eastern Ukraine, the strong military and political involvement with the Assad regime in Syria, and the aggressive interference in the American elections of 2016 are but a few signs of such Russian risk-taking. Russian commitment to modernizing its extensive

nuclear forces even during times of economic difficulties, is another. Meanwhile, China has exhibited relatively risk-averse policies outside of its immediate backyard (in the East and South China seas), ranging from a modest response¹⁵ to the U.S. bombing of its Serbian embassy in 1999 through its quiet diplomacy and negotiations with the U.S. in response to President Trump's blustering denunciations and tariff threats over China's trade policies.

It is difficult to decipher whether or not this comparison is an anomaly or one that is typical of the differences between declining versus rising powers, without a systematic and comparative analysis that moves beyond these two cases. Nor can we tell without a more systematic and comparative analysis across a broader variety of cases whether or not these differences in strategies (high risk-taking and aggressive for the Russian Federation and low-risk, conservative on the part of China) is a function of differences in trajectories or their relative dissatisfaction with the global status quo. Yet these two cases are strongly suggestive of dramatically different status-seeking strategies by states with different capability trajectories and different issues related to their relative status in the major power club's hierarchy. In this sense, their approaches to status seeking may not be comparable.

They are also suggestive of another issue: the reference point for status aspiration may be historical (e.g. Freedman 2016) rather than contemporary, and not necessarily one of competition and conflict between "rising" powers. The Russian status reference appears to be more in the

¹⁵ Government supported (sponsored) protests against the US broke out across China after the bombing of its embassy, and the condemnation rhetoric was strong, although the response was otherwise minimal. NBA basketball games were suspended on Chinese television but there was little venom directed against American personnel or businesses inside China. Compare this with the anti-Japanese protests over the East China Sea dispute during which Japanese businesses were vandalized, and Japanese citizens attacked on the streets. See Public Radio International, "How China Used the U.S. Bombing of Its Belgrade Embassy to Win a PR Victory," May 5, 2014, retrieved at: <https://www.pri.org/stories/2014-05-05/how-china-used-us-bombing-its-belgrade-embassy-win-pr-victory>

context of its status as attributed by Western states and powers (e.g. Neumann, 2018), and not in comparison to China's rising status. The Chinese reference may be in the context of its historical focus on global South leadership, and thus may be at least as concerned with its status among the entire community of states as much as with those that are members of the major power club.

In fact, there is no reason to assume that status seeking among rising powers must be a zero sum game of competition and conflict. The creation of institutions such as the BRICS and the G-20 illustrate that substantial cooperation between rising powers can also achieve higher status. Whether rising powers actually engage in status competition with each other may very well depend on the nature of their trajectories, their membership in major or regional power status clubs, and the extent of their dissatisfaction with the progress they are making in either seeking club membership or their placement within the hierarchy once membership is granted.¹⁶ We need to assess systematically the range of factors, both environmental and endogenous to rising powers that would trigger or minimize status competition between them; such work is not presently available in our knowledge base regarding how "rising" powers seek additional status in world politics. The focus of this special issue is in part designed to add to that knowledge base.

A Word about Status Seeking "Rising Powers" and Global Governance

Space limitations prohibit us from an extensive discussion of the voluminous literature on global governance. Instead, we suggest that there are four aspects typically associated with the topic. First, some capture global governance as architecture construction: the creation of

¹⁶ There are institutional contexts however that may actually stimulate status competition between rising powers. For example, enlarging the permanent membership in the UN Security Council may pit one rising power against another while enlargement may also be perceived as a zero sum outcome for states that are already permanent members.

institutions and organizations at the global level designed to facilitate interaction and joint decision-making by states and other key actors in world politics. A second approach is to focus on not construction but the maintenance and growth of such architecture: here the focus is on the provision of resources to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of organizations and institutions, along with the expansion in the scope of their activities. A third approach focuses on the issue context in which global decision-making needs to occur: this focus is on addressing specific global problems shared by the community of states regardless of institutional context. Fourth, some scholars concerned with global governance focus on a normative dimension: the creation and accession to global norms such as human rights, economic liberalism, democracy, nuclear anti-proliferation norms, etcetera, which in turn—it is argued--strongly influence global governance. Due to space limitations, we focus primarily on the first approach

“Rising” powers can pursue status-seeking strategies involving all four dimensions of global governance, but much of their success may depend on their willingness to commit differential capabilities required by these dimensions. Of the four, perhaps the most difficult, taxing, and as well the most conflict producing would be the creation of new global architecture for governance. Such new architecture creation is relatively rare, and typically comes on the heels of tumultuous events that make extant architecture useless, such as in the aftermath of the First and Second world wars.

While the end of the Cold War had enormous implications for world politics, its end was not accompanied by much new global architecture creation (e.g., see Volgy et al. 2009), which is typically constructed by the winners emerging from global transformation. In this instance neither the U.S. nor its allies needed such changes, especially since the existing architecture reflected their priorities. Occasional efforts to change substantially global security and economic

institutions since 1989 have been either half-hearted or advanced more as a wish list by rising and by declining powers. Instead, most of the new architectural creation has been regional in nature, either filling gaps created by the Cold War's end (e.g., in post-Soviet space) or, as a result of regional responses to failures in global governance (e.g., mechanisms of finance and trade following the Asian crisis in the 1990s). At the global level, efforts to supplement or supplant architecture on the part of rising and declining powers have been more of a cooperative nature rather than conflictual (e.g., the creation of BRICS, the G-20, MIKTA, and inter-regionally, with the Shanghai Cooperation Council (SCO)). Some of this cooperation between rising powers has also bled over to efforts to reform existing global architecture (e.g. the G-4, seeking changes to the permanent members of the UN Security Council).

Yet, much of the formal architecture for global governance has remained in place following the end of the Cold War. Repeated efforts to reform the UN Security Council to reflect new realities have failed. While supplemental—and at times competing—efforts to create governance mechanisms at the regional level (Asian Development Bank, the SCO) have met with some success, less formal architectural creation at the global level (e.g. the BRICS and the G-20) have not dramatically altered global governance. Formal new architecture in the post-1989 era has either remained controversial with limited state participation (e.g. The International Criminal Court), or has worked as an extension of previous institutional arrangements (from the GATT to the WTO). Expansion of security architecture, as in the case of NATO, have led to substantial resistance from those excluded from these mechanisms.

While it is clear that much of the global architecture, especially formal institutions, are in great need of repair or replacement, there has been little in the way of collective action to address this issue. The patchwork approach to updating Cold War governance mechanisms has either

been resisted by powers such as Russia (e.g. Kobayashi 2017), or more or less accepted by others like China (Summers 2016), as it has benefitted extensively from its accession to the WTO.

Conclusion

Our effort here does not offer a definitive conclusion to the debates surrounding rising powers, their status, nor the potential implications of status competition for global governance. Rather, it has aimed to highlight the complexity of these topics among international politics, and ideally provided an additional assessment from which further research can expand and its contribution to our extant knowledge base can be evaluated. As we have discussed, the notion of a ‘rising’ power is clearly understood in a number of different ways. Since rising depends on the context at hand, which states can be categorized as rising powers, which are relatively stable in their trajectory, and which are declining remains debatable. We have argued that the majority of states within this overall project, Brazil, China, India, Russia, and South Africa, already qualify as major or regional powers within the international political system. The extent to which they are rising or declining in a different manner (e.g. within the hierarchy of their particular status club, or from one grouping to another) is a different story. Nonetheless, these states at even a base level, stand apart from the other countries of interest for this project.

We do not believe that our concerns about rising, status maintaining, and status declining powers is a trivial one. In fact, the strategies needed, and the risks that states are willing to take for status purposes very much revolve around the “status of their status”. The risk-taking actions of the Russian Federation are dramatically different from the relative conservatism of the Chinese. These differences are not, we claim, simply historical or cultural in nature (e.g., Kotkin 2016, Freedman 2016) but have to do as much with their respective current trajectories and the consequent risks their policy-makers are willing to take under these different circumstances.

We offer less certainty regarding Iranian and Turkish aspirations and the likelihood of their successes. The extent to which we can distinguish particular countries as powers from the broader community of states largely depends on three components: opportunity, willingness, and competence. As rising powers, these two states have the potential to gain membership to a high status-generating club. To do so, however, would require, even for regional power status, not only a vast commitment to increasing their economic and military clout, but as well a substantial commitment to their region of interest (the Middle East, presumably). Even then, regional power status would only be conferred if one of the two would substantially exceed the other both in capabilities and activism in the region. That is not likely in the near future: the costs, both domestic and international, would be too high for such a status race.

What would such a status race mean for governance, especially regional governance in the Middle East? The role of rising powers, as they navigate between the givens of their regions and the pressures of global governance, is uncertain (e.g. Desrati et al. 2018). In the case of Iran and Turkey, their limitations are not the only issue. These two states (along with several other Middle Eastern countries) are also substantially constrained in a region with several regional power pretenders that also lack the capabilities to dominate the region, but are caught in a dense set of rivalries that make it exceedingly difficult for them not to resist the rise of a regional power (Volgy et al. 2017).

One major lesson of the post-Cold War era, with respect to global governance, has been that it is far easier to create new regional institutions than to create global ones (Volgy et al. 2009). No wonder then, that much of the new formal architectural construction since 1990 has been regional in scope, in Latin America (Brazil), Southern Africa (South Africa) post-Soviet space (Russia), and Asia (China). Turkey and Iran face different challenges in their region: there

is no other region as conflict-ridden and filled with as many strategic rivalries as the Middle East (Volgy and Gordell 2018), making regional governance exceedingly difficult, even if there was a dominant power.¹⁷ Ultimately, the inability of rising powers to effectively establish new architecture within this environment suggests they need to keep this track record in mind when evaluating their status-seeking strategies.

Nevertheless, rising powers may pursue status seeking strategies in part by demanding and offering new global architecture to replace previous mechanisms. Russian, Chinese, Indian, South African, and Iranian policy makers have at times critiqued and at times offered alternative architectural arrangements to replace the status quo, but have been less than successful in pursuing their goals, and it is questionable whether or not their status has been positively impacted through these efforts. Ironically, the most amount of upheaval to these global governance institutions has come from the change in the political leadership of the state that may have most benefitted from the status quo and extant architectural arrangements: the United States. The Trump administration's assault on the WTO, NATO, the Paris Climate Conference, the United Nations, the European Union and NAFTA are some of these instances. How rising powers adapt to the aftermath of the American assault on these institutions, and what the status implications are for them in doing so remains a large question mark. It may be less status competition around global governance by rising power and more by the damage done to increasingly fragile global institutions by the U.S. that may be most critical. The Trump administration's direction suggests the gravest of consequences for global and regional governance as other world leaders stand apart from the actions and rhetoric of the current U.S.

¹⁷ Note the case of India as the dominant regional power in South Asia. As the only regional power involved with a strategic rivalry, its ability to construct substantial governance architecture in the region has been relatively unsuccessful.

administration (or just as likely seek to exploit them), thrusting the dynamics in the existing inter-state relationships into the great unknown.

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