Status Dilemmas and Inter-State Conflict

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ABSTRACT

We develop the concept of a "status dilemma," and conduct initial case studies that examine how it might help explain patterns of conflict. The process of signaling and recognizing status claims is at least as subject to uncertainty and complex strategic incentives as are the security politics with which scholars of international politics are familiar. Hence, just as the security dilemma may create or amplify conflict among states that seek only security, so might a status dilemma create or amplify conflict among states that are satisfied with their relative position. Case studies ranging from 19th century to the latter Cold War highlight the differences between security dilemmas, status dilemmas, and status competition. They raise the possibility that the status dilemma fosters strategic behavior commonly attributed to the security dilemma.

Notes to Yale Workshop participants:

This paper is part of a larger project on I am co-editing with Deborah Larson and T.V. Paul. I have attached as an appendix the table of contents from that project, as well as an excerpt from the introductory paper that defines key terms.

This paper is co-authored with Dave Kang of USC, who is providing an important case study on inter-war Japan. Because that study is still being conducted, we agreed that I would not present it here, so the first draft of that case is also included as an appendix.

INTRODUCTION

A rising China seeks the status of a great power in a multipolar world. A developing China wants to retain the status of a poor country, resisting attempts to accord it developed country status. The United States is the "indispensable nation," the world's Number One, whose proper role in all global endeavors is that of the leader. Washington is a co-equal partner with all other major powers, no longer seeking a special role. Which of these stories about status is true? Is a rising China challenging or seeking equality with the US? Or, is the real problem China's *lack* of status aspirations and penchant for free riding? And is the US, for its part, clinging to sole superpower status or desperately seeking to be seen as on par with other great powers? There is evidence for all of these stories because officials in Beijing and Washington send different signals about their status to different audiences at different times, as the situation seems to demand. As a result, what the real state of their mutual status politics is remains uncertain.

The process of signaling and recognizing status claims is at least as subject to uncertainty and complex strategic incentives as are the security politics with which scholars of international politics are familiar. Some proportion of the conflictual behavior of states may thus derive from their inability to signal status claims. That is, status conflict may occur among states that would be satisfied with their status if only they could obtain an accurate estimate of it. Or, very costly conflict may occur in a system of states whose beliefs about each other's status are only minimally inconsistent. Just as the security dilemma may foster or amplify conflict among states that seek only security, so might a status dilemma create or amplify conflict among states that seek only to maintain their relative standing.

This paper seeks to determine whether we need to know more about status dilemmas. Do they actually occur? If they do, how strong are their effects? Could status dilemmas drive states into arms races, militarized rivalries or even war in the absence of other powerful conflict-generating mechanisms? Is there

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reason to be concerned that status dilemmas might plague relations among today's rising and established powers? Under the wrong circumstances, could an event such as Russia's invasion of Georgia, China's shooting down of the U.S. spyplane over Hainan Island, or North Korea's sinking of the *Cheonan* morph into real, costly conflict between major powers?

We begin by comparing the status dilemma model with what we call the Standard Model of status competition, as well as the well known rationalist model of the security dilemma. Drawing on the burgeoning literature on status in international politics, we then establish initial expectations about how common status dilemmas are likely to be. If the current literature is right, we argue, status dilemmas should be frequent. Frequency, of course, does not equal significance. Are status dilemmas likely to be an important cause of inter-state conflict? Theoretically, seemingly compelling cases can be made on both sides of this question. We therefore seek to advance the analysis empirically. Compact case studies from the Crimean War to inter-war Japan and the Cold War buttress support for the frequency of status dilemma dynamics, while suggesting that their conflict-generating importance lies mainly in interaction with other mechanisms. In the conclusion, we turn to the promise and challenges of further research in this area and the potential payoff for understanding contemporary rise-and-decline dynamics.

1. THE SECURITY DILEMMA, THE STANDARD MODEL, AND THE STATUS DILEMMA

The security dilemma model as developed most notably by Robert Jervis, Andrew Kydd, and Charles Glaser features two states that may be either "secure" or "greedy" (that is, motivated to expand by non-security aims), and they are uncertain of each other's type. [1] The dilemma emerges when two pure security-

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[1] The description of the model here follows James D. Fearon, "Two States, Two Types, Two Actions: Comments on Charles L. Glaser's *Rational Theory of International Politics*," *Security Studies* 21/2 (forthcoming December 2011). See Robert Jervis, "Cooperation under the Security Dilemma," *World Politics* 30 (1978): 167-214; Andrew H.

seekers are unable to signal their type and then take defensive actions that feed mistrust and suspicion of the other as greedy, leading to arms races and militarized rivalries that may raise the probability of war. Over the past twenty years, Jervis, Glaser and Kydd and many others have carefully developed propositions concerning the conditions under which rational security seekers might find themselves in a security dilemma. The chief result of this work is that, when technology and other circumstances allow, states can take actions (e.g., procure types of arms) that credibly signal their type, and that, if they are rational, security-seekers will certainly do this. Once security-seekers can separate other security seekers from greedy states, security dilemmas disappear. The net effect of this line of theorizing has been to narrow dramatically the scope conditions under which something like a security dilemma might occur and to expand dramatically the set of feasible policy options for avoiding such tempests in teapots.[2]

The result is to render puzzling the all-too pervasive evidence of competitive dynamics that look like security dilemmas. What made the security dilemma such a captivating concept is that it seemed to account for such a large swath of competitive behavior of this type, notably the cold war. If Glaser, Kydd, Jervis and their colleagues are right that rational security seekers should easily be able to signal their benign intentions, especially when defense is dominant, as in the age of nuclear deterrence, then the real explanation must lie elsewhere.

Candidate explanations abound, the best known being "offensive realism," which holds that security-seekers will always make worst case assumptions about others' intentions, driving spirals of competitive behavior.[3] The theory's many critics find this argument impossible to square with the rationality assumption.[4] If you are nearly certain that another state is a security-seeker, why assume that it is

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Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations* (Princeton 2007); Charles Glaser, *Rational Theory of International Politics* (Princeton 2010).

[2] Shipeng Tang, "The Security Dilemma: A Conceptual Analysis," *Security Studies* 18 (July 2009): 587 - 623

[3] John J. Mearcheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*.

[4] Brooks, "Dueling Realisms," *International Organization* Vol. 51, No. 3: 445-477, Summer 1997; Harrison Wagner, *War and the State;* Fearon "Two Types."

greedy? This project highlights another explanation: that security dilemma scholarship misses much of the real stuff of international politics by adopting Waltz's assumption that security is the overarching motivation of states. As other papers in this project demonstrate, status is also a preference. The upshot of a large body of scientific and social scientific research is the expectation that people who identify with a state, most notably those responsible for its international conduct, will tend to prefer favorable status comparisons with relevant others. In the set of goals a state pursues, a congenial set of external beliefs about its standing in international society plays some role—a role whose overall importance is a subject of a growing research project in IR. Under certain conditions, this preference, just like preferences for security or wealth, may clash with those of other states with similar preferences and lead to competition.

In what might be called the "Standard Model" of status competition, one state is dissatisfied with its status. Its leaders perceive a gap between what they think others *should* think about their state's standing and what they estimate others actually *do* think about their state's standing, a disquieting condition often called "status dissonance." In a typical Standard Model setup, a state has enhanced its standing on some measurable dimensions (e.g., material capabilities) and yet others do not accord it commensurate status. The newly enhanced state seeks recognition of its new status, but relevant others refuse to grant it.[5] Leaders chafe under this state of affairs and seek to rectify it, possibly through assertive action. Leaders of other states perceive the link between the newly assertive behavior and a status claim, and reject the claim by resisting the behavior. Contestation may lead to arms racing, rivalry, crises or war. Contestation subsides when beliefs about what others believe about status converge: either other states revise their beliefs about the position of the dissatisfied state so as to make it satisfied, or the dissatisfied state comes to terms with the *ex ante* beliefs of others and accepts them. In most treatments, this process of reconciliation involves war, but other

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[5] See Axel Honneth, *The Struggle for Recognition: The Moral Grammar of Social Conflicts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press 1994); and Erik Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996)

actions, such as expensive arms races or scary crises, may also impose costs that generate an alignment of beliefs about status.

The Standard Model is a candidate explanation for competitive behavior among security-seekers that is inexplicable in terms of the Jervis-Glaser-Kydd model. Security-seekers may clash with other security-seekers even when conditions afford them means of credibly signaling their type simply because they value status as well as security. While renderings differ, key here is the Standard Model's assumption that, although status is socially constructed and subjective, the clash of preferences for status is objective. *A* really wants more recognition and deference from *B* than *B* is willing to grant, and, at the extreme, both are willing to fight (or engage in other risky or costly actions) rather than yield on the issue. Hence there is no dilemma, no tragedy, no tempests in teapots. When the Standard Model holds, the conflict we see is the result of real clashes of preferences.

By contrast, and by direct analogy to the Jervis-Glaser-Kydd model, a status dilemma occurs when two states would be satisfied with their status if they had perfect information about each others' beliefs. But in the absence of such certainty, a state's leadership may conclude that its status is under challenge even when it is not. Mixed signals, botched communications, or misinterpretations of the meanings underlying action may generate misplaced status dissonance. A state may then take actions to reassert its current estimate of its status that appear to undermine the other's estimates of its own status. What *A* does to confirm its satisfaction with the current set of beliefs about status may undermine *B's* satisfaction, leading to countermeasures and an upward spiral of needless status competition among fundamentally satisfied states.

The implications of the status dilemma are analogous to the security dilemma. It raises the possibility of preventable conflict arising between states with no strong conflict of interest—tempests in teapots, if you will. The differences, however, loom large. With status as a preference, the variables that may exacerbate or ameliorate the dilemma are completely different (more below). Most important is that solving the security problem does not necessarily solve the status problem. Indeed, policies that might ameliorate the security dilemma could

exacerbate the status dilemma. Secure states may still conclude that their preferred status in under threat, and take actions that look a lot like security dilemma dynamics.

Needless to say, in seeking to explore this potential phenomenon we enter an extremely crowded and complex scholarly context. Our chief concern below is to check for potential explanatory value-added from the status dilemma concept over the security dilemma and Standard models. This confronts daunting challenges in measuring status. Motivation is unobservable, and it will be hard to distinguish security motivation from status, yet it is crucial to do so in order to separate the Standard Model of status competition from offensive realism. And there are many other models that seek to explain similar behavior, ranging from domestic politics based models to popular information and commitment-problem based bargaining models. As one of us has argued elsewhere if they are truly indifferent about the origins and nature of preferences, then many bargaining models may well complement status-based arguments.[6] But, in the interests of tractability, we will set aside these complexities and focus on the three kinds of models discussed so far.

2. ARE STATUS DILEMMAS LIKELY?

As the introductory paper stresses, overlapping research findings from multiple disciplines lead us to expect social status to be an important a driver of human behavior.[7] Efforts to maintain or enhance status should be central to states' identities and interests, leading to periodic struggles for recognition by relevant others.[8] Copious empirical research, both quantitative and qualitative, provides at

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[6] Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, Status Competition and Great power War," *World Politics* 61/1 (January 2009). Quint and Shubik, "Games of Status," *Journal of Public Economic Theory* 3/4 (2001): 349-72; Shibuk, "Games of Status," *Behavioral Science* 16/2 (1971): 117-129.

[7] See Larson, Paul and Wohlforth, "Status and World Order."

[8] Greenhill, "Recognition and Collective Identity Formation in International Politics, " *European Journal of International Relation*s 14/2 2008 343-368; Murray, "Identity, Insecurity, and Great Power Politics: The Tragedy of German Naval Ambition Before the First World War" *Security Studies* 19/4 (2010) 656-688; Ringmar, *Identity, Interest and Action: A Cultural*

the very least circumstantial evidence for the importance of status concerns in international politics.[9] To date, most of this evidence has been assimilated into the standard model, but if status is important to states, there is no reason to assume that they always or even usually have good information about it. The more difficult it is for states to assess status and signal satisfaction, the greater the likelihood of status dilemmas, and the more likely it is that much evidence and the associated behavior taken as evidence for the Standard Model actually reflects the status dilemma. And much of what we know about international politics suggests that the politics of status will be plagued with uncertainty.

2.1 Strategic Challenges

Consider three strategic challenges of status politics. The first is illustrated in the opening paragraphs of this paper: strategic incentives and signaling ambiguity. Efforts to communicate claims and expectations regarding status are subject to an extraordinarily complex set of strategic incentives. The problem is not simply that states face incentives to pretend to be different types (e.g., a revisionist pretends to be satisfied with the status quo) but rather that they face incentives to be more than one type simultaneously (to be revisionist to some audiences, in some regions, or on some issues, and status quo for others). In other words, the incentives are often for ambiguity. Given the strategic benefits of such ambiguity, it may not be easy to find ways to signal sincere beliefs about status.

Second is measurement uncertainty. Status is hard to measure. 'Status' is a recognized position in a social hierarchy, implying relations of dominance and deference. Although it is related to material capabilities and observed capacities, status is socially constructed in that it achieves meaning though intersubjective beliefs and social processes. As the introductory paper stresses, status derives from others' recognition. So status is a set of collective beliefs about a state's standing, but it is only known to a given state through acts that imply recognition. If a state

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Explanation of Sweden's Intervention in the Thirty Years War. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 1996).

[9] For reviews, see Larson, Paul and Wohlforth; Larson and Shevchenko 2005, 2010; Wohlforth 2009; Renshon forthcoming; Lebow *Cultural Theory;* Markey, etc..

wants to know its status, it needs to estimate the collective beliefs relevant other states hold about it, even as those states face strategic incentives to misrepresent their beliefs, Measuring a state's status thus entails eliciting acts of recognition by others, each of which must be mutually understood to signify social position. On its face, this is a process fraught with ambiguity.[10]

And most the capabilities or attributes that scholars say underlie status in international politics are hard to measure. Summarizing the literature, the introductory paper lists "wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, socio-political organization, or diplomatic clout" as "valued attributes" that underlie status. Of these, only wealth is readily measurable. Thus, unless states all agree on some easily measurable metric, the challenge of measuring status remains even if states look to markers of status rather than actual estimates of others' collective beliefs.

The third strategic challenge is the endogeneity of measurement challenges. If states value positively distinct social comparisons to relevant others—the core claim of the status literature—then the challenges of measurement are likely to be endogenous to the struggle for recognition, making it extremely hard either to agree on status rankings or to agree to disagree. Status claims are related to the resources or capacities at a given state's disposal, but the relationship between specific resources or capacities and status is always contestable. In any bargaining over status, each state faces incentives to highlight the particular resources in which it enjoys a comparative advantage or the particular things it is good at. American officials often equate superpower status with high-end military capacity, for example, while Europeans try to stress the salience of post-conflict order-provision. So even if the United States and Europe agree that status is connected to the capability to resolve conflicts and provide order, they may not be able to agree on the status implications of the kinds of capabilities at their disposal. If all states value positive comparisons, moreover, then no state is likely to agree to a status-conferring attribute that puts it at a disadvantage. And given that all states will seek

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[10] See R. V. Gould, *Collision of Wills: How Ambiguity about Social Rank Breeds Conflict* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003)

recognition from others, then states are unlikely for long to be able to "agree to disagree" about what attributes convey status.

2.2 Systemic Challenges

For three reasons, these strategic properties are likely to be exacerbated by properties common to international systems. First, material capabilities are rarely distributed so as to ameliorate the signaling and measurement problems discussed so far. If states face incentives for ambiguity on signaling and recognizing status claims, and if they face incentives to highlight to social significance of attributes in which they are relatively favored, then few real capabilities distributions will have unambiguous status implications. To be sure, relative resources distributions may rule out some claims. For example, many states simply cannot credibly claim great power status.   And it may be, as one of us has argued, that today's material distribution renders incredible claims by states other than the United States to sole superpower status.[11] That suggests the possibility of consequential variation in the status implications of the distribution of capabilities among states. But the search for such variation   obscures the big picture: that few international systems are sufficiently stratified materially to eliminate status uncertainty. After all, what matters is not just the raw distribution of aggregated capabilities, but the distribution of various status-conferring dimensions. All it takes is one state with a lot of one kind of capabilities (e.g., naval) and another excelling in a different type (e.g., landpower) to render uncertain any obvious implications for social stratification. With very few exceptions, truly stratified systems, where capabilities in all relevant dimensions sort all or most states into self-evident ranks, do not occur.[12]

The second systemic challenge unit heterogeneity. Most international systems are made up of units that vary not only by size and capability, but also by

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[11] Wohlforth, 2009.

[12] A significant exception is the system described in Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (Columbia University Press, 2010). See also some of the ancient systems discussed in Kaufman, Little and Wohlforth, *The Balance of Power in World History* 2007.

type (state, city-state, empire, confederation) and domestic system.[13] This is likely to complicate agreement on the attributes that convey status, and magnify the problems of signaling and recognition. International systems, moreover, are rarely static—new members join and face the challenge of navigating and negotiating the system's extant status politics. Whenever new units seek to enter an existing system or whenever different types of units coexist within a system, uncertainty of status politics is likely to increase.

Finally, norms are unlikely to be sufficiently robust to overcome the uncertainty problem that is likely to drive status dilemmas. To be sure, the discussion thus far highlights the importance of shared norms. "Every international system or society has a set of rules or norms that define actors and appropriate behavior,"[14] which Christopher Reus-Smit calls the "elementary rules of practice that states formulate to solve the coordination and collaboration problems associated with coexistence under anarchy."[15] One can conjecture that a robust set of norms might clarify status politics sufficiently to ameliorate the problem of status dilemmas. A normative system might explicitly endorse and reflect hierarchy, for example, and elaborate a clear set of status markers. An ideal stable normative system would comprise a set of fundamental principles that clearly identify what comprises status, how it is gained and measured, and which parties are possible participants for status. Such a system would be marked by a consensus and delineation of the rules of the game.

But we have already identified the challenge to this conjecture: if the status literature is right that states value positive comparisons, why would they accept norms that reflect unfavorably on themselves? Even—indeed, especially— if states could be reconciled to explicitly hierarchical norms, each would be expected to resist any status-defining norms it saw as diminishing its own status relative to

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[13] Buzan and Little, *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations*; Kaufman, Little and Wohlforth, *Balance of Power In World History*.

[14] Stephen Krasner, "Organized hypocrisy in nineteenth-century East Asia," *International Relations of the Asia-Pacific* 1 (2001), pp. 173-197, p. 173.

[15] Christopher Reus-Smit, "The Constitutional Structure of International Society and the nature of Fundamental Institutions," *International Organization* 51 No. 4 (1997), pp. 555-89, p. 557; John Ruggie, "Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis," *World Politics* 35 No. 2 (1983), pp. 261-285.

others. It thus comes as no surprise that, empirically, examples of robust norms regulating the politics of status in international politics are few and far between.[16] The current Westphalian system, for example, is composed of sovereign nation-states that interact with each other in a ritualized and institutionalized manner.[17] But formal juridical equality is taken for granted, both as a normative goal and also as an enduring reality of international politics. That is, once accepted into the system, all nation-states are formally considered equal. The politics of status takes place entirely in the interstices of this normative system, leaving very little scope for norms to ameliorate the uncertainty attendant upon status claims and recognition.

These common properties vary, and it is possible to generate hypotheses about systemic settings more or less prone to status dilemmas, just as Jervis, Kydd and Glaser have done with the security dilemma. Before confronting the substantial challenges such research would entail, it pays to investigate the phenomenon empirically. We expect status dilemmas to be common, but we do not really know whether they actually occur, or, if they do occur, how significant they are.

While the literature surveyed in the introductory article convincingly shows that those who manage the affairs of states are likely to place a value on positive status comparisons, we still do not know how strong this preference is. Many scholars, reflected in this collection by David Lake and William Thompson, contend that status preferences themselves are relatively unimportant in explaining conflict. It is only by confusing status with authority (Lake) or conflating "little 's' status" with "big 'S' Status" (Thompson) that scholars may think otherwise. If these skeptics are right, then decision makers will value positive status comparisons but will be unwilling to pay large costs or take big risks to pursue that preference unless it overlaps with other more concrete interests. Status dilemmas, in that view, may well be ubiquitous but trivial—dilemmas that are transcended or solved as soon as they threaten large costs.

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[16] For the generalization, see Luard, *Types of International Society* and Watson, *Systems of States*. For exceptions see Kang 2010, and Lebow, *Cultural Theory*

[17] Andreas Osiander, "Sovereignty, International Relations, and the Westphalian Myth," *International Organization* 55 No. 2, (2001), pp,251-301; Hendrik Spruyt, *The Sovereign State and Its Competitors* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1994); and Darel E. Paul,"Sovereignty, Survival, and the Westphalian Blind Alley in International Relations," *Review of International Studies* 25 no. 2 (1999.) pp. 217-231.

3. STATUS DILEMMAS IN ACTION

The short cases that follow are plausibility probes. We selected cases in settings that seem ripe for status dilemmas and where we observe the phenomenon of interest: militarized great power competition. We also sought an array of cases that would highlight different theories so we could compare the explanatory leverage provided by the status dilemma with that provided by the security dilemma, the standard model and offensive realism.

3. 1. The Crimean War

The setting for the Crimean War was a multipolar system with both Britain and Russia at the top of the great-power hierarchy.[18] If status reflects mainly financial and naval capabilities, Britain was clearly number one. If status is mainly a reflection of military power, Russia comes out on top. Paul Schroeder's masterly exegesis of contemporary perceptions place both Russia and Britain on a roughly equal status footing as "co-hegemons" of the system. At the same time, France was still widely seen as having at least the potential to make a plausible bid for hegemony in Europe.

The case features a seemingly trivial inter-state dispute that morphs into a bloody great-power war:

•In 1852 France demands of the Ottoman Empire enhanced privileges for Roman Catholic clerics at the Holy Places in Palestine, at the expense of Greek Orthodox clerics supported by Russia. France moves a warship to the Dardanelles. In December, the Sultan acquiesces.

•Russia issues an ultimatum to the Sultan: formally grant Russia the authority to act as a protector of the religious rights all Orthodox subjects of the

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[18] See Schroeder, *Transformation,* and his influential *Austria, Britain and the Crimean War: The Destruction of the European Concert* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1972). Watson, *Evolution.*, 243. See also Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of British Naval Mastery* (London: Macmillan, 1983): chap. 6 for a discussion of nature and limitations of British power in this period.

Ottoman Empire, or Russia will take military action. Britain then redirects a naval force to the Dardanelles.

•When the Sultan refuses, Russia occupies two Ottoman principalities in the Balkans, raising the issue to a general European crisis.

•Austria mediates, drafting a potential settlement that grants much of Russia's demand. Tsar Nicholas I immediately accepts this "Vienna Note." Sensing support from Britain and France, the Sultan rejects the deal.

•The Ottomans declare war; numerous settlements are attempted and fail; Turkish military forces attack Russian positions; Russia sinks the Turks' Black Sea Fleet; more negotiations ensue as Britain and France move fleets closer to the Black Sea.

•In 1854, Britain and France declare war against Russia, effect a landing on Crimea, and, with the Turks and other allies, defeat Russia at the cost of some 650,000 lives.

Scholars have rarely (if ever) examined this case in terms of either the standard model or the security dilemma.[19] The setting was plausibly ripe for standard model status competition in that either France, Britain or Russia might seek Number One status, which could spark resistance from the others.[20] But because no salient power dynamic seemed to favor any one, the classic preconditions for standard model style status competition are generally thought only to have occurred later, with the rise of Germany. Some aspects of the crisis that led to the war are redolent of a security dilemma: a series of military moves, most which could be construed as 'defensive,' leading to countermoves on the part of others, slowly escalating to war. But this runs against the dominant view of the conflict: that Turkey, Britain and France fought to prevent Russia's greedy (non-security motivated) expansionism.[21]

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[19] David Sylvan, Corinne Graff, and Elisabetta Pugliese, "Status and Prestige in International Relations" (Manuscript, Graduate Institute of International Studies, Geneva, 1998) establish the central role of status in the conflict, but do not distinguish between status and authority, or between the standard model and the status dilemma.

[20] Wohlforth 2009.

[21] William R. Thompson outlines this view in " Status Conflict, Polarity and Hierarchies."

Given the long history of Russian expansionism at the expense of the declining Ottoman Empire both before and after the Crimean War, it is little wonder that scholars looking back should see the case this way. And, to be sure, there were always highly placed Russians eager to strike the Ottomans. The problem is that a great deal of probative process evidence from the case itself is inconsistent with this explanation. In particular, what Tsar Nicholas and his top ministers said and did during the crisis strongly suggests that status dilemma dynamics were in play.

The key question is, why did Russia escalate? Nicholas made no territorial demand and never suggested that anything going on in Turkey had anything to do with the security of his empire or the welfare of his subjects. He sought specified and constrained authority: that is, the right to act as the protector of the religious interests of the Sultan's orthodox subjects. The Russians claimed that this right had been enshrined in an earlier treaty. But why revive the claim in such a way as to risk a dangerous crisis? The standard view is that the authority claim was a pretext for territorial aggrandizement. But much Russian behavior and copious internal evidence undermines that view. After all, Nicholas leapt at the chance to accept the Vienna Note, which granted the gist of his authority claim but no territorial gain. And the evidence we have of internal deliberations indicates that Nicholas wanted just what he said he wanted.[22] This was clear, moreover, to many observers. As the British ambassador in St. Petersburg observed:

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[22] I base this on close reading of the very documents featured in standard accounts; see documents reprinted in Zaionchkovskiy, *Vostochnaia voina* and Anderson. *Documents;* and analyzed in Goldfrank, *Origins;* Royle, *Crimea;* Rich, *Why the Criman War?* and Vinogradov, "Sviatye mesta is zemnye dela (anglo-Russkie otnosheniia nakanune Krymskoi voine," *Novaia i noveishaia istoriia* 1983: Nos. 5 and 6. See also British ambassador Seymour's dispatches, analyzed in Hermann Wentker, "Russland vor dem Krimkrieg: Die russische Aussenpolitik 1853/54 im Urteil des britischen Gesandten George Hamilton Seymour," *Jahfbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas* Vol 30, No. 3: 376-380. My reading aligns with Mel'nikova, who, examining the same sources, concludes that "Russia's aggressiveness is grossly exaggerated" in the historical literature. Liubov' V. Mel'nikova, "Sviatye mesta v tsentre vostochnogo voprosa: tserkovo-politicheskiy faktor kak odna iz prchin krymskoi voiuny," *Rossiiskaia istoriia* 2008 (No, 6): 70..

Now as before I believe that His Majesty began this deplorable quarrel, and even took military possession of the Principalities, neither with the idea of over-running the rest of Turkey, or adding to his already overgrown possession, or of involving himself in disputes with his allies ....[23]

This leaves two main explanations. One, which almost all historians reject, is that Nicholas was so motivated by the desire to support his fellow Orthodox Christians in the exercise of their faith, either out of his own religious conviction or because of domestic pressures, that he was willing to risk great-power war.[24] The other is strongly supported in the documentary record but largely ignored by modern scholars: Nicholas and his advisors believed that Russia's status as co-hegemon and bookend of the European Concert required Turkey and France to back down clearly and publicly. The Porte's decision to acquiesce to Napoleon III's demand was profoundly inconsistent with Nicholas' estimate of his empire's status. As the Russian Chancellor Count Nesselrode explained to the British Ambassador:

You have known me two years—you have seen that I am not disposed to violent measures … Well, I declare to you that I could not advise the emperor to recede. His dignity would be lowered, his position would be compromised. It would be a triumph for the Turks, and a humiliation for Russia . . .[25]

Nicholas' subsequent actions were all aimed at restoring and securing Russia's identity as Britain's equal in world affairs. Russia took what struck others as aggressive action not, as the standard model would have it, in order to make some new claim to a new position in world politics. Nor did it take action out of insecurity as the Jervis-Glaser-Kydd model defines that term. Nor did it seek Mearsheimer-style expansion to gain more power out of worst-case assumptions

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[23] Quoted in Royle 78.

[24] Mel'nikova, "Sviatye mesta."

[25] Quoted in Royle 55.

about other great powers' intentions. On the contrary, Nicholas embarked upon the crisis sure of his empire's security and capabilities and confident that Britain, Prussia and Austria would support him. The insecurity concerned Russia's status, which had been dealt a blow by Napoleon's meddling and the Sultan's intransigence.

The challenge for Russian policy was that it had to do four things at once: secure unambiguous confirmation of Russia's current estimate of its status via a clarification of rights in Turkey; communicate a serious threat to Turkey to coerce a reversal of the Sultan's decision; reassure the British Cabinet of Russia's commitment to the status quo; and prepare for the possible need for cooperation among the powers should Turkey collapse either under its own weight the force which Russia might apply to coerce acquiescence.

Managing these multiple messages proved beyond the capability of Tsarist diplomacy. The problem with the Tsar's demand for the authority act as protector of the religious rights of Orthodox Christians in Turkey was that it easily lent itself to the interpretation of a Russian desire for quasi-suzerainty over the Ottoman Empire, which, in turn, implied to British minds an unacceptable and unwarranted increase in Russia's status and a potential security threat down the road. [26] (Note, however, that Nicholas very nearly got this authority in the Vienna Note.) Russia's attempts to coerce the Ottomans, first by occupying the two Balkan provinces and later by sinking the Turkish Black Sea squadron, were increasingly hard to square with professions of a desire to maintain the status quo. And the contradictions inherent in trying to make advance arrangements for the possible collapse of the Ottoman Empire were already evident in January and February 1853, when Nicholas discussed matters with the British ambassador in what he thought was the spirit of his earlier "gentlemen's agreement" with Aberdeen (now Prime Minister) on the issue. He reaffirmed Russia's long-standing support of the status quo in the near East, but, in a move much criticized by diplomatic historians, he proceeded to

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[26]As the British ambassador in Paris memoed to Foreign Secretary Clarendon in May: " … in the East ecclesiastical and civil authority are so interwoven, that to give Russia the right of interference in manners of religion is to give her the opportunity of interfering in matters of civil administration."   Clarendon noted later: "Russia would then give the law to Europe and defy us all." Quoted in Hermann Wentler, *Zerstörung der Großmach Rußland? Die britischen Kriegsziele im Krimkrieg* (Göttigen and Zürich: Vandenhoek and Rupprecht, 1993): 53; 60.

vet his ideas about how Turkey's possessions might be disposed should the empire collapse in the near future. [27] When communicated to London, this signal began the process of alarm which set the spiral in motion. [28]

In short, Russia faced a status dilemma: actions it took to secure its status seemed threatening to others, which resulted in a spiral of actions that risked Russia's security and cost it dearly in blood and treasure. For the spiral to result in war, however, the other players needed strong reasons to resist Russia. For Turkey, these reasons had to do with autonomy and sovereignty.[29] Even if the Sultan believed that Nicholas's aims were limited to the rights of co-religionists and therefore discounted major near-term security threats, a Russian victory in the crisis would constrain his autonomy by granting another sovereign some legitimate authority over thousands of his subjects. So long as Turkey could bank on British and French support, it had classic non-status motives to fight Russia. Turkey's resistance, in short, reflects a fight over authority precisely in Lake's sense.[30] While ambiguity shrouds Napoleon III's objectives, France's aims are widely seen as a modest *increase* in status at Russia's expense, lending veracity to Nicholas' initial assessment.[31] Between Paris and St. Petersburg there was no status dilemma, for France was a real if limited revisionist.

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[27] Diplomatic and military historians agree on Nicholas conservatism, his commitment to the European order, and his belief that Russia did not require further expansion, but they question his perceived need for a coerced prestige victory and a preliminary understanding among the powers concerning the disposition of Turkey. See, especially, Fuller, *Strategy,* John Shelton Curtiss, *Russia's Crimean War* (Durham, N.C., Duke University Press, 1979) and Albert Seaton, *The Crimean War: A Russian Chronicle* (London: Batsford, 1977).

[28] For Sir G. H. Seymour's report from Petersburg and Foreign Secretary Lord John Russell's response, see Anderson, *Great Powers* chap 4, docs. 4 a and b; 5. On the reception among cabinet members, see J. B. Conacher, *The Aberdeen Coalition, 1852-1855: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Party Politics* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1968).

[29] Saab, *Origins of the Crimean Alliance*.

[30] Lake, " Authority, Status, and the End of the American Century."

[31] Historians stress that France's ambiguity stemmed both from international and domestic incentives (that is, the need to ward off a countercoalition, yet also to signal other revisionists of France's intent, while also satisfying domestic interests for and against revisionism) *and* the ambivalence of its leader, making for extraordinarily tough interpretive dilemmas. Fortunately, there is a fine account: William E. Echard, *Napoleon III and the Concert of Europe* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1983).

What about Britain? Britain's ultimate decision to fight is the key, for historians agree that Nicholas was right: had London colluded or even stood aside, Russia would almost certainly have prevailed. And there is little evidence that Britain started the crisis intent on taking Russia down a peg. Indeed, the Tsar's estimate of his empire's status vis-a-vis Britain was grounded in real recent experience. Yes, there were British statesmen who resented the Tsarist empire as a sclerotic despotism and disliked its hugely influential role in European politics. But Schroeder's assessment of operative perceptions is hard to discount: overall, official London saw much as Nicholas himself did: as a massively powerful pillar of the European order. In the most recent, similar crisis involving most of the same actors, Russia had pursued identical policies and handily secured its interests while retaining the entente with Britain.[32] That crisis had indeed been resolved in exactly the spirit of "co-hegemony." When Nicholas visited Britain in 1844, he believed he had reached a "gentlemen's agreement" with Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel and Foreign Secretary Lord Aberdeen on exactly this issue.[33] And, while mixed, the evidence flowing to St. Petersburg even late in the buildup to the Crimean War could feed rational expectations that the British cabinet would stand aside.

What caused Britain to resist? The standard view is roughly consistent with offensive realism: no matter what Nicholas might say, if he were allowed to win this crisis, it would result in a sufficient enhancement of Russia's position to threaten the European 'balance,' and possibly India, in the future. Overall, the evidence for this view is plentiful: British memoranda and notes are laced with these concerns, which

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[32]On the eastern crisis of 1839, forerunner to the Crimean War, see Schroeder *Transformation,* 739-41.

[33]The following passage from Russian Chancellor Count Nesselrode's memorandum submitted to the British government after this visit sums up much of this paragraph: "On land Russia exercises in regard to Turkey a preponderant action. On sea, England occupies the same position. Isolated, the action of these two powers might do much mischief. United, it can produce a real benefit; thence the advantage of coming to a previous understanding before having recourse to action." Anderson, *Documents* 67. What was true of Turkey applied to many other areas as well.. For critical assessments of Nicholas' general policy, see Nicholas V. Riasanovsky, *Nicholas I and Official Nationality in Russia, 1825-1855* (Berkeley, University of Californa Press 1959); W. Bruce Lincoln, *Nicholas I: Emperor and Autocrat of all the Russias* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press): 1978; and Nina Stepanova Kiniapina, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii pervoi poloviny XIX v.* (Moscow: Vysshaia shkola, 1963).

gain in force as the crises progressed. But it is important to note that many British statesmen also understood that the real issue in play was not about security threats. And there is plenty of evidence of British pique at the Tsar's pretentions.   As Seymour put it:

> I cannot doubt that His Majesty entertains most exaggerated ideas as to the influence to which he is entitled in the country of a feeble but independent sovereign, and that the time has fully come when some demonstration must be made which will have the effect of shewing where the limits to his authority are traced.[34]

Like Seymour, many members of the British cabinet saw Nicholas as making a claim for enhanced status unwarranted by any shift in real capabilities. They knew that failure to achieve Nicholas' objective would be a humiliating blow to his empire's status and sought ways to settling the crisis that would avoid this outcome. Throughout the crisis, the British cabinet remained split, and throughout, aggressive Russian action helped tilt the balance toward those who favored a war to curb Russian pretentions in the Near East. Coercive moves by the western powers, particularly the dispatch of fleets, implied a shift of influence in the Near East to Russia's detriment. After each move, there was cause to believe that firm Russian countermeasures coupled with compromise offers would defuse the crisis, return Britain to the "gentlemen's agreement," and maintain Russia's status.   The compromises accepted by Russia gave in on all points—except they included language that, however vaguely, codified Russia's rights vis-à-vis her co-religionists that the Tsar and his ministers insisted had characterized the status quo before 1852. For Russia, these clauses symbolized the restoration of the status quo ante. For many British decision makers, they implied a dramatic increase in Russia's influence that was not warranted by any increase in Russian power. Yet intertwined with these sentiments are copious arguments about potential threats to concrete British security and economic interests. It is difficult to see how the reluctance of

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[34] Quoted in Royle, 78.

many key British decision makers to risk war with Russia could have been overcome had the status contestation not also implied authority claims with important security and economic implications.

In sum, status dilemma dynamics are strongly implicated in the origins and escalation of the crisis. As best as they can be measured, the initial set of beliefs about status were only minimally inconsistent. Evidence for signaling dilemmas and uncertainty concerning estimates of status abounds, as does evidence connecting these problems with the parties' inability to stop the spiral to war. Evidence consistent with other models begins seriously to accumulate once the crisis crossed the threshold to war and is necessary to explain why the crisis morphed into a great power war. Thus, the status dilemma helps explain this case, but this case does not support the inference that status can be an independent cause of major war.

3. 2. The 'New' Cold War

The latter Cold War is the poster child for modern security dilemma scholarship. By the 1970s, many of the systemic and technological conditions that should allow rational security-seekers to signal their type and cooperate to ameliorate the security dilemma were in place.[35] Like Britain and Russia in the 19th century, the two superpowers were relatively secure against each other's conventional forces. With the acquisition of secure second-strike capabilities by the early 1960s, the nuclear argument for insecurity could be turned on its head into a powerful argument for ultimate security. For most scholars writing at the time, the détente and arms control of the 1970s were rational responses to external incentives, while the descent into the "new Cold War" of the late 1970s and early 1980s, featuring the return of intense arms racing and regional competition, were outgrowths of irrational ideology or suboptimal domestic impulses. [36]

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[35] See, especially, Glaser, "Realists as Optimists," and Glaser, *Rational Theory.*

[36] See, e.g., Stephen M. Walt, "The Case for Finite Containment: Analyzing U.S. Grand Strategy," *International Security* 41: 1 (Summer 1989): 3-43; Barry Posen and Stephen Van Evera, "Defense Policy of the Reagan Administration: Departure from Containment," in Steven Miller, ed., *Conventional Forces and American Defense Policy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986); Jack L. Snyder, "The Gorbachev Revolution: A Waning of Soviet Expansionism?" *International Security* Vol 12, No. 3 (1987); pp. 93-131, and *Myths of Empire*

The status dilemma is a potential alternative explanation for this behavior. The late Cold War United States and Soviet Union were superpowers—an unambiguous new status designation that reflected a distribution of power without precedent in the history of the European states system. By the early 1970s, superpower equality was recognized explicitly and implicitly in a series of formal agreements, just as "great power" status had been codified in the international conferences and congresses of the Concert of Europe. Officials from each superpower acknowledged their overall military parity. The Ostpolitik treaties regulating the German question, the superpowers' "agreement on basic principles," and the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe codified formal US-Soviet political equality. In contrast to earlier international systems, the Cold-War hierarchy seemed much more stable and formal. The superpowers' superiority to all other states and putative equality vis-à-vis each other was unusually explicit—a state of affairs lending support to the widespread view of the latter Cold War as a loose superpower concert.

All this new evidence signaling equal standing, however, came against the backdrop of quarter-century post-World War II experience in which both superpowers and most other observers agreed that the United States outranked the Soviet Union. While the Soviet Union was thought to be equal to or even stronger than the United States in conventional military capabilities, the United States dominated all other categories of capabilities. In each other's eyes, the two superpowers were indeed in a special status above all the rest, but the United States ranked above the Soviet Union. At the same time, the Soviet Union was close enough to the United States to spark fears that it expected or sought true equality or even preeminence for itself.

The contemporary evidence strongly showed that Moscow placed immense importance on formal superpower parity. The importance of status for Moscow showed up in numerous diplomatic exchanges, including Moscow's efforts to ensure that China not be treated as a status-equal. American decision-makers

(Cornell, 1991); Roger E. Kanet and Edward A. Kolodziej, eds., *The Cold War as Cooperation* (London: Macmillan, 1991); Allen Lynch, *The Cold War is Over—Again* (Boulder, Co: Westview, 1992).

perceived this clearly, even as they negotiated the détente-era agreements that formalized superpower parity. Subsequent memoir evidence backs up this impression.[37] Thus, it was clear that détente and status were linked. What was not clear was how the formal parity enshrined in detente was to be reconciled with continued real status inequality between the two principles.

Part of the problem was that Moscow faced the same problem St. Petersburg had a century before. Its status was based mainly on military power, and its efforts to secure recognition with this blunt instrument could be perceived as threats to security, claims to primacy, or both. This is exactly what appears to have happened in the sequence of events that destroyed détente and set in motion the last round of the Cold War.

While these events remain controversial, new archival releases, interviews, and memoirs have nudged the interpretive center of gravity among Cold War historians toward the view that the Soviet Union began the 1970s as a competitive rather than a defensive, security-maximizing expansionist.[38] Unlike its Tsarist predecessors, the Soviet elite began by trying to enhance rather than merely preserve its status. But the new evidence is hardly an unambiguous vindication of 1970s hawkish assessments. The Soviets did seek relative status gains, but from an

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[37] For contemporary evidence and U.S. perceptions, see W. C. Wohlforth, *Elusive Balance: Power and Perceprions During the Cold War* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell university Press,1993): chap 7; Memoirs that attest to the important of "equality and equal security" include G. M. Kornienko, *Kholodnaia voina — svideltel'svto ee uchastnika* (Moscow: Mezhdundarodnaia otnosheniia, 1994); and Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's sic Cold Warf Presidents* (New York: Random House, 1995).

[38] As Odd Arne Westad sums up the new evidence on the Horn conflict, "The main foreign policy aim for Soviet involvement in Africa was to score a series of inexpensive victories in what was perceived as a global contest with Washington for influence and positions in the Third World." "Moscow and the Angolan Crisis, 1974-76: A New Pattern of Intervention," Cold War International History Project [CWHIP] *Bulletin* 8-9 (Winter 1996-97): 21. I gratefully acknowledge my debt to the Carter-Brezhnev Project, sponsored by the Center for Foreign Policy Development, at the Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies, Brown University; the National Security Archive; and the CWIHP. This project is responsible for declassification of scores of important documents, and has generated much of the new documentation and interview material on this period. A key publication of the Project is Odd Arne Westad, ed., *The Fall of Détente: Soviet-American Relations in the Carter Years* (Oslo: Scandinavian University Press, 1997). In addition, an invaluable source for any student of this period is Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: Soviet-American Relations from Nixon to Reagan* rev. ed., (Washington, DC: Brookings, 1994).

inferior position.   Neither the available documents nor the recollections of Brezhnev's aides paint a picture of a leadership taking on the United States for world primacy. Rather, the aim was arguably simply to secure the identity of status equal of the United States by translating the *signals* of recognition they received in the early 1970s into concrete behavior.

Brezhnev and his aides sought to confirm their newfound status by emulating the relevant referent group, the United States. They built a blue water navy and sought to compete with the United States for influence outside traditional Soviet spheres of influence. The Soviet leadership and intelligence services planned the Africa strategy in advance, as a relatively cheap and riskless way not only to compete with the United States, but also to counter China's policy of status-enhancement. Indeed, Soviet decision-makers appear to have seen the new policies not only as efforts to confirm recognition, but as reflections of the status gains they had already made, and which were codified in détente. Moscow's new status as putative superpower equal to the United States implied an "equal right to meddle in third areas."[39]

The result of Moscow's modest efforts was an upward spiral of competitive moves. Soviet moves in Africa, Europe, Southeast Asia and eventually Central Asia slowly shifted the Carter cabinet in favor of National Security Adviser Brzezinski's hawkish view of a "Soviet thrust toward global preeminence."[40] As Carter described his "view of the Soviet threat" in 1980, "my concern is that the combination of increasing Soviet military power and political shortsightedness fed by big-power ambition, might tempt the Soviet Union both the exploit local turbulence (especially

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[39] Soviet official, quoted in Dallin, "The Road to Kabul: Soviet Perceptions of World Affairs and the Afghan Crisis," in Vernon Aspaturian, Alexander Dallin, and Jiri Valenta, *The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan: Three Perspectives* ACIA Working Paper no. 27 (Los Angeles: UCLA., Center for International and Strategic Affairs, September, 1980); 57. See also Westad, ibid.,; Kornienko, *Kholodnaia voina,* Viktor Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin During the Yom Kippur War* (University park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1995); and the interviews reported in Alexei Vassiliev, *Russian Policy in the Middle East: From Messianism to Pragmatism* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1993).

[40] Zbigniew Brzezinski, *Power and Principle* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1983) 148.

in the Third World) and to intimidate our friends in order to seek political advantage and eventually even political preponderance."[41]

The Americans' response was *linkage,* a policy of holding the central strategic relationship—nuclear and conventional arms control, trade, and cultural exchanges, and the relationship with China—hostage to Moscow's behavior in the Third World. And linkage is the key, for the main decision-makers on both sides believed that arms control and other forms of military cooperation were in their long-term security interests. By subordinating the central security relationship to the struggle for status, Carter was accepting a trade-off between security and status.[42] Moscow's response indicated similar preferences: If what the Soviets wanted was enhanced security, they could have had it at the price of less status. As the U.S. policy slowly gathered steam, Soviet policy did shift from status enhancement to status maintenance.[43] But Moscow preferred renewed security competition to acceptance of détente on terms that suggested *reduced* status.

In other words, each side of the 1970s debate was half right. As the doves argued, the Soviets did value détente, were not imbued with soaring confidence, and had no serious expectation of supplanting the United States as the world's leading superpower. But, as the hawks maintained, the Brezhnev leadership valued détente not simply for security reasons but also as a reflection of status gains. They preferred renewed competition to acceptance of détente on terms that suggested reduced status. Brezhnev's problem was analogous to Nicholas' 120 years before: how to maintain détente without signaling acceptance of reduced status.[44]

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[41] Brzezinski*, Power and Principle*, Annex 1, p. 2.

[42] And by moving closer to Beijing, Carter was risking military tension in the one security relationship that could genuinely threaten U.S. survival—that with the Soviet Union. These were precisely the risks Secretary of State Vance and other "doves" did not want their country to take. See Vance, *Hard Choices,* ch. 5; Gaddis Smith, *Morality, Reason and Power: American Diplomacy in the Carter Years* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1986): ch. 9.

[43] Vance perceived the changed Soviet attitude, noting "They were displaying a deepening mood of harshness and frustration at what they saw as our inconsistency and unwillingness to deal with them as equals." *Hard Choices,* 101.

[44] Vance perceived the changed Soviet attitude, noting "They were displaying a deepening mood of harshness and frustration at what they saw as our inconsistency and unwillingness to deal with them as equals." *Hard Choices,* 101.

Moscow's solution was similar to St. Petersburg's: offer to negotiate, but subordinate the search for agreement to insistence on symbolic recognition of the status status quo. At several junctures during the unfolding struggle in the Third World, Brezhnev and Gromyko made offers of cooperative conflict resolution in the spirit of a concert or "condominium." Following the precedent set by the Nixon and Ford administrations, Carter rejected these offers as provocative ploys. The problem for Washington was that the offers reflected Soviet insistence on superpower parity, a status the U.S. was willing to grant only on strategic arms negotiations.[45]

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan crystallized the spiraling dynamic. The burgeoning documentary record shows a Soviet leadership more preoccupied with maintaining than enhancing its regional and global status.[46] The Soviet Union's influence over its southern neighbor had increased with the successful coup carried out by local communists in April 1978. But by the following spring, Moscow's new client seemed on the verge of collapse. The fear that threads through the documents concerning Soviet decision-making was that the pre-1978 status quo of Afghan "neutrality" in the Cold War was unattainable: if the regime fell, it would fall into US hands. American observers, on the other hand, assumed that the alternative to the leftist regime was a government that would, as before 1978, respect the geopolitical reality of Soviet power. Thus, for the Soviet side, a "loss" of the client regime implied a major blow to its status; while for many on the American side

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[45] The best example is Brezhnev's "condominium ploy" in the Yom Kippur War of 1972. Compare the Soviet and Americans views as reflected in Viktor Israelyan, *Inside the Kremlin,* chaps. 5-7; and Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* 299. For the similar logic beging U.S. rejection of "condominium offers" concerning Angola, see Zbigniew Brzesinski, *Power and Principle*, 180-81.

[46] The following sources were most useful for surveying the new evidence on Afghanistan: Westad, *Fall of Détente;* and "Prelude to Invasion: The Soviet Union and the Afghan Communists, *International History Review* 16:1 (February 1994): 49-69; *The Intervention in Afghanistan and the Fall of Détente,* collection of translated documents for the Carter-Brezhnev's project's Oslo Conference (17-20 December 1995); Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation* ; Diego Cordovez and Selig S. Harrison, *Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal* (New York: Oxford, 1995); "New Evidence on the Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan," CWIHP *Bulletin* no. 8-9: 128-184; and a fine archive-and interview based account by Maj. Gen. Aleksandr Liakhovskiy, *Tragediia i doblest' Afgana* (Moscow: GPI Iskona, 1995).

Soviet refusal to permit a return to the pre-1978 status quo indicated revisionist intent.[47]

The U.S. reaction—limited linkage coupled with a demand for a return to the pre-1978 status quo—appears to have created severe status strains for Moscow, which were not wholly resolved for another decade. The Soviets now had to worry that withdrawal would undermine Soviet prestige and credibility, possibly deliver Afghanistan to the West, and signal that Moscow could be intimidated into second-rate status by western hard-line policies. According to still-classified Soviet general Staff documents, Ustinov and Andropov advanced precisely these arguments in late February, 1980, when the Soviet leadership, reportedly at Brezhnev's insistence, discussed the possibility of Soviet withdrawal. And exactly these arguments were to be repeated again and again as the Soviets struggled to extricate themselves from the Afghan quagmire. They help explain the fact that while Mikhail Gorbachev was committed to withdrawal upon his accession to power in 1985, his first move was to escalate the fighting, and he was unable to effect a withdrawal until 1989.[48]

In sum, evidence points to the status dilemma as a candidate explanation for the 'new Cold War.' It may not have been a pure status dilemma, in that Moscow began the episode dissatisfied: Soviet leaders wanted to make their formal 'parity' with the US more real. For their part, U.S. decision makers, while happy to talk parity talk to jolly along their Soviet counterparts, balked at walking the parity walk. Hence, there was a real discrepancy in status preferences. But dilemma dynamics amplified this discrepancy. The actions Soviet decision makers took to secure their identity as an equal of the United States fed American fears of a Soviet "thrust to primacy," justifying costly and at times dangerous U.S. responses. The resulting spiral was sufficiently dangerous and costly to cause both superpowers to seek rapprochement and ultimately détente in the mid-late 1980s.

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[47] Cf. "Meeting of the Politburo, 3/17/79," *Intervention* no. 6; with Amstutz to State, "An Assessment of Soviet Influence and Involvement in Afghanistan," no. 53.

[48] See Liakhovskiy 177 on Feb initiative. See also archives and Harrison.

CONCLUSION

The cases show ample evidence of status dilemma dynamics. In both, evidence reveals efforts to attain recognition in order to secure actors' own estimates of their status. Even though initial beliefs about status were arguably only minimally inconsistent, uncertainty and signaling dilemmas led others to misinterpret these efforts as threatening, leading to counter-efforts and upward spirals of competition. The exact causal mechanisms the theoretical argument expects—signaling ambiguity, status anxiety, botched efforts to reduce it, misread signals feeding militarized competition—are all strongly in evidence and help to explain important aspects of the cases. In the Crimea case, signals from London initially supported Russia's estimate of its own status, making it seem as if the real problem for Nicholas was Turkey and France. But Russia could not find a way to secure its status after the spat over the Holy Places without ultimately alarming Britain into taking countermeasures that fed a spiral to war. Only once the crisis crossed the threshold to war did statesmen in London seriously entertain a preference for taking the Russians down a peg. In the Cold War case, the U.S. signaled that Moscow had at last attained parity but acted in ways that suggested otherwise. The Soviet leaders' attempts to resolve this dissonance generated U.S. fears of a thrust to preeminence and an upward spiral of competition.

Needless to say, status dilemma *dynamics* do not equal pure status dilemmas. In each case, status dilemma dynamics interact in complex ways with mechanisms identified in other models to generate competitive behavior. No case supports the argument that war can emerge without the background problem of security under anarchy and without some conflict of material interest. Yet in these cases, the preference for positive status comparisons and the problems of measuring and signaling help start, magnify, and prolong conflict. So, while have no empirically-based reason to think that status dilemmas could drive states to war in the absence of other profound causes, we do have reason to suspect that they could feed arms acquisitions, commitments to support clients in regional conflicts, or foregone opportunities for cooperation.

Given the salience of status politics in contemporary international relations, this finding alone is sufficient to warrant further research on status dilemmas on at least three fronts.

First, the cases analyzed here clearly need further work, and in all there remain unexploited archival materials that may alter our initial assessment of the workings and relative significance of status dilemma dynamics.

Second, there many other cases in which scholars have found copious evidence of status competition but which have yet to be studied through the lens of the status dilemma. A clear candidate is World War I. The complexity of the case and scholarship surrounding it are daunting, but the quality and quantity of evidence, some only having become available in recent years, more than compensate. As Williamson and May observe, "We probably know more about 1914 than about any other fateful moment in history."[49]

Third, it may not be premature to begin developing hypotheses about variation in the status dilemma. We have already suggested three dimensions along which international systems vary in ways that might affect the frequency and severity of status dilemmas: material stratification, normative structure, and unit heterogeneity. One might readily conjecture that comparatively materially stratified systems with clear hierarchical norms composed of like units would be less prone to status dilemmas than vice-versa. Many other hypotheses readily suggest themselves, especially concerning domestic ideas and institutions. The literature on status in international relations still tends to generalize about states when the real objects of analysis are the subgroups who make relevant decisions in the name of states. Variation in the beliefs and institutions that link those groups to the rest of the citizenry may affect the relative importance of status comparisons, the significance of status dissonance, the ease of sending and receiving signals about status, and many other relevant issues.

If we were rashly to ignore the preliminary nature of this work and conclude with implications for contemporary policy, the message would be a cautionary tale about the potential pitfalls of managing the status aspirations of rising powers.

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[49] Samuel R. Williamson Jr. and Ernest R. May "An Identity of Opinion: Historians and July 1914, " *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (June 2007), 382.

Statesmen representing dominant states may find it tempting to stroke the status aspirations of rising powers in the pursuit of the policy objective of the moment. G.H.W. Bush and Bill Clinton and their aides appeared successfully to use this approach with Gorbachev's Soviet Union and Boris Yel'tsin's Russia as they sought cooperation on Iraq, nuclear proliferation and a range of other issues. Beginning in the G. W. Bush administration and apparently continuing into the Obama presidency, we see evidence of a similar approach to China, from "responsible stakeholder" to "G2." While these attempts have met with mixed success, at best, they have had no discernable ill effects.

Our cautionary note simply is that this may not hold in the future. After all, the Soviet Union and Russia were in freefall when Bush and Clinton played the status reassurance card, and China was still a long way from parity when Bush II and Obama tried it. The stronger China gets, the more careful U.S. leaders need to be about this strategy, lest it feed status dilemma dynamics. John F. Kennedy arguably tried a strikingly similar ploy at the Vienna summit with Khrushchev, stressing the two sides' "equality" in hopes of convincing the Soviet Premier to ease back on Laos. This arguably fed into a well documented series of dangerous misunderstandings as Khrushchev sought to leverage widespread perceptions of Soviet rise into immediate gains. Nixon and Kissinger attempted such a policy with Brezhnev and Gromyko, hoping for help out of Vietnam but ultimately helping to set in motion the misperceptions and renewed rivalry chronicled above. As China's rapid rise begins closing various gaps with the US, the setting shifts to one in which careless signals about status might have similarly baleful consequences.

APPENDIX 1.

Status and World Order
Deborah Larson (UCLA)
T.V. Paul (McGill University)
William Wohlforth (Dartmouth College)

Contents:
Larson, Paul and Wohlforth, "Introduction: Status and World Order"

Deborah Welch Larson (UCLA) and Alexei Shevchenko (Cal State, Fullerton), "Managing the Rise of Great Powers: The Role of Status Concerns"

David Lake (UCSD): "Authority, Status, and the End of the American Century"

Iver Neumann (University of Oslo), "Status is Cultural: Lessons from Russian and Polish Great-Power Status Bids"

Thomas Volgy, Renato Corbetta, Keith Grant, and Ryan Baird (University of Arizona) "The Two Clubs: Major Global Powers, Major Regional Powers and Status Considerations in International Politics"

William R. Thompson (Indiana) "Status, Systemic Uncertainty, and Rise and Fall Dynamics"

Vincent Pouliot (McGill), "Setting Status in Stone: The Negotiation of International Institutional Privileges"

Randall L. Schweller and Xiaoyu Pu (Ohio State), Status Signaling, Prestige Demands, and Role Choices In China's Grand Strategy

T.V. Paul and Mahesh Shankar (McGill), "Status Accommodation through Liberal Means: India's Rise and the Global Order"

William Wohlforth (Dartmouth) and David Kang (USC), "The Status Dilemma and Inter-State Conflict"

APPENDIX 2

Excerpted from the introductory paper:

Definition of Key Terms

Below we present a brief literature review (as it pertains to International Relations) and conclude with key questions for the project. Clarity on definitions of key terms is crucial, however, so we begin by starting that important conversation:

1) **Power**: The ability to achieve desired outcomes.

2) **Capabilities**: Material resources states can use to seek ends (e.g. GDP, military forces). Possession of material capabilities is also an important source of status in the international system.

3) **Authority:** a legitimate claim to command over other states.

A state may also be able to convert status into authority over others. According to Hedley Bull, a great power is recognized by other state leaders and peoples as possessing "certain special rights and duties, namely the right to play a part in determining issues that affect the peace and security of the international system as a whole and the responsibility of modifying their policies in the light of the managerial responsibilities they bear."[50]

4) **Status**: Beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes, such as wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, socio-political organization, or diplomatic clout. In relations between large-scale groups such as states, estimates of relative status are not based on direct interaction but rather beliefs. This may generate misperception,[51] both of the state's standing and the opinions of others, or in other words, between achieved and ascribed status. A state estimates its own standing on evaluative criteria, a judgment that may leave it either satisfied or dissatisfied with its status.

Status is sometimes used to refer to a formal position within an organization, such as professor at a university or governor of a state. The occupant of the position may have high or low status depending on his/her performance of the role responsibilities.[52] This is distinct from personal status. A corrupt or incompetent governor, for example, may have high formal status but low prestige. Similarly, William Thompson distinguishes between status with a big "S" referring to a state's position in the international system and status in the sense described above as based on other states' evaluations.[53] A state may be described as

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[50] Bull 1977, 202.

[51] Barkow, 1975; Barkow 1989, 191-92.

[52] Barkow 1989, 203-204.

[53] Thompson 2011.

occupying the position of great power, major power, regional great power, middle power, or minor power.[54]

The categories of regional great power and major power suggest that there may be *multiple status* hierarchies, in which regional status orderings are embedded in the global system.[55]   A current great power (e.g. China) may aspire to become a superpower or global power whereas the next step for a dominant regional power (e.g. India) is to acquire great power status.   Within regional hierarchies, states jockey for status, as illustrated by the competition between Argentina and Brazil in Latin America, and between Japan and China in East Asia.

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[54] Wight 1978, pp. 41-67; Neumann 1992.

[55] Thompson 2011.

APPENDIX 3: Japan's Imperial Project

Status dilemmas might be most likely to occur when there are new entrants to the system that have not yet sorted out their relative status rankings. One such case was the emergence of Japan in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. In this case, a country with a long and proud history abandoned with alacrity the traditional hierarchic tribute system of international relations within which it had functioned for centuries, choosing instead to embrace the Western, Westphalian system based on the formal equality of states and informal status granted to "great powers." Japanese eagerly adopted Western norms, mores, institutions, and rules, and the debate within Japan was about how far to go in becoming "Western," and how to find a status they felt appropriate. Yet by the 1930s, Japanese elites had become disillusioned with their prospects for gaining equal treatment by Western nations. Although a status dilemma was hardly the only cause, subsequent Japanese imperialism – particularly against China and the "southward push" of the 1930s – ultimately led to the Pacific War.

As the Japanese were to discover, gaining status as a great power was not so easy: Japan's desire for recognition of their status as a great power was implicitly and explicitly rebuffed over time by the established great powers. Japanese leaders and elites felt that they were denied status either for racial reasons, for reasons of power, or for other reasons altogether. At the same time, the Western powers – in particular, the United States – were unsure about how exactly to treat Japan. Was it a great power, identical the western powers? Or was it something different, a country that had some but not all great power characteristics? The resulting ebb and flow of thinking about what was Japan led the U.S. in particular to under-estimate Japanese intentions and goals, particularly as to whether Japan was a status-quo power or one intent on domination and imperialism. Both sides had political, economic, and military aims that did not necessarily clash with each other – the U.S. did not necessarily seek predominance in continental Asia, Japan did not necessarily seek imperial control over all maritime Asia.

The Confucian world order as embodied in the institutions and rules of the "tribute system," collapsed within the space of a few decades upon the full arrival of European colonial powers in the late 19th century.[56] By the beginning of the 20th century what was taken for granted – institutions, rules, norms, and even appropriate dress -- had changed fundamentally. Japan wrestled with different ideas about how to respond to the Western intrusions – and ultimately decided that embracing Western norms and institutions of international relations was better than resisting.[57]

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[56] David C. Kang, *East Asia Before the West: Five Centuries of Trade and Tribute* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010); Kirk Larsen, *Tradition, Treaties, and Trade: Qing Imperialism and Choson Korea, 1850-1910* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008); Alexis Dudden, *Japan's Colonization of Korea: Discourse and Power* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2005).

[57] Seo-hyun Park, "The Language of Sovereign-Nationalism in Japanese and Korean Security," paper prepared for presentation at the annual convention of the International Studies Association, New York, N.Y., February 15-18, 2009, p. 5.

The contemporary word for civilization used in China, Korea, and Japan — *wenming* (文明, k. *munmyung*, j. *bunmei*)—is a neologism introduced in the late 19th century that refers to the Western notion of civilization as distinct spheres and as expressed in military might and imperial conquest, in contrast to the traditional East Asian view of civilization as being built on cultural prowess. Indeed, as has been demonstrated elsewhere, Western nations made clear distinctions between "civilized" and "barbarous" nations, and clearly understood much of their normative mission to convert the latter.[58]

As a means of showing their Western, "civilized," status, Japanese quickly began to dress in Western clothes, abandoned traditional tributary institutions for interacting with Korea and China, and undertook "civilizing" behaviors towards other East Asian countries. Yukichi Fukuzawa, an influential intellectual of the late 19th century, wrote that Japan should, "leave the ranks of Asian nations and cast our lot with civilized nations of the West."[59] Japan's chief diplomat with the U.S. during the early part of the 20th century, Harvard-educated Kentaro Kaneko, told U.S. audiences in 1904 that Japanese "are yellow in skin, but in heart and mind we are as white as Europeans and Americans…the civilized heart is the same the world over."[60] As Mark Peattie observes, "Just as steel navies, constitutions, machine guns, rationalized tax structures, and steam locomotives seemed part of modernity and efficiency, acquisition of a colonial empire in the late nineteenth century was a mark of national eminence, the ultimate status symbol upon the world scene."[61] By distinguishing Japan from what they themselves perceived as less civilized countries such as Korea and China and indeed colonizing them, Japanese signaled to the rest of the world that they were equal to, and deserving of, the status as a modern great nation. Embodied in the phrase *fukoku kyohei* ("rich nation, strong army"), an opportunity for such a test came when Japan and Russia clashed in a bloody but short war over control of the Liaodong peninsula in China in 1904-05. For the first time, a non-Western country had defeated a Western great power in a major war.

In retrospect it is easy to downplay the impact that this view of the world had on countries at the time as mere rhetoric glossing over more basic Great Power geostrategic or political considerations. Yet such views were relatively unquestioned at the time. While there were certainly were material reasons for Japanese behavior towards China and Korea in the late 19th century, it would be mistake, as Shogo

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[58] Edward Keene argues that nineteenth century Europe was operating in the context of two very different international societies: There was one set of rules that applied to the European states and there was a very different set of rules that regulated Europe's relations with the outside "uncivilized" world. Keene, *Beyond the Anarchical Society: Grotius, Colonialism and Order in World Politics*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002). See also Bruce Cumings, *Dominion from Sea to Sea: Pacific Ascendancy and American Power* (New Haven, CT.: Yale University Press, 2009); and Rodney P. Carlisle and J. Geoffrey Golson, eds., *Manifest Destiny and the Expansion of America* (ABC-CLIO, 2007).

[59] Quoted in Andrew Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan: From Tokugawa Times to the Present* (Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 115.

[60] Quoted in Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise*, p. 220.

[61] Mark Peattie, "Introduction," in Ramon H. Myers and Mark Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Colonial Empire, 1895-1945* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), p. 10.

Suzuki reminds us, "to somehow assume that the proclamations of Japan's 'civilizing' role within Asia was merely rhetoric, thus implying that the Japanese leaders were able to rationally detach themselves from their particular social world and cynically use the 'civilizing mission' to justify imperialist ideas that had somehow always been latent."[62]

Yet despite winning on the battlefield, Japanese frustration with Western countries came just as quickly. A series of incidents over the years showed that while Japan might achieve some acceptance, the Western nations still saw Japan as different. The "triple intervention" by Russia, France, and Germany in 1895 forced the Japanese to concede territory it had won in a war with China, after which Russia immediately occupied the territory and other Western powers took advantage of the weakened Qing government to extract further concessions and seize port cities under unequal terms. The view in Japan was that while Western powers made lofty references to norms, such norms were reserved for the already established powers and denied to newcomers.

Then, in 1905, having soundly beaten Russia in war and regained that territory, the Japanese expected a large indemnity payment from them, the way most countries were forced to do at the time when they lost a war.[63] Yet previously enthusiastic Japanese supporter Teddy Roosevelt pressured the Japanese at the Portsmouth negotiations not to ask for indemnity payments from Russia. When the Japanese finally relented, the Russian chief negotiator saw the subsequent peace treaty as, "…a complete victory for us."[64] The subsequent anger and humiliation led Japanese to begin seeing themselves not as totally accepted as equals to the Western great powers. In fact, anger at U.S. pressure for Japanese concessions resulted in riots, with mobs burning thirteen churches, overturning streetcars, and throwing stones at Americans in Tokyo, causing U.S. marines to be dispatched to protect the embassy. Buckman observes that:

> Japan was made conscious in numerous insulting ways that material power did not grant commensurate status and convey admittance to the Euro-American club. [Despite being one of the "eight great powers"], in 1914 the mean protocol rank of Japanese ambassadors in the capitals of the world was fifteenth from the top…racist opposition to Japanese immigration in Australia, Canada, and the United States signaled the unwillingness of Western peoples to grant full substance to their recognition of Japan's elevated position in the world.[65]

Yet perceived differences were more than simply material. Race played a powerful role in late 19th century international relations, as well. In fact, the view of Japan as a different type of major power, and as "race" as a key component of

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[62] Suzuki, p. 143.

[63] Indeed, a decade later, after World War I, it was German reparations that are considered a major factor in leading ultimately to the rise of Nazism in Germany. See 302.

[64] Quoted in Bradley, *The Imperial Cruise*, p. 303.

[65] Thoms Burkman, *Japan and the League of Nations: Empire and World Order, 1914-1938* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'I Press, 2008), p. 4.

international relations, pervaded both American and Asian perceptions of each other in the 19th and 20th centuries.[66] Rudyard Kipling, who had lived in Vermont in the early 1890s, famously wrote a poem urging American imperialism, the title being: "The White Man's Burden: The United States and the Philippines," while the *Journal of Race Development* was founded in 1910, to be renamed *Foreign Affairs* in 1922. American domestic opinion also turned against Asian immigrants, in 1908 the U.S. essentially forcing Japan to accept a "gentleman's agreement" that restricted Japanese immigration to relatives of people already living in the United States. California prohibited Japanese from owning land, and in 1922 the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that no Asian immigrants could become naturalized U.S. citizens. As Australia, Canada, and the United States imposed increasingly restrictive measures on Asians, Andrew Gordon notes that, "part of the passion moving people in Japan to oppose diplomatic cooperation with the West came from anger at the way America was treating Japanese immigrants."[67] In 1919, U.S. ambassador to Japan Roland Morris noted that popular hostility against America was "surpassing any previous anti-foreign agitation in extent and bitterness."[68]

This belief that Japan was only an "honorary" Western country was furthered by the result of the Paris Peace Talks that concluded World War I. The principles of equality and justice espoused by Wilson were rapidly seen to be cynical advancement of Western interests: although Japan was one granted the status of the "five major powers," (along with the U.S., Italy, U.K., and France) most aspects of the League of Nations were decided by the other four countries and then communicated to the rest of the participants, including Japan.[69] Woodrow Wilson himself used an administrative tactic to reject the principle of racial equality introduced by Japanese diplomats in 1919, causing outrage in Japan (Figure 1). The *Asahi Shimbun* called the Japanese diplomats "incompetent" and the *Kokumin* said that British and American delegates were, "defying humanity in the most outrageous manner in all history."[70]

//Figure 1 here//

Clearly there were issues of national security and power politics affecting the Japanese decision to expand southward during the 1930s, and by no means should we attribute Japan's fateful decisions as prompted solely by facing difficulties in gaining acceptance of its status by Western powers. As with other great powers, Japan wanted both status and material gains, and it was often difficult to disentangle these motives. Given the unsettled situation between the U.S., Germany, Soviet Union, and other great powers, Japan's view of the international situation at the time was hardly unique in viewing imperial expansion as protecting its national

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[66] Louis Arthur Coolidge, *An Old-Fashioned Senator: Orville H. Platt of Connecticut* (General Books, 2010), p. 295; Robert Rydell, *All the World's a Fair: Visions of Empire at American International Expositions, 1876-1916* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), p. 30, quoted in Bradley, p. 183.

[67] Gordon, *A Modern History of Japan*, p. 176.

[68] Quoted in Burkman, p. 8.

[69] Buckman, p. 62.

[70] Buckman, p. 85.

security. The increasingly authoritarian domestic Japanese government and influential military were creating a situation inside Japan in which the only debate was whether expansion should be quick or slow.

Yet at the same time, the question remains why the U.S. and Japan ended up in a vicious shooting war. Neither Japan nor the U.S. actually had had designs on greater expansion, neither side saw each other as a military threat in the early 20th century. Japan has been called "diplomatically isolated" during the early 20th century – although making numerous alliances, secret treaties, and agreements with the other great powers, none saw Japan as its firm friend and ally, and all the other great powers were deeply suspicious of Japanese motives and intentions.

The 1920s saw Japan following a generally "internationalist" course – imperialism for sure, but imperialism and foreign policies designed to be similar to those in the West, generally more light-handed rule. While the West and in particular the United States had begun to move beyond the "imperial" grand strategies of the 19th century – Woodrow Wilson's approach perhaps most obviously a turn to international values – the Japanese remained an imperial power seeking "manifest destiny" in their region. The New York stock market crash of 1929 and subsequent global economic depression affected Japan as much as any other country, particularly harming its exports to the U.S. The Soviet revolution in Russia created an alternative model – and threat -- to the Western model of democracy and capitalism. Within Japan itself, assassinations and social conflict resulted in a militarized dictatorship putatively under the control of the emperor.

The turning point came in 1931 – when the Japanese fomented an incident with China in order to justify their military expansion on the continent. Known as the "Manchurian incident," the Japanese used the suspected bombing of a railway line near Mukden to vastly expand their occupation of Manchuria, including aerial bombing and fighting with Chinese forces. The incident resulted in a 13 to 1 vote against Japan's actions in the League of Nations Council and a 42 to 1 vote against Japan in the General Assembly. The Japanese resigned from the League of Nations, began clearly moving in a direction of southward imperial advancement, and abandoned the Washington Naval Treaty limiting its naval forces in 1936. As right-wing, military, and ultranationalist forces increasingly gained power domestically in Japan, overall consensus moved from attempting to find accommodation with the Western countries in East Asia to believing that no compromise was possible.

As Western criticism of Japanese actions increased, subsequent nationalist feelings in Japan hardened. As the U.S. Ambassador to Japan during the Manchurian incident, Joseph Grew reported to Washington that, "The moral obloquy of the world is a negligible force in Japan. Far from serving to modify the determination of the Japanese, it merely tends to strengthen it…nobody could miss the political significance of Japan's decision to quit the League of Nations. It marked a clear break with the Western powers."[71] Matsuoka Yosuke, former special envoy to the League of Nations, said later that, "After Geneva I began to think that the League of nations that tries to gather all the nations in one conference was impossible, and that the world should have leadership in each region…"[72] Japan

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[71] Quoted in Buckman, p. 192, 194.

[72] Quoted in Buckman, p. 204.

became increasingly isolated in its relations with other great powers, and slowly there coalesced in Japan a belief that their own relations with other great powers could not be repaired.[73] Japan at the time was not a world power, but rather a regional power. Its interests were primarily focused on East Asia, in contrast to the United States, United Kingdom, and other great powers that had both European and East Asian interests.

Thus, by the 1930s, Japanese thinking had moved beyond taking colonies along the Western model – lightly controlled territory – to full assimilation "…which professed the racial brotherhood and union of all Asian peoples. If this contradiction was soon apparent to other Asians, it seems to have been lost upon military and civilian authorities in Tokyo."[74]

Arguing that status dilemmas and misperceptions about desired status were a factor in Japan-US relations in the 20th century rests in part, on a counterfactual: was a stable relationship possible if both sides had recognized each other's true goals? Answering such a question is impossible, of course, but it is worth asking whether Japan could have worked out a stable relationship with the Western powers similar to that worked out by the U.S. declarations of Manifest Destiny and the Monroe Doctrine had largely led the European powers to recognize America's unique position in Latin America. While these powers retained deep relations with, and occasionally even continued their colonial relations with, Latin American countries, they did not view U.S. predominance in the region as threatening their own core interests, nor did they challenge the U.S.'s unique position.

Could Japan have come to such a relationship with the Western powers? On the one hand, like the U.S. in the Western hemisphere, Japan was alone in East Asia as a potential Great Power. Although the other great powers had interests in Asia, there is little evidence that U.S. leaders felt that true colonization of the Asian mainland was either desirable or possible. Furthermore, although Japan had initial imperial designs on its close neighbors (Korea and Taiwan), it did not obviously need to become a true colonial power throughout East Asia (Singapore, Vietnam, mainland China). For Japan, had conditions been different, would it have been willing to allow China in particular to remain independent? Could domestic interests and status goals have been served without invasion of China and the creation of the puppet regime in Manchukuo?

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[73] L.M. Cullen, *A History of Japan, 1582-1941* (Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 246.

[74] Mark Peattie, "Japanese Attitudes Towards Colonialism, 1895-1945," in Myers and Peattie, eds., *The Japanese Colonial Empire,* p. 123.

Figure 1. Japan's view of the failure of the racial equality clause

Depicts Uncle Sam restraining little Japan from including a racial-equality clause in the charter of the League of Nations after World War I. The Japanese diplomat holds the racial equality clause and it says "Japan is out." *Source:* John Dower, *XYZ*.