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Micro-foundations of the Quest for Status: Testing Self-Status Perception and the Multilateral Use of Force

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Research on status in international relations has expanded in the last few decades. The key empirical studies suggest that status concern generates an incentive for initiating international conflicts since unilateral military engagement is believed to increase the status of a country. We concur with this argument. However, a further study should be conducted to find whether "multilateral" military engagement can change status perceptions and therefore be related to international politics over status. The test is important since the multilateral use of force is distinct from the unilateral use of force in its theoretical background and its connotation in world politics. In our experiment conducted in Japan, we treat the information on the multilateral use of force, and examine whether variations of the treatment information change people's self-perception over their country's international status. The results show that participation in a multilateral use of force *increases* and an early departure from the multilateral mission out of casualty concerns *decreases* their country's self-status perception. Also, we successfully identify that the people who have a high social dominance orientation trait are more susceptible to such information.

La investigación en materia del estatus en las relaciones internacionales se ha ido ampliando a lo largo de las últimas décadas. Los principales estudios empíricos sugieren que la preocupación por el estatus genera un incentivo para iniciar conflictos internacionales, debido a la creencia de que el enfrentamiento militar unilateral aumenta el estatus de un país. Estamos de acuerdo con este argumento. Sin embargo, debería realizarse otro estudio con el fin de averiguar si el enfrentamiento militar ≪multilateral≫ puede llegar a cambiar la percepción del estatus y, en consecuencia, si puede estar relacionado con la política internacional sobre el estatus. Esta comprobación es importante, ya que el uso multilateral de la fuerza es distinto del uso unilateral de la fuerza tanto en su trasfondo teórico como en su significado en la política mundial. En nuestro experimento realizado en Japón, abordamos la información sobre el uso multilateral de la fuerza, y examinamos si las variaciones de la información tratada cambian la autopercepción de la gente sobre el estatus internacional de su país. Los resultados muestran que la participación en un uso multilateral de la fuerza aumenta y que la salida anticipada de una misión multilateral por temor a las bajas disminuye la percepción de autoestima de su país. Además, identificamos con éxito que las personas que tienen

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un rasgo de orientación a la dominancia social (ODS) elevado son más susceptibles a dicha información.

La recherche sur le statut en relations internationales s'est élargie ces dernières décennies. Les études empiriques clés indiquent que les préoccupations concernant le statut peuvent motiver l'initiation de conflits internationaux, car l'engagement militaire unilatéral augmenterait le statut d'un État. Nous sommes d'accord avec cet argument. Néanmoins, une nouvelle étude devrait être menée pour déterminer si l'engagement militaire ≪ multilatéral ≫ peut modifier la perception du statut, et donc avoir un lien avec la politique internationale le concernant. Le test est important, car le recours multilatéral à la force se distingue de l'usage unilatéral de la force par son origine théorique et sa connotation en politique mondiale. Dans notre expérience au Japon, nous traitons les informations sur le recours multilatéral à la force, avant d'examiner si les variations des informations de traitement modifient comment les personnes envisagent le statut international de leur pays. Les résultats montrent que la participation à un recours multilatéral à la force *améliore* la perception du statut de leur pays, quand un départ anticipé d'une mission multilatérale pour limiter les pertes la *dégrade*. Par ailleurs, nous parvenons à identifier que les personnes possédant un trait particulièrement marqué d'orientation de dominance sociale (ODS) se montrent davantage sensibles à ces informations.

Introduction

Status matters for states. A widely held belief among international relations scholars is that a country's status matters a great deal. There is a variety of observational evidence suggesting that a country's status affects how it behaves in world politics, and how it formulates its foreign policy. For instance, countries enjoying "major power" status are more likely to engage in militarized conflicts (Chiba, Machain, and Reed 2014). In a similar vein, the fear of losing status may motivate a country to initiate militarized disputes and potentially lead to other status-seeking activities (Renshon 2017).

Existing work demonstrates that status can be a key national interest, and that therefore governments will often adopt policies to achieve a superior status in the international system (Organski and Kugler 1980; Lemke 2002; O'Neill 2006; Rhamey and Early 2013; Ward 2017; Musgrave and Nexon 2018; Pedersen 2018, 2020; Wohlforth et al. 2018; Pedersen and Reykers 2020). Such scholars agree on one important point: *status can be promoted by types of international engagements such as use of military force abroad.* Status may change over time, and that status can be manipulated by a country's deeds and words.

Importantly, as status is a product of human perceptions and the socially constructed ranking of a country relative to others (Renshon 2017), international engagements aiming to increase the status of a country must be *overt* and *publicly known.* Otherwise, it will not change people's perceptions. Also, those international engagements should create a positive change in the world, or at least be believed to bolster a positive image in international society; without doing so, they will not achieve higher status. Furthermore, such international engagements must in some way be connected to the power projection of a country—this is based on the assumption that a larger power is somehow connected to a higher status. When a state engages in an overt, costly military activity that will contribute to international peace and security, the people in the world would expect that the country should obtain a higher status in international society.

Some qualitative studies suggest these causal links (e.g., Pedersen 2018, 2020; Pedersen and Reykers 2020). However, they do not offer quantitative evidence, including micro-level status perception changes when a country involves itself with an overt overseas military deployment. In this study, to fill this gap, we employ an empirical test of this causal connection between people's status perception of a state and overt international military engagements at a micro-foundation level. We use an originally designed survey experiment in Japan to test whether a military engagement overseas changes the country's status perception, and if so, among *whom* in particular. The results of our study show that participation in a multilateral use of force *increases* and an early departure from the multilateral mission out of casualty concerns *decreases* their country's self-status perception. Also, we successfully identify that the people who have a high social dominance orientation (SDO) trait are more susceptible to such information.

Status and International Politics

In the last two decades, an increasing amount of scholarly works on status and international relations has been published (Lemke 2002; Wohlforth 2009; Renshon 2017; Ward 2017; Wohlforth et al. 2018; Larson and Shevchenko 2019, 2020; Götz 2021). Its origins can be traced back at least as far as the foundations of power transition theory (Organski and Organski 1961; Organski and Kugler 1980), but many of the more recent works are related to (and are possibly a reaction to) the rapidly changing nature of international politics, in particular the rise of China and other emerging countries like India and Brazil. While status politics is not necessarily a zero-sum type of international interaction, it is a reflection of scholarly concerns that the status of Western countries is somehow being threatened by those newly empowered countries in the twenty-first century. More importantly, some scholars use the status politics framework to predict how those newly emerging powers behave in the near future; specifically, they tend to connect how the use of military force is utilized to change a country's status in international relations.

Understanding the Status of States

Although scholars have not yet achieved consensus, Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth (2014, 7) provide a suitably encompassing definition of status. They define status as "collective beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout)." This definition suggests that there are some key features of status. First of all, status is positional.[1] Status entails *comparison with others* (see Lake 2014; Ward 2017). In other words, status is an actor's position within the international social hierarchy. States continuously evaluate and categorize each other into higher- and lower-status countries, and this categorization creates a hierarchy. While there are a variety of views on whether status should be seen as a continuous measure of relative standing, a binary attribute of group membership, or some combination of both, scholars seem to agree that status is a certain kind of pecking order.

Second, status is perception-driven. This means that status is based on people's beliefs. According to Renshon (2017), there is no objective or natural status in hierarchy. Furthermore, there would *not* be "immutable characteristics that confer status" (Renshon 2017, 35). Although material capabilities or other attributes are an important factor for status, how states are recognized is more crucial and essential (Ward 2017; Wohlforth et al. 2018; Larson and Shevchenko 2019).

Third, status perception is collective. Perception of status must be shared in global society. Governments and individuals may have their unique perception

[1] Here, we follow Renshon (2017)'s categorization of the attributes of status.

about the hierarchical structure of international politics, but there should be a degree of loose collective common understanding of which state should be a major power and where a country should belong in the hierarchy. For some countries, the shared recognitions are firmly supported among the state community (e.g., the United States as a major power and Nepal as a minor power), but for other cases, perceptions may be controversial. As Renshon (2017, 36) claims, status is "many actors' beliefs about what many other actors also believe." In this sense, status is an intersubjective concept (Renshon 2017; Murray 2018). International relations scholars have often incorporated the concept of the "gaze" of others in the definition of status (Dafoe, Renshon, and Huth 2014; Renshon 2017; Murray 2018; Larson and Shevchenko 2019).

However, this feature of status makes empirical studies of status difficult. Status is difficult to measure if we want to directly incorporate the "gaze" of others because it is not very clear what country's status can be a benchmark, whose perception we should examine, and how we can integrate different perceptions of the hierarchy. In reality, scholars do not often measure status itself by asking how others perceive the status of a country. Instead, they often rely on an individual's (e.g., a political leader's or the general public's) or a single government's status judgments of their country. For instance, Renshon (2017) measures status by using individuals' status concerns in his experiments and case studies. Murray (2018) and Ward (2017, 42) also use a single state's perception as a proxy of the shared, collective status recognition. Since it is extremely difficult to directly capture intersubjective status perception itself, the second best choice would be an empirical strategy to study the individual-level self-perception over the status of their country.

Moreover, we argue that this type of empirical strategy is indeed the best strategy for *the study of status-seeking behavior*. This is because status-seeking behavior is not directly caused by the "gaze" of others but *by what people believe that other people believe*. Identifying the status perception that causes status-seeking behavior is different from measuring and identifying the somewhat shared status of a country. Leaders may adopt certain foreign policies to show the increased status of their state to the domestic constituencies or the international audience. They may also do so for the fear of losing the status of their country. Or perhaps the general public has a shared desire to increase the status of their country. In any case, the status-seeking behavior is adopted based on the status evaluation of their country in their mind, not in others' minds. Thus, using an individual-level self-perception of the status of their country is a reasonable strategy in the explanation of status-seeking behavior. In our study, we use such an individual-based, self-status perception.

Status Improvement and Use of Force

In the society of sovereign nations, the members continuously evaluate each others' status through their basic national capabilities and their interactions. National capabilities are an important determinant, but it is not the only one. Status is perceptual, so how a country behaves in its interactions with others also largely affects how its status is recognized in the world. Accumulated scholarly works have identified that the status can be a key national interest, and thus countries will adopt a particular foreign policy to seek a better status (O'Neill 2006; Rhamey and Early 2013; Ward 2017; Musgrave and Nexon 2018; Pedersen 2018, 2020; Wohlforth et al. 2018; Pedersen and Reykers 2020).

Among the recent scholarly works on status, Renshon (2017) connects the use of force with a country's status. He argues that a concern for status loss drives a country to engage in militarized interstate disputes, and increases the country's use of force abroad. This is because leaders believe that initiating and winning conflicts reveals states' capabilities and provides new information on where they should stand in a given hierarchy (Renshon 2017, 65). Through multiple experiments, Renshon (2017, 112–115) demonstrates that political elites and the general public, who care

about personal status and believe that their power position is in decline and when they are told that their status is at risk, would select a higher escalation choice. In his observational analysis using diplomatic exchange data, we can see that the status deficits lead to escalation and war (Renshon 2017, 150–181).

Status can be gained by a country's proactive policies, including the use of force and escalation of disputes. Being assertive against enemies or rival states can be seen as a signal of being a capable and strong international player by other countries in the world. Such impressions can make a country's status higher than before a country engages in such an assertive policy.

Multilateral Use of Force

Although unilateral use of force has been one of the main topics of the study of status, there is another type of use of force: the multilateral use of force, such as military coalitions and UN peacekeeping operations. Some studies suggest that military coalitions and UN peacekeeping operations are also considered as a trigger of the change in status perception in international relations (Suzuki 2008; Pedersen 2018, 2020; Wohlforth et al. 2018; Pedersen and Reykers 2020). For instance, Pedersen (2018) argues that a key reason why the Nordic states engage in militarized interventions with the United States as its coalition partner is a status-seeking motivation. The Nordic states, i.e., Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden, have gradually started to consider that a militarized coalition participation is an important tool to gain reputation and improve their status position in the international hierarchy. According to Pedersen (2018), those countries joined a US-led coalition based on "bandwagon for status." Moreover, Pedersen and Reykers (2020) claim that the status-seeking motive exists even among different countries in Europe. Using the case of Belgium's participation in the military coalition against Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), the authors argue that status can be increased by joining a coalition operation and that is a key motive for them to send troops along with the major power country like the United States. Wohlforth et al. (2018) interpret these status-seeking behaviors as a "system-supporting" function of status: small and middle powers participate in multilateral uses of force because they can achieve moral authority by sustaining a given hegemonic order and the hegemon itself.

In a similar vein, from the English school point of view, Suzuki (2008) considers that "frustrated great powers" can seek a position of "legitimate great power" status by joining in a peacekeeping mission conducted under the authorization of the United Nations. Japan and China, typical frustrated great power states according to Suzuki, have sent their troops to UN peacekeeping missions to prove that they deserve a higher status recognition from the other states, and the UN peace operation can be seen as a status "recognition game" (Suzuki 2008, 53).

These studies provide insightful evidence that bridges status perception and the multilateral use of force. However, they rely on qualitative measures of status such as politicians' statements and government publications. In general, it is difficult to disentangle status concerns from economic and security interests using qualitative measures of status. This is because these statements may be strategically made to signal their interest to a foreign audience or to mobilize domestic support and because "leaders rarely talk about status as scholars define it" (MacDonald and Parent 2021, 10). Thus, additional evidence would be beneficial to improve our understanding of the relationship between the multilateral use of force and status. On the micro-foundation evidence for that relationship, however, we lack evidence to our best knowledge. We do not know whether and how individuals connect their country's status with the multilateral use of force. We do not know the heterogeneity of public status concerns either. These kinds of evidence are important for three reasons. First, status is an aggregation of each individual's perception, so the micro-foundation of status is actually an "atom" of status. An attempt to understand

the functions of status without its micro-foundation would miss some fundamental aspects of status. Second, individuals' perceptions would largely influence their country's behavior. Leaders often care about their citizens' reactions when making their country's foreign policies (Tomz, Weeks, and Yarhi-Milo 2020), and some studies imply that this is true not only in democracies but also in autocracies (Weeks 2008; Weiss and Dafoe 2019; Hyde and Saunders 2020). Micro-foundations of status would, therefore, contribute to a better understanding of the motivation for the status-seeking behavior of states. Third, multilateral use of force is distinct from unilateral use of force. As Ruggie (1992) says, multilateralism needs "principles which specify appropriate conduct for a class of actions." Multilateralism is widely thought of as being legitimate and just (Finnemore 2005), whereas unilateralism is often seen as an illegitimate behavior that might destabilize the world order (Ikenberry 2001; Finnemore 2005). These views suggest that the multilateral use of force is perceived differently from the unilateral use of force, and thus, it is important to separately gather evidence about how people see multilateral use of force and connect it with status perception. In the next section, we will propose a theoretical prediction to connect those multilateral military operations with status perceptions by using a framework built on social identity theory and status politics (Larson and Shevchenko 2019).

Theory and Hypothesis

As previously suggested, status is a perception-driven concept. It is not only material capabilities but also a country's behavior in daily interactions that affects how its status is perceived in the world (Wohlforth et al. 2018). This leaves room for states to manipulate their status by adopting certain kinds of policies. We argue that participation in multilateral use of force (namely, military coalitions and UN peacekeeping) has a positive effect on a state's status, and early withdrawal from multilateral use of force has a negative effect. We also claim that SDO is an important determinant of national status perception, and that it positively correlates with national status concern.

Larson and Shevchenko (2019, 6–14) use Henri Tajfel's social identity theory to explain how status politics work in international relations.[2] They present three strategies by which a state can improve its standing: *social competition*, *social creativity*, and *social mobility*. *Social competition* is the most aggressive strategy. In a society where the existing high-status countries are close to the new emerging member, a country that wants to promote its status needs to fight with them and attain equal or superior status through competition. For instance, Japan in the 1930s and 1940s adopted this strategy and challenged the world order by proposing the idea of a "Greater East Asia Coprosperity Sphere." This was not just Japan but also Germany at the same time challenged the world's existing order with its new political project to create the Third Reich. These behaviors are called *social competition*. By contrast, *social creativity* may work when a society accepts a new idea to determine the status of countries. During the Cold War, promoting the non-aligned movement and demands for neutrality, decolonization, and non-use of force were a typical strategy to promote the status of key emerging countries like India, Yugoslavia, and Egypt in the 1950s to 1960s. Middle-power states such as Canada can be norm entrepreneurs and leaders such as in the anti-personnel mine movement; this leadership can be a source of respect and can increase a country's status.

The third strategy—*social mobility*—is an imitation approach of the existing high-status countries' policies. When global society shares a particular standard and value, and when there are some shared ideas about what the major power states

[2] Wohlforth et al. (2018) are also referring to and reframing (the application of) social identity theory as a key theoretical framework over international status politics.

should and should not do in international society, social mobility is appealing to those who want to increase their status. Larson and Shevchenko (2019) argue that "[j]ust as individuals imitate the social norms and lifestyle of the up- per class to be accepted into social clubs, so aspiring states may adopt the political, economic, and social norms of the dominant powers to be admitted to more prestigious institutions or clubs." They use Meiji Japan as an example of this (Larson and Shevchenko 2019, 6–7). In the late nineteenth century, Japan was forced to open its country to the world and start a rapid assimilation to the West. From the emperor to the lay people, all Japanese admired the Western culture and learned from the systems of European countries and the United States. This made a national slogan "Itto-koku (first order state)," and this justified all the reform policies that could never be possible under the pre-Meiji era. Adopting what the existing major powers do can be a key status promotion policy. Also, in line with Suzuki (2008)'s argument, as Meiji Japan made its very best efforts to respect European international law (e.g., at the Russo-Japanese War), a policy that is considered as legitimate and just in the current international society would be perceived as helping to increase the status of a country.

While contributing troops to US-led coalitions may be different in many ways from contributing troops to UN peacekeeping missions (e.g., on what is the cause of the military operation and what they do on the front line), we consider that the military participation in these gatherings would play the same role as social mobility. First, as some key studies suggest (Pedersen 2018, 2020; Wohlforth et al. 2018; Pedersen and Reykers 2020), participating in US-led coalitions is perceived as being important in the American-centered society. They are both domestically and internationally salient, so if a state wants to be highly regarded in the American-centered society, sending troops to a coalition is one of the most salient and thus effective behaviors. The participants increase their reputation, and this should increase the rank of the country's status (Wohlforth et al. 2018). The US government knows this mechanism, and thus its State Department often creates a list of coalition partners and makes the list public when it forms a coalition. This list would mainly work as a message to the enemy state to show its aggregated coalition power, but this also would be seen from those who are expected to send their troops and make a clear difference between participating countries and non-participating counties.

Second, UN peacekeeping missions are another typical multilateral use of force, and the participation of the national contingents in the operations could be connected to higher status because the UN actions are believed to be legitimate and to contribute to the global good (Tago 2007; Tago and Ikeda 2015; Matsumura and Tago 2019). Having a distinctive identity of contributing to world peace as a part of the UN could help in seeing itself as a part of the United Nations, which is perceived to be the most legitimate world institution.

In contrast, an early withdrawal of national troops from a multilateral force, which could occur as a result of troop casualties and may be seen as an irresponsible act in international society, would damage the status perception and would be seen to lower the state's rank. In many multilateral missions, early departure by the contributing troops could cause controversy both on international and domestic fronts (Tago 2009; Mello 2020). On the international front, an early withdrawal of troops might make a whole coalition weak and unstable. The decision of the departing government would be subject to criticism by the other coalition partner governments, and it could make that country seem less responsible in international society.

As such, UN-led coalitions, UN peacekeeping, and the withdrawal from them work as a device with which a state could sway other states' perceptions and make a difference in its status recognition. As status scholars often argue, status and military power are different in that status is what we conceive in our mind and it may or may not be based on material power (Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth 2014; Renshon 2017; Ward 2017; Wohlforth et al. 2018). UN-led coalitions and UN peacekeeping do not usually change the military power of the participants, especially when they

just follow the US or the UNSC mandate. But we argue that they could alter status perception without changing material power due to the salience of these multilateral military activities.

Finally, building on Renshon (2017), we consider that SDO could be a key to identifying *who* is more likely to see the importance of the status of a country. SDO is a personal trait and is designed to capture "the extent to which one desires that one's in-group dominate and be superior to out-groups" (Pratto et al. 1994, p. 742). This is used to explain how a person supports group-based hierarchy and the domination of "inferior" groups by "superior" groups (Sidanius and Pratto 1999). This means that a high-SDO score is a sign of a higher preference for "hierarchy-enhancing ideologies and policies" (Pratto et al. 1994, p. 742). To date, SDO is found to be related to "valuing power, prestige, and status" (Son Hing et al. 2007), as well as support for war (McFarland 2005). We argue that SDO predicts an individual sensitivity to the multilateral use of force because, as we argued above, some multilateral military interventions have status-related salience and implications. Thus, SDO would be a good indicator of how susceptible an individual is to her/his country's status, especially in the case of multilateral military interventions. Persons with a high-SDO score would react more strongly than those with low-SDO scores in assessing the information about status-changing policies.

As was discussed earlier, status perception is formulated as an intersubjective idea over the positioning of a country in the society of countries. A particular foreign policy may have a positive or negative impact on where a country is located on the status scale. We consider that contributing troops to a coalition/UN peacekeeping mission is a highly salient policy, and the people would expect that the policies could change the country's status significantly. Based on the arguments made above, we expect the following hypotheses to test as a micro-foundation mechanism connecting status perception and national troops' contribution to coalition/UN peacekeeping missions.

Hypothesis 1.1**(H1.1)**: People exposed to information about their country contributing troops to a US-led military coalition would expect the status of their country to increase more than in the case where the country gives up such a contribution.

Hypothesis 1.2**(H1.2)**: People exposed to information about their country contributing troops to a UN peacekeeping mission would expect the status of their country to increase more than in the case where the country gives up such a contribution.

Hypothesis 2**(H2)**: People exposed to information about their country withdrawing its troops from a US-led military coalition or a UN peacekeeping mission would expect the status of their country to diminish more than the case where a country stays in a coalition/mission.

Hypothesis 3**(H3)**: Those who have a high-SDO score will have a stronger reaction than those who have a mild or low score when they are exposed to the manipulation of information.

To clarify the scope of our theory, we briefly discuss when the multilateral use of force can be status-enhancing and when not. This clarification is important because some existing studies argue that unilateral use of force can also lead to a status increase (Renshon 2016, 2017; Ward 2017; Murray 2018). We expect that, compared to unilateral use of force, multilateral use of force is likely to be status-enhancing, and withdrawing from the missions is status-decreasing when states are under the sphere of the hegemonic powers and the mission of the multilateral use of force is for supporting the stability of the international order. A reason is that states tend to have similar values and standards about what highly ranked states should and should

not do, and this similarity makes the social-mobility strategy more likely (Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth 2014). For instance, democracy, rules of law, and peace are all seen as valuable by Western countries in the current international order, so providing or protecting these goods tends to be highly evaluated. Also, if the mission is to support the existing international order, the hegemonic powers would acknowledge that type of use of force as legitimate and valuable or it would directly lead it. So the competition for closeness to the hegemonic powers can happen among the countries by joining these multilateral activities. Japan, Canada, South Korea, and the EU member states actively participated in the UN- and US-led multilateral military missions even though they do not have direct and strong interests in the issues at stake.[3] These behaviors are status-enhancing. By contrast, an act of withdrawal from those multilateral military activities inevitably signals that the country lacks the capability and the will to contribute to international public goods and thus not being qualified as a high-status country.

In contrast, we consider that unilateral use of force becomes status-enhancing either when a country is the hegemonic country (i.e., the United States at this moment) to show its vast capability and the will to contribute to the international public goods, or when a country is seeking to become a new hegemonic power like China at this particular moment in international relations. This article focuses on the status-enhancing effect of the *multilateral* use of force and skips discussions over the unilateral military action. That is, our scope is limited to the "follower" countries like Japan and Australia that are under the US hegemonic order.

Method

Validity of the Experimental Method

This study tests the hypotheses via an online survey experiment, which is an ideal approach to test the causal hypotheses H1.1, H1.2, and H2. What we want to see is people's perceptions, as country status is a product of people's perceptions, and our hypotheses are about how people see the level of a country's status depending on how they are informed about the foreign policy choices of its government. An online survey experiment is a highly appropriate method to study how the general public views such issues.

Indeed, Powers and Renshon (2023) provide evidence for the validity of survey experiments, specifically for the study of status. They argue that the public easily understands the status implications of foreign policy events, "even if they remain relatively uninformed of the historical context or exact details of foreign policy." There are two reasons. First, status competition must be public and high-profile for leaders to revise their country's status, so they often make their status-seeking behaviors "more salient to the domestic public than most events in foreign affairs" (Larson and Shevchenko 2019). Thus, the public is accustomed to these events and is aware of the status implications of foreign policies. Second, status concerns and competition are so innate to social life (Anderson, Hildreth, and Howland 2015) that "their dynamics and implications are natural and intuitive to the public" (MacDonald and Parent 2021). Because "having high relative standing is instrumental in helping people to achieve the objectives they care most deeply about" (Frank 1985) and status is an innate human desire (Larson and Shevchenko 2019), status and status competition are omnipresent events to individuals. Therefore, they are "likely to look to the status cues sent by the actors involved to judge the implications" of foreign policies (Powers and Renshon 2023). They also provide empirical evidence that supports their claim. Using open-ended questions in their experiment, they check whether the public understands "status" in the same way as scholars do. The result is that, as

[3] See Pedersen (2018, 2020), Wohlforth et al. (2018), and Pedersen and Reykers (2020) for the motive of some of the EU countries for joining these multilateral missions.

they argue, the public use "status" in a quite similar way as IR scholars do (Powers and Renshon 2023). Thus, we consider that the general public is capable of judging the status implications of foreign policies in an experiment.

We also think that the domestic sample is appropriate to understand the motive of status-seeking behaviors of states. As we argued before, an empirical measure of status is difficult because we do not know how to incorporate the "gaze" of others into status. Status-seeking behavior is, however, mainly caused by a single state's self-perception of its status because it seeks a status increase when it realizes that its subjective international status is insufficient, and this feature makes it possible to avoid the complicated discussion of how to incorporate others' perception of the status of a country. In fact, Renshon (2017), Ward (2017), and Murray (2018) adopt similar strategies. Thus, the domestic sample is appropriate enough to study status-seeking behavior, and this is the reason why we focus on "self-perception" of status.[4]

Selection of the Experiment Field: Why Japan?

We examine the empirical implications of our argument in Japan. The reasons why we select Japan as an experiment field are as follows. First, Larson and Shevchenko (2019, 6–7) repeatedly refer to Japan as a country that typifies those seeking status and utilizing a social mobility strategy. We can therefore see it as a representative case when observing the causal link of the hypotheses introduced in the previous section. Second, Japan has a theoretical relevance as well as a historical background of a status deficit. As we discussed at the end of the theory section above, the scope of our theory is the "follower" countries that are supportive of the current international order created and managed by the US and reflected in the UN Charter. Japan is one of these countries. Also, Japan once lost its major power status by losing WWII, and this historical background has pushed Japan to recover its status in international society via the US–Japan alliance and active involvement in the United Nations. In fact, according to the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the US–Japan alliance and "UN-centered diplomacy" are two of the three foreign policy pillars since 1957. Third, Japan has been engaging in both US-led coalitions as well as UN peacekeeping operations since the end of the Cold War. Hypothetical experimental scenarios on the two multilateral missions will therefore have a high plausibility. We consider that the validity of selecting this country is relatively high to study the two types of multilateral use of force.

Experiment Design

To test our hypotheses, we made several hypothetical scenarios of a ceasefire process in country B in the Middle East. In the country B, a civil war ended, but a peace process is still unclear. In such a condition, we randomized whether Japan does not participate in any multilateral mission (control condition), or if it joins a US-led coalition to monitor the cease-fire in country B (treatment 1), or if it joins in a UN peacekeeping mission to cease-fire in country B (treatment 2). These scenarios are

[4]We admit that the domestic sample provides only one-sided evidence of status. The self-recognized international status could be affected not only by the domestic perception but also by how the state is viewed by other states, so how other countries see the status of the state adopting a particular foreign policy could be an essential piece of study. This article does not cover that aspect of status, and this is going to be a future task.

included to test H1.1 and H1.2.[5] The vignettes of treatments 1 and 2 are shown below.[6]

In state B in the Middle East, a civil war ended recently. The United States decided to send a peacekeeping mission in coalition with allied countries [The United Nations decided to send a peacekeeping mission]. The Japanese government, reacting to the US' [UN's] decision, started to consider sending 800 Ground SDF troops to monitor the ceasefire in state B. While the disarmament of the armed groups is still not finalized, the Japanese government has just decided to send its GSDF troops as a part of the US-led coalition mission [a part of the UN mission]. How much do you support the Japanese government's decision to send GSDF troops?[7]

Also, we randomized a scenario on the potential early withdrawal of troops from a coalition or a UN peacekeeping mission to test H2. We asked the respondents to read one of the following paragraphs after asking some questions regarding the use of force and multilateral operations.

[Continue Treatment] On X/Y (date and month), state B had a major combat incident, and that incident caused multiple deaths of GSDF troops who had been engaging in the peacekeeping mission. Faced with this incident, the Japanese government has decided to continue GSDF deployment to state B. How much do you support the Japanese government's decision to send GSDF troops?

[Withdrawal Treatment] On X/Y (date and month), state B had a major combat incident, and that incident caused multiple deaths of GSDF troops who had been engaging in the peacekeeping mission. Faced with this incident, the Japanese government has decided to withdraw GSDF deployment from state B. How much do you support the Japanese government's decision to withdraw GSDF troops?

To measure status perception as a dependent variable, we asked the respondents, "Do you or do you not think that the decision to send [not to send/continue the deployment of/withdraw] the GSDF troops has an impact on changing the status of Japan? Select only one choice that fits to you the best." They have a choice of (1) has an impact of increasing its status, (2) does not have an impact and (3) has an impact of decreasing its status.

Furthermore, to test H3, we inserted the standard SDO measurement in the survey experiment after the treatment (Pratto et al. 1994, 2000). A person's SDO concerns the degree to which the individual believes that there should be a hierarchy among groups in human as well as international relations. The reason we put the SDO measure after the treatment is that otherwise, it may affect the dependent variable (status perception) as unintended priming; because the SDO measure would considerably stimulate participants' sense of hierarchy among groups and because the number of questions relating to it is relatively large (16 items in total), we are

[5] In theory, we could treat the information that Japan unilaterally goes to war and compare it with the multilateral case to test our theory. However, we did not adopt this scenario simply because it is quite unlikely that Japan unilaterally causes a war and the Japanese public is used to judging that type of information. Also, we recognize that the US-led coalition contains both the information that the US is a leader and the information that Japan joins a multilateral military coalition. So, the subjects could be treated by both types of information at the same time, which makes it difficult to capture which type of information causes a difference in participants' reactions. However, we did not unbundle these treatments for the sake of the reality of our vignettes: Japan has never joined a military coalition without the US leadership since 1945, so it would be too demanding for the Japanese public to imagine Japan joining a military coalition without the US leadership.

[6] In the original experiment setting, we had a priming of status concern to the respondents by asking them to think of status and recent evaluation on Japanese status in international relations; we expected that the priming amplifies the treatment effect, but it did not work in either a positive or a negative way. In the following section, we report pooled results over the priming. For clarification and robustness of our finding, we report the outcome of our study divided into primed and non-primed groups in the Appendix.

[7] For control, we showed the respondents the following scenario. "In state B in the Middle East, a civil war ended recently. The United States of America decided to send a peacekeeping mission in coalition with allied countries [The United Nations decided to send a peacekeeping mission]. The Japanese government, reacting to the US' [UN's] decision, started to consider sending 800 Ground SDF troops to monitor the ceasefire in state B. While the disarmament of the armed groups is still not finalized, the Japanese government has decided not to send its GSDF troops as a part of the US-led coalition mission [a part of the UN mission]. How much do you support the Japanese government's decision not to send GSDF troops?"

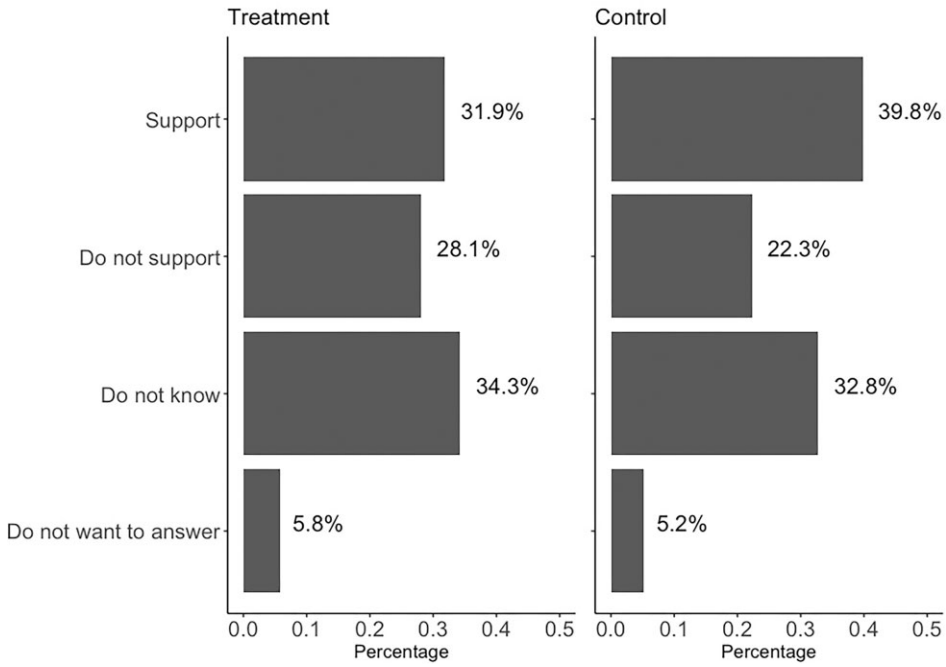

Figure 1. Support the level of government's decision by treatment (join UN/US multinational use of force) and control (not join) groups.

worried that if we put the SDO measure before the treatment, participants' state of mind diverges from a realistic situation and, as a result, our study would lack external validity. To avoid this, we put the SDO measure after the treatment.[8]

The survey experiment was fielded in Japan in January 2021 via Lucid Marketplace.[9] The entire sample size was 2726; we gathered 1801 samples for the treatment groups and 925 samples for the control group. We set a quota for gender and age cohort (six generation categories) in randomizing the control/treatment groups.

Result

Figure 1 shows the descriptive statistics of a question asking if the respondents support the government's decision either to participate in or stay out from the UN/US-led military operation in the Middle East. In the treated group, 32 percent of the respondents support the Japanese government's decision to send its SDF forces along with the UN peacekeepers or US military, while in the control group, about 40 percent of the respondents support the decision by the government not to join such a multinational force. In general, Japanese people tend not to support troop deployment overseas, no matter if it is under the UN or US flag.

With such negativity toward participation in multinational military operations on foreign soil, we wanted to see whether the difference of the treatment and control

[8]We are aware of the potential danger of post-treatment bias when putting the SDO measure after the treatment and subsetting the data based on it (Montgomery, Nyhan and Torres 2018). However, comparing the unintended priming with the potential danger of post-treatment bias, we judged that the former would be more problematic since the former affects all of the analysis in this study, whereas the latter affects only the SDO analysis. In addition, it turns out that the SDO mean is well balanced between the treatment and control groups (which is shown in the online Appendix), and the effect size of SDO is large enough. Thus, we believe that the potential post-treatment bias is not large enough to change the conclusion of our experiment.

[9]This experiment was conducted before the American withdrawal from Afghanistan in August 2021.

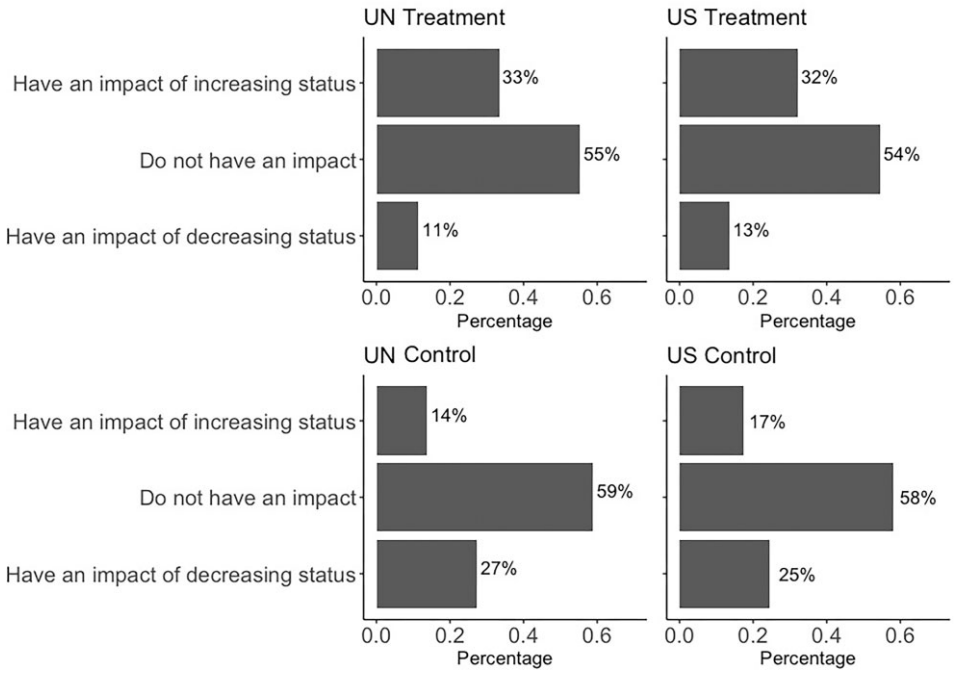

Figure 2. Expectation over Japanese international status by treatment (join UN/US multinational use of force) and control (not join) groups.

groups would change the perceptions over Japan's international status among the people, as predicted in the hypotheses. Figure 2 shows the descriptive statistics of a question asking whether the decision to continue deployment of the GSDF troops had an impact on changing the status of Japan.

The figure shows a contrasting outcome over status expectations.[10] In the UN peacekeeping operation case, 33 percent of the respondents in the treated group considered the government's decision would have a positive, increasing effect over the Japanese international status. Similarly, in the US coalition case, 32 percent of respondents answered their expectations to increase the status. By contrast, 54–55 percent of the respondents considered that there would be no effect, and only 11–13 percent of the respondents answered that there would be a negative impact on its status. This is very different from the control, where the Japanese government decided not to join in a multinational military operation; in the control condition, only 14–17 percent of the respondents considered that Japan would increase its international status, and the majority thought it would not change the status, but 25–27 percent of the people expected that it would decrease its international status.

Figure 3 shows this contrasting result more explicitly. The figure reports the difference of the treatment and control groups regarding expectations over Japanese international status. We see the engagement in the multilateral use of force increases the expectation of status enhancement by 15 percent in the US-led coalition case and by 20 percent in the UN-led peacekeeping case. Both are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. By contrast, if there is no engagement in the multinational military mission, expectation of the status decrease would go up about 11 percent in the US-led case and 16 percent in the UN-led case. On the no-change expec-

[10]We report a correlation between the support level for the government and status expectation in the online Appendix.

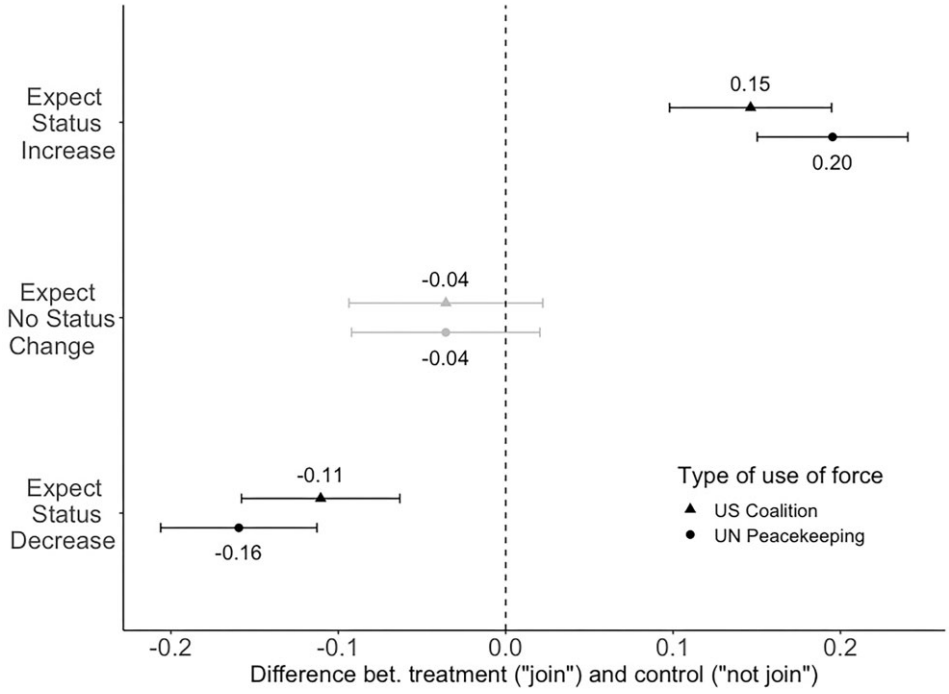

Figure 3. Difference of treatment and control groups regarding expectation over Japanese international status.
Note: These results are calculated by subtracting each ratio in the control group ("not join") from the corresponding ratios in the treatment group ("join"). Error bars show 95 percent confidence intervals.

tation, we could not see a statistically significant difference between the treatment and control.

Our findings support hypotheses 1.1 and 1.2, which are that participation in US-led coalitions and UN-led peacekeeping operations increases status expectations.[11] There is no critical difference in *who* leads the multinational military mission. While a few more people tend to support the status increase in the UN peacekeeping case, the status jump is expected even if Japan is a part of the US-led coalition forces.

On hypothesis 2, Figure 4 shows the outcome trend of status expectation when one of the groups saw the continuation of troop deployment scenario and the other saw the early withdrawal scenario, respectively. The figure clearly suggests that the continuation of military deployment leads to an expectation of higher international status (a 20 percent increase in the US-led case and a 16 percent increase in the UN-led case), and it would reduce the status quo and status decline expectations compared with the cases of early and unilateral troop departures from the joint military operation. (For the expectation of no status change, Figure 4 suggests a 10

[11]This may imply that an underlying motivation for status could be a driving force for why a state participates in the UN-led or US-led military activities. If citizens feel good about their country's status when their country engages in these activities and contributes to the world order, the leaders may choose to join these multilateral operations to make their citizens satisfied with their country's status and to gain support from them. Or, perhaps, leaders may consider the same way as ordinary citizens and feel satisfied with status enhancement brought by participating in these military activities. As Wohlforth et al. (2018) argued, this type of status motivation can be understood as a stabilizing effect of status on international order: a motivation for status improvement could lead to the support for the current world order and the current distribution of power. This point of view offers a unique insight for why the US hegemony is often sustained by other countries, especially by its allies.

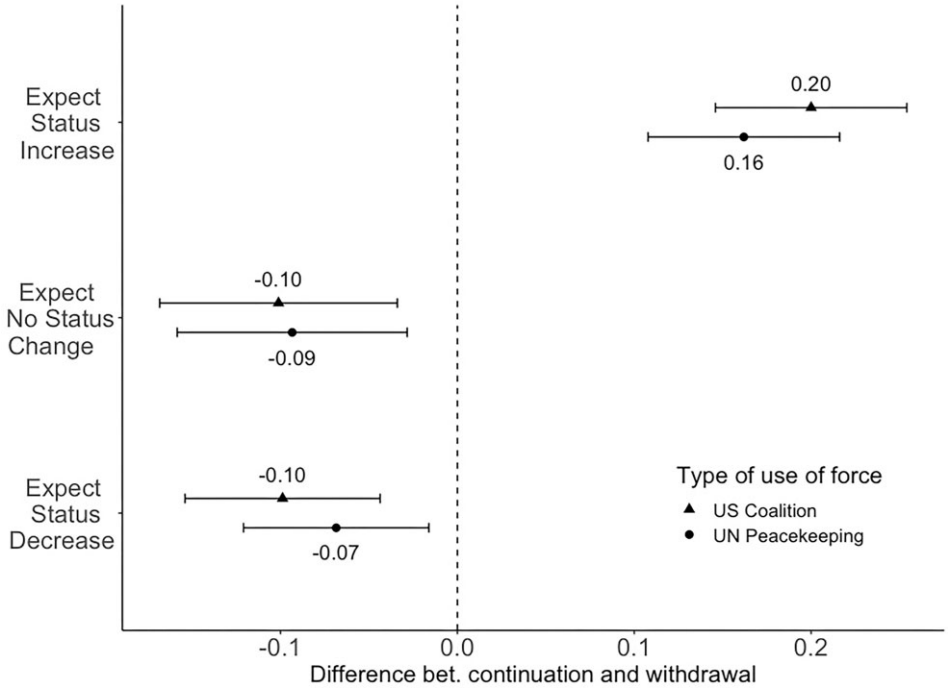

Figure 4. Difference of continuation and withdrawal groups regarding expectation over Japanese international status.
Note: These results are calculated by subtracting each ratio in the continuation group from the corresponding ratios in the withdrawal group. Error bars show 95 percent confidence intervals.

percent decrease in the US-led case and a 9 percent decrease in the UN-led case. For the expectation of a status decrease, it indicates a 10 percent decrease in the US-led case and a 7 percent decrease in the UN-led case.) These results are statistically significant at the 0.05 level. Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported, which means that withdrawing troops from a US-led coalition or a UN peacekeeping mission diminishes a country's status. It must be also noted that the trend did not change by who leads the multilateral mission, which could be interesting since it can be expected that the early departure of the US coalition may harm the Japanese reputation as a reliable ally for the United States and its other partners and might directly damage the status of Japan in the US-centered hierarchy (Tago 2007, 2009).

Finally, to test hypothesis 3, we divided the respondents into three different groups by using the SDO scale—high-, middle-, and low-SDO groups.[12] Figures 5 and 6 show that the individual trait on SDO indeed drives different responses toward the expectation of Japanese international status as a result of a hypothetical policy scenario in joining and departing the multinational military mission. High-SDO people tend to react far more strongly in expecting more gain in status when they read the scenario of *joining* and *staying* in a multinational military mission (a 40 percent increase and a 34 percent increase, respectively). By contrast, for the people in the middle- and low-SDO groups, the size of the effects is smaller (15–19 percent increases). This tendency is also true on the expectation of a status decrease. We

[12] In the SDO analysis, we define the high-SDO group as those whose SDO scores are more than one standard deviation from the mean, the low-SDO group as those whose SDO scores are less than one standard deviation from the mean, and the middle-SDO group as those whose SDO scores are between the two criteria.

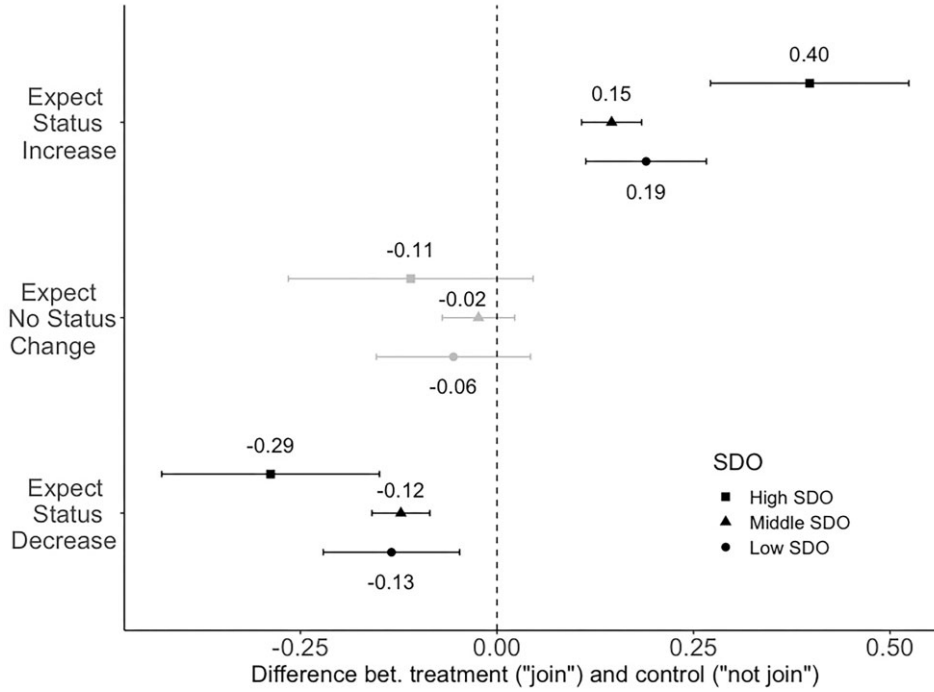

Figure 5. SDO and expectation over Japanese international status: join or not join. *Note*: These results are calculated by first subsetting answers based on the SDO groups and then subtracting each ratio in the control group ("not join") from the corresponding ratios in the treatment group ("join"). Error bars show 95 percent confidence intervals.

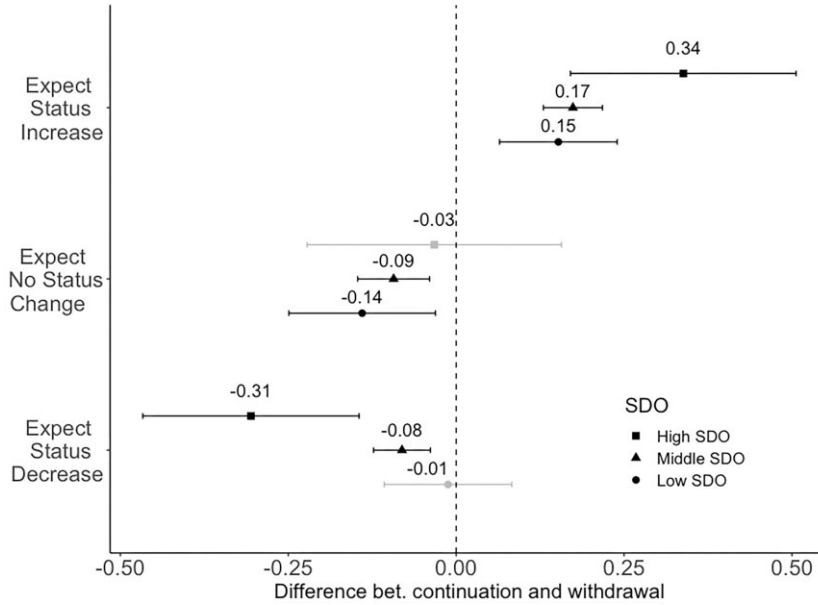

Figure 6. SDO and expectation over Japanese international status: continuation or withdrawal.

Note: These results are calculated by first subsetting answers based on the SDO groups and then subtracting each ratio in the continuation group from the corresponding ratios in the withdrawal group. Error bars show 95 percent confidence intervals.

observe 29 percent and 31 percent decreases for the high-SDO people, whereas we see only 8–13 percent decreases for the middle- and low-SDO people. In the case of the continuation and withdrawal of troops scenario, the low-SDO people would not consider the unilateral withdrawal of troops would decrease the status, which is a clear difference from the other two groups. In line with Renshon (2017), SDO is a driving force for status seeking among the general public, and the high-SDO holders would consider that a particular government policy may change the country's status both in a positive and in negative direction.

Conclusion

The study has offered empirical evidence to connect international status perception changes and participation to/early withdrawal from a multinational military mission. As expected, sending troops along with the United States and as a part of a UN peacekeeping mission increases expectations about Japan's status as a country among respondents in Japan.[13] By contrast, an early, unilateral departure from a multinational mission significantly decreases expectations about the status. Moreover, our additional sub-sample analysis indicated that people who have a high-SDO trait are more likely to change expectations depending on how the Japanese government decides regarding multinational forces.

Our study is important to find that status perception can be manipulated by a choice of government intervention policy abroad. What a government does as a part of a coalition or UN peacekeeping operation can change both positively and negatively in formulating the status expectation of a country, and it is especially true for high-SDO people. Since status perception is based on the socially constructed ranking of countries (that is, status evaluation would be done by other states and their general public), mirror image experiments should be performed further in other countries than Japan—i.e., asking people in other countries whether they consider that Japanese status would increase if it sends troops as a part of a coalition/UN peacekeeping operation and whether they perceive a decline in Japan's status if it unilaterally leaves before others. Meanwhile, our study shows one side of the story: status expectations would be boosted by sending troops to a multilateral military operation, which has been relatively overlooked in previous studies.

Related to this last point, this study suggests that an underlying motivation for international status could be a driving force for why a state joins in a coalition led by major powers such as the United States and international peace operations authorized by the United Nations. This point implies the stabilizing effect of status on international order: status reflects and reinforces the distribution of power, and it becomes a way in which systems of great power cliques get normalized and legitimated (Wohlforth et al. 2018; MacDonald and Parent 2021). In this regard, the multilateral use of force as a status-seeking behavior is distinct from the unilateral use of force. Up until today, a variety of studies have offered analyses about why states join in a multilateral military operation (e.g., Tago 2007; Lake 2011; Vucetic 2011; Wolford 2015; Recchia and Chu 2021), but they have rarely included status motive in the data. While operationalization of status seeking could be a challenge, we may need to include such a "status" motive as a potentially important driving force to send troops abroad as a part of multinational military missions.

[13]We need to be conservative in evaluating our experimental outcome. While our study is internally valid as an experiment-based study, we only fielded this in Japan—a country that could be the most likely case to have this type of association between the status and multilateral use of force among the general public. Also, our study may need to be replicated by the political elite survey experiment since the status concern may be more salient among the political leaders. We believe that further studies are required to make a solid conclusion on the external validity of our findings.

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Supplemental Information

Supplementary information is available at the *Foreign Policy Analysis* data archive.

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