



International Hierarchy and Functional Differentiation of States: Results of an Expert Survey

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*"Power, like love, is easier to experience than to define or measure."
Joseph Nye (1990: 25)*

Abstract: This article investigates the existing international hierarchy employing expert survey as its primary method. 'Authority hierarchy' and 'power status hierarchy,' the two existing research traditions of hierarchy studies, are briefly introduced. We demonstrate a gap between basic research on power status, emphasizing its social nature, and applied case studies, primarily relying on purely material indicators of a country's capabilities, such as the GDP and CINC. In times of rapid hierarchical shifts, there is a need for a more nuanced and holistic approach. The article suggests placing hierarchy studies onto the ontological foundation of Niklas Luhmann's Differentiation Theory to overcome these problems. The article gives a brief account of the international society's segmentary differentiation, stratificatory differentiation (status hierarchy), and functional differentiation (specialization). The paper argues that the functional roles of states and their positions in the international hierarchy are interconnected. The hierarchy of states' roles, resulting from functional differentiation, is understood in terms of authority hierarchy. In order to lay the ground for further research, the article provides three valuable insights into the international hierarchy. Firstly, we categorize 26 countries as belonging to one of the power status categories (small power, middle power, great power, superpower) as of autumn 2021 based on the survey results. We calculate indices for the states in the survey operationalizing their power, roles, public goods provision, and revisionism. Secondly, the paper presents experts' evaluations of the importance of various valued attributes (such as the size of the economy, military might, international prestige, autonomy, etc.) for different power status categories. Thirdly, we suggest a novel approach linking a country's position in the international hierarchy to its functional roles. We use correlation analysis to test the hypothesis and compare the roles index to other popular power status indicators.

Keywords: Sociology, Luhmann, New Systems Theory, power status, valued attributes, Differentiation Theory, authority

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Despite International Relations (IR) theory's long-standing focus on anarchy, many recent studies have brought forward the concept of. Following them, this paper deals with the origins of the *international hierarchy*. As the international order is undergoing a profound transformation, there is a growing need to understand shifts in international hierarchy. However, existing approaches to hierarchy lack consistency, and this study aims to improve them.

The article has two theoretical sections. The first one reviews the literature on theoretical approaches to hierarchy, emphasizing existing gaps, methodological and ontological problems. In order to bridge these gaps, the second section anchors the study of international hierarchy to New Systems Theory, which applies Niklas Luhmann's Differentiation Theory to IR. We hypothesize that the states' roles in functional domains of international society and their position in the current international hierarchy are interdependent. The third and fourth sections outline the methodology (expert survey) and present the results of this study. The hypothesis is tested and compared with several alternative hypotheses. The final section presents an 'impactful role' criterion and outlines a possible framework for integrating existing international hierarchy approaches.

Hierarchy in an Anarchic International System

Anarchy has long been treated as one of the main distinguishing features of IR (Waltz 1979: 88-89; Wendt 1992; Bull 1995: 57) and even its 'core constituent principle' (Walker 1993: 171). It was perceived as the main obstacle to international cooperation (Oye 1985; Axelrod Keohane 1985) and a source of conflict (Osgood, Tucker 1967: 13; Waltz 2001: 159-186) among nations. Unlike people, who 'signed' a social contract to break away from anarchy, sovereign states seemed to be bound to exist in their natural state (Wight, 1960). However, in the 1990s the Neorealist-Neoliberal debate led many to believe that cooperation was possible among states in an anarchical system and questioned the existence of anarchy as an IR assumption (Milner 1991; Powell 1994; Lake 1996). In the same decade, R.B.J.Walker (1993: 151-152, 164) proclaimed the normative inferiority of anarchy, in a way following the English School tradition (Bull, 1981).

The concept of anarchy was stripped of much of its meaning to deal with the criticism. Jack Donelly (Donelly 2015) pointed out that even the most prominent IR authors, including Kenneth Waltz, confused two distinct understandings of anarchy: 'absence of hierarchy' and 'absence of an international government.' While the latter has some practical use, albeit limited, as it can serve for demarcation purposes, the former is primarily false and can produce nothing but erroneous predictions. Although states are legally equal, they are intrinsically differentiated to a point where the differences in their characteristics, status, and power determine the structure of their relations within the international relations system, forming a hierarchy. Even Waltz (Waltz 1967) pointed out that 'inequality is inherent in the state system' and 'cannot be removed.'

This narrower interpretation of anarchy leaves space for the study of international hierarchy. Before, the long-standing emphasis on anarchy overshadowed the fact that inequality and hierarchy among states exist and determine much of the interstate relations. The contemporary study of hierarchy in IR stems from occasional publications on state inequality, classifying states into small, middle, great powers, and superpowers (Glazebrook 1947; Organski 1958: 326, 330; Vandenbosch 1964; Vital 1967; Kaiser 1968; Keohane 1969; Wallace 1971; Vayrynen 1971; Holbraad 1984). This literature lays the foundation for the power status and hierarchy research tradition, but until the 1990s, they were peripheral to the mainstream debates and did not form a full-fledged research program. At the time the study of hierarchy was hardly systemic. In an early attempt, David Lake (Lake 1996) suggested classifying security arrangements by the intrinsic hierarchy level (alliance/ protectorate/ informal empire/ empire), inaugurating a novel research program.

The road from oblivion to prominence took two decades: in 2016, Janice Bially Mattern and Ayse Zarakol (Zarakol 2016) proclaimed in an International Organization article that "hierarchies are a ubiquitous feature of international <...> politics". Zarakol (Zarakol 2017) identifies two contemporary strains of hierarchy studies, which could be labeled "authority hierarchy" and "power status hierarchy"¹ (see Table 1).

The first tradition adopts a definition of hierarchy as 'legitimate authority' (Zarakol 2017: 4), which brings it closer to hegemony studies². It focuses on relations of subordination and superordination between actors and deals with the origins of hierarchy. John Ikenberry and Daniel Nexon (Nexon 2019), representatives of this vein of thought, unhesitatingly put hierarchy research inside the hegemony research program. As in the case of hegemony, public goods provision is essential to understanding the origins of hierarchy.

Within this tradition, the Critical Theory, postcolonial and Neo-Marxist accounts of international hierarchy occupy a special place, as they depart from the narrow definition and consider hierarchy the main constituting principle of social relations, not just IR. For critical theories, the description of existing hierarchies is a way to dismantle them. Carlos Escudé (Escudé 1998), an Argentinian pioneer of hierarchy research, can also be regarded as an 'Authority hierarchy' theorist. According to Escudé the world was organized in a proto-hierarchy among states 1) setting the rules, 2) following them and 3) rebelling against them (Escudé 2012). Following in the same tradition, Donnelly (Donnelly 2006) identified multiple hierarchy systems in IR (Balance of Power, Protection, Concert, Collective Security, Hegemony, Dominion, Empire, Security Community).

¹ In this context, 'power' is mostly understood in a narrow sense as 'a person, organization, or country that has control over others, often because of wealth, importance, or great military strength,' see Cambridge Dictionary. URL: <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/power> (accessed 05.07.22).

² Compare it with the definition of hegemony in a recent edition: 'legitimated rule by dominant power' (Dutkiewicz et al. 2020: 1)

Table 1. Hierarchy research traditions

Hierarchy research tradition	Authority hierarchy	Power status hierarchy
Drivers of hierarchy	International ordering	Inequality between actors
School of thought	Neoliberalism / Critical theory, Neo-Marxism	Constructivism, Realism
Positions inside hierarchy	Subordination and superordination	Microstates, small powers, middle powers, great powers, superpowers
Predominant approach to power	Relational power	Power-as-resources
Rationale for hierarchy	Order for autonomy bargain / None	"The weak suffer what they must"
Source of hierarchy	Deliberate actions / deep structure (for critical theory and Neo-Marxism)	International socialization and capabilities inequality
Number of hierarchies	Multiple (possibly overlapping) hierarchies	One universal hierarchy, several regional hierarchies
Prominent scholars	D.Lake, J.Ikenberry, C.Escude, J.Donnelly, M.Bukovansky, D.C.Kang, E.Keene, I.Wallerstein, A.Cooley, K.Weber	T.V.Paul, D.W.Larson, A.Shevchenko, R.Adler-Nissen, A.Zarakol, T.J.Volgy, B.Buzan
Research questions	What is the nature of hierarchy? What is hierarchy made of? How is hierarchy made? Where does hierarchy come from?	How do actors exist in hierarchies? How do actors use/ navigate/ reproduce/ resist/ escape existing hierarchies? How do existing hierarchies function? How are existing hierarchies sustained or dismantled?

Composed by authors based on Zarakol (Zarakol 2017).

The second tradition builds upon the differentiation of states into traditional power categories under the assumption that those reflect the actual status of states. It focuses on the mechanisms of status adjustment and accommodation, interpreting status as 'collective beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, sociopolitical organization, and diplomatic clout)' (Paul et al. 2014: 5-7). The valued attributes are the power status criteria brought forward by academia and practitioners.

Although somehow related to capabilities, status is a social construct. As David J. Singer and Melvin Small (Singer, Small 1966) put it, "status may correlate with certain inherent and objective properties, capabilities, or skills of the actor in question, [but] it need not." For instance, as Baldev Raj Nayar and T.V. Paul (Nayar, Paul 2003: 8) argue, there is a built-in status quo bias in the international power hierarchy, impeding the ascension of new major powers.

Power status rests upon the recognition of others. Still, it is indirectly tied to material capacities, as most valued attributes are material and measurable. The problem with valued attributes is that they change over time and are historically dependent. There are multiple approaches to determining valued attributes. Assessing whether Russia is a great power, Barry Buzan (Buzan 2021) refers to such criteria as a military power (including nuclear weapons and delivery capabilities), territory, UN Security Council membership, foreign development assistance, GDP, demography, networks of friends and allies, contribution to climate adaptation. According to Tatyana A. Shakleina (Shakleina 2011), the set of great power criteria comprises territory, natural resources, demography, military capabilities, the size of the economy, access to advanced

technologies, level of scientific development, access to education, cultural development, the tradition of acting and thinking globally.

Today the international hierarchy is undergoing a major transformation: the US hegemonic decline³ destabilizes the international order, the rise of middle powers brings forward new key actors (Montgomery 2016) with new assertive strategies (Sucu et al. 2021). Power status debates are also of some interest to practitioners since there is a general understanding that states are interested in elevating their power status (Bratersky 2018; Wohlforth et al. 2018; Volynchuk A.B., Volynchuk Y.A. 2018; Bratersky et al. 2021). Consequently, there is a growing need to operationalize and investigate current changes in the power status hierarchy. Still, despite many attempts, there are no universal criteria for hierarchy. While in a case study, several valued attributes can be used, in large-N research, scholars generally have to rely on⁴ capability measures including the widely criticized but still widely used GDP, a GDP * GDP per capita measure (Beckley 2018), the Composite Index of National Capability – CINC (Singer et al. 1972), the Aggregated potential index (Melville, Mironyuk 2020) and others.

The multifactorial analysis demonstrates constant fluctuations among tier-two powers (Artyushkin et al. 2021), which are counterintuitive since the power status change is usually gradual and does not occur too often. Theoretical insights on the importance of recognition and the social nature of status are hardly transformed into applied research, especially papers relying on quantitative large-N analysis. Even some papers that deliberately develop constructivist notions of power status rely on material parameters (Gorelskiy, Mironyuk 2019). There are a few exceptions, all connected to the study of diplomatic relations. Among those an early work by Singer and Small (Singer, Small 1966), a ground-breaking book on security implications of the status deficit by Jonathan Renshon (Renshon 2017) pursuing a network approach, a paper which uses the centrality of a state in the network of embassies as a measure of status by Marina G. Duque (Duque 2018) and a work by Denis A. Degterev, Aleksei S. Butorov (Degterev, Butorov 2018). However, *diplomatic embeddedness* is not a direct measure of status but rather a consequence of high status. Hence, although it sometimes seems to perform better than capability-based approaches, it can misguide the researcher as other variables interfere. For instance, one of the papers mentioned above ranks contemporary Belgium second in the status comparison right behind the US.

There is no universal guide on which parameters to use so as to determine whether a state is a great power, a middle power, or belongs to some other category. This has led to the emergence of multiple theoretical rather than merely methodological approaches, which sometimes provide conflicting assessments (Sucu 2021). For instance, there are at least four influential approaches to identifying middle powers: functional,

³ While some authors still contend with the erosion of American hegemony (Schweller, Pu 2011) or its scale (Germain 2020; Schmidt 2020), most treat it as a fact (Cooley, Nexon 2020; Wohlforth 2021). At least, a complex hegemony is no longer possible today (Safranchuk et al. 2021).

⁴ For some examples of such analysis, see: (Bijan 2005; Xuetong 2006; Komleva 2010; Thompson 2011).

behavioral, hierarchical (or positional) (Chapnick 1999), and, more recently, ideational (Gecelovsky 2009; Carr 2014).

The functional approach measures middle powers' capabilities at exerting their influence and assuming responsibility in international relations (Chapnik 1999). The behavioral approach, labeling middle powers by their policies, was best described by Robert Cox: "the middle power is a role in search of an actor" (Cox 1989). In other words, to comply with the status of a middle power, states have to meet certain expectations, conduct a multilateral foreign policy, seek conflict resolution via compromise, and employ 'good international citizen' diplomacy (Cooper et al., 1993: 19). The hierarchical approach measures a state's position in the international hierarchy based on its material capabilities⁵. The ideational approach as proposed by Andrew Carr (Carr 2014), postulates that middlepowermanship rests on a state's self-identity as a middle power.

Furthermore, A.F. Cooper, R.A. Higgott, and K.R. Nossal (Cooper, Higgott, Nossal 1993) described a geographic approach tying middlepowermanship to the national geography, and a normative approach giving ethical evaluations of middle powers and placing them above great and small powers, since they are perceived as states pursuing predominantly benevolent behavior for the sake of others (Carr 2014). Despite relatively low popularity among scholars, the normative approach was partly incorporated into the behavioral approach, manifesting in idealism in analyzing middle power behavior (Carr, 2014).

Nevertheless, some scholars have attempted to reduce the discrepancies between those approaches. Setting aside the numerous traditional approaches, A. Carr (Carr 2014) proposed to break down the analysis of states into investigating their position (material capabilities, e.g., GDP), behavior (diplomacy and activities in conflict resolution), and identity. Still, there is no consensus on middle power definition and criteria, although there is some progress. Today's middle power research agenda indicates deep ontological lacunas within the power status hierarchy (between rationalism and reflectivism), which impede the integration of approaches based on qualitatively different premises.

Another problem with power status hierarchy is the lack of objective thresholds for different power categories. No precise GDP figure alone would classify a state as a great power or a country in transition from one status to another. Working with relative indicators and rankings facilitates the task but does not provide clear thresholds. There is no way to unequivocally deduce such a figure from expert judgments since they will reveal no clear threshold between a great and a middle power in terms of GDP and more complex composite indices.

Besides, the existing approaches to hierarchy fail to explain how functional roles in the international system influence hierarchy of states (if they do at all). Contrary to Waltz's arguments, specialization in international relations is becoming more and

⁵ Wood B., 1987. Middle powers in the international system: a preliminary assessment of potential. – Helsinki, Finland: WIDER, 49 p.

more vivid. These traditions might be making a mistake of not considering the implications of such specialization for hierarchy. Thus, as we intend to prove, the existing approaches are reducing the validity of the evaluations and predictions scholars make.

As there are significant problems in both approaches to measuring power status and explaining the modern international relations system, the hierarchy studies seem ripe for some theoretical synthesis. Combining the two approaches to hierarchy can help refine the measurements and open up new avenues for predictions of changes.

This paper builds on the power status tradition in the choice of the dependent variable but posits a research question that is more suitable to 'authority hierarchy': what determines a state's power status? In addition, the article aims to find out which criteria are more relevant to the applied research on status in international relations. Also, this study will provide a current assessment of some states' positions in the international hierarchy.

The article will bring closer the two existing traditions of hierarchy research. To do so, we should anchor the study of international hierarchy to a systemic approach that would accommodate both traditions into a single framework. Luhmann's Differentiation Theory (Buzan, Albert 2010) is apt for the task, especially given its focus on stratification and functional differentiation, reflecting hierarchy and specialization in IR. Luhmann's theory has recently been used to reconfigure the study of middle powers by Sarah Teo (Teo 2021) and produced promising results. This study aims at creating a single approach, applying Differentiation Theory to the study of International Hierarchy, which would not be limited to one power status category.

Social Differentiation as a Theoretical Framework for the Study of International Hierarchy

According to one of the Sociological schools of thought, the development of any social system is the result of its differentiation, meaning "reduplication of the difference between a system and the environment within a system" (Luhmann 1967). As a result of such differentiation, "facts, events and problems obtain a multiplicity of meanings in different perspectives" (Luhmann 1982: 231). Niklas Luhmann identified three possible forms of differentiation: segmentation, stratification, and functional differentiation (Luhmann 1982: 232).

Segmentation produces the division of a social system into equal subsystems. Inequalities of potentials and 'communication chances,' as Luhmann would put it, might exist but do not yet fulfill any systemic function. As the system develops, these inequalities produce qualitative changes, the system becomes stratified, and symbolic practices reflect the emerging hierarchy. This inequality fosters communication among the upper-class subsystems. Still, equality persists as the 'principle defining the identity of subsystems' (Luhmann 1982: 234).

Functional differentiation or specialization is the most advanced form of differentiation, which occurs when the communication processes are organized 'around spe-

cial functions to be fulfilled at the level of society' (Luhmann 1982: 236). No functional sphere would have absolute primacy over the others since 'all necessary functions must be fulfilled and are interdependent.' According to Luhmann, three consecutive stages of functional differentiation exist: a) multiple roles appear, b) complementary service-receiving roles appear (e.g., pupil for teacher, a parishioner for a cleric)⁶, c) functionally specialized communications become subsystems (e.g., education, religion). Subsystems in a functionally differentiated society obtain specific characteristics. The communications inside them are organized around certain core notions (i.e., 'public' and 'power' for politics, 'wealth' for economy, 'faith' for religion, etc.). As Luhmann argues: "roles organize their complementary expectations around a specific function."

Functional differentiation alters both segmentation and stratification. As Barry Buzan and Mathias Albert (Buzan, Albert 2011) explain, "'Functional specification' means basically that in modernity, politics, the economy, law, art, science, etc., emerge as relatively autonomous realms of society. This specification over time becomes more important than specifications according to status (as in stratified societies) or place (as in segmented ones)". Luhmann argued that functional differentiation shifts "the distribution of equality and inequality," i.e., alters the system's stratification (Luhmann 1982: 236). Strikingly relevant to IR, he also stressed that "a functionally differentiated society ... will become or will have to pretend to be *a society of equals*" (Luhmann 1982: 237).

There is no single history of international society, but rather multiple histories of international societies, which emerged, transformed, and then disappeared. Instead of giving accounts of ancient civilizations, this section will focus on the traditional Europe-centered history of modern society to demonstrate how different forms of differentiation transform the society based on well-known examples. Also, as Mathias Albert noticed, "neither historically nor in the contemporary world, should we see forms of differentiation as mutually exclusive. Most forms of differentiation can be found in most forms of society most of the time" (Albert 2016: 62).

As for segmentation, the subsystems comprising the international society, are national/territorial states, which have emerged as the main social, organizational structure in Europe in the 17th century, with sovereign equality becoming the system's organizing principle (Buzan, Albert 2010; Albert 2016: 124-125). Historical sociology provides extensive literature on segmentation of international relations⁷. For the Differentiation Theory, the nature of the 17th-century state is not as important. What matters, though, is its universal character, since Trade Republics, Monastic Orders or

⁶ It should be noted that such dual roles usually establish relations of subordination and superordination as studied by the authority hierarchy.

⁷ Max Weber tied modernization with Protestant ethics. Charles Tilly showed how violence and tax-collection produced the modern state. Michael Mann emphasized political, economic, military, and ideological power. Richard Lachman put the elite struggle at the forefront of modern state formation. Benno Teshke analyzed the slow process (16-17th cc.) of transforming a feudal state into an absolutist state, although he disputed that a 17th-century state could be characterized as modern.

the Catholic Church⁸ and other segmentary subsystems have ceased to play an essential role in international relations. Using an English School term, they were mostly excluded from the international society (Clark 2005: 38).

If there were a single event marking the transition of the international society towards stratification, it would be the 1814-1815 Vienna Congress. The great powers embodied by their monarchs decided the fate of Europe in a series of communicative acts (mostly during parties, using the modern language). From then on, it is possible to observe an international hierarchy, although quite simple⁹. It had arguably only two or three levels: great power, civilized state, and uncivilized state¹⁰. The Congress also established discriminatory practices of diplomatic communications via the Vienna Protocol of 1815 and Aachen Protocol of 1818: only the Great Powers exchanged ambassadors, while other states assigned lower-rank diplomats¹¹. As a League of Nations Committee characterized that system, 'the real desire of the signatory parties at Vienna was ... to ensure an exclusive rank for the representatives of the great powers' (Jayne 1927). These symbolic practices are something Luhmann would expect from a stratified system. Incipient functional differences appear in the form of special responsibilities of great powers (something Waltz (Waltz 1979: 198) would endorse), although they do not yet perform any systemic function.

As the basis for communications between great powers, the congress system persisted for most of the century (1814-1815 Vienna Congress, 1856 Paris Congress, 1878 Berlin Congress). Also, in the 19th century, universal valued attributes for international status emerged (naval capabilities, possession of colonies). Once the congress system became obsolete, the systemic function of enhancing communications between subsystems with higher status was replicated with permanent members of the Council of the League of Nations (1920-1946) and the permanent members of the UN Security Council (from 1945). Thus, multilateral communication between great powers became permanent.

Also, in the 19th century, the 'world power' (German '*Weltmacht*') category emerged as a higher-strata alternative to the category of 'great power'¹². After WWII, the 'world power' category was partially replaced with the 'superpower' moniker. Although not enshrined in any official documents (since sovereign equality impedes formal declaration of hierarchy), the concept is not infrequent in political

⁸ However, the Holy See and the Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of Saint John of Jerusalem, Rhodes, and Malta have continued to exist. Despite playing a marginal role in international politics, the Holy See enjoys a unique status that does not fit the interstate hierarchy. For instance, main international agreements on diplomatic representation (Vienna Protocol of 1815 and Vienna Convention of 1961) stipulate special status for Holy See's diplomatic representatives (apostolic nuncio). Their status can be even higher than that of ambassador, since in some countries, nuncio, rather the longest-serving diplomat, is the head of diplomatic corps.

⁹ Notably, the European Mediaeval society enjoyed a very formal status hierarchy between, for instance, Dutchies, Kingdoms, and Empires. However, with the collapse of the Feudal society, that stratification also became obsolete.

¹⁰ For an extensive analysis of the 19th century 'Standard of civilization' see Linklater (Linklater 2016, 2021).

¹¹ Zonova T.V. 2014 *Diplomatija: Modeli, Formy, Metody* [Diplomacy: Models, Forms and Methods]. P. 53. (In Russian).

¹² Müller T. The structure of status hierarchies: High Imperialism and great power status, the 1860s to 1930s. EISA 2021, Panel "Status, Competition, Rise and Decline in the Empire-System 1856-1955". September 2021. Also see Zonova T.V. 2014 *Diplomatija: Modeli, Formy, Metody* [Diplomacy: Models, Forms and Methods]. P. 53. (In Russian).

discourse¹³. Nuclear weapons and an alliance network (the Soviet and the Western blocs) became new valued attributes. Enhanced communications between the superpowers were established in 1963 with Washington–Moscow Direct Communications Link¹⁴. It was in the post-war era that the middle power category also emerged to serve as an identity of several states¹⁵. Thus, the international hierarchy became more complex.

Waltz famously discarded any possibility of functional differences among states (Waltz 1979: 96-97). The differentiation-inspired strand of IR argues that there is a functional differentiation of international society, albeit not among states. There is a strong opinion for a need to "move away from state-centric models of international system/ society towards ones where non-state actors, whether firms or civil society associations and even individuals have standing as units" (Buzan, Albert 2010) in order to find functionally differentiated subsystems. This notion is reinforced with the overall anti-rationalist impulse in IR and International Political Economy literature, which permeates the hierarchy studies (Cooley 2003). The arguments concerning the functional differentiation of international society revolve around international institutions and bureaucracy becoming somewhere in the 19th century the 'nodal points' establishing communication around certain key notions and expanding, especially after the Second World War and the Cold War (Koenig-Archibugi 2013).

According to this theory, international society has military, political, economic, societal, legal, health, environmental, and other functionally differentiated spheres (or first-order subsystems). These are also replicated inside the political subsystem in the form of spheres of global governance (governance of health, international security, global economy, etc.). Every one of these is a second-order subsystem of international society, which appears as the result of the interaction between the political subsystem and other first-order subsystems. The political subsystem is organized around the core notion of 'power' (Albert 2016: 5) and the 'strong/weak' binary opposition. Similarly, its second-order subsystems are also based on 'power,' but combine this communicative code with other codes significant to a specific function¹⁶. The first-order security

¹³ See Gorbachev's Perestroika and New Thinking: A Retrospective. *Russia in Global Affairs*. 09.08.2021. URL: <https://eng.globalaffairs.ru/articles/perestroika-and-new-thinking/> (accessed: 05.07.2022), Bush's Bush Sr. Say US. Should Be Humble. *AP News*. 22.03.2001. URL: <https://apnews.com/article/940fd106d40147230fcdcdccde97c35> (accessed: 05.07.2022), and also Mao's Against the Revisionist Yellow Journalism of the "Guardian" (Part 1). *The Workers' Advocate*. 6(6), September 1, 1976. / Encyclopedia of Anti-Revisionism On-Line URL: <https://www.marxists.org/history/erol/ncm-3/cousml-mao/article2.htm> (accessed: 05.07.2022).

¹⁴ Notably, there are still no similar communication channels between China and the US. It can be interpreted as a non-recognition of China's superpower status by Washington.

¹⁵ We can find an early mention of the middle power concept in the first volume of the International Organization (Glazebrook 1947). However, the idea can be traced back to the 16th century. For the extensive genealogy of the middle power concept, see Carsten Holbraad (Holbraad 1984).

¹⁶ It should not be seen as a straightforward transformation. While international security is indeed centered around military might, the global economy is not simply communications about economic power, as it primarily deals with development, while the nascent subsystem of global climate governance is centered around climate ambitions. On establishing the environmental subsystem of international politics, see (Zhornist et al. 2022). Beyond that, this article does not engage the debates on power in IR. We do not think the taxonomy of power presented in Michael Barnett and Raymond Duvall (Barnett, Duvall 2005) can significantly improve this analysis since functional subsystems are not necessarily linked to a specific type of power. For instance, institutional power is essential for all four functional subsystems included in the survey.

subsystem of the international society is deeply intertwined with the political one, to the point when it can be argued that the two are not fully separated. Moreover, similarly, different sectors of securitization (second-order subsystems) along the division lines of other first-order subsystems exist in the security first-order subsystem (Albert, Buzan 2011).

We argue that there is no reason to discard state-centric analysis in theorizing on functional differentiation. One should not disregard certain communications in a communication-centric paradigm just because bureaucrats produced them. More importantly, with the international society divided into nation-state segments, which acquire different status as the system is stratified, the next logical step is to see how states assume different functions. The need to look for non-state nodal points (we did not focus on nodal points for segmentary differentiation, why start now?) might obscure the interplay between different types of differentiation. Thus, we assume that states can also fulfill functional roles in international relations.

The international society might not have embraced functional differentiation as the primary organizing principle yet. However, it does not imply that there were no functional roles of separate states or that those roles had zero effect on the segmentary and stratificatory differentiation. The functional differentiation of sedentary and nomadic peoples in the Middle Ages altered the course of the world's history long before territorial states came to the forefront, continuing to perpetuate underdevelopment and conflict in certain regions even today (Shettima, Tar 2008). If applied to states, there are certainly some functional roles in the international society (world's factory, raw-material appendage, global policeman, norm entrepreneur, buffer state, tax haven, petrostate, etc.), some of which form dyads (foreign assistance donor/recipient, asylum country/exodus country).

Unlike an ordinary individual, a state can easily assume multiple roles at once. For instance, a state can fulfill the role of a security provider (e.g., the role of the US for Western Europe), a norm entrepreneur in the environmental sphere, and a vaccine donor in the humanitarian sphere. These roles relate to specific functional subsystems, including the world economy, international security, international humanitarian agenda, and global climate agenda. The enumerated roles suggest that in most functional subsystems, relations of subordination and superordination among actors (states included) abound, effectively producing an authority hierarchy¹⁷. Some actors play a more critical role, while others do not. There might be a specific fluid hierarchy between different functional subsystems (Nye (Nye 1990) argued that economic power became more important than military power). However, Luhmann emphasized that no function is subordinate to another since all functions need to be fulfilled for a society to continue existing. This article will assume that the four functional domains

¹⁷ Although theoretically egalitarian functional subsystems where all the states assume the same role or roles which do not automatically produce asymmetrical power relations are possible.

listed above are equally important, and we will return to this assumption in the discussion section.

The hypothesis to be tested is that a state's roles in functional domains of the international society and its position in international hierarchy are interdependent. If confirmed, it would also mean that power status hierarchy and authority hierarchy are linked via the functional subsystems. There has been little research¹⁸ on the interplay of functional and stratificatory differentiation in IR, and this paper aims to fill this gap. We will test a series of alternative hypotheses based on the long-standing assumption that states' capabilities determine the status and another alternative hypothesis related to public goods provision and compare their predictive power to that of the working hypothesis.

Methodology

Given the complex nature of power status and functional roles, expert survey has been chosen as the primary method of analysis¹⁹. Arguably, the subjective nature of power status (Paul et al. 2014) makes survey the best way to measure it. In our analysis, we assume that subjects whose opinion determines the status and specialization are members of the epistemic community of international relations scholars and practitioners. Since these are the networks that first conceptualized and began to use the valued attributes and most power categories, we find this method optimal.

Survey design

The questionnaire for the survey (see an abridged version in table 2, the complete questionnaire is available in an online appendix²⁰) was composed by the research group during a series of workshops based on the literature review outlined in the previous sections. Some questions aimed to quantify states' positions in the international hierarchy (power status, Q9) and their specializations (functional roles, Q11). Since the provision of public goods is closely associated with the international hegemony and participation in global governance, a question concerning public goods provision was added as well (Q12) to test an alternative hypothesis. The authors added another question on revisionism to deepen the analysis and enable further research (Q13).

26 states were included in the survey, including 19 members of the G20 (Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, South Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, but without the EU) and seven countries important for their respective regions (Egypt, Iran, Israel, Nigeria, North Korea, Pakistan, Poland). The purpose of such a list was to include all possible superpowers, great powers, and most middle powers.

¹⁸ Apart from the article about middle powers (Teo, 2021), another research should be mentioned as an exception (Fehl, Freistein, 2020).

¹⁹ On the applicability of expert surveys to study complex political phenomena, see (Steenbergen, Marks 2017).

²⁰ See the online supplementary materials, doi: 10.24833/2071-8160-2022-olf2-supl

Q1 was designed to separate IR experts from the public and differentiate between levels of expertise; Q2-Q4 allowed control for age, paradigm, and the country of origin. Apart from Q1-Q4, other questions were optional to let respondents omit some questions if they were having doubts. Q5, Q6, Q10 were added to check whether power status is the best concept to study stratificatory differentiation of states. Q7 and Q8 were meant to reveal which criteria were behind an expert's decision to categorize a state. The questionnaire was designed and shared using Google Forms web service (a .pdf version is available in the online appendix).

Table 2.

The questionnaire (abridged)
Q1. How do you describe your professional level in International Relations (IR)? [This was followed by the following excludable options: IR Scholar / Non-IR scholar / IR student/ Non-IR student / Foreign policy practitioner / No expertise]
Q2. Which International Relations theory paradigm(s) is (are) most relevant to your research and/or practice? [This was followed by the following non-excludable options: Realism, Liberalism, Constructivism, Marxism, None (Non-Paradigmatic), Other. The researcher could fill out the last option.]
Q3. What country are you from?
Q4. What is your age?
Q5. Is the categorization of states into superpowers, great/major powers, middle powers, small powers, and micro-states relevant today? [Yes, No]
Q6. If no, specify why?
Q7. What criteria would you say are essential to determine whether or not a state can be considered a superpower/ great power/ middle power (multiple choice) [This was followed by a list of 16 possible criteria and 3 "Other" criteria to be added by the respondent. Each criterion could be connected to any of three power categories or to none at all: Superpower, Great Power, Middle Power. The list of criteria is available in the online appendix.]
Q8. If you chose "other," please specify. Separate with commas.
Q9. Categorize as many countries as you can [This was followed by a list of the 26 countries and four excludable options for each: Superpower, Great Power, Middle Power, Small Power]
Q10. Which other ways of differentiating states do you consider relevant today, if any? (multiple choice) [This was followed by a list of 8 other categorizations and "other" category to be filled out by the respondent, if necessary]
Q11. Choose key states for the following spheres [This was followed by a list of 26 countries and four excludable options for each: Global climate agenda, International Security, Global economy, International humanitarian agenda]
Q12. Choose mainly revisionist (as opposed to status quo) states for the following Spheres [This was followed by a list of 26 countries and four excludable options for each: Global climate agenda, International Security, Global economy, International humanitarian agenda]
Q13. Choose mainly providers (as opposed to takers or free-riders) for the following Spheres [This was followed by a list of 26 countries and four excludable options for each: Global climate agenda, International Security, Global economy, International humanitarian agenda]

The questionnaire was peer-reviewed by two internal and one external reviewers to ensure validity and reliability. In addition, the questionnaire was piloted on five graduate students who completed the survey and gave their feedback (their answers were not included in the final sample).

Survey population

We determine the target population broadly as experts in International Relations, including scholars, practitioners, and students (especially postgraduate). Experts' e-mails were collected from university websites, open-access journals, and personal con-

tacts. Moreover, a link to the survey was published on the Twitter account of MGIMO Institute for International Studies (we have reasons to believe that no more than a few respondents used that link). The survey was conducted in September 2021. Out of 1941 e-mails sent, 101 were either auto replied or not delivered. We received a total of 77 answers, which produced a response rate of <4.2%. We cannot estimate the exact rate since a small number of respondents might have accessed the survey via Twitter. Also, respondents could share the link to the survey, although they were not asked to do so. One answer was discarded as non-expert based on Q1. Although expert surveys are famous for having low response rates, this one is significantly below average. Such a low response rate is explained by a lengthy questionnaire, impersonal e-mails, and no incentives provided for the respondents.

Among the 76 experts surveyed, the median age was 49.5 years (with a minimum of 23 and a maximum of 95). Experts from 25 countries participated in the survey (see Fig.1); 41 of them identified themselves as realists, 17 – constructivists, 12 – non-paradigmatic, 15 – liberal, eight – marxist, and eight chose other paradigms²¹.

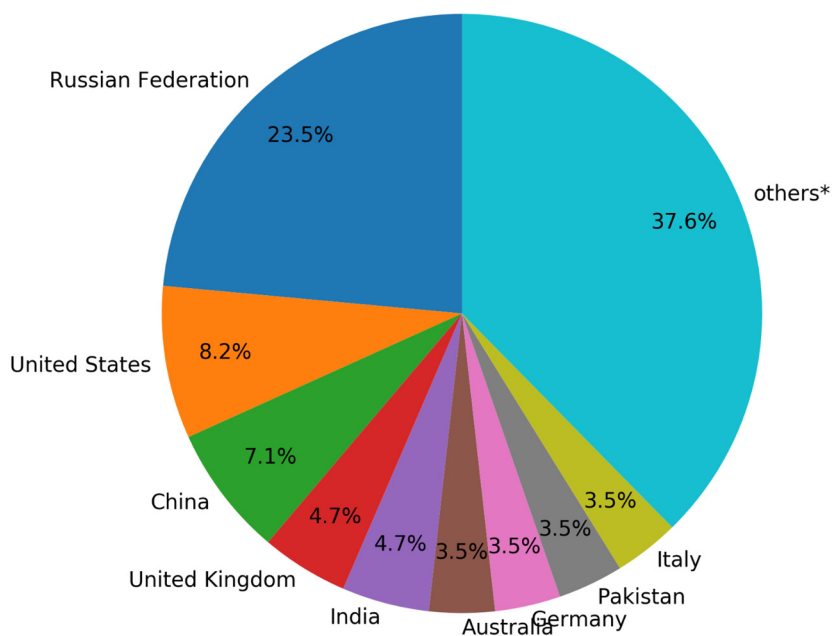


Figure 1. Respondents' countries of origin

**Others include Croatia, France, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Netherlands, Turkey, Kyrgyz Republic, Iran, Poland, Hungary, Spain, Sweden, Tajikistan, Canada, Bhutan.*

²¹ The sum is more than 76 due to the possibility of choosing multiple paradigms.

Post-stratification weighting

Post-stratification weighting is an advanced technique to improve the representativeness of the survey sample (Royal 2019). Apart from weighting by expertise, conductors of an expert survey usually do not have an opportunity to introduce post-stratification weighting to their samples because the target audience is not researched enough. As a result, conducting a representative expert survey poses certain challenges.. Luckily enough, there is some data on international relations researchers. Hence, it was possible to weigh both expertise (although on a limited scale) and sample bias in this research. Expertise weights were introduced following Q1 answers and were elaborated collectively during a workshop. Foreign policy practitioners and IR Scholars were weighted with $w_e=1.0$, non-IR Scholars and IR students received weights $w_e=0.75$, non-IR students received weights $w_e=0.5$. Weights were added to paradigms to which the respondents pertain (the control data was extracted from TRIP 2017 Faculty Survey²²).

Finally, country weights were introduced according to experts' countries of origin. Scimago Country Ranking in Political Science and International Relations (documents published in 2020)²³ served as a reference point. Weights were added to the top-10 countries in Scimago Country Ranking, and the rest were accumulated as "others" in both data from Scimago and the sample. Foreign policy practitioners (11 respondents, 14.5% of the sample) were excluded from country and paradigm weighting. The post-stratification weighting was not applied to data from Q5 and Q10.

Limitations

Although post-stratification weighting is supposed to reduce sampling bias, it should be noted that people disinterested in the categorization of states in small, middle, and great powers were less likely to complete the survey than those who were interested. It might have benefited the reliability of Q7 and Q9 but reduced the validity of Q5 and Q10.

Post-stratification weighting allows to minimize sampling bias. Still, the research sample reflects the biases of the target audience. International relations is a predominantly Western-centric academic discipline (Acharya, Buzan 2010), especially when analyzing journals indexed by Scopus. This research assumes that the bias of the target audience is consistent with that of the international society. Foreign policy practitioners were included in the sample to ensure there were no radical differences between academia and communities of praxis.

It is challenging to identify the population size for an expert survey, and hence it is not possible to calculate the margin of error. Thus, we cannot claim that our survey is representative, although the techniques that we used were aimed at improving this metric.

²² Maliniak D., Peterson S., Powers R., Tierney. 2017 M.J. *TRIP 2017 Faculty Survey. Teaching, Research, and International Policy Project*. Williamsburg, VA: Global Research Institute. URL: <https://trip.wm.edu/>.

²³ Scimago Country Rank / Scimago. 2021. URL: <https://www.scimagojr.com/countryrank.php> (accessed: 05.07.2022).

We asked the same experts about the functional roles of the same group of states' and status positions, which might have influenced their judgment. The status and the role questions were asked on separate pages of the survey and were separated by another question to mitigate possible consistency bias.

When testing alternative hypotheses, data availability on alternative predictors is limited. Some indicators are only available for 2015-2016, while the power status index is only available as of 2021. Consequently, further tests are required as newer data becomes available.

Results analysis

Post-stratification weighting and results analysis (data pre-processing, data aggregation, correlation analysis, means calculation, variance analysis, and data visualization) were conducted using Python 3.7 with Pandas 0.24.1, Numpy 1.16.1, Matplotlib 3.1.3, Scipy 1.4.1. and krippendorff 0.5.1.

The data from Q9 was turned into a power status index in a range from 1 to 4 with "Small Power" corresponding to 1, "Middle Power" to 2, "Great (Major) Power" to 3, and "Superpower" to 4. This index was calculated for each country in the survey as a weighted average of experts' evaluations. The data from Q11 was calculated as the share of experts,²⁴ who decided that a particular country plays a crucial role in one of the four spheres. Then the rates for each sphere were aggregated to get an overall evaluation of each country's roles (an index between 0 and 4). The same procedure was applied to providers (Q12) and revisionists (Q13).

To test both the working hypothesis and alternative hypotheses, the authors calculated Spearman correlation coefficients²⁵ of power status index and 1) roles index, 2) public goods provision index, 3) GDP (PPP) (2019), 4) CINC (2016), 5) Melville's international potential index (Melville, Mironyuk, 2020), 6) Beckley's GDP (PPP) * GDP (PPP) per capita measure (2019) were calculated. The first correlation coefficient was compared with the other five using *cocor* (Diedenhofen, Musch 2015).

We switched parameters and options to check robustness, and the results remained both consistent and statistically significant (as parameters changed, the correlation between the Power status index and Roles index ranged from 0.89 to 0.95). After the tests, the parameters agreed upon during a workshop were reintroduced.

Survey Results

According to the survey, 91.9% of respondents answered that the differentiation of states into superpowers, great powers, middle powers, and small powers is relevant today, while only 8.1% answered that it is irrelevant (see Fig. 2). When asked about

²³ Experts who did not mark any country were excluded from calculations.

²⁴ The null hypothesis is that the two variables are not interdependent.

alternative categorizations (see Fig. 3), respondents preferred categorizing states into global and regional powers, based on states' development (developed, developing, with transition economy) and on their nuclear status.

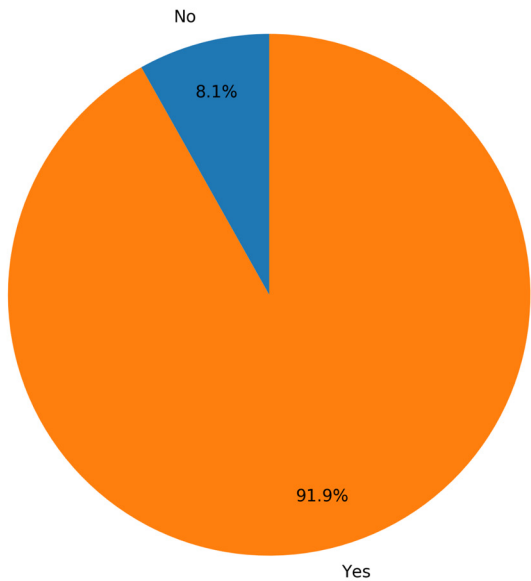


Figure 2. The relevance of the differentiation of states into superpowers, great powers, middle powers, and small powers

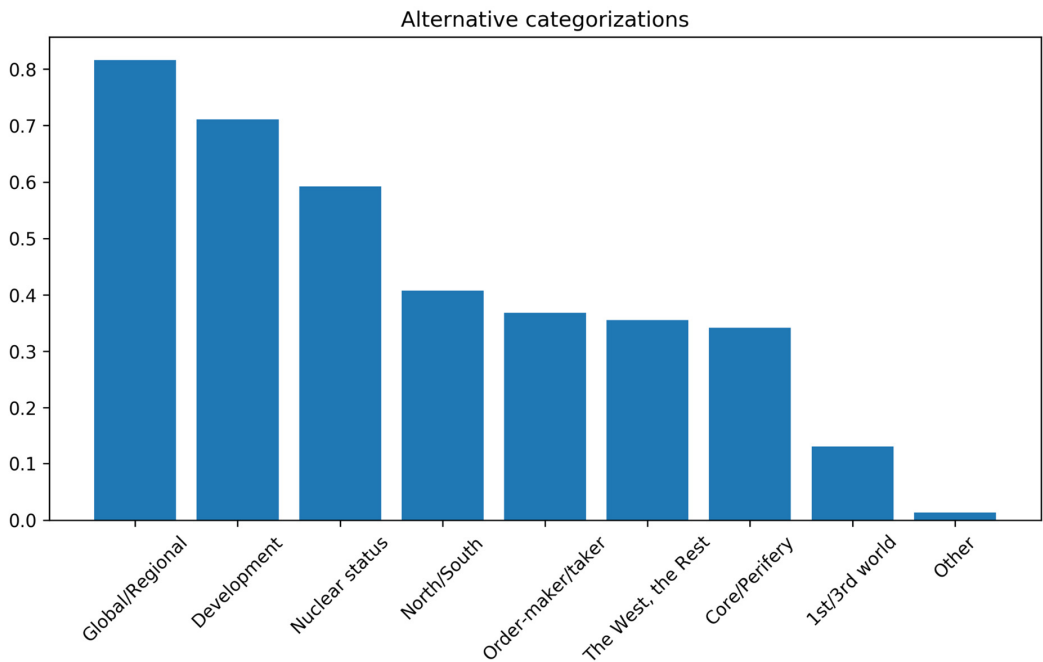


Figure 3. Alternative categorizations of states

As for the importance of the criteria for the categorization of states into superpowers, great, middle or small powers (see Fig. 4), the researchers opted for a strong military, big economy, and self-sufficiency in critical technologies and strategic resources as the main criteria of classifying as a superpower, with military might being at the top of the list. The respondents chose green policy, advantageous geographical location, and efficient domestic institutions as the least essential criteria, defining a superpower.

The top three criteria for classifying as a great power in the survey were high international prestige, ability to influence the international agenda, and engagement with international organizations. Respondents chose active green policy, advantageous geographical location, and self-declaration of its power status as less essential criteria for classifying as a great power. Military might, crucial for classifying as a superpower, only ranks 6th in the great power criteria list.

On average, respondents chose fewer criteria for middle powers. Respondents chose engagement in international organizations, active humanitarian agenda, and a network of friends and allies as the most influential criteria for classifying as middle powers. Nuclear capabilities, self-sufficiency, and military might were ranked the least important in classifying as such.

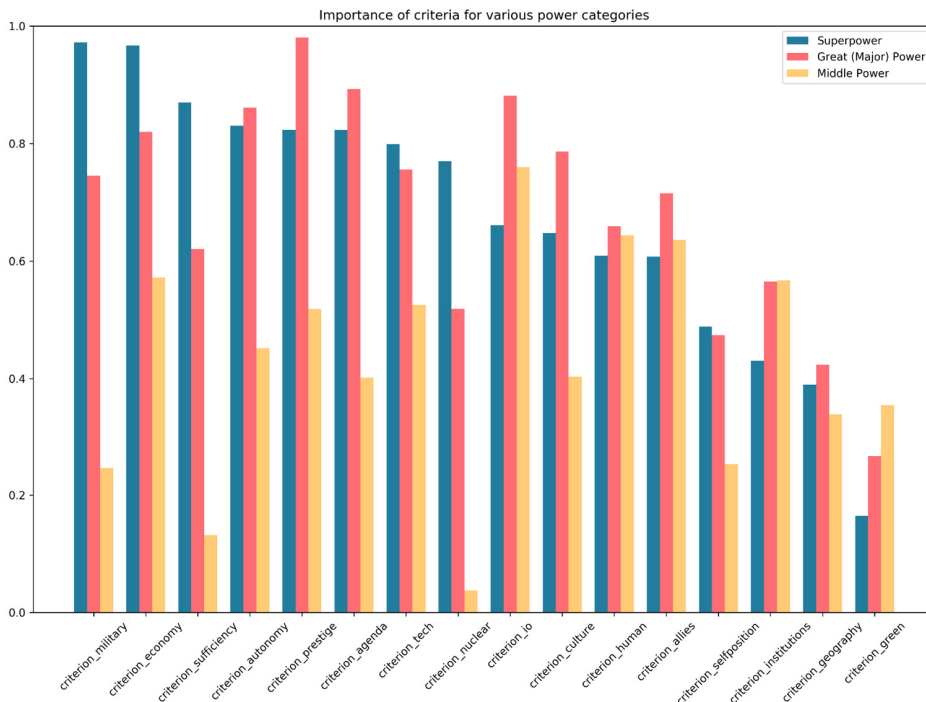


Figure 4. Importance of criteria for various power categories

The green policy criterion and the institutions' efficiency criterion are different from other criteria, as they were ranked more critical for middle powers, less critical for great powers, and least crucial for superpowers. In contrast, all other criteria

were deemed more important either for superpowers or great powers with declining importance for middle powers. Twelve experts chose to add other criteria to the list (available in the online appendix).

In reply to the question concerning power status hierarchy, respondents ranked the US and China as superpowers (their power index being 3.88 and 3.73 accordingly), Russia, Germany, India, France, and the UK as great powers, with Russia being far ahead of other states with a power index of 3.18 and other great powers being closer to middle powers in their power status (without Russia great powers' status index is between 2.63 to 2.76). North Korea and Poland were categorized as small powers (power index ranging from 1.19 to 1.31), with other countries ranking as middle powers (see Fig. 5). Less than 50% of respondents ranked Japan and Nigeria as middle powers. The middle power stratum was the most diverse, with the power status index ranging from 1.53 to 2.38.

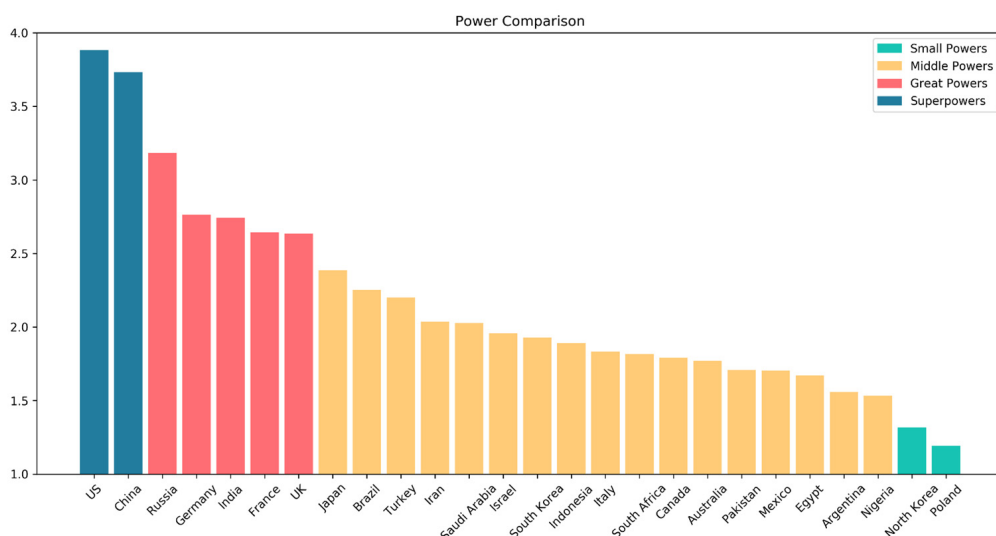


Figure 5. Power status index of states

According to the survey results, superpowers (the US and China) aggregate the biggest number of roles among the surveyed states (roles' index being 3.42 and 3.23, respectively). There is a significant divide between superpowers and great powers in aggregated roles and small fluctuation in the great powers' group (their roles' index ranging from 2.45 to 2.75). In contrast, the roles' distribution among middle powers is drastically uneven: Japan aggregates the number of roles nearing that of India, Argentina's roles number is exceeded by Poland's (middle powers' power index ranging from 0.48 to 2.15 and Poland's and North Korea's are 0.49 and 0.83 respectively). Still, the interstrata gap is larger than the intrastrata.

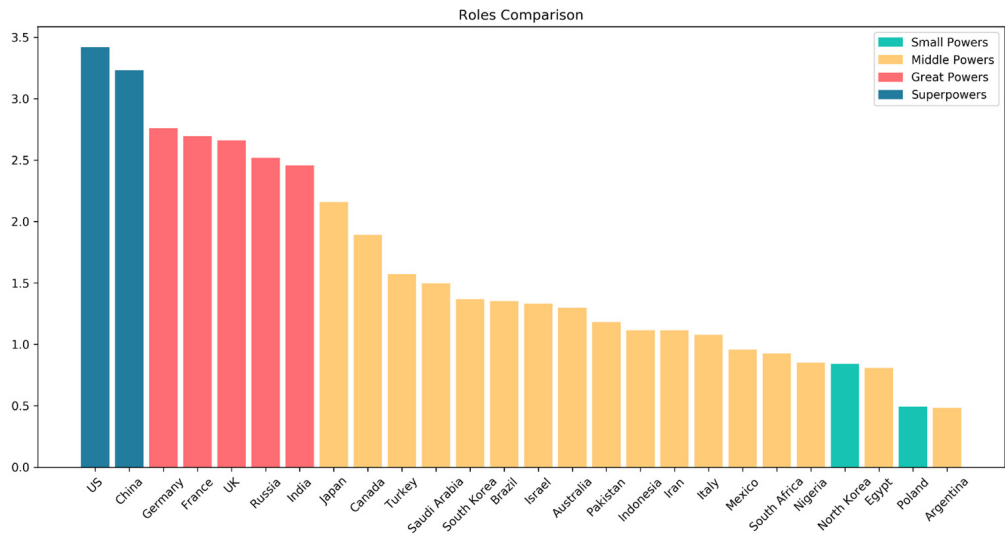


Figure 6. Roles index of states

There is a smaller overlapping of states’ public goods provision (see Fig. 7) and power status hierarchy, but still there is a persisting pattern of superpowers being at the top of ranking (though following Germany, a leader in public goods provision), followed by great powers, and small powers being at the bottom of the ranking.

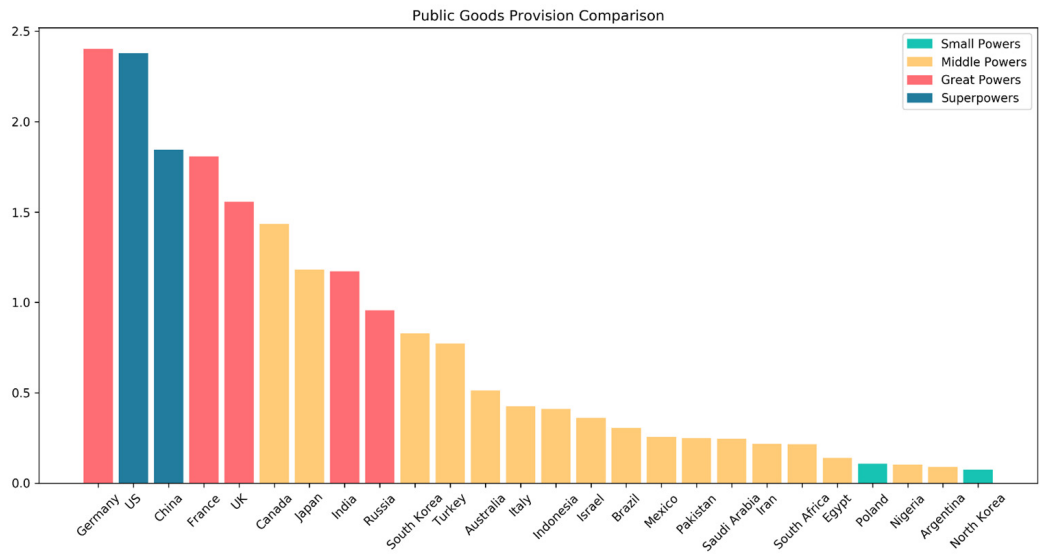


Figure 7. Comparison of states’ public goods provision

The overlapping of states' revisionism ranking with power stature hierarchy is even less than with states' public goods provision. Still, both superpowers are ranked among

the highest (see Fig. 8). Great powers are more dispersed in the ranking, though generally tending to be closer to the top than middle powers. An average revisionism index is significantly below 50% of the theoretical high (4.0).

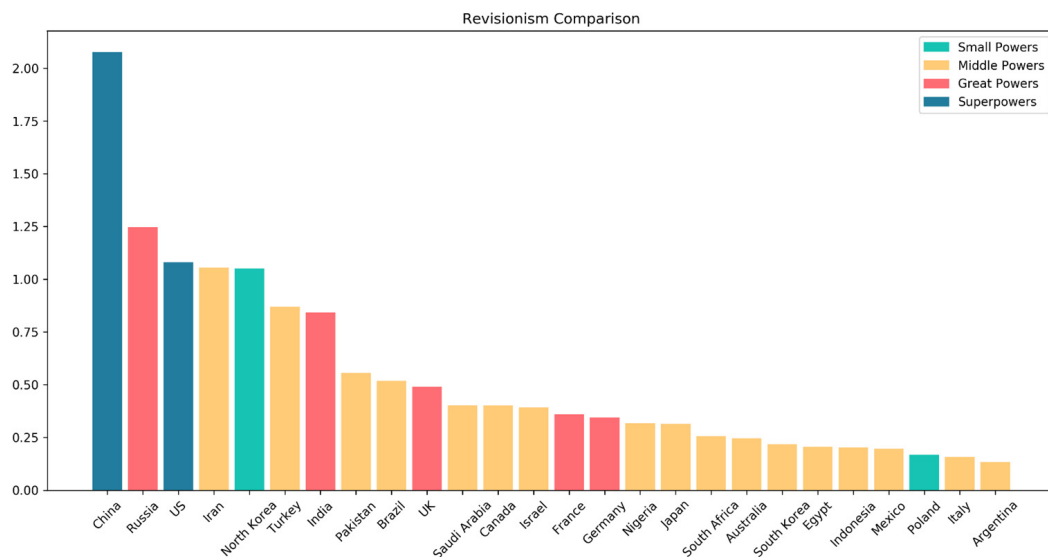


Figure 8. Comparison of states' revisionism

Full aggregated results, including comparing countries' roles in separate functional subsystems, are available in the online appendix.

Variance analysis

The variance analysis was only applied to the power status index. Two metrics were used: Krippendorff's alpha coefficient for an overall evaluation and the share of experts who agree with the power status deriving from the Power status index for case-by-case assessment. Krippendorff's alpha was calculated at 0.613, putting it slightly above the margin to be considered 'substantial' (Landis, Koch, 1977). Two out of 26 cases have less than 50% (40% for Nigeria and 49% for Japan) of experts supporting the evaluation. The US status of a superpower is supported by 91% of experts, while the rest have cohesion between 54% and 75%. Specific figures are available for each country in the online appendix.

Hypothesis testing

The hypothesis of the interdependence of power status and functional roles has been confirmed with Spearman correlation of the Roles index, and Power status index equal to 0.91 and null hypothesis rejected at 99.9% certainty (also see Fig. 9). All alternative hypotheses have been confirmed (see Table 3), but the correlation between the power status index and every alternative predictor is less strong. Cocor analysis shows that the correlation between the Roles and Power status indices is significantly strong-

er than that of other alternative indicators. Still, in the case of Melville's aggregated potential, the number of cases is not enough to prove the statistical significance of the value difference, and some p-value counting methods drop the statistical significance for the GDP and CINC indicators being less strong than the Roles index below 95% (it is still above 90%, and other methods show around 97% confidence).

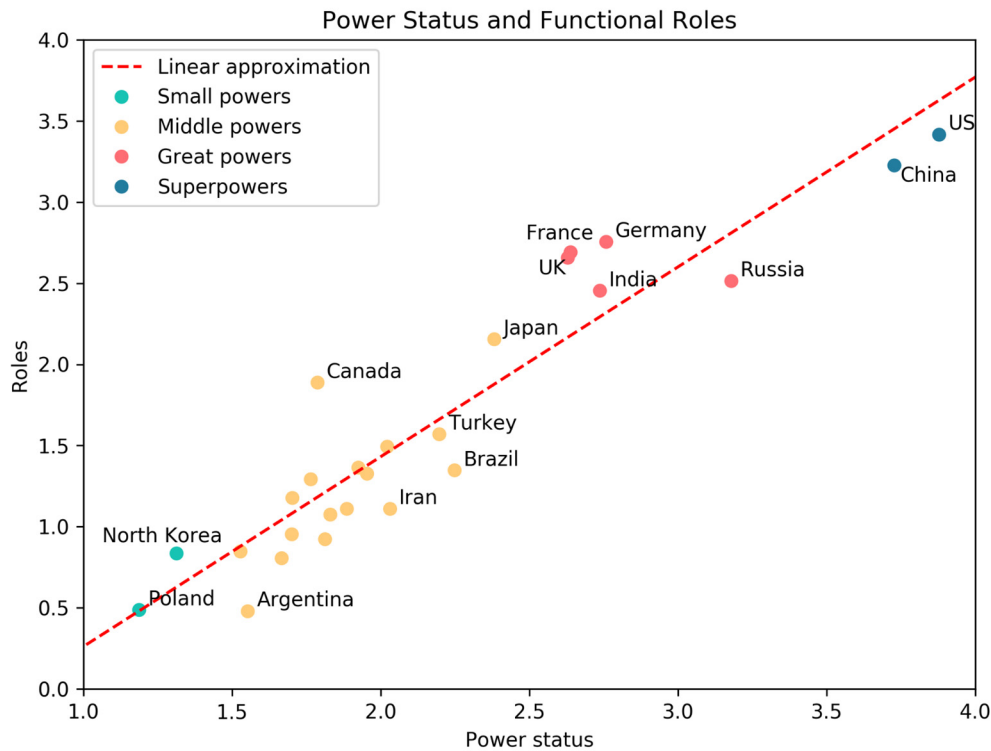


Figure 9. Linear approximation of power status and functional roles

Table 3. Alternative hypothesis testing (correlation with Power Status index)

	GDP (PPP)	GDP * GDP per capita	Aggregated potential	CINC	Public goods provision index	Roles index
Year	2019	2019	2015	2016	2021	2021
Spearman correlation coefficient with power status index	0.79***	0.77***	0.81*	0.71***	0.82***	0.91***
N (cases)	25	25	8	26	26	26
Cocor's p-value ²⁶ of roles index correlation being stronger ²⁷	0.033 - 0.067	0,001 - 0,016	0.313 - 0.427	0.025 - 0.068	0.010 - 0.038	N/A

²⁶ The corresponding null hypothesis is that the correlation between the power status index and roles index is weaker or equal to that between the power status index and an alternative predictor.

²⁷ Different p-values calculated using different cocor algorithms. The smallest and the largest p-values are indicated in the table.

Discussion

Given the results of the survey, power status hierarchy is probably the most relevant stratificatory differentiation of states today²⁸. The second-scoring categorization into global, regional, and local actors seems to be interrelated with power status hierarchy (superpowers and great powers define global agenda, middle powers influence regional agenda, small powers influence local agenda) in what appears to be another dimension of the interplay between functionally and stratificatory differentiated subsystems of international society.

As was the case for middle power research, there is no consensus on criteria for a great power or a superpower. The fact that there is no reliable way to compare and aggregate such different phenomena as nuclear capabilities and autonomous decision-making suggests the limited analytical value of the 'valued attributes.' Traditional approaches do not inspire too much hope in this respect. On the contrary, a Differentiation Theory-based approach, which was already used to reconfigure the study of middle powers (Teo 2021), is quite promising.

Interestingly, experts have chosen different valued attributes essential for superpowers, great powers and middle powers. In accord with most papers on middle powers, weaker states need not mimic stronger ones but instead have other options to improve their positions in the international hierarchy. However, a state's engagement with international organizations and its influence on the global agenda being the main middle power criteria is quite counterfactual, given that Erdogan's Turkey, Bolsonaro's Brazil, Israel, and especially Iran are among the stronger middle powers. Experts chose the characteristics traditionally associated with middle powers, though they do not represent the only possible way to qualify as a middle power. Relying only on valued attributes creates a situation when a state can slightly lag on specific characteristics to be considered a great power but simultaneously fail to be classified as a middle power. It possibly indicated severe flaws in the existing hierarchy research.

Under the Differentiation-theory ontological premises and according to the hypothesis confirmed in this paper, it can be suggested to turn away from valued attributes to an *impactful role* criterion.

To be recognized as a middle power, a state needs to achieve significant or critical roles in 1-2 functional subsystems of international society. For instance, Saudi Arabia plays a vital role in the international economy, as it can regulate global oil prices and a significant role (although comparatively less critical) in international security since it wages war in Yemen and has some leverage over belligerent non-state actors across North Africa and the Middle East. However, it is neither an essential humanitarian aid

²⁸ Apart from specific questions (Q5, Q6, Q10), there is also indirect evidence. There are large gaps in the power status index between great powers and superpowers, great powers and middle powers, while the difference is less between states belonging to the same category. This suggests that the power status categories actually exist as analytically distinct concepts that are not epiphenomenal.

donor nor a leader of human rights promotion and also has a minimal impact on the global climate agenda (and has to adapt to it instead). Hence, Saudi Arabia plays significant roles in two of the four subsystems²⁹ and can only qualify as a middle power, but not a great power. The importance and impact of a role are determined in relative terms, as we expect different roles in a specific functional domain to form a functional hierarchy of subordination and superordination.

A possible interpretation of the survey results is that a country needs to play key or significant roles in roughly three functional subsystems to become a great power. For example, France historically plays a vital role in the humanitarian subsystem, takes responsibility for security in many African countries, and actively participates in the green agenda, including via the European Union. Even though its economic influence is mediocre, France can currently be considered a great power. However, if this approach is true, as France has been losing its grip on African security for several years, its status becomes less stable, and it faces the prospects of decline.

The novel approach can help explain certain anomalies that arise from traditional indicators. For example, despite being the world's third or fourth-largest economy (depending on whether to use nominal GDP or GDP PPP) and having significant military spending, Japan is not recognized as a great power. The impactful role approach suggests that it is due to its constitutional limits on military use and a weak role in maintaining international security which are not compensated by proactive participation in the global environmental (Japanese role has diminished since the signing of the Kyoto Protocol) and humanitarian efforts.

This approach does not discard traditional material indicators such as GDP, army size, or military expenditures but perceives those as enablers for an impactful role rather than as something important in itself. In a sense, valued are those attributes that either enable a country to play key roles in the most important functional spheres or demonstrate that it plays such a role. Nevertheless, it should be noted that there are some independent dynamics related to valued attributes. Firstly, there is a possibility that specific valued attributes attain symbolic significance and become directly linked to stratification (e.g., exchanging ambassadors in the 19th century). Secondly, agents depend on valued attributes as tokens of information in a situation of information asymmetry and bounded rationality. Although the impactful role seems to be more important in the long run, a single agent's perception of others' status might depend on certain valued attributes observed by this actor.

A step further would be to integrate relevant actors' capabilities and policies, roles, status, and communication opportunities (diplomatic embeddedness) into a single framework, while also adding non-state actors to the analysis. This paper suggests that the research of capability indicators as enablers should be broken down into functional subsystems, namely the second-order security, the economic, the humanitarian, and

²⁹ If more functional subsystems are taken into account, the thresholds would have to be different.

the environmental subsystems. Each functional realm is expected to have multiple roles forming a hierarchy. Specific capabilities might enable actors to pursue certain policies and assume those roles.

Finally, a superpower must play critical roles in all functional subsystems to maintain its status. Lagging in the humanitarian subsystem, China is one of the world's largest foreign aid donors, allowing it to play an essential role despite its controversial human rights record. Unlike individuals struggling to fulfill many roles at once, states have the advantage of bureaucracy, allowing them to take on several roles at once, which makes a society of states different from a society of individuals.

Although this research has focused on states, this approach can be used to study other actor types as well. From the point of view of non-state actors' emergence, they will need to play a more critical role in international society than states. It also means that comparing a country's GDP to companies' annual revenue will not allow us to compare their status because those capabilities are transformed into playing roles differently for different kinds of actors³⁰.

The cause and effect in relations between roles and power status have been left undetermined. It is not a matter of utilizing more advanced mathematical methods to identify the dependent and independent variables because they can and do work both ways. Either (which is perhaps less common) a state acquires higher/lower status first, and then obtains a more/less critical role in functional subsystems (as others let it assume more important roles or push it to abandon them) or the opposite: it manages to increase its role in functional subsystems and then its status improves.

Thus, the emergence of a new functional subsystem can potentially shift the international hierarchy. It is especially relevant for studying the environmental subsystem, where states become increasingly stratified as new differentiation criteria and new roles emerge.

It still leaves us with the next piece of the puzzle unsolved, namely, what are the most critical functional domains in a given time, and it requires further research. Perhaps, a helpful starting point would be intersectionality, emphasizing the intersection of various roles in the international society. It seems that Luhmann's argument on all functions being equally important needs to be reevaluated. In methodological terms, it requires scholars to develop and test a more sophisticated model for the Roles Index calculation³¹, which cannot be done on this paper's data alone.

Probably there are at least three layers of hierarchies—first, a status hierarchy stretching through the whole international society with each segment having a certain status. Second, a hierarchy of functionally differentiated subsystems of yet unknown character. Third, there is a hierarchy of roles inside every functionally differentiated

³⁰ For instance, a multinational company operating in a state that is not considered failed might have trouble converting its financial resources into an essential role in local, not just international, security.

³¹ Perhaps, weighted mean-square metrics could produce some results if the weights are not selected arbitrarily.

subsystem based upon the asymmetrical distribution of power and communication opportunities among different roles.

Another possible avenue for future research is the study of comparative advantages that certain domestic institutions provide for international specialization. Such a theoretical development could bring new economic models to IR.

* * *

The article confirms the existence of the interdependence between a country's roles and its position in hierarchy. The article introduces an 'impactful role' and 'three-layer hierarchy' concepts, based upon the theoretical synthesis of several traditions of Hierarchy Theory and a broader N. Luhmann's Differentiation Theory framework. Moreover, the evidence favoring the 'impactful role' model is stronger than that of previously existing models of power status based on specific combinations of valued attributes (GDP, GDP*GDP per capita, CINC, National potential index).

The novel conceptualization allows for a deeper understanding of the international power status, which would make it possible for more nuanced applied research. This approach can integrate different states' attributes and study the impact of new nationwide and systemwide developments on a state's position in the international hierarchy.

This research advances both Hierarchy Theory and new Systems Theory, inaugurated in IR by M. Albert and B. Buzan. As the latter can accommodate the former, the new Luhmann-inspired Systems Theory is one step closer to becoming a full-fledged IR paradigm.

The expert survey results have also shown that categorizing states into superpowers, great powers, middle powers, and small powers is most relevant in current conditions.

Based on the survey, we provided simplified guidelines for applied analysis based on the interconnectedness between international hierarchy and specialization: 1) in order to be recognized as a middle power, a state needs to achieve significant or critical roles in one or two functional subsystems of international society (out of four), 2) to become a great power a country needs to play key or significant roles in roughly three functional subsystems, 3) a superpower has to play critical roles in all functional subsystems in order to maintain its status (or at most play a significant role in one of them).

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Conflict of interests:

The authors declare the absence of conflict of interest.

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А.Д. Несмашный, В.М. Жорнист, И.А. Сафранчук

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Статья фокусируется на изучении международной иерархии с применением метода экспертного опроса. Представлен краткий обзор литературы по двум основным подходам к изучению иерархии в международных отношениях: «иерархии авторитета» и «иерархии державного (властного) статуса». Демонстрируется, что существует разрыв между фундаментальными и прикладными исследованиями статуса. В то время как фундаментальные работы постоянно подчёркивают социальный характер международного статуса, исследования отдельных случаев зачастую опираются на исключительно материальные показатели национального потенциала. В связи со стремительными изменениями положения государств в международной иерархии возникает необходимость сформулировать более детальный и целостный подход. Авторы предлагают пересмотреть теорию международной иерархии на основе онтологии Никласа Лумана и его теории дифференциации. В статье описаны процессы сегментационной, стратификационной и функциональной дифференциации международного общества. Стратификационной дифференциации соответствует возникновение международной иерархии государств, а функциональной — появление международной специализации. Авторы

утверждают, что функциональные роли государств и их положение в международной иерархии взаимосвязаны. Для подтверждения данного тезиса используется корреляционный анализ. Иерархия функциональных ролей понимается в терминах «иерархии авторитета». В статье представлены три важных для последующих исследований вывода. Во-первых, 26 государств охарактеризованы экспертами с точки зрения их принадлежности к одной из категорий державности (сверхдержава, великая держава, средняя держава, малая держава), для них рассчитан индекс державности. Во-вторых, представлены мнения экспертов о том, какие критерии державности важны для прикладных исследований (включая размер экономики, военную мощь, международный престиж, уровень автономии и т.д.). В-третьих, сформулирован новый теоретический подход, который связывает положение государства в международной иерархии и его функциональные роли. Кроме того, также рассчитаны на основе ответов экспертов индексы ролей, предоставления общественных благ и ревизионизма для 26 стран мира.

Ключевые слова: социология, Луман, новая системная теория, властный статус, критерии державности, теория дифференциации, авторитет

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