

Paulo Esteves, Maria Gabrielsen Jumbert and Benjamin de Carvalho (2020) *Status and the Rise of Brazil: Global Ambitions, Humanitarian Engagement and International Challenges*. Palgrave Macmillan, 226pp. (ISBN 978-3-030-21659-7). Hardcover £81,84

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In his recent book on the history of Brazilian diplomacy and how it helped build the country's very identity, Rubens Ricupero describes how the search for prestige and a higher status in the international order has been a part of the foreign relations of the country ever since the Portuguese established its roots in Brazil in the early 19th Century (Ricupero, 2017). Recent research has shown that the Brazilian foreign policy community sees a stronger international role for the country as one of its priorities (Souza, 2002, 2008). The foreign relations of Brazil has historically been marked by a strive for greater international status and the fact that the country believes it deserves to have a stronger role in international politics ((Ricupero, 2017; Lafer, 2000; Diaz and Almeida, 2008; Mares and Trinkunas, 2016; Larson and Shevchenko, 2014; Stolte, 2015; Stuenkel and Taylor, 2015)).

Although it has clearly been established the ambitions of higher status of Brazil, very little research has been developed as means of understanding what is the result of this drive for international recognition and what is the level of the actual prestige of the country. *Status and the Rise of Brazil* is a collection of chapters that focus precisely on the question of the standing of Brazil in the world with a theoretical approach that pays attention to this idea of status in IR. The chapters stipulate the achievement of status as a key driver of Brazil's global reach, and offer a thorough discussion on the subject with different approaches, filling many gaps in putting the recent scholarship of status in contact with the study of the case of Brazil.

Part of the reason for the delay in this type of study is that the scholarship on status international relations has only recently started to gain momentum. While international politics generally assumes that it operates under conditions of anarchy and equality, without a centralized governmental structure responsible for world order and global governance, this does not explain variation in international political conditions. Even if the traditional scholarship of IR have always included a sense that status was important, recognising that from the beginning of the formation of a European system of states, the different nations were already held to belong to different layers whose power and importance varied, it traditionally was not the focus of rigorous analysis (Paul et al., 2014; Renshon, 2017; Neumann, 2014). It was

only more recently, however, that IR scholars have started to actually focus on the evaluation of the status of nations. Studies began to employ new theoretical and empirical literatures, building from disciplines like sociology, social psychology, political theory, and behavioral economics, and to tackle the role of status motivations in new ways (Paul et al., 2014).

Status and the Rise of Brazil is an important contribution both to this newly developed theoretical approach to status in IR and to the analysis of the standing of Brazil and the result from its historical drive for prestige and the strategies adopted for that. The book is the final product of “Brazil’s Rise to the Global Stage: Humanitarianism, Peacekeeping and the Quest Great Powerhood (BraGS)”, a research project with the objective to understand the drivers behind Brazilian humanitarian action and participation in peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities. From this, the project addressed the role of rising powers in global governance and the status component of humanitarian engagements, which led to an investigation of the status of Brazil.

The book starts with an introduction that focuses exactly on this strategy of involvement in humanitarian engagement as means to achieve status, as well as a discussion about the definition of status in international relations. The first chapter explains, however, that so far Brazil’s quest for higher status has been frustrated by many problems both internal and in changes in the international order. It discusses the whole concept of emerging and great powers and talks a lot about the fact that emerging powers do not emerge, and that, for Brazil, this may be because it is a ‘hybrid’ power, trying to appease both the developed West and the emerging South. The following chapter reinforces the idea that Brazil underperforms in terms of status when compared to other emerging nations and also points to problems in the strategies used by the country in this quest for prestige.

The second section of the book presents three chapters focusing on Brazil’s foreign policy, and how it is connected to the country’s quest for status. A third section of the book focuses on Brazil and the international Security Agenda, analysing how the country has tried to get involved in global issues via peace operations and mediation of conflicts. And the last part of the book evaluates how development cooperation may also be connected to a strategy to improve the status of Brazil.

Although it is focused on Brazil, one of the main contributions of the book is the discussion about the very definition of status in IR and the debate about different methodologies that may be used to analyse this attribute. Building on the sociologist theories of Weber, Carvalho et al. (2020) define status as recognized rank of one state vis-à-vis other states, which has been used in the development of the main definition accepted in IR, and

reinforces the importance of what other think about the country, since “there is no rank if it is not recognized by others as such” (p.3). This approach builds on Wohlfarth (2014), who argues that status is a recognized position in a social hierarchy, implying relations of dominance and deference. It is socially constructed, and it achieves meaning only through intersubjective beliefs and social processes. Status, thus, derives from the recognition of others, since it is a set of collective beliefs about a state's standing. In terms of methodologies, most of the chapters of the book reinforce the idea that there is not one single method to analyse the status of a country like Brazil, but they attempt to do so with different approaches, most of them with a quantitative focus.

Even if the debate about theory and methods related to status is one of the strongest points of the book, it is also where the collection of chapters has gaps and limitations. While the discussion about the definition of status pays attention to the subjective, relational characteristic of status as one of the main points of the literature on the subject, the book follows the traditional approach in which there are not many studies with qualitative methods focused on perceptions of external parties.

While status has come to be accepted as a valid theoretical framework to the study of international relations, most studies in the area still focus more on status aspirations and in the attempt to develop quantitative methods to measure status, so the focus is self-referencing and lacks studies about status in international relations through the eyes and perceptions of third parties, analysis of the foreign gaze towards Brazil and its status (Renshon, 2017; Duque, 2018; Beaumont and Røren, 2020; Mares and Trinkunas, 2016). Status attribution has been described as a perceptual phenomenon with behavioral consequences (Volgy et al., 2011). The book on the status of Brazil offers a discussion that argues that prestige is a general irrational element toward which every polity strives, which leads to the importance of focusing on perceptions of external players as a sign of this “recognition” necessary for prestige.

Status and the Rise of Brazil is certainly an important contribution with a varied approach to the study of the status of Brazil. However this scholarship would benefit from contributions that would focus on different aspects of status, such as the perceptions from other nations and players from outside the country analysed, breaking away from self-serving narratives. It would also be important to develop new methodological approaches that could go beyond quantitative analysis, since status can be a subjective attribute. This does not mean that other methods and theoretical approaches are more valid than the ones presented in the book, but rather that it is important to explore different approaches in order to make sure the study of

status in IR can be as thorough and pluralistic as possible in order to fill all the gaps in this newly developed scholarship.

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