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Article

Domestic Politics, Prestige, and War: The Emergence of Chile's Democratic Status Narrative

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Abstract

The domestic politics of international status unfolds beyond its foreign policy implications. Sometimes actors engage in status politics to pursue their domestic political aims. Looking at the opposition to Pinochet in Chile, I introduce the notion of the democratic status narrative, which emerged as a means of contesting authoritarianism. The narrative first entered the public sphere during the 1978 Beagle Channel crisis in the pages of opposition magazines, rarely consulted by scholars of international affairs. As it grew more prevalent, it became a central element in the formation of the Concertación coalition's influential foreign policy elite, shaping post-authoritarian foreign policy.

Keywords: Status; prestige; domestic politics of international status; Chile; Concertación; Pinochet regime.

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Introduction

Recent International Relations (IR) scholarship has dedicated increasingly systematic attention to understanding the role of status in world politics (e.g., Volgy et al. 2011; Larson et al. 2014; Renshon 2017; Ward 2017; Larson and Shevchenko 2019). Although this corpus persuasively showed that status matters and why, the domestic dimension of international status still deserves greater exploration. Indeed, while most scholars pay preferential attention to the international level of this social phenomenon, status is not exogenous to domestic politics at all. Previous works have looked into the unit-level to account for external status behavior; yet, the domestic politics of international status unfolds beyond its potential foreign policy implications. Indeed, sometimes actors get involved in status politics less for the sake of

status than for their domestic political goals. In so doing, they still engage in the making of their country's status. Leaning on a useful IR metaphor, international status resembles a *two-level game* (see Pu 2019; Van der Westhuizen 2021); however, instead of being connected by negotiation as in Putnam's (1988) original take, the international and domestic levels of status are connected through *narratives*. Narratives are the main vehicle through which political elites develop and mobilize international status claims at home and domestic audiences learn about their country's standing in the world.

In this article, I analyze how a narrative of Chile as a democracy became a primary lens of the country's foreign policy. Chile dramatically enhanced its international status following the 1990 democratic restoration. In only a few decades, it turned from an ostracized, low-income authoritarian regime during the civilian-military dictatorship led by Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990) into an upper-middle-income, liberal democracy that has often punched above its weight in world politics (Bywaters et al. 2021, 22–23). I focus on the origins and early development of what I call the *democratic status narrative* (DSN)—a particular frame for understanding Chile's place in the world that connects the international standing of the country to its domestic political regime. Born in the heat of the struggle against the Pinochet regime,[1] the DSN presented a stylized representation of the pre-authoritarian past in which Chile allegedly enjoyed high prestige among its regional peers and in the world. More crucially, the DSN portrayed a future in which the restoration of democracy appeared as the only means for the country to restore its international status—a prescription that would prove relevant for the task of imagining the foreign policy of an uncertain democratic future.

The DSN emerged into Chile's then-restricted public sphere during the late 1970s from the pages of Santiago-based opposition magazines. It played a significant role in early opposition politics, partly because the discussion of domestic politics was repressed, and no organized opposition could present itself as a viable alternative to the prevailing domestic order yet. Perhaps surprisingly, the DSN was catalyzed by a security issue rather than an inherently status-related one: namely, the 1978 Beagle Channel crisis (BCC), which almost led to war with Argentina. Using, in some cases, pseudonyms to protect themselves against political persecution, the DSN's crafters saw in the possibility of war an opportunity for the opposition to contest the legitimacy of the dictatorship by highlighting its inability to deliver security. This critique targeted the very value upon which the Pinochet regime attempted to assert legitimacy through the 'national security doctrine'—a counterinsurgent doctrine that directed repression against the so-called communist 'internal enemy'. For the DSN authors, the ultimate cause of Chile's insecurity in the BCC owed to the absence of international prestige derived from domestic democratic governance. The narrative juxtaposed that insecurity with Chile's past democratic tradition as the foundation of the country's international security.

[1] The DSN draws from exceptionalist representations that prevailed before 1973 which are not covered in this article.

At this point, the DSN was mostly for domestic consumption; however, this did not make it any less consequential. Its relevance is two-fold. With its emphasis on international rather than domestic politics, the DSN helped create ways for elites who, despite standing in opposition to Pinochet, had different political identifications, divergent priorities, and little mutual trust. The DSN thus expressed and contributed to, the incipient revalorization of liberal democracy by Christian Democrats and socialists, offering a common ground where these still-foes and future allies could come together around a shared concern for the country's lost status. Beyond the domestic, the DSN had a lasting influence on Chilean foreign policy until our days. Indeed, while in this article I cover its early development during the late 1970s, the DSN's broader significance lies in that, in the 1980s, it was adopted by, and worked as a binding ethos for, the incipient, center-left Concertación coalition's foreign policy elite (CFPE). This highly influential political cohort[2] heavily influenced Chile's epistemic community in IR (Álvarez 2021) and conducted the country's foreign affairs almost uninterruptedly for a quarter of a century starting in 1990. Although the DSN seems to have had little or no impact on Pinochet's foreign policy, the narrative mattered in how the CFPE would approach key foreign policy questions on the eve of democratization and once in office, putting status-seeking at the center of the country's post-authoritarian international relations and setting a precedent for its strict adherence to the liberal international order after 1990. Bringing the DSN to the fore is, therefore, crucial to have a better grasp of the development of the IR discipline in Chile, the foundations of the CFPE's *esprit de corps*—which I see as intimately related to status concerns—as well as this foreign policy elite's emergence, upward trajectory, access to power, and foreign policy conduct.

To track the early development of the DSN, I analyzed articles published in the magazines *Mensaje* (1973-1980), *APSI* (1976-1980), and *Análisis* (1977-1980)—the three of which had mainly domestic audiences—and contrasted them with foreign policy pieces published in the exiled-ran magazine *Chile-América* (1974-1978). Despite these publications' noted influence in opposition circles during the dictatorship, they have been rarely used by IR or international history scholars.

The article unfolds as follows. After briefly reviewing the scholarship on status and Chilean foreign policy, I analyze the origins of the DSN in the context of the BCC. Then, I present the implications of these findings to the study of Chilean foreign policy. Finally, I present my conclusion.

[2] Some CFPE members during that decade were (in alphabetical order): Mariano Fernández, Ángel Flisfisch, Alicia Frohmann, José Miguel Insulza, Alberto van Klaveren, Gustavo Lagos, Ricardo Lagos, Luis Maira, Heraldo Muñoz, Carlos Portales, Fernando Reyes Matta. Juan Somavía, Luciano Tomassini, Gabriel Valdés, Juan Gabriel Valdés, Augusto Varas and Edmundo Vargas. Predominantly formed by men, the CFPE has a politically mixed composition including Christian Democrats, renewed socialists, radicals, independents, and members of the MAPU-OC and the Christian Left. Many became key foreign policymakers, high-level multilateral officers and/or influential politicians after 1990. Their respective degree of individual influence varies over time.

Literature Review and Theory

As a dimension of a country's collective identity[3] (Ward 2019), status, in its broadest sense, refers to a state's standing in international structures of social stratification or hierarchies. According to classical sociological accounts, it is 'an effective claim to social esteem in terms of positive or negative privileges' (Weber 1978: 305). In its canonical definition in IR, status is based on 'collective beliefs about a given state's ranking on valued attributes (wealth, coercive capabilities, culture, demographic position, socio-political organization, and diplomatic clout)' (Larson et al. 2014, 7). Concern for status emerges from a basic human disposition from whose fulfilment people extract psychological benefits (Wohlforth 2009). Unlike close notions such as *role*,[4] status is thus a potentially powerful tool when mobilized by political actors because having a greater status makes elites and audiences feel good about themselves (Clunan 2014; Lebow 2016). Therefore, state leaders strive for social recognition for their state and seek to improve, or at least maintain, its position in international hierarchies (Renshon 2017).

Status in IR has been conceived as a phenomenon that unfolds almost exclusively at the international level, where scholars usually locate its implications. With their focus on external behavior, they also often black box the state. Although explaining variation in foreign policy (Clunan 2014; Ward 2017; see also Larson and Shevchenko 2019, 14) and individual responses to status dissatisfaction (Ward 2019) has led some to look inside the black box, the domestic politics of status remains barely explored. Actors deploy claims about international status in their domestic politics, too. Crafting and maintaining narratives is a central task for foreign policy elites, who must explain to other elite members and constituencies the country's standing in world politics in order to justify foreign policy action (Miskimmon et al. 2013). Beyond foreign policy, however, actors may engage in status politics for domestic political aims as well. They may seek to secure their own privileged position in domestic hierarchies (Weber 1978; Schulz 2019; Long and Urdínez 2021) through the legitimation effects of status (Lebow 2016; Pu 2019). Failure to secure status may damage a government's position at home (Ward 2017, 37-38), thus creating opportunities for the opposition to criticize the government (Van der Westhuizen 2021) and, as I show in this article, even contest its overall legitimacy. This might be especially the case for states that, like Chile, have historically constructed their identity as a 'small' and 'peripheral' country (Browning 2006) and are also 'heavily integrated in global politics' (Carvalho and Neumann 2015, 5).

[3] Unlike identity, status is founded on social esteem (Weber 1978; Duque 2018). Status is also *positional* and therefore relative to other states' hierarchical positions (Larson et al. 2014; Renshon 2017). Finally, only status manifests in voluntary deference to higher-status actors (Larson, Paul, and Wohlforth 2014:10).

[4] Although status and role are not mutually exclusive categories, they are analytically distinct. While role broadly refers to the enactment of certain social behaviours in accordance (or not) with Self-conceptions and others' expectations, status relates to claims about an actor's accorded *social esteem* (Weber 1978, 305; Duque 2018). The notion of *isolation* discussed below in this piece, for instance, could hardly be understood as a 'role'; rather, it better fits the notion of being socially stigmatized—a question of social status, not role.

This article contributes both to the above literature on status and to the specialized corpus on Chilean foreign policy. Some students of the Chilean case point out prestige either as a foreign policy driver or tool (e.g., Durán et al. 1983; Wehner 2011; Aranda and Morandé 2011; Fuentes-Julio 2020; Alfaro Martínez 2020; Bernal-Meza 2020; see also Schulz and Thies 2023; Røren and Beaumont 2019, 444). Also, status-related categories (e.g., prestige, isolation, insertion, model, reliability, open regionalism) are pervasive in policy and academic discourse. However, despite the paramount influence of status concerns in contemporary foreign policy, they remain largely underexplored. Empirically, I bring to the fore discourses and grassroots influences generally overlooked by students of Chile's international identity (Colacrai and Lorenzini 2005; Van der Ree 2010; Wehner 2020). I add to an increasing scholarly corpus that reappraises Chilean foreign relations during the dictatorship (e.g., Harmer 2013; Morley and McGillion 2015; Santoni and Sáez Fuentealba 2018; Ross 2020; Avery 2020; Pryluka 2022) and the democratic transition (Fuentes-Julio 2020; Medina et al. 2021; Rubio 2022). While my focus on the CFPE is shared by some works on Chilean foreign policy (Álvarez 2021) and the evolution of IR in the country (Álvarez and Figueroa 2018; Heine and Aguirre 2019; Oyarzún-Serrano and Fuentes-Julio 2023), I look at the influences on the CFPE other than academia and ideological shifts of the age. Also, I newly touch upon how the dictatorship and the opposition both saw prestige as a source of (inter)national security, albeit in disparate ways—an unexplored dimension of Chilean foreign relations to date. More broadly, I add to an incipient scholarly interest in Latin American countries' status dynamics (e.g., Schulz 2017; Esteves et al. 2020; Buarque 2020; Long and Urdinez 2021; Chagas-Bastos 2023).

Status at the Centre-stage

The September 1973 civil-military coup was a status-altering event that affected the beliefs of the larger international society with regard to Chile's status (Renshon 2017, 256). Shortly after seizing power, therefore, status became a primary concern for the Pinochet regime and its supporters. The leadership had expected acclaim for what they saw as their heroic deed of saving the country from the talons of international communism. Instead of receiving acceptance, however, the Junta found itself increasingly ostracized as news about the violent overthrow of socialist President Salvador Allende (1970-1973) and systematic human rights abuses against Allende's supporters spread throughout the world. Then, in an attempt to legitimize the new authoritarian social order (Bernal-Meza 2020, 444), the dictatorship's foreign policy focused on managing the country's damaged international prestige, which was perceived as a pillar of Chilean national security. For instance, in a master class on the matter before the 1975 Diplomatic Academy promotion, Vice-minister of Foreign Affairs Col. Enrique Valdés listed 'looking out for the country's international prestige' and 'developing an active and efficient propaganda and contra propaganda abroad, according to the country's interests' as key contributions of diplomacy to

national security (Valdés 1975, 7). The regime made unsuccessful efforts to improve its external image (e.g., Pryluka 2022) and explain to the world the coup's alleged emancipatory nature. Official discourse and conservative media blamed an *anti-Chilean campaign* sponsored by the Soviet Union for their inability to gain international acceptance (Santoni and Sáez Fuentealba 2018); however, there was disagreement within the government regarding the sources of status loss (Huneeus 2007). At home, perceived 'international isolation'—as the decrease in status was known within official circles—also concerned the Christian Democratic Party (PDC) faction that initially supported Pinochet under the misplaced expectation that they would return to power once order prevailed, whereas its opposition faction denounced the dictatorship internationally (Ulianova et al. 2021). The US Government initially shared these concerns (Kornbluh 2013), although the bilateral relationship turned increasingly uneasy soon after (Fermandois 2005; Harmer 2013; Morley and McGillion 2015; Avery 2020).

The leftist opposition, persecuted and nearly dismantled, paid less attention to status concerns in the early years of the dictatorship. Those who remained in the country were forced to focus on physical security and the maintenance of party structures and networks. The restriction of political activity and the dictatorship's control over information left little room to advance alternative discourses. For exiled leaders, maintaining and exacerbating the military government's status loss through public denunciations in international forums was an essential tool in their repertoire to promote democratic restoration from abroad. Rome-based magazine *Chile-América*'s consistent coverage of foreign policy matters played an important role in highlighting Pinochet's isolation from its very first issue in September 1974—an idea that helped boost the collective morale of the opposition as it reaffirmed the legitimacy of their cause. Yet, unlike the DSN elaborated in local magazines, *Chile-América* mainly attributed isolation to human rights violations and a lack of diplomatic tact instead of the breakdown of democracy; it barely used the notion of 'prestige', nor depicted a stylized representation of the country's lost status (e.g., "La junta militar crea una delicada situación internacional a Chile," 1975). The intellectual and political agendas of the IR experts who would later constitute the CFPE focused elsewhere at that time. This group's production would peak only the following decade. Amongst this group, dependency theory (DT) remained the most influential current, and its focus on international structures left less room for agency-related concerns such as status. Increases in international support for IR activities in the country would emerge only in 1983, with the partial opening of the public sphere, although institutions closely related to Chilean experts but based elsewhere received substantial funding since the late 1970s (Tickner 2002). The few public interventions some CFPE members made in the second half of that decade focused less on foreign policy *per se* than on national security, hemispheric relations, DT, and imperialism. In one of the earliest post-1973 CFPE foreign policy interventions, for instance, the then-unknown politician and later foreign minister José Miguel Insulza (1994-1999) interpreted Chile's international position through a Marxist-inspired lens that stressed the role of US imperialism (Insulza 1977). Although some academics with close connections

with the CFPE adopted the 'foreign policy' category early on (e.g., Wilhelmy von Wolff 1976; see also Cope 1975), it incipiently gained greater currency among CFPE members since the early 1980s, thanks to international transformations, the decline of DT vis-à-vis a greater ideological moderation, their embrace of policy-oriented IR approaches, and the prospect of eventual access to power.

The Beagle Channel Crisis and the Emergence of the DSN

Since the early 20th Century, Chile and Argentina held a territorial dispute over three small islands located at the Beagle Channel in the Austral extreme of the American continent. In 1971, the two countries agreed to request the British Crown an arbitration award to solve the matter. The 1977 final resolution fully conceded Chile the ownership of the islands and projected the country's territory into the Atlantic Ocean, thus affecting Buenos Aires' perceived interests. Although the arbitration award was legally binding, a few months after its announcement the Argentinian right-wing military government declared it 'null and void' (January 1978). This decision unleashed a major bilateral crisis that, by late 1978, had both countries' armed forces 'at a high state of readiness' for war after failed bilateral negotiations (Villar 2016, 2). For a few weeks in 1978, the BCC was serious enough to make real the prospect of an armed conflict (Collier and Sater 2004, 363).

The political landscape in Chile had experienced incipient shifts on the eve of the BCC. In 1975, Pinochet completed the regime's installation phase and moved towards its institutionalization through the crafting of a new Constitution of authoritarian inspiration (Huneeus 2007). Shortly before the BCC commenced, Pinochet also strengthened his position by scoring a victory in a fraudulent plebiscite that rejected reiterated UN condemnation for human rights violations and which implicitly named him president (January 1978). Yet, other factors favored the opposition. The assassination of socialist former minister and ambassador Orlando Letelier in Washington, D.C., by the regime's repressive secret services and the subsequent electoral victory of Jimmy Carter left Pinochet on thin ice with the United States by late 1976. Domestically, the powerful Catholic Church doubled down on its critical stance on human rights violations and created the Vicariate of Solidarity in early 1976. Similarly, the PDC completed its transition from its initial support of Pinochet to the opposition in late 1977, after being outlawed a few months earlier. For its part, a portion of the left, mostly in exile, undertook a difficult process of acknowledging the causes of Allende's defeat. As a result, parts of the left rethought their positions vis-a-vis liberal democracy.

These transformations led to the emergence of an opposition press at the margins of the regime-dominated domestic media environment. Within the cease of political activity imposed by the dictatorship, journalism was limited to a narrow set of issues defined and controlled by the government (Angell 2011, 175). Taking advantage of the greater permissiveness on foreign affairs

coverage, *APSI* magazine was created in 1976 as an international news agency, with only marginal mentions of Chile. Yet, it widened its editorial line in late 1978 to comment on domestic affairs (Araya 2007, 21) through the prism of foreign policy, prompted by both external condemnations against Pinochet and the BCC. The turn of the Catholic Church and the PDC also favored this shift in the media environment. The renowned Jesuit magazine *Mensaje*, founded in 1951, adopted a more openly critical stance towards the dictatorship in the mid-1970s. The *Análisis* magazine was launched in December 1977 as a monthly magazine sponsored by the Academy of Christian Humanism. It published centrist and leftist critical perspectives under the protection provided by the Catholic Church. Over the years, these magazines expressed and contributed to the re-articulation of the democratic opposition. Since their main target audience was political and intellectual opposition elites, they served as a platform for opposition members to divulge their ideas (e.g., Maira 1975; Portales and Varas 1978).

In November 1977, the imminence of a new United Nations General Assembly condemnation of human rights violations—this time backed by Washington—propelled the opposition to offer in dissident magazines their first critical assessments of Chilean foreign policy since the beginning of the dictatorship (Soto 1977). However, it was the magnitude of the BCC a few months later that propelled the publication of additional critical accounts, which outlined the contours of the DSN. Although in the opposition's view, the country's ownership of the islands was clear (e.g. Montealegre 1978), Argentina had managed to shirk a legally binding settlement procedure without significant consequences. Yet, for these critics, the cause of the crisis was not to be found in Buenos Aires nor even in Santiago's foreign policy—the key was the authoritarian nature of Chile's domestic regime. Indeed, these accounts stressed what they saw as a blatant inconsistency: contrary to what Pinochet told the country, relations with Argentina proved he was incapable of preserving national security—the very value which he had pretended to legitimize his power and the regime with from the outset. Indeed, repressive policies harbored by the national security doctrine had isolated the country to the point that '*true national security* has never been more compromised' (Rubio 1979, 528, emphasis added). Isolation infringed on Chilean diplomacy's 'unwritten, golden rule': namely, cultivating positive international ties to avoid the possibility of war with its neighbors 'or to wage it in the best possible conditions' (Rubio 1979, 523). Similarly, in an attempt 'to create conscience of the dangerous isolation experienced by Chile and whose gravest consequences just begin to emerge', *Análisis* editor and future National Journalism Award laureate Juan Pablo Cárdenas noted:

> "Over the last few weeks, public opinion has been able to appreciate more clearly than ever the extent of the difficulty that affects us, and how problems and threats to our security approach our borders.
>
> *Paradoxically, the restrictions imposed in the name of 'national security' that have affected so much our civil rights have left us more lonely and insecure in the world*" (Cárdenas 1978. 3, emphasis added)

According to the early DSN writings, Chileans' source of international security was not their armed forces but the prestige of the country's democratic institutions. This representation was advanced by an author who wrote under the pseudonym 'Ángel Rubio'. Rubio praised pre-coup Chile's extensive diplomatic network. In his view,

> 'This success—which was an important element of Chile's power situation—was based on an important but greatly effective factor: Consecutive governments, as different as they were in the conduct of domestic affairs, *they [all] inspired respect, trust, credibility abroad*.
>
> *The continuity of Chilean democracy,* with all of its imperfections, had turned into *an important element of Chile's international security* which kept it advantageously inserted within a framework of all kinds of international relations in which [Chilean] governments could rely on multiple backing points' (Rubio 1979, 524, emphasis added).

As the excerpt shows, the DSN relied on a mythical representation of the country's past international status in which democracy acted as the main source until the 1973 coup. Writing along the same lines as Rubio was an unidentified author who signed as 'Antonio Soto' in *Mensaje*. In a cautious critical assessment of the dictatorship's foreign policy, the author noted that in Chile there was a 'close relationship between the behavior assumed by a certain government within its borders and the conduct of its foreign policy' (Soto 1977, 696). Soto noted:

> 'Some analysts have pointed out the close relationship that, in their view, would exist between states' *internal politics and international behavior*. Thus, there would not be a foreign policy indifferent to the internal and [therefore] it would entail the defects and qualities of national politics. Whatever the case may be, in the Chilean case, there is at least one notable- relation: *as popular participation expanded in the country's political and social life, it [the country] also enriched its own [participation] in world affairs, progressively expanding the area of its international relations*' (Soto 1977, 690, emphasis added).

Usually, this mythical depiction was implicitly done against the backdrop of a Latin American region portrayed as unstable and marked by authoritarianism and political instability. Soto observed that during the Frei and Allende administrations, Chile's foreign relations experienced a notable expansion to the point of making it 'the only Latin American country that could show such richness' in its international life (Soto 1977, 690). In fact, 'as popular participation expanded in the country's political and social life, it [the country] also enriched its own [participation] in world affairs, progressively expanding the area of its international relations' (Soto 1977, 690). The crucial factor that explained such richness was the country's longstanding 'process of *democratization* and modernization that took place *within the respect of human rights and constitutional stability* [which] projected *an image* of *great respectability*' (Soto 1977, 690, emphasis added).

In the DSN rationale, active membership in international organizations and diplomatic compromise were external behaviors closely associated with democracy at the domestic level—and it was precisely the lack of those behaviors which had left the Pinochet regime in an impossible situation with the Argentinians. In fact, since the overthrow of Allende, '*these factors began to disappear*, and a process of crisis of [our] external relations began to such extent that the country today is more *isolated* than ever before in the past, with *a grave risk to our national security*' (Soto 1978, 199, emphasis added). Given its rapid 'loss of international prestige and credibility', the dictatorship lacked the authority to force Buenos Aires to comply with the arbitration resolution. Instead, the dictatorship had to resort 'to military means to cover for the greater insufficiency of political means for the preservation of the country's international security' (Rubio 1979, 527). Prestige, thus, had an instrumental value in order to satisfy other basic foreign policy goals and served as a means to secure the territorial status quo with the neighbors.[5]

The DSN's Democratic Prescription

Consistent with the representation of a glorious past in which democracy served as the source of Chile's status, the early DSN prescribed that the only means for the country to overcome international isolation and recover its prestige was to restore the democratic regime. Soto wrote:

> 'We have to abandon the 'fortress spirit' and open the country with all that it means in terms of *democracy, freedom, hope, participation on a national project that unites a majority of Chilean*s, and of adaptation to present realities. Thus would begin *a recovery process, at least in part, of how much we have lost in international trust and prestige*' (Soto 1978, 202, emphasis added).

Restoring democracy was a matter of national security as well. According to Cárdenas, democracy was 'an indispensable condition for peace […] *Hence the need for a new internal order. National Security demands it*' (Cárdenas 1979, 3, emphasis added). A more subtle, but equally compelling, call for democracy was presented in an *APSI* editorial suggesting that peace with Argentina depended on democratization on both sides of the Andean mountains. *APSI* presented the bilateral relationship as a longstanding friendship linked to common nineteenth-century national independence figures—Chilean Gen. Bernardo O'Higgins and Argentinian Gen. José de San Martín, who jointly defeated Spanish forces at the 1818 Battle of Maipú, thus sealing Chilean independence.

[5] This is consistent with Alfaro Martínez (2020).

> 'The *development of the social [and] democratic fabric in both countries is the only way for a real solution to revive the historic friendship* that ever since O'Higgins and San Martín unites our peoples in brotherhood. […] As *greater social sectors can express, they will do so, with complete certainty, in favor of peace*. In that same proportion, small groups that spur on a militaristic adventure will find themselves *more and more isolated* and war games will fall into the void' ("Chile-Argentina: cómo mantener una amistad." 1978, 3, emphasis added).

The DSN After the BCC: Influence, Implications and Further Research

The DSN became one of the earliest opposition narratives to gain some public relevance in the late 1970s, serving as a promoter of democratic restoration when the value of democracy was still a contentious matter within opposition groups. To some extent, its salience owed to the notoriety of the BCC. Also, it expressed the high expectations that the then-disarticulated opposition placed on external factors to bring the dictatorship to an end. Indeed, looking back at the late 1970s, renowned sociologist Manuel Antonio Garretón criticized the substitution of a shared political strategy in the opposition with 'certain myths' such as 'the regime's political isolation' and 'the [external] pressures that Human Rights policies could have on it' (Garretón in Marras 1980, 4). The fraudulent approval of the 1980 Constitution moved the opposition's focus away from external factors in favor of domestic political re-organization, although keeping the dictatorship isolated remained an important political tool. The formation of the 1983 Democratic Alliance coalition between the PDC, renewed socialists, and others—which would later evolve into the Concertación—provided the DSN with a political platform for its broader socialization and later institutionalization.

Over time, the possibility of war with Argentina vanished and so did the DSN's original emphasis on security and peace.[6] However, the place of democracy as a key status marker became increasingly consolidated as the predominant frame through which the opposition envisioned the future of Chilean foreign policy. The DSN's growing clout can be traced throughout almost all the academic and policy texts the CFPE members produced during the transition away from authoritarianism. In his canonical 1986 book on the dictatorship's foreign relations, later foreign minister Heraldo Muñoz (2014-2018) defined 'international political isolation' in terms of status loss. For him, isolation implied 'the deterioration of *'national prestige'*, [which is] an intangible element of power of particular transcendence for countries that, like Chile, lack great military or economic resources' (Muñoz 1986, 12, emphasis added). Resembling the DSN's security critique of Pinochet and noting the instrumental value of status, Muñoz adds that an isolated government 'cannot satisfy its national aims in the world context with the same ability and success reached by its predecessors', thus tending 'to facilitate the emergence of

[6] Democracy reappeared in CFPE's views through *democratic regional security*.

threats to national security' (Muñoz 1986, 12–13). The fact that he does not further elaborate on the notion of prestige nor refers to the Western status literature of the age suggests that, in establishing his conceptual framework, he might have mirrored the DSN instead of purely drawing from IR theory (cf. Tulchin 2010, 436).[7]

The DSN's influence and democratic prescription are also traceable throughout the generative texts that envisioned a foreign policy agenda for a democratic Chile (e.g., Lagos et al. 1983;[8] Somavía 1988; Muñoz 1989), including the Concertación 1989 government program (Aylwin 1989). When this center-left coalition triumphed over Pinochet, the DSN then served as the basis for President Patricio Aylwin administration's (1990-1994) official foreign policy discourse. In the long run, the connection the DSN established between status and democracy stands as a clear antecedent to the country's strict adherence to the liberal international order after 1990. Also, the DSN crystalized the centrality of status concerns in the post-authoritarian age, albeit they would gradually shift from the political to the economic dimension through trade policy.

Beyond policymaking, the DSN has been highly influential in the language academics use to study Chilean foreign policy. The findings underscore some crucial issues in these academic works. Take, again, the notion of international isolation, which has long served as both a useful shortcut to refer to the dictatorship's foreign policy and a baseline to describe what came after. Consistent with recent works on the period (Santoni and Sáez Fuentealba 2018), the centrality of isolation to the early DSN shows that the dissemination of this category long preceded the publication of Muñoz's (1986) aforementioned book to whom the concept is often misleadingly attributed. This suggests that the question of isolation is certainly a conceptual issue (Ross 2007), but also a fundamentally political one. Therefore, isolation might be better conceived as a status-related, context-dependent political idea that has been strategically mobilized by political elites; it should be treated as such, rather than as a purely academic category that describes an allegedly objective reality. More broadly, a deeper understanding of Chilean foreign policy requires us to reevaluate our usual categories (see Ross 2007; Jenne and Briones Razeto 2018; Bywaters 2021) and read foreign policy through more abstract IR theory frameworks (e.g., Villar 2016; Fuentes-Julio 2020; Jenne 2020; Schulz and Rojas-De-Galarreta 2020; Wehner 2020). A final implication regards the overlapping nature of political and academic discourses on Chilean foreign policy in the last three decades. To some extent, this stems from the double role played by many CFPE members during the 1970s and 1980s as both academics *and* politicians—an intersection common to a whole generation who found shelter in social science research institutions (Puryear 1994; Tickner 2008), yet overlooked by Chilean IR. This made the genesis of Chilean IR and the articulation of contemporary policy narratives connate phenomena. In order to get a better grasp of contemporary foreign policy, we would benefit from acknowledging and bringing

[7] Muñoz (1980) quotes Soto (1977) in what seems to be his first Chilean foreign policy writing.

[8] This important piece was later reprinted with marginal modifications in Muñoz (1989).

to the fore the duality of many CFPE members during the dictatorship and treating them as political actors instead of pure academics who later became policymakers.

Conclusion

The domestic politics of international status has been underexplored. In this article, I offered a way to think about international status management as a two-level game in which the two dimensions are connected through status narratives. Looking at the then-incipient moderate opposition to the Pinochet regime, in this article I introduced the notions of the Concertación foreign policy elite and the democratic status narrative, established its importance to Chile's international relations, analyzed the DSN's origins in rarely consulted opposition magazines at the margins of the public sphere during the second half of the 1970s, and drew out some implications for the study of contemporary Chilean foreign policy.

The article contributes to ongoing IR debates on status in world politics in various ways. Firstly, while academics often open the black box of the state to account for external status behavior, the Chilean case shows that the domestic politics of international status unfolds beyond its potential foreign policy implications. Indeed, sometimes actors engage in status politics less for the sake of their country's standing *per se* than because mobilizing status narratives may be instrumental to other, perhaps more urgent domestic political objectives—in this case, the opposition elite's aim to contest the dictatorship and create the conditions for a still uncertain democratization. Governments, of course, are key actors in this regard, but the findings also indicate that opposition groups might engage in status politics even when excluded from the public sphere. Secondly, the target audience of the magazines analyzed and how the DSN created ways for disparate opposition groups to come together suggests that, in engaging in status politics, elites might target other elite members instead of broader audiences and constituencies. This invites greater attention and nuance to the common assumption that status matters domestically because it affects a political community's collective self-esteem. Thirdly, while academics note that status-seeking may at times contradict the pursuit of other foreign policy aims such as security (Wohlforth 2009), the Chilean case indicates that elites may also see these aims as convergent. In the case of the DSN, status was portrayed as a source of security, but as briefly shown above, there is evidence that the Pinochet regime also believed that diplomacy's contribution to national security was to preserve the country's prestige. Finally, the article also detaches narratives of status loss from recent illiberal politics (Beaumont 2017; Freedman 2020), showing that they can also serve democratic actors with system-supporting foreign policy agendas.

Further research on international status would benefit from widening its focus to include domestic dynamics that are not necessarily related to state external behavior at least as a primary concern. The conceptualization of status narratives and their role in the two-level game of status

is also a worthwhile enterprise. Finally, how status interacts with other foreign policy aims such as security and prosperity deserves greater attention in the future.

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The primary sources used in the article are available online in various repositories. Mensaje articles can be found in the magazine's historical archive (https://www.mensaje.cl/archivo-historico/); APSI and Análisis are available at the National Library of Chile's Memoria Chilena repository (https://www.memoriachilena.gob.cl/); Chile-América is available at the Socialist Party of Chile's Clodomiro Almeyda Digital Library (https://www.socialismo-chileno.org/).

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