



**Call for Papers:**  
**Status Symbols in World Politics**

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Workshop Conveners:  
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This workshop aims to explore the various status symbols in world politics and probe the question as to how they emerge from being regular types of things, practices, or behaviors, towards becoming internationally recognized symbols of social positionality. Recent literature in IR has shown that a plethora of actors in world politics are avid observers, and sometimes obsessive players of international status games. However, the literature has remained oddly quiet about the status symbols acquired and used to further that goal. One notable exception is Lilach Gilady's (2018) groundbreaking monograph *The Price of Prestige*. Drawing on Thorstein Veblen's ideas on conspicuous consumption, Gilady shows how one can study status politics via status symbols. This workshop takes inspiration from Gilady's book, and answers her call for more work investigating status symbols in world politics (Gilady 2018, p. 165).

Status symbols are the intermediary mechanisms - things, attributes, rights, privileges, or behavior - that actors acquire, embody, or practice to signal their preferred social status. Specifically, to gain signal higher positional status, or to signal entrance to a status club, actors must acquire status symbols that signal their fit with the values and ideas the higher status group. While acquisition of status symbols does not guarantee entry, they are nonetheless crucial tokens that either might help facilitate the acquisition of an entry ticket into the club or simply generate more recognition from peers.

Furthering our understanding of status symbols is not an esoteric concern but crucial to shedding light upon how international order (dis)functions. Status symbols require costly endeavors that use public funds and energy that might be put to better use. Moreover, historically international society's status symbols appear especially pathological: from empires to nuclear weapons, the international abounds with activities that policy makers and activities alike would rather be stigmatized than valorized. As such, learning more about the processes and mechanisms through which status symbols emerge promises the possibility for contesting normatively undesirable symbols and encouraging more pro-social status symbols to stand in their stead.

Status and status symbols by their social, contingent and context nature are difficult objects for analysis and as such IR status scholarship grapples with the challenge by incorporating an eclectic menu of methodologies. In seeking to get the study of status symbols off the ground we want to keep this pluralistic spirit and so we invite papers using very different approaches - from network analysis, to archival research, from experiments to discourse analysis - such that the workshop can bring into dialogue scholars that might ordinarily keep to their respective camps. In short, the workshop invites papers that **explore empirically and theoretically how and why particular status symbols rise or rose to prominence and explore the functions and effects of status symbols in world politics**. Within this deliberately broad and inclusive remit, potential workshop papers might address:

**Objects as status symbols**

1. Military equipment
2. Buildings
3. Geography
4. Wealth & luxury goods
5. Art

**Practices & Performances as status symbols**

1. Practical mastery
2. Gender and race symbolism
3. Country performance indicators
4. Victory & defeat,
5. War waging and peacemaking

**Theories of status symbols**

1. The rise and fall of symbols
2. Individual vs collective status symbols
3. Signaling via symbols
4. Historical contingencies
5. Ontology of status symbols

**Orders and status symbols**

1. Groups and clubs
2. Hierarchy and International Society
3. Rituals, orders, and status symbols
4. Legitimacy and status symbols
5. Online status hierarchies

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