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Abstract

While the international status literature sees status as club membership or a ranking, it has mostly explored the role of status in higher-end hierarchies: great powers and Western Middle-Powers. Most recently, there has been an effort to explore these dynamics in lower-status countries. However, the interplay between locally and globally constructed status beliefs remains unexplored. In this article, I use information from in depth interviews with diplomats at the UN Headquarters in New York and co-sponsorship data to analyze how local status creates path-dependent patterns that, in turn, shape global status, and vice versa. Specifically, I argue that interactions between geographically and culturally contiguous countries are more likely; therefore, their available heuristic for who is high-status is likely to be within their main reference group. At the same time, regional high-status countries act as representatives in larger groups of shared interests, such as the EU or the G77. This helps them gain recognition from other high-status states and reinforces their standing both locally and globally. I also explore apparent anomalous cases in which low-status countries, despite being underrecognized within their main reference groups, can accrue global status recognition by connecting with otherwise disconnected groups, providing a structural explanation for this phenomenon.