

International Status and Its Impact on Voting Success in the UN General Assembly

:A Network Analysis of Diplomatic Representation

SeulAh Choi

Boston University, Political Science

Abstract

How does international status emerge? What are some behavioral implications of international status? Despite growing consensus that state status matters, existing studies on this topic suffer from two shortcomings: most research neglects the social nature of status by regarding it only as a byproduct of exogenous factors such as economic, military or technological capabilities. Even if they recognize the social nature of international status, there are relatively few studies exploring why it matters. This paper argues that international status is ultimately established by social recognition from other states. States that have more of these network characteristics at great levels can have high status and exert social power. Consistent with previous studies, this paper recognizes international status order through diplomatic representation. By utilizing two sets of data –the diplomatic exchange data and the UN General Assembly Roll Call dataset, it shows that three network-based variables – indegree centrality, betweenness centrality, and transitivity– are consistent and substantively strong determinants of diplomatic formation compared to other exogenous variables. (It also shows that prestigious states with high network centralities are more likely to achieve voting success in the UN General Assembly.) By exploring the determinants of international status and its social influence, this paper illuminates the explanatory value that the social nature of status can contribute to international relations.

Research Questions

1. How does international status emerge? What determinants - such as endogenous or exogenous factors -influence state status in the international system?
2. What are some behavioral implications of international status? How does international status impact a state's ability to have a peaceful influence on other states?

Theory and Hypotheses

1. Formation of Diplomatic Ties

I argue that while exogenous factors such as geographical proximity and economic power do matter in the decision of a state to open an embassy in another state, endogenous factors embedded in the diplomatic network structure are also important determinants of diplomatic ties. States consider the network itself into which they are entering, and network-based motivation can play a substantial role in the decision to establish diplomatic ties.

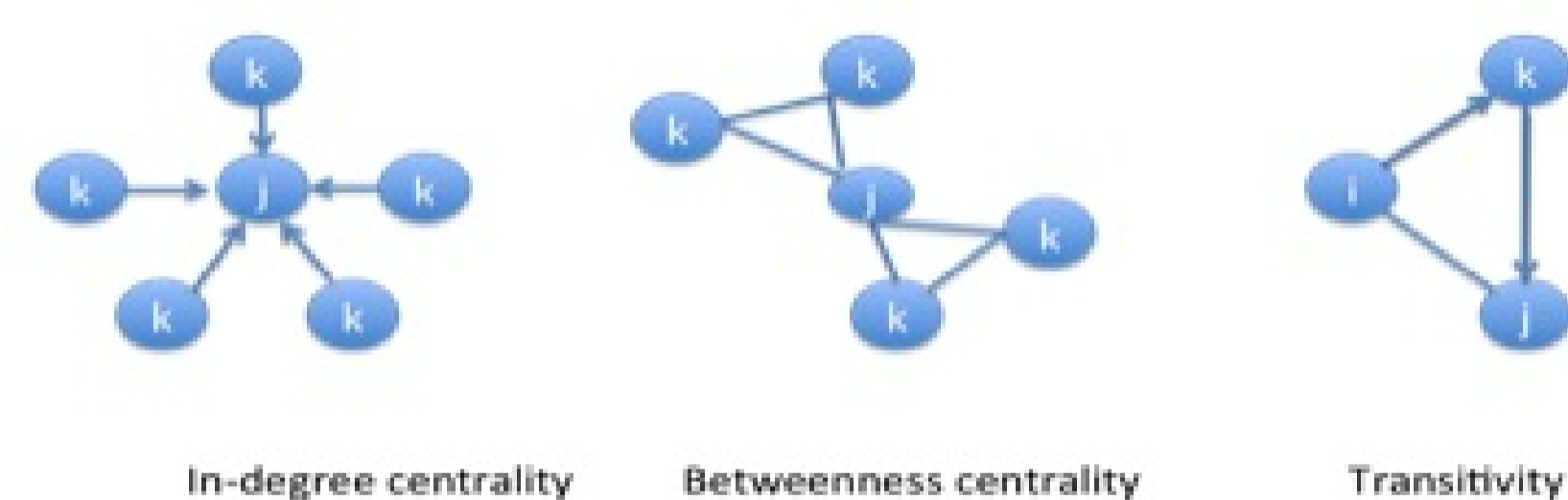


Figure 1: The Three Network Effects

1. In-degree centrality: It is measured by the number of foreign embassies located in a host state. If a state enters an existing diplomatic network it tends to target diplomatic partners with high in-degree centrality because this maximizes the benefits of diplomatic ties: it helps to reduce the cost of communication with third parties and allows access to important and influential actors in international relations.

• *Hypothesis 1: States that enter the existing diplomatic network are more likely to create diplomatic ties with other states that already have high in-degree centrality.*

2. Betweenness centrality: It captures the number of paths connecting pairs of states that pass through a state. Since the diplomatic network can be understood as a communication network in the sense that information mainly travels along diplomatic ties between states, states with

a high level of betweenness centrality can act as information brokers or mediators between states, which incentivizes the formation of diplomatic ties.

• *Hypothesis 2: States that enter the existing diplomatic network are more likely to create diplomatic ties with other states that already have high betweenness centrality.*

3. Transitivity: It is measured as a state position relative to its neighboring states. Like befriending a friend of a friend, states prefer to establish diplomatic formation with countries where their diplomatic partners also have diplomatic ties. Since states in transitivity can threaten disconnection from the network, which can be utilized as a bargaining chip for them, this notion is another way to capture a state's status in the international system.

• *Hypothesis 3: States that enter the existing diplomatic network are more likely to establish diplomatic ties with states where their diplomatic partners also have diplomatic relations.*

2. The Impact of International Status on Voting Success in the UN General Assembly

I argue that prestigious states – defined in terms of network centrality – have social power and thus exert their influence on other states. This state power, which is derived from status, can be demonstrated in the voting success of states in the UN General Assembly as they can successfully raise issues and negotiate with each other.

• *Hypothesis 4: States which have high network centrality are more likely to achieve voting success in the UN General Assembly.*

Data and Methodology

In order to test these hypotheses, I mainly utilize two sets of data: the diplomatic exchange data, established by Bayer(2006) and the UN General Assembly Roll Call dataset, constructed by Voeten(2004). Given the dichotomous nature of the dependent variables, I ran two logit models to test the determinants of diplomatic ties and state voting success in the UNGA respectively. The time scope of my analysis is limited to the year 2000 due to data constraints.

1. Predicting Diplomatic Formation from Network Effects

In order to test the first three hypotheses, I replicate datasets from Neumayer (2008) and Kinne (2014) as a baseline and incorporate three network-based variables.

• **Dependent variable :** The dependence variable: Diplomatic formation, which is the directed dyad – if one member of the dyad has a diplomatic tie with the other, it is coded as 1, otherwise as 0

• **Control variables**

- Distance: log-transformed distance between i and j 's capital cities
- Economic influences: i) trade– log-transformed total trade between i and j in year 2000 and ii) log-transformed GDP per capita
- Political influences: i) IGO membership– the number of shared IGO memberships between i and j ' and ii) Polity IV scores
- Military influences: i) alliance – coded as 1 if i and j share either an entente, neutrality pact or defense treaty, otherwise as 0. ii) CINC scores
- ideological influences: S index scores

2. Predicting UN Voting Success based on State Status

• **Dependent variable :** voting success is coded as 1 if a state votes for a resolution and 0 if a state abstains or votes no. No resolution has ever

failed during the 55th session(2000) success in the UNGA.

• **Control variables**

- Political capabilities : Polity Scores
- Economic capabilities : GDP per capita
- Military capabilities : CINC scores
- States' rate of voting success in 54th session

Results

Table 1: Determinants of Diplomatic Formation: Effects of Exogenous and Endogenous Factors

	Diplomatic Ties	
	Model1.1	Model1.2
Trade	0.364*** (0.012)	0.357*** (0.013)
Distance	-0.039*** (0.002)	-0.041*** (0.002)
Alliance	0.875*** (0.090)	0.972*** (0.093)
IGOs	0.100*** (0.003)	0.092*** (0.003)
S-Score	0.236*** (0.090)	0.808*** (0.096)
Sender's GDP per capita	0.035* (0.021)	-0.149*** (0.024)
Receiver's GDP per capita	0.008 (0.021)	0.076*** (0.022)
Sender's military power	0.547*** (0.016)	0.062** (0.026)
Receiver's military power	0.576*** (0.016)	0.678*** (0.017)
Sender's polity	-0.020*** (0.003)	-0.026*** (0.003)
Receiver's polity	-0.011*** (0.003)	-0.007* (0.004)
Indegree		0.017*** (0.001)
Betweenness		0.001*** (0.0001)
Transitivity		1.426*** (0.479)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Table 2: Determinants of Voting Success: Effects of International Status

	Model 2
	voting success in the UNGA
Rate of previous voting success	0.370*** (0.105)
GDP per capita	-0.398*** (0.034)
Military power	-0.220*** (0.033)
Polity	-0.028*** (0.005)
Betweenness	-0.0004*** (0.0001)
Transitivity	-2.384*** (0.657)
Indegree	0.001 (0.001)

Note: *p<0.1; **p<0.05; ***p<0.01

Conclusions

- At the empirical level, the decision of a state to open an embassy in another state is obviously endogenous to the existing structure of diplomatic ties. State status, which comes from social relationships with other states, demonstrates power in the UNGA.
- At the theoretical level, network-based motivations illuminate the underlying order of international status. International status impacts a state's ability to have a peaceful influence on other states.

Limitation and Future Research

- This work needs to utilize a network-based model –Exponential Random Graph Model or Stochastic Actor-Oriented Model– to analyze all dyads jointly.
- More control variables would likely lead to a more sophisticated understanding of voting success in the UNGA.
- Looking at the development of ties and seeing how state status has changed over time is necessary to extend the influence of this work.