

Liberia (where he served as special assistant and then aid management adviser to the Minister of Finance from 2007 to 2009) and South Africa, comparing and contrasting the results obtained by the high-navigation-by-judgment UK Department for International Development to those obtained by the low-navigation-by-judgment US Agency for International Development (USAID).

Honig's book is written as much for development practitioners as for academics, and in the concluding chapter, he proposes multiple strategies for increased development aid effectiveness. First, he calls for better—and often *less*—measurement of outputs and outcomes in development projects, having established elsewhere in the book that one behavior of low-navigation-by-judgment institutions is a propensity for creating a surplus of key performance indicators that do not actually seem to catalyze good performance. Second, he suggests that international development organizations need to allow their staff space to pilot navigation-by-judgment strategies. Third, he offers up the perennial suggestion that international development organizations specialize more, such that those organizations with low levels of navigation by judgment task themselves with working in predictable situations on projects with measurable outputs and outcomes.

Although Honig operates mostly at the mesolevel, he brings his focus to the level of the states that create and constrain international development organizations with a discussion of why some agencies have more ability to navigate by judgment than others. He argues that it has to do with the political authorizing environment, and he describes the ways in which the perpetual scrutiny of foreign assistance in the United States has led to institutional behaviors that are less present in the United Kingdom, where there is more public and political enthusiasm for overseas development. Interestingly, Honig notes that the constraints that follow from these authorizing environments may very well be self-imposed by the organizations, pointing out how his study revealed no cases of direct legislative interference in the design or implementation of the development projects for which the legislatures appropriate funding.

It is in this realm that scholars of international development have significantly more work to do. By working to combine the insights of Bermeo's macrolevel analysis about funding appropriations and policy initiatives with the insights of Honig's mesolevel analysis of how development agencies structure the work that they actually do, we will be able to learn more about the conditions under which development assistance and development policy can be successful. Honig's suggestions about how to make development aid function better, for instance, seem completely compatible with a grand strategy of targeted development, and yet the core example of a state pursuing targeted development in Bermeo's book—the United

States—allows the least navigation by judgment. Perhaps USAID has imposed constraints on itself that need not be present or else might be able to make a better argument for more liberty in its operations by appealing to the goal of targeted development. By better developing our understanding of how aid organizations make the decisions that they make within the realms where they have discretion, we might, as scholars, be able to help them pursue strategies for better navigating the world of targeted development.

The Price of Prestige: Conspicuous Consumption in International Relations. By Lilach Gilady. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2017. 232p. \$45.00 cloth.

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In *The Price of Prestige*, Lilach Gilady grapples directly with political decisions such as the following: Why do countries procure showy weapons systems known to be relatively ineffective? Why do countries expend their own resources on aiding other, strategically unimportant states? Why do countries invest in elaborate scientific programs such as the race to space?

To explain puzzling investment in such international “luxuries,” *The Price of Prestige* turns to Thorstein Veblen's theory of conspicuous consumption. Veblen famously contended that individuals care about their social standing and that they consume expensive, flashy goods not because of the short-term material utility of those goods but instead because of the prestige they bestow. Consuming such goods signals that one has discretionary money to burn, and their demand rises as their price does. Gilady astutely applies this theory to behavior in the international arena, arguing that puzzling political decisions across a range of domains—weapons procurement, foreign aid spending, and investment in “Big Science” programs—can be explained by countries' concerns for their social standing.

In chapters 1 and 2 in particular, but also throughout the book, Gilady carefully teases apart the components of Veblen's theory and describes the observable implications of countries' pursuit of prestige through consumption. At one point in chapter 1, she outlines four categories of observable implications: (1) the consumption behavior in question should be demonstrably *costly* (in absolute terms and relative to other goods that might have been purchased instead); (2) governments should be particularly eager to pay high costs for goods that are *conspicuous* rather than inconspicuous; (3) governments should be pursuing goods and activities that would allow them to advance to a position *just above* the one they currently occupy in the hierarchy (that is, rising powers should be pursuing goods that make them look like superpowers, whereas more marginal countries should be pursuing goods that

keep them from being in last place); and (4) countries should switch to the pursuit of different conspicuous, extravagant goods once consumption of other conspicuous goods becomes too common (that is, there should be some *instability* in the composition of status goods; pp. 27–29). Gilady's lucid distillation of these components of the theory provides a useful foundation for the rest of the book.

Gilady is modest about her empirical aims. At one point, she aptly describes her methodological approach as “combin[ing] a detailed analytical discussion . . . with diverse anecdotal evidence” (p. 119). Chapters 3 through 5 contain precisely this combination: in each one, Gilady lays out the observable implications of Veblen's argument as applied to a particular domain of international relations. She then grapples with alternative explanations conceptually and theoretically, as well as in light of historical and contemporary examples. Gilady wisely does not rely on leaders' self-reported reasons for their actions (p. 25). Instead she largely looks for the observable implications of Veblen's theory in conjunction with the observable implications of other theories.

The applications in the book are wide-ranging. In chapter 3 she considers the procurement of weapons systems that are outdated, expensive, and often ineffective. She pays particular attention to the behavior of members of the aircraft carrier club, especially China's investment in carrier procurement and construction at the expense of missiles and submarines. Yet she also compares the procurement of tanks (a less conspicuous good) with that of warships (a more conspicuous good). The main alternative explanation Gilady considers is that states might invest in conspicuous weapons systems for the sake of deterrence, but she argues that the procurement of conspicuous weapons systems (like the aircraft carriers) does not closely track geostrategic needs and that these systems are often known to be outdated and ineffective (or operational for only parts of the year). In chapter 4, she discusses states' “prosocial spending”—especially the contribution of resources to peacekeeping operations and the giving of foreign aid. Here, to illustrate the cyclical features of international status goods, she explores how, compared to spending on foreign aid, contributing to peacekeeping operations became a less effective status symbol over time as becoming a contributor became cheaper, allowing everyone to join in (pp. 117–88). In chapter 5, she examines investment in large-scale scientific projects, such as space programs, whose “expense . . . ensures that only a handful of actors can afford such endeavors” (p. 126). She considers various alternative explanations for behavior in this domain as well, including that states might expect to benefit from more scientific knowledge (but argues that this explanation cannot solve the collective action problem, nor does it explain the disparity between governments' minimal spending on basic scientific research and

their extravagant spending on “Big Science”) and that scientists might lobby for these large-scale projects (but argues that such interest groups are not likely to be electorally important or otherwise significant to political elites). By considering several disparate domains of international relations, she provides suggestive evidence that the theoretical framework she proposes applies widely.

The goal of the empirical chapters, Gilady explains, is not “a test of the theory but rather a systematic illustration” (p. 31) of its plausibility. The book accomplishes this goal well. The discussions in each chapter are eclectic and thought provoking. The chapters make little attempt to conduct a rigorous horse race between the theory of conspicuous consumption and other sets of explanations. Indeed Gilady at several points notes that “prestige considerations can overlap with considerations of security, deterrence, and welfare without being mutually exclusive” (p. 17). Nor do the chapters attempt to gauge how prevalent prestige-seeking behavior might be in any of the domains in question or more generally. These are not Gilady's stated goals. Instead, Gilady's purpose is to invite “further inductive theoretical refinement and development” (p. 31) and to introduce new ways of thinking about international relations that might be more rigorously tested in future research.

At the very end of the book, Gilady explains that she hopes that she was “successful in generating additional questions and theoretical challenges” (p. 166). The book is certainly successful in this regard, and I would raise at least two sets of questions. First, why not disaggregate the state more explicitly and systematically? Although Gilady is at points transparent about the dangers of anthropomorphism and the challenges of translating a sociological theory about individuals to account for the behavior of states (p. 10), countries (or state “actors”) still remain a fairly black box category throughout the book. In specific empirical examples, the reader gets a hint that different actors within the state might be differentially driven by prestige concerns. For instance, in her discussion of “Big Science” spending, Gilady notes, “Congress provided more funds for the space program than either the White House or the scientists dared to request” (p. 128). Yet, the reader is left wondering how to think systematically about the configuration of domestic actors who make up the state and about the constraints they face in different countries. Do particular institutions encourage elites to be more or less sensitive to their country's status in the international hierarchy? Should we be looking at variation in leaders' personality traits to understand variation in prestige-seeking behavior across countries and across time?

Disaggregating the state might generate more observable implications for the theory, which could strengthen it relative to alternatives. Disaggregating would also provide stronger micro foundations for the overarching theory. Indeed, Gilady stresses that her theory is

“inherently social” (p. 163), but the social interactions and relationships among state actors are largely absent in much of the book.

The second set of questions I would raise is about states’ reference groups and their options for pursuing prestige. At one point in chapter 2, Gilady argues that reference groups in international relations are relatively fixed: “Unlike individuals, international actors are unable to relocate, meet new friends, or move to another profession” (p. 43). Yet, some of Gilady’s empirical examples, such as the Canadian initiative to create a “middle powers group” within the United Nations, suggest that the boundaries and selection of reference groups might very well be subject to states’ choices. Drawing as it does on Veblen, the book also largely focuses on prestige seeking through emulation rather than through other strategies, such as redefining high-status behavior or seeking to reduce the status of other states. How might the theory be adjusted or extended to include these other facets of the quest for prestige? Would doing so be analytically useful? Gilady’s thoughtful book raises many fruitful questions.

Break All the Borders: Separatism and the Reshaping of the Middle East. By Ariel I. Ahram. New York: Oxford University Press, 2019. 282p. \$99.00 cloth, \$29.95 paper.
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It was my pleasure to read Ariel Ahram’s new book, *Break All the Borders: Separatism and the Reshaping of the Middle East*. In this detailed study of contemporary separatist movements in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), Ahram describes the historical roots of these self-determination efforts, and he specifies the issues that motivate them. He offers not only general coverage of separatism in the region, particularly in regard to the Arab Spring, but also a set of detailed case studies focusing on Cyrenaica, Southern Yemen, Kurdistan, and the Islamic State. The book is organized around a set of important questions in world politics. Why do these separatist conflicts erupt? Why do they develop in the context of state weakness? What role has the international system played and is continuing to play in perpetuating these conflicts? What can be done to fix the underlying problems?

Ahram’s core argument is that separatism in the MENA region is the consequence of state-building efforts during the twentieth century (if not earlier). In contrast to arguments that stress ethnosectarian divides and ancient hatreds, Ahram contends that separatists are drawing inspiration from the Wilsonian emphasis on self-determination and building their claims on the legacies of prior states and state-building efforts. He contends that the legacies of these earlier states continue to shape

contemporary separatism in two ways. First, the memory of these earlier states provides focal points and a kind of socio-institutional residue around which separatists can mobilize. Second, separatists can then refer to these former states in their appeal to the international community, effectively arguing that self-determination should be awarded for historical reasons. Overall, Ahram is making a fairly structural argument, one that will be familiar to those who have read Philip Roeder’s book on the role that administrative units play in generating nationalist aspirations (*Where Nation-States Come From: Institutional Change in the Age of Nationalism*, 2007).

In addition to this argument for where separatist movements come from, Ahram offers an analysis and critique of international order. First, the so-called Wilsonian Moment (p. 4) at the end of World War I introduced the principle of self-determination to the international system. As a result, a substantial number of stateless nations from around the world sent representatives to France to meet with Wilson and declare their desire for statehood. Although some states were born during this time, mostly from the wreckage of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, the majority of the aspiring nations were denied independence. Second, the Sykes-Picot Agreement at the end of the war created new territorial boundaries and units that would eventually become modern states like Syria and Iraq. Despite the fact that these new states and borders were largely artificial and did not match the realities of preexisting political and ethnic units, they gradually structured reality for state leaders, who then had an interest in defending the territorial integrity of the new state, and for trapped populations and separatists who saw “their fate as inextricable from the states they were trying to contest” (p. 31). The product of these two forces—the Wilsonian emphasis on self-determination and the bias in international politics toward preserving territorial borders—is the perpetuation of enduring separatist movements (what Ahram calls “Wilsonian Orphans,” p. 13) within states that are juridically sovereign but empirically frail. Ahram concludes by saying that stability in the MENA region will be unlikely without a reconceptualization of how sovereignty is awarded and organized.

There is much to like about this book. It is meticulously researched, and it offers a terrific primer on separatist politics across the region. Its case studies are particularly rich, as Ahram delves into the histories of Cyrenaica, South Yemen, Kurdistan, and the Islamic State. Readers will learn about the key actors in these separatist struggles and come to understand that these efforts are all built on the idea of a state or political area that existed in earlier times. I particularly enjoyed learning about historical political units like the Senussi-Ottoman condominium, the sultanates of eastern Yemen, and the Kurdish principalities that sat astride the frontier