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To cite this article: Marco Clementi, David G. Haglund, Andrea Locatelli & Valentina Villa (2021) The Guns of April: Status Anxiety as Motivation for Italian – Possibly Even American – Intervention in the First World War, *Diplomacy & Statecraft*, 32:3, 417-439, DOI: [10.1080/09592296.2021.1961484](https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2021.1961484)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/09592296.2021.1961484>



Published online: 17 Sep 2021.



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## The Guns of April: Status Anxiety as Motivation for Italian – Possibly Even American – Intervention in the First World War

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### ABSTRACT

Over the past several years, there has been a renewed scholarly interest in the origins, waging, and consequences of the First World War. This interest has resulted partly from a quirk of timing given that between 2014 and 2019, a series of centennial commemorations kept minds focused on a conflict that many take as the most consequential war the world ever experienced. On the other hand, interest has been stimulated not so much by the past as by the future of international security, with the “return” of the prospect of Great Power war beginning to concentrate minds in ways not experienced for a generation. Since much – but not all – of this renewed interest in Great Power war relates to China’s “rise” assessed through the prism of “power-transition theory”, it is natural to analogise from the events that led to 1914. In this, at least one interesting question remains relatively unexplored: are decisions to join a war already in progress prompted by a different calculus from decisions to go to war at the outset? In particular, does “status anxiety” warrant more attention as a determinant of policy-making than it has heretofore received on the part of late entrants? This analysis argues that it does and makes the case by analysing the decision of one latecomer, Italy, to join the First World War in April 1915. Although the chief focus is on Italy, the conclusion raises the possibility that status anxiety may also have been of importance in the American decision to go to war two Aprils later.

The past two decades have featured a renewed scholarly interest in the place that emotion has in state decision-making.<sup>1</sup> One particular emotional trait, “status anxiety”, has garnered a heightened amount of attention and not just on the part of scholars of international relations [IR] who concentrate on relations amongst the “Great Powers”. Illustratively, even a self-advertised “middle Power” such as Canada developed and promoted foreign policy objectives for reasons easily traceable to status anxiety. This became clear – painfully so, to some – in late spring 2020. The country’s status-propelled bid

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for a temporary United Nations Security Council seat was rebuffed for the second time in a decade, notwithstanding Justin Trudeau's government investing a great deal of time and energy to secure the seat, which it thought would be symbolic confirmation that Canada was "back" as a force in international diplomacy.<sup>2</sup> Nor is Canada an exception amongst the lesser Powers, so many of which have status enhancement as a motivating element in their foreign policy development.

Indeed, like SARS-COVID, status anxiety is pandemic in the international system. Unlike the coronavirus, however, status anxiety is generally inconsequential as the Canadian case suggests. Sometimes, though, things can be otherwise should status anxiety become linked to certain Great Power's foreign policy aims.<sup>3</sup> The potentially most consequential contemporary example is the relationship between the United States and China. Over the past several years, much debate has swirled around the prospects of a future Sino-American war, triggered in no small measure for reasons derivative of the logic of "power transition theory". One claim made by power transition theorists is that "rising" Powers usually prove troublesome for international peace and security as they pursue policies fuelled by "hubris", a shorthand way for expressing the thought that they are recklessly anxious to enhance their status in the eyes of their peer competition. The implication is that their anxiety grows in proportion to that of their power, with war in the offing, unless arranging some means of "accommodating" or otherwise assuaging their status anxieties.<sup>4</sup>

Nevertheless, one need not conjure hypothetical future wars, or even use a power-transition theorist, to connect status anxiety with state decisions to go to war. As a recent study has it, there have been many occasions that states were "fighting for status".<sup>5</sup> None have come remotely close to matching in magnitude and consequence the First World War, on which this analysis focuses, which inserts status anxiety into a different kind of "war origins" question from the widely commented enquiries about why the war occurred in the first place.<sup>6</sup> Instead, why did it *spread* to one country in particular, Italy, which at the outset of the war had indicated a strong desire to remain above the fray yet, by April 1915, decided to join? There is even a hint that status anxiety did not just figure centrally in the Italians' putting into operation the "guns of April" in 1915,<sup>7</sup> but may also have had more than a little to do with similar American action two years later.

The theoretical focus is also on the war's spread or "diffusion". Recent centennial commemorations associated with the First World War provide fresh reminders of the lengthy and never-ending enquiry mounted by legions of IR specialists – political scientists and historians alike – into the origins, waging, and consequences of what one political scientist justly regards "without question, the defining event of the twentieth century".<sup>8</sup> Naturally, much less attention remains accorded to the phenomenon of why

the war spread rather than why it began. Nevertheless, its spread was to prove nearly as important in policy terms as its onset – and some say, even more important as it turned what had been a localised conflict into a global one.

Even today, suggestions exist that the war did not directly threaten the “vital interests” of most states lucky to remain at peace in August 1914.<sup>9</sup> Yet quite a few of those fortunate lands would opt for war, even if neither experiencing an actual or imminent military invasion nor facing a credible threat of one at the moment of their entry. In all, for whatever reason, 17 states decided that it made sense to swap neutrality for belligerency, in the process globalising a fight that at the start had mostly been a regionalised one, the first phase of which so nicely captured by an American critic’s description as a “European adventure in Christian ballistics”.<sup>10</sup>

Among those 17 Johnnies-come-lately, two stand apart because of the impact their joining had on the war’s outcome and, thus, the future shape of the European, and global, balance of power: Italy and the United States. Along with two other original belligerents, Britain and France, these late joiners would be parts of the “Big Four” Powers that rearranged the world at the Paris Peace Conference. Thus, did Italy – and, by inference, possibly the United States – play a hitherto underexplored and very significant part on the road to war for status considerations? Did status anxiety have an impact that to date has somehow gone unnoticed or under-emphasised by those who have investigated the decision to abandon neutrality?

Italy is a case study not because its decision for war could have been more consequential than America’s – although some have made that argument.<sup>11</sup> Rather, as Rome’s decision-making in April 1915 remains less studied than April 1917, this analysis helps fill a “gap” in the scholarly record. Moreover, the Italian case constitutes a potentially useful matrix for assessing the impact of status anxiety on other countries’ decisions for war and, thus, possesses theoretical significance of potential relevance to other late entrants into the struggle. In this context, some theoretical starting points require addressing, as they relate to the debate regarding the war’s diffusion.

When leaders in Rome and the capitals of other late entrants made choices for war over continued neutrality, they could have been in no doubt about the possibly horrendous implications of their decision. Unlike those countries that started fighting in late July-early August 1914, the later joiners had to have been well aware that if their war declarations resulted in actual fighting, they might expect the cost of their decision to be exorbitant. Of course, not all the late entrants figured to do much, if any, fighting.<sup>12</sup> But some intending to wage war faced a price tag for admission to the contest that was decidedly stiffer than any comparable invoice presented to the “charter belligerents” in early August 1914, nearly all of whom gave the impression of believing that the war would be short, not terribly costly in blood and treasure, and, best of all,

victorious.<sup>13</sup> By the time late entrants decided to participate, it was obvious the war had turned into a singularly hideous enterprise with no end in sight.<sup>14</sup>

In determining whether and how the altered emotional setting might have helped “convince” Rome of the necessity of war, cues exist from recent scholarly work into the question of whether different dynamics from ones applicable to going to war at the outset governed decision-making about late entry. Although there is no *a priori* reason for believing such differentiated motivational dynamics do operate, or if they do, to question whether they matter very much, some scholars disagree.<sup>15</sup> They insist on distinguishing the decision-making context facing those at the outset of a conflict from the context(s) extant once the war spread. For those scholars investigating the expansion of fighting in the First World War, there is an extremely important situational distinction to highlight; it inheres in the impact of the slaughter during the first weeks of combat on Europe’s battlefields and the “emotional beliefs” of leaders – and publics – whose countries remained on the sidelines.<sup>16</sup>

The assumption is that leaders of Powers contemplating entering this war had a different affective sense of what lay in store for them, as contrasted with leaders contemplating entering a potential war during July 1914. This is because at its commencement, the war envisioned during the July crisis looked like a traditional “cabinet” war and not the “civilisational” clash into which it would develop.<sup>17</sup> Now, it did not take long for the transformation in the nature of the war to come into full view – in the judgment of one scholar, after only a few weeks of intensely costly open-field combat,

a new bitterness and hatred emerged that no one could have foreseen when the armies marched off to war in the early days of August . . . . Most important [by autumn 1914], a vicious cycle of hatred began based around lurid tales of atrocities that all sides used to fuel an ever more murderous war. These themes, normally associated with the horrors of the period of the “big battles” of 1916, were well in place by the time the kaiser saw the first leaves fall to the ground outside his palace at Potsdam.<sup>18</sup>

Because of this dramatic elevation in the emotional temperature, it is easy to understand why some scholars would wish to postulate that a different calculus operated on the joiners’ decision-making as opposed to that of the original belligerent Powers. The escalation of the war’s horrors aroused passions. For Rome certainly, and perhaps for Washington, this mooted calculus might have had much to do with the passion of status anxiety. As noted above, this concept has garnered much attention of late in IR, even though there is nothing totally novel about the new – or renewed – interest in status; a virtually identical notion is “prestige”, no stranger to the scholarly enquiry of an earlier generation’s practitioners of modern realism.<sup>19</sup>

But with the growing appeal during the middle decades of the Cold War of systemic and rational-choice approaches in IR, status – prestige – considerations became relegated to the margins of IR theory. They remained there until

the ending of the Cold War, when the growth in the popularity of constructivism generated a renewed interest in first- and second-image variables in IR and foreign policy analysis<sup>20</sup> – variables either singly or together heralded as key sites of “agency” in decision-making. But if status anxiety is back in vogue, there nevertheless remains the problem that it is like so many of the central concepts in IR, a tricky one to “operationalise”, being neither possible to quantify nor rendered easily reconcilable with the logic of consequences. Nevertheless, status anxiety is hardly unusual in this regard, and trying to ban it from the conceptual toolbox of theorists of IR and foreign policy would be a fool’s errand. Those analysts who do insist that status considerations possess demonstrable empirical effects, at both the domestic and systemic levels of analysis, appear on a promising, even if somewhat bumpy, path of discovery. They also seem to be growing in number.<sup>21</sup>

The curiosity in these swelling ranks of scholars inclines them to ponder what the quest for status might have to say about the origins of Great Power war or foundations of international order.<sup>22</sup> Interestingly, scholarship on the operational consequences of status anxiety for international and domestic political outcomes is not the monopoly of a single paradigm of IR theory. Realists, constructivists, and liberal-institutionalists all seem able and more than willing to make status anxiety a key component of their explanatory and normative theorising. Nor does war, in either its initiation or spread, constitute the sole object of their theoretical concern, for there are other important “dependent variables” thought linked causally to status anxiety. To take just two salient examples among many, status anxiety has figured in studies on the procurement of nuclear – and even conventional – weaponry, as well as the formation of multilateral coalitions.<sup>23</sup> The list is easily expandable: status anxiety, to reiterate, is widespread throughout the international system and so is scholarly interest in the phenomenon.

But what exactly is “status”, and how might status anxiety be connected causally with decisions to go to war? How can this emotional variable provide explanatory service? These are not easy questions to answer, especially given that status can be, and often is, mixed with such cognate concepts as prestige, reputation, and honour. For starters, status represents a state’s ranking within a social hierarchy, with status anxiety being the corollary emotion bound up in the thought that for some decision-makers, their country supposedly lacks a suitably lofty ranking. Like the American comedian, Rodney Dangerfield, they “get no respect” – or at least, not as much as they believe they should have and are entitled to claim.<sup>24</sup> In some ways, status is similar to power, with both regarded as domestic attributes of the international system’s units – that is, the states that comprise the system – as well as a structural, relational property that tells something important about the very organisation of social hierarchy.<sup>25</sup> Still, there is an important difference to highlight compared with power: status is inherently a socially constructed concept. To put it bluntly, while power can

be, and very frequently is, measured in terms of capabilities, status defies any such “simple” metric.<sup>26</sup> Status might constitute an archetypal social fact given that its value depends on its recognition by other actors.<sup>27</sup>

It follows that as a state property, status comprises two distinct components. The first relates to the physical and symbolic markers constituting a state’s postulated standing in the social hierarchy; the second is a function of recognition by the other members of that community – in other words, the status attributed to a Power by a reference group of significant others, which for Great Powers means peer competitors.<sup>28</sup> This leads in turn to three main features of status: it is positional, understood as relative to others; it is perceptual, its ultimate base found more in the realm of beliefs than of material factors; and it is social, because the eventual definition of a state’s status depends on the collective belief of its comparator group.<sup>29</sup>

Quite simply, status is what states make of it<sup>30</sup>; as a result, it is tempting to think that no one could operationalise the concept. Temptation notwithstanding, numerous scholars have sought empirically to gauge this elusive concept, especially when it features in their analyses as a causal variable. Some, for instance, understand diplomatic exchange and representation to be useful tokens of status – Canada’s bid for a symbolically valuable Security Council seat.<sup>31</sup> Others emphasise less symbolic representations and more what is revealed in the historiographical record, meaning a search for decision-makers’ statements that can, inductively, support the claim that status anxiety has played an important part in policy choices – in this case, choosing to join a war already in progress. Comparative historiographical analysis reveals that not much work on this genre has characterised enquiries in recent decades into the Italian – and by implication, American – war-joining decisions.

Before turning to April 1915, a few more preliminary observations are in order. First, and to amplify a comment made in the preceding paragraph, the vast corpus of IR theoretical studies into postulated causal linkages between status anxiety and conflict has accorded scant attention to Italy. This is unsurprising given that this scholarship, at least to the extent animated by power-transition theory, often aims at comprehending the behaviour of “rising” Powers within the setting of power transition.<sup>32</sup> And, for good measure, those scholars naturally turn their attention to studying the way(s) in which status anxiety might be said to influence the decision-making of the “Great Powers”.<sup>33</sup> In respect to both points, Italy is something of an outlier. It may have been among the Great Powers in 1915 – this analysis holds that it was – but if so, it had barely squeezed its way into this cohort, being routinely and correctly thought of at the time as hobbled by “some stupendous weaknesses”.<sup>34</sup> As well and partially related to these weaknesses, Italy was not exactly a “rising” Power before 1914. Quite apart from thinking about Italy in connexion with status anxiety, there is the epistemological matter of thinking about “decision-making” in general – that of any country, not just Italy’s.



Although Italy technically “entered” the First World War on 24 May 1915, its decision to do so effectively came late the previous month with its 26 April signature of the Treaty of London, pledging it to join combat alongside France, Britain, and Russia within 30 days. The idea of going to war against Austria-Hungary had stronger support among some segments of the population than the cognate thought of fighting Germany. Pro-war, and anti-Habsburg, nationalist rallies punctuated a tense period of Italian history known as the “radiant days” of May – *radiose giornate*.<sup>35</sup> Those days provided the backdrop to a cabinet crisis that led the prime minister, Antonio Salandra, to tender his resignation on 13 May. King Vittorio Emanuele III did not accept Salandra’s resignation, vowing to abdicate and plunge the country into a constitutional crisis should the prime minister quit.<sup>36</sup> Eventually, despite confirming the decision to intervene, a majority of the Members of Parliament were unconvinced it was a wise one. Leading the anti-war faction was Giovanni Giolitti, the most prominent personality in Italian politics, but even his enormous, albeit declining, political influence was insufficient to keep the country neutral.

Far from uniting Italy, the intervention decision threatened to tear it apart, given that at the best of times since its 1861 unification, the country had not shown itself to be a paragon of national unity. Following the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in Sarajevo on 28 June 1914, Italy entered the worst of times, wracked by political and socio-economic turbulence.<sup>37</sup> Only recently – in fact, the year before – had Italian parliamentary elections first occurred through universal manhood suffrage; inevitably, this reform produced a more fragmented chamber and thus weaker government than heretofore the norm. Several months before the Sarajevo assassination, in March 1914, Giolitti had resigned as premier following widespread unrest that showed no signs of abating but rather continued to mount, culminating in the “Red Week” of early June. This atmosphere of rising popular discontent was hardly an opportune moment for Italy to contemplate going to war, and thus the decision to remain on the sidelines when the fighting commenced by early August seemed so expressive of common sense as to have “made” itself – the last thing the country needed at that juncture was an additional source of upset.

One impact of the societal upheaval was to give the impression that public opinion was bound in the future to matter more than ever before in foreign policy decision-making. The growing strength of *vox populi*, or so it was believed, had begun to be glimpsed a decade previously, stimulated by both the 1907–1908 economic recession and Austria-Hungary’s unwillingness to mollify Rome with compensation that it thought its due for acquiescing in Vienna’s annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908. A result of refusing compensation was the reawakening in many Italian breasts of the “hatred of Austria”,<sup>38</sup> among whose primary manifestations was an uptick in irredentist sentiment in lands ruled by Vienna but claimed or desired by Rome.



Since Italy and Austria-Hungary were nominal allies at this time, it is less than shocking to discover that when the war began, Rome felt absolutely no guilt over failing to support its putative partners. Even had it wished to join its Central Power allies, a newly energised public opinion would almost certainly have prevented doing so. At least, this is the conclusion of scholars who have studied the neutrality decision and argue that the “influence of domestic politics on foreign policy [was] predominant” in August 1914.<sup>39</sup> Pro-neutrality voices emerged loudly from all quarters. The press was solidly anti-war, as was the Church; parliament might have been less univocal but, even there, Giolitti’s faction held nearly two-thirds of the seats, and he was the most prominent neutrality advocate. Socialist opinion unsurprisingly remained strenuously anti-war out of convictions that fighting only served the interests of the nefarious capitalists. In sum, so strong was the nationwide consensus that when in early August the king proclaimed Italian neutrality, hardly anyone dissented.

Still, in less than a year, Italy would be at war, only not on the side of its Austro-German allies. How to account for this development? Had public opinion, hitherto so anti-war, suddenly shifted in a martial direction? If so, why did it do so in light of what everyone by early 1915 had to have known about the increasingly ghastly nature of this war? Or was the decision to join the fighting made with little concern for public opinion? Was that decision motivated by considerations of status anxiety? To begin answering these questions, it is necessary to examine what scholars have written about the decision-making context during the nine months that separated Rome’s initial neutrality from its eventual belligerency.<sup>40</sup> Since the causal significance of status anxiety on the part of leaders is crucial, canvassing alternative explanations, beginning with public opinion, is telling.

It is hard to imagine why public opinion, so resolutely neutralist in August 1914, should convert to intervention nine months later. Admittedly, there had been clusters of anti-Austro-Hungarian nationalists who made no secret of their desire for Italy to enter the war against its quondam ally, but these were hardly decisive forces. As well, to some extent, British and French propaganda between August 1914 and April 1915 succeeded in presenting the Central Powers in an increasingly negative light to Italian public opinion.<sup>41</sup> Nevertheless, opinion remained in spring 1915 what it had been in summer 1914: solidly supportive of neutrality.<sup>42</sup> If anything, it had become even more neutralist because of growing socio-economic distress associated with the first months of combat in Europe. The disruption in trade led to shortages of grain and raw materials such as coal, which resulted in declining industrial output, growing unemployment, soaring inflation, and the onset of food shortages. All heightened the country’s degree of political tension and carried the increased risk of a destabilised monarchy.

Therefore, what happened to enable, if not impel, Italy to go to war against its recent allies? Here, scholars remain divided. Some stress second-image – domestic – economic rationales as being uppermost in guiding policy-makers in Rome during the run-up to the April 1915 decision. Others spotlight third-image factors associated with the European balance of power. Clearly, the pressure of domestic economic interests helped lead Italy into the war. Arguments for intervention because of economic necessity have emphasised the dependence of certain key industrial sectors for producing war *matériel* by – anachronistically, and with apologies to Dwight Eisenhower – Italy’s “military-industrial complex”.<sup>43</sup> Those inclined to argue in this manner draw attention to the need for markets for war-related goods tumbling off the assembly lines of factories owned by the Agnelli family, whose Turin-based Fiat supplied Italy’s Army with vehicles and ordnance. Joining the Agnellis was the Perrone brothers’ Genoa shipbuilding enterprise, Ansaldo, which supplied not only Italy’s Navy but also its Army, for whom it produced the “Lancia I.Z”. armoured vehicle and other kit.

Similar arguments exist about America’s subsequent road to war to the effect that “big business” dominated decision-making in April 1917.<sup>44</sup> In Italy’s case, a forceful argument interprets the decision for intervention as having been a consequence of the dictates of the country’s “industrial imperialism”.<sup>45</sup> Hence, Italy’s intervention was the logical culmination of a pro-war agenda promoted by a powerful coalition of political and economic domestic elites. The war, then, was an opportunity waiting for exploitation, and the coalition seized the moment to do so. Survival of Italy’s heavy industries required nothing short of a foreign policy of imperialism, which after 1914 meant a policy of interventionism: “Italy’s foreign policy from 1911 to 1915, however subject it may have been to considerations of military and diplomatic balance, admirably fitted the interests and alliance of her industries, especially the heavy industries most dependent on the state”.<sup>46</sup>

Some scholars have stressed a supplementary economic sector as instrumental in generating support for entering the war: rich landowners in the Po valley seeking to protect their economic interests from socialists and peasant unions and sensing that entry into the war would somehow resolve their problems.<sup>47</sup> Certainly, one cannot discount the possibility of domestic economic elites decisively influencing the April 1915 decision; at the same time, however, the economic interpretation suffers from two shortcomings. The first relates to an absence of compelling evidence to substantiate that the economic elites did heft the labouring oar in decision-making pertaining to war and peace; in the delicately phrased judgment of one critic, an economic interpretation forcefully “pushes [the] evidence further than can be justified”.<sup>48</sup> The second problem is graver, stemming not so much from the absence of evidence to sustain the economic interpretation but from the lack of logical coherence, since the structural condition of Italy’s economy should have, all

things being equal, dictated continued neutrality instead of intervention. Italy needed to preserve good relations with its two major trading partners, Germany and Britain, and neutrality was the only way to square that circle.<sup>49</sup>

Overall, it is hard to escape the conclusion that if left to Italy's commercial and financial elites, there would have been no decision to intervene in April 1915. It is easy, even at the remove of more than a century, to grasp that choosing neutrality might have had a sound economic basis, but it remains difficult to detect any such basis in the choice for intervention. For example, "industry was not ready for a sustained war effort" in spring 1915, which corresponds with Giolitti's conviction that "intervention would ruin the nation's economy".<sup>50</sup> Understanding the decision taken in April 1915 requires looking beyond the condition of the Italian economy and shifting from the second to the third image. Specifically, did something about the structure of the European balance of power endow it with a major presence in Italian decision-making?

The first consideration is Italy's alliance "bonds" when the war broke out. A common thought is that states are prone, eventually, to side with allies who started a war either because they are somehow "treaty bound" to do so or they happen to share relevant security interests that compel them to want to do so.<sup>51</sup> Either way, allies are "dragged" by their security partners into a conflict not of their making. If this is indeed the rule, then Italy is the exception that proves it. Germany and Austria-Hungary alleged that Italian neutrality in August 1914 flew in the face of Triple Alliance obligations; and for good measure, it would be hard to argue seriously that Italy had common security interests with its allies.

In the case of treaty obligations, Italian decision-making in the First World War often sees a charge of "betrayal" levelled. The charge draws its sustenance from Italian behaviour at three critical junctures. The first is 2 August 1914 when Rome declared its neutrality, not only "abandoning" its allies, but worse, enabling France to redeploy troops freed from its border with Italy to re-enforce its defences at the Battle of the Marne. The two other key dates were 3 March and 3 May 1915, respectively the days marking the onset of secret negotiations with the Entente Powers and renouncing the country's membership in the Triple Alliance. For this, its erstwhile allies condemned Italy for siding "with the enemy" and contributing to their final defeat. For good measure, Italian behaviour seems to have contradicted the related idea that treaty obligations aside, common security interests should have resulted in Italy continuing to cleave to the Central Powers.

In addressing these two related arguments, it needs remembering that the Triple Alliance was a defensive pact. Austria-Hungary would give military assistance to Italy and Germany in case of French aggression – Article 2; each Power would give military assistance to any of the parties in case of aggression by two or more other Powers – Article 3; and to observe "benevolent

neutrality” in case a single third Power attacked any of the signatories – Article 4. Moreover, the parties pledged to undertake mutual consultation on potential military measures to adopt in case of a threat to their security – Article 5. In light of these stipulations, Italian neutrality should have surprised no one, ally or not. In early August 1914, Salandra made clear that Italy understood the situation as constituting no *casus foederis* – Germany and Austria-Hungary were aggressors – thus, Italy had no obligation to provide military assistance to Austria-Hungary. Not only this, Salandra insisted that Vienna had violated the terms of the alliance through failure to consult Rome before sending its ultimatum to Serbia. Nor had Austria-Hungary offered Italy any territorial compensation after attacking Serbia, notwithstanding Article 7 of the alliance mandating, “neither Italy nor Austria could make temporary or permanent territorial gains in the Balkans without prior mutual consultation and agreement. And the partner obtaining the advantage was obligated to provide the other with proportionate territorial compensation”.<sup>52</sup>

Why did Austria-Hungary flout its obligations to the Italian ally? Some answers suggest themselves. Perhaps Vienna suspected that Rome would pass along to St Petersburg whatever it happened to find out about the ultimatum. If so, it would be best to let Rome know nothing at all.<sup>53</sup> Perhaps Vienna worried that any territorial compensations proffered to Italy might trigger similar claims by Romania. Whatever the answer, Austria-Hungary scarcely imagined itself in need of any Italian military aid against Serbia. For whatever reasons, Austria-Hungary chose not to utilise the Triple Alliance and, on this basis, Italy justified its choice of neutrality.

Given that the parties’ Triple Alliance obligations varied in accordance with the number of belligerents, treaty commitments depended in no small measure on the structural nature of whatever conflict – bilateral or multilateral – which is to say, they depended on whether a war was a localised or generalised one. This is the background for assessing the April 1915 decision. Perhaps, when Italy’s foreign minister, Sidney Sonnino, decided in early March 1915 to advocate Italy’s possible intervention on the Entente side, he was being “disloyal” to the country’s Austrian-Hungarian ally.<sup>54</sup> However, when he was making his calculation, the war had metamorphosed into a generalised conflict, leading him to argue the Triple Alliance was no longer relevant as Austria-Hungary and Germany had acted as aggressors and, according to a protocol attached to the treaty, the Triple Alliance was not directed against Britain.

Of course, and irrespective of what the treaty may or may not have stipulated, Italy could always have chosen to side with the Central Powers had it deemed that the defence of its vital interests required it so to do.<sup>55</sup> Nonetheless, the treaty had long since ceased to be much in harmony with the changing Italian assessment of those interests. It had instead become a liability given Austro-Hungarian policies towards irredentist movements,

including those in the Balkans. This is why compensation came to occupy Italy's core position when the war broke out. As late as 24 July 1914, neither Salandra nor San Giuliano had ruled out the prospect of Italy's siding with the Central Powers, but they insisted that Rome needed to "know" beforehand whether its allies were on the same page when interpreting Article 7.<sup>56</sup>

Evidently, they were not. Thus, on 3 May 1915, San Giuliano's successor, Sonnino, made known publically what had been decided secretly a week or so earlier in London – Italy would renounce its membership in the Triple Alliance. In retrospect, Italy focussed on territorial compensation even before the war started; compensation was and would remain an important interest. But was it an interest so "vital" that Italy would go to war to secure it? Part of the answer relates to the role of public opinion in the decisions pertaining to war and peace. If third-image variables linked to the European balance of power and Italy's participation in alliances did not impel the country to war, does it leave a second-image default solution to the policy puzzle? Alternatively, were there some strong first-image considerations derivative of status anxiety that account for April 1915 better than the second-image explanations surveyed so far?

Before embarking on that first-image exploration, some final commentary is necessary regarding the issue of territorial compensations: so-called unredeemed lands, territories under foreign control over which Italy claimed sovereignty because of either demography, language, or historical ties – or a combination of the three. These territories were the Trentino, Gorica, Trieste, Istria, and Dalmatia. The Italians "had disputes with Paris as well as with Vienna, but the fate of the 800,000 Italian speakers under Austrian rule . . . in the Trentino and round Trieste was primary for them".<sup>57</sup> Who would deny that the disputes over the *terre irredente* constituted the necessary "causes" of the April 1915 decision?<sup>58</sup> From those disputes, it is an easy analytical jump to invoke nationalism as the cause of intervention. If true, it would turn out that the decision-making logic surrounding the war's diffusion – at least in Italy's case – was identical to the logic attending the decision-making of the charter belligerents. And if it is true that nationalism proved the major driver of Italian foreign policy and therefore the chief cause of the country's intervention in the First World War, then, as some have said, that conflict could represent the fourth, and last, of the country's wars of independence, completing its political unification.<sup>59</sup>

Alas, for two reasons matters are not so clear-cut. First, as demonstrated above, public opinion that should have manifested itself as both the vector for and legitimization of nationalism as the "cause" of intervention fails the test dramatically. Again, the public was strongly anti-interventionist in both August 1914 and April 1915. Secondly, and no less important, nationalism was not the "cause" of the First World War. It did, it is true, bear more heavily on the decision-making of the late joiners than on that of the charter

belligerents; but even for those countries that intervened while the war was in progress, “nationalism”, as an important causal variable, would have to have revealed itself in and through public opinion. In this examination, it has been impossible to detect the determinative power of public opinion on the decision to go to war. Nor should the so-called impulsion of nationalist public opinion be a predominant element in Italy’s decision for the very good reason that by the time of making the decision, Austria-Hungary was showing itself disposed to accede to almost all of Italy’s territorial requests.

So, why did Italy enter the war? To answer this question, there needs to be a focus on first-image components of decision-making, especially as status anxiety might have propelled them. It is a commonplace that Italy chose to side with the Entente because the British and French promised Italy more benefits than did the Triple Alliance.<sup>60</sup> In reality, however, the territorial offers made by Austria-Hungary and Germany became more than favourable to Italy, especially when weighed against the horrific prospect of fighting a bloody, expensive, and protracted war. Just as Italy decided to support the Entente, the final Central Power offer was generous: it included the Trentino; the right bank of the Isonzo River wherever inhabited by Italians; the establishment of Trieste as a free city; the Albanian city of Valona; and some other inducements.<sup>61</sup>

In a famous letter published by *La Tribuna* in January 1915, Giolitti observed, “[i]t could be, and would not seem unlikely, that, under the current conditions of Europe, quite a lot could be achieved without a war”.<sup>62</sup> He had met with the king many times during those fateful months separating neutrality from intervention; he even talked to him a week after the signing of the London treaty. Giolitti again explained the reasons for his firm opposition to entering the conflict, only to fail again to sway the king’s judgment; by this time Austria-Hungary proffered the new and more favourable concessions mentioned above. The king confessed to Giolitti that he felt personally committed to the recently concluded London agreement.<sup>63</sup>

Italy’s entry into the war was not a topic much discussed by its parliamentarians. How could it have been when only three people knew about the secret negotiations leading to the final signing of the London treaty: Salandra, Sonnino, and the king? Their historic decision came behind closed doors and reflected entirely the personal perspectives of the two leading members of the executive, closely working with the monarch. The preferences of this tiny group were leagues away from those of the common people represented through public opinion and, even more surprisingly, perhaps, these preferences betrayed hardly any understanding of military realities.

In light of the above, what possible justification could there be for the country entering the war with all its risks, horrors, and costs? In an apt summary, the “final decision was the result of a combination of calculation and guesswork in which domestic policy issues played only a secondary



role”.<sup>64</sup> But this analysis highlights the first-image variables associated with the king and other key actors in the executive, with motivations derivative of status anxiety at the centre of the puzzle of Italy’s risking so much when, objectively, it had so little to gain from abandoning neutrality. It is not that those scholars who pondered the intervention decision had never before broached status anxiety. It is just that those earlier accounts tended to get written off by subsequent generations of analysts smitten with the more sophisticated explanatory offerings of the second and third images, a tendency on display by all students of foreign policy not just in Italy.<sup>65</sup>

Consider the assessment of the intervention decision found in the memoirs of Italy’s minister for the colonies. In recollecting a conversation with the king, Ferdinando Martini offered a brilliant positional rendering of status anxiety on which it would be difficult to improve: “I do not understand”, the king said, “how we can possibly hope for a victory of the Central Powers. Austria itself is already a vassal of Germany. If the Triple Entente is to triumph, we would have to deal with three Powers, and we shall have some room for manoeuvre. If the Central Powers are to win, we would be subjected to German rule”.<sup>66</sup> Vittorio Emanuele, therefore, feared that a Triple Alliance victory would create a single centre of power in Europe, Germany, and this despite Italy having joined the war against the Entente. Conversely, he believed that Allied victory would create three separate centres of European power: Great Britain, France, and Italy.<sup>67</sup> In this event, Italy would have made it beyond cavil into the exclusive club of top-tier Great Powers – with all the benefits expected from such membership – at the expense of the Central Powers.

Regarding the king, additional considerations entered into his decision in opposition to both his own parliament and Italian public opinion. First, he sincerely believed Italy had to be successfully involved in the war effort to keep alive the military and historical tradition of the House of Savoy. Prior to April 1915, the only real war in which the Kingdom of Italy had been involved since its establishment had been the minor – from Rome’s perspective – Libyan war against the Ottoman Empire in 1911. Considering his options in 1915, Vittorio Emanuele is said to have remarked, “the House of Savoy has been trying to take up the challenge for centuries; in 1915 there were the favourable circumstances for war and I could not have found better ones”.<sup>68</sup>

Second, the king possessed an abiding personal antipathy towards both Franz Joseph of Austria-Hungary and Wilhelm II of Germany. This dynastic bad blood had a lengthy history and by now had become both mutual and personal. Franz Joseph had not returned an 1881 visit made to Vienna by Umberto I, Vittorio Emanuele III’s father. In consequence, the latter made a point of deliberately avoiding a stop in Austria-Hungary during his first royal tour of Europe in 1902.<sup>69</sup> In addition, the condescending and often deprecatory attitude of the German kaiser towards the physically diminutive Italian monarch had long poisoned relations between the two rulers.<sup>70</sup> In Vittorio



Emanuele, therefore, personal feelings and status considerations mixed: he was the heir of the longest ruling dynasty in Europe and sovereign of a country “of a certain weight in the European concert”.<sup>71</sup> The gamble he took in April 1915, therefore, while close to shocking if assessed in the cool light of rational-action assumptions, looks otherwise when gauged as a function of the emotional heat generated by status anxiety.

It is impossible to overstate Vittorio Emanuele’s influence on Italy’s decision to enter the First World War. Without his support, or without at the very least his conscious assent, Italy would have certainly stayed out of the conflict. His refusal to accept Salandra’s resignation on 16 May 1915 was the most compelling indication that he intended to pursue entry into the war even against parliamentary will.<sup>72</sup> Clearly, the king’s conduct on this occasion lacked “constitutional” merit by any modern understanding, but it was consistent with the way that the Italian government had conducted its affairs during the early twentieth century. Although officially a constitutional monarch, the king was able to take a highly personal line on foreign policy development, based on a literal interpretation of Article 5 of the Albertine Statute, which formed the constitution of the Kingdom of Sardinia when first enacted into law prior to its later adoption as the Kingdom of Italy’s constitution. According to this article, “Executive power is reserved to the King alone. He is the supreme head of the state; he commands all the armed forces on land and sea; he declares war, makes treaties of peace, of alliance, of commerce, and of other kinds, giving notice of them to the Parliamentary Chambers if the interest and security of the state allow, and accompanying such notice with opportune explanation”.<sup>73</sup>

This analysis makes two claims. First, Italy’s decision to enter the First World War came from a tiny group in the country’s “executive”, primarily Vittorio Emanuele. Second, he and his close advisors acted in large measure because they sensed that throwing in with the Entente Powers – instead of remaining neutral – could best enhance Italian status. On a speculative note, what about America’s decision for war, which followed two Aprils later?

On the face of it, an implicit comparison between Italy and the United States might seem absurd, perhaps even provocative, as stark differences existed in the two countries’ objective geopolitical circumstances. One was a European state with visions of playing a role as one of the Old Continent’s Great Powers; the other a New World state that long made it the cardinal principle of its grand strategy to stay out of European power politics and keep Europe out of those of the American system. There was a no less considerable chasm between their respective constitutional structures. America’s founding fathers made it their purpose to erect, through the “separation of powers”, a system of checks and balances – especially when it came to foreign affairs – that would constitute a “permanent invitation to struggle” over the crafting of policy.<sup>74</sup>

And, yet, a close look at America's war decision reveals some surprising commonalities with the Italian one. Admittedly, United States entry into the fighting came from a Congressional declaration of war, with legislative approval obtained a few days after President Woodrow Wilson asked for such action on 2 April 1917. The Senate resolution passed by a vote of 82–6, and the subsequent House one by 373–50. Although the outcome was not close, it is not really evidence of a nationwide bloodlust, for not since 1812 had either house of Congress evinced as much opposition to a war resolution.<sup>75</sup> What this suggests is that the American public and legislators, acquiescing in the decision to go to war, were not its driving forces. Had not Wilson narrowly won re-election just five months earlier in a campaign with a memorable slogan, “he kept us out of war”?<sup>76</sup> In so doing, he defeated a Republican rival, Charles Evans Hughes, who did his utmost to convince the electorate that he, too, was committed to staying out of the conflict.<sup>77</sup>

Constitutional differences between Italy and America aside, one similarity bears emphasising: in both countries, a very small number of individuals decided the question of war or peace. In fact, respecting the American decision, there was a single individual, Wilson, whereas the Italian decision was largely the work of Salandra, Sonnino, and Vittorio Emanuele – the king having the most decisive voice. It is not without reason that in America, the First World War once had the name “Mr. Wilson's war”, an epithet borrowed from a famous book examining that era.<sup>78</sup> In this respect, another writer put it best in commenting, “Unlike Washington, Wilson would never have tolerated a Hamilton . . . . Wilson's isolation was unparalleled among American presidents”. So unparalleled was the outsized role of the president in the decision-making regarding intervention, the “story of America's journey from neutrality to war to a failed peace is largely the story of Woodrow Wilson's journey from neutrality to war to a failed peace”.<sup>79</sup>

Did Wilson take his country into war for reasons related to status anxiety? On the vexing question of American intervention, there has been a deluge of scholarship over the past century with little end in sight. Although a recitation of these sources is beyond this analysis, one salient aspect of Wilsonian decision-making that speaks to status anxiety is the contention made by several scholars over time that the president's most important desideratum in deciding on war was to position America better for shaping the peace. According to this thesis – admittedly, “status anxiety” linked to IR debates were still long in the future – Wilson wanted America in the fighting because he understood that the country's standing in the eyes of its Great Power peers – its status – would suffer were neutrality maintained. To “make” the peace, Wilson knew he had to make war.<sup>80</sup>

Obviously, the notion that America joined the war to obtain the status Wilson believed it deserved is but one of many explanations for the intervention decision. Those contrasting explanations range over the entire

level-of-analysis scaffolding erected above for Italian decision-making leading to April 1915. According to this corpus of scholarship, America intervened because its economic interests dictated war; or because its physical security interests demanded war; or its honour did; or, to some, its president was woefully misguided for reasons of psychological imbalance. On the question of April 1917, it truly is a historiographical “Alice’s Restaurant”, where in the words of the Arlo Guthrie song, “you can get anything you want”.

The status-anxiety angle is well worth exploring in future research, even more so because the question of America’s overall “power” in that era’s international system is nothing if not unresolved.<sup>81</sup> It is easy to show that America’s GDP had become the world’s largest in the decades following the Civil War. It is far more difficult to demonstrate that Wilson thought he possessed the means of dictating the peace, and therefore the future structure of the international balance of power, short of America entering the war and becoming the determinative factor in its ending. For Vittorio Emanuele, going to war on the Entente side was a necessary condition for enhancing Italy’s status in the balance of power, which is another way of saying that it was a means of resolving his – and therefore, Italy’s – status anxiety. For Wilson, going to war as an Entente ally was a necessary condition for achieving his goal of eliminating the balance of power through collective security. That was not his goal when war broke out in August 1914, but it certainly became one with the unfolding of the War’s myriad horrors.

## Notes

- 1 For instance, Neta C. Crawford, “The Passion of World Politics: Propositions on Emotion and Emotional Relationships,” *International Security* 24, no. 4 (2000): 116–56; Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison, “Fear No More: Emotions and World Politics,” *Review of International Studies* 34, no. S1 (2008): 115–35; Jean-Marc Coicaud, “Emotions and Passions in the Discipline of International Relations,” *Japanese Journal of Political Science* 15, no. 3 (2014): 485–513. Cf. especially, Todd H. Hall, *Emotional Diplomacy: Official Emotion on the International Stage* (Ithaca, NY, 2016).
- 2 Analysts divide about why Canada made such an effort to gain this seat, with some stressing status anxiety born of a societal need for collective “valorisation”, whilst others regard it as merely an operational ploy intended to enhance the Trudeau government’s position *vis-à-vis* the domestic political opposition. See, respectively, Andrew Coyne, “Losing the Security Council Vote is Not the End of the World”, *Globe and Mail* (20 June 2020), O2; Editorial, “Why Did We Want a UN Seat, Anyway?”, *Ibid.*, A10. (19 June 2020).
- 3 Deborah Welch Larson and Alexei Shevchenko, *Quest for Status: Chinese and Russian Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT, 2019).
- 4 See Graham Allison, *Destined for War: Can America and China Escape Thucydides’s Trap?* (Boston, MA, 2017).

- 5 See, especially, Jonathan Renshon, *Fighting for Status: Hierarchy and Conflict in World Politics* (Princeton, NJ, 2017). Nor do only power-transition theorists make this connexion; also see Michelle K. Murray, *The Struggle for Recognition in International Relations: Status, Revisionism, and Rising Powers* (NY, 2019); Tudor A. Onea, "Between Dominance and Decline: Status Anxiety and Great Power Rivalry," *Review of International Studies* 40, no. 1 (2014): 125–52.
- 6 On the historiography of the war's contested causes, see John W. Langdon, *July 1914: The Long Debate, 1918–1990* (Oxford, 1991); Hew Strachan, *The Outbreak of the First World War* (Oxford, 2004); Thomas G. Otte, *July Crisis: The World's Descent into War, Summer 1914* (Cambridge, 2014); Annika Mombauer, "The Fischer Controversy, Documents, and the 'Truth' about the Origins of the First World War," *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 2 (2013): 290–314; John C.G. Röhl, "Goodbye to All That (Again)? The Fischer Thesis, the New Revisionism and the Meaning of the First World War," *International Affairs* 91, no. 1 (2015): 153–66. For the manner in which the war-origins controversy might be said to contribute to IR theory, see Keir A. Lieber, "The New History of World War I and What It Means for International Relations Theory," *International Security* 32, no. 2 (2007): 155–91; Richard Ned Lebow, "What Can International Relations Theory Learn from the Origins of World War I?" *International Relations* 28, no. 4 (2014): 387–410; and Dale C. Copeland, "International Relations Theory and the Three Great Puzzles of the First World War," in *The Outbreak of the First World War: Structure, Politics, and Decision-Making*, eds. Jack S. Levy and John A. Vasquez, (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 167–98.
- 7 Unlike the "guns of August", it took a while for those of April to begin barking in earnest, the Italians' only starting to do so by late June 1915 and the Americans' not really until summer 1918. We borrow the trope from Barbara W. Tuchman, *The Guns of August* (NY, 1962).
- 8 Richard Ned Lebow, *Archduke Franz Ferdinand Lives! A World Without World War I* (NY, 2014), 3.
- 9 This argument has been made, in the case of the United States, for many decades; recent examples, on both the left and the right, include Michael Kazin, *War against War: The American Fight for Peace, 1914–1918* (NY, 2017); Walter A. McDougall, "The Madness of Saint Woodrow: Or, What If the United States Had Stayed out of the Great War?" *Law & Liberty Forum*, October 2, 2017. <https://lawliberty.org/forum/the-madness-of-saint-woodrow-or-what-if-the-united-states-had-stayed-out-of-the-great-war/>.
- 10 Quoted in Warren I. Cohen, *The American Revisionists: The Lessons of Intervention in World War I* (Chicago, 1967), 99. On the war's diffusion, see Robert Gerwarth and Erez Manela, "The Great War as a Global War: Imperial Conflict and the Reconfiguration of World Order, 1911–1923," *Diplomatic History* 38, no. 4 (2014): 786–800.
- 11 Éric Zemmour, *Destin français* (Paris, 2018), 454–55, claims that Italy's part in the defeat of the Central Powers was far greater than that of the United States, citing its victory over the Austro-Hungarians at the battle of Vittorio Veneto as the most important contribution made by any French ally to the war effort. André Kaspi, *Le Temps des Américains: Le concours américain à la France en 1917–1918* (Paris, 1976) offers a less heterodox French account. Also see, for balanced assessments, John Gooch, *The Italian Army and the First World War* (Cambridge, 2014); and Vanda Wilcox, *Morale and the Italian Army during the First World War* (Cambridge, 2016).
- 12 While seven of the eight Latin American countries that "went off" to war – Costa Rica, Cuba, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Nicaragua, and Panama – only the eighth, Brazil, engaged in combat; see Roderick Barman, "Brazil in the First World War," *History Today* 64, no. 5 (2014): 23–27.

- 13 Frank Furedi, *First World War: Still No End in Sight* (London, 2013), 1–2.
- 14 Japan was the first to “diffuse”, entering the war on 23 August 1914, early enough to be an exception to this generalisation; see Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, MA, 1999).
- 15 Arguing the case for no basal separation in decision-making logics is Jack S. Levy, “The Initiation and Spread of the First World War: Interdependent Decisions,” *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7, no. 2 (2011): 183–88. The dissenting position is advanced in John A. Vasquez, Paul F. Diehl, Colin Flint, and Jürgen Scheffran, “Forum on the Spread of War, 1914–1917: A Dialogue between Political Scientists and Historians,” *Ibid.*, 139–41; as well as Vasquez et al., “The ConflictSpace of Cataclysm: The International System and the Spread of War 1914–1917,” *Ibid.*, 143–68.
- 16 For this concept, implying the twinning rather than separation of emotion and “rationality”, see Jonathan Mercer, “Emotional Beliefs,” *International Organization* 64, no. 1 (2010): 1–31; Rose McDermott, “The Feeling of Rationality: The Meaning of Neuroscientific Advances for Political Science,” *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (2004): 691–706.
- 17 Jeffrey Verhey, *The Spirit of 1914: Militarism, Myth and Mobilisation in Germany* (Cambridge, 2000).
- 18 Michael S. Neiberg, *Dance of the Furies: Europe and the Outbreak of World War I* (Cambridge, MA, 2011), 152, 179–80. Also see Eric J. Leed, *No Man’s Land: Combat & Identity in World War I* (Cambridge, 1979). In the war’s first dozen weeks, France suffered nearly three times as many casualties – 329,000 – as it would at the height of the struggle for Verdun between February and April 1916–111,000. Moreover, its casualties in those 12 weeks were far greater than the 143,000 sustained in its April–June 1915 Artois offensive, as well as the very costly battles of June to August 1918–157,000. Germany’s battlefield losses in August–September 1914 exceeded those of France. Alan Kramer, *Dynamic of Destruction: Culture and Mass Killing in the First World War* (Oxford, 2007), 34, noted “[c]ontrary to received wisdom, it was not trench warfare, but the mobile warfare of the first three months, which was most destructive of lives”.
- 19 See, for instance, Hans Morgenthau, *Politics among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace* (NY, 1948); Robert Gilpin, *War and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, 1981); and Jonathan Mercer, “The Illusion of International Prestige,” *International Security* 41, no. 4 (2017): 133–68.
- 20 The reference here is to the levels of analysis, or “images”, presented in Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State, and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (NY, 1959).
- 21 Thomas Volgy, Renato Corbetta, Keith Grant, and Ryan Baird, “Major Power Status in International Politics,” in *Major Powers and the Quest for Status in International Politics*, eds. idem (NY, 2011), 1–26.
- 22 See Richard Ned Lebow, *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* (NY, 2008); William C. Wohlforth, “Unipolarity, Status Competition, and Great Power War,” *World Politics* 61, no. 1 (2009): 28–57; T.V. Paul, Deborah Welch Larson, and William C. Wohlforth, “Status and World Order,” in *Status in World Politics*, eds. idem (Cambridge, 2014), 3–29.
- 23 Barry O’Neill, “Nuclear Weapons and National Prestige” (Discussion Paper Number 1560, Cowles Foundation, 2006) <http://cowles.yale.edu/sites/default/files/files/pub/d15/d1560.pdf>; Scott D. Sagan, “Why Do States Build Nuclear Weapons? Three Models in Search of a Bomb,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (1996/1997): 54–86; Dana P. Eyre and Mark C. Suchman, “Status, Norms, and the Proliferation of Conventional Weapons,” in *The Culture of National Security*, ed. Peter J. Katzenstein (NY, 1996), 79–113; Lilach Gilady, *The Price of Prestige: Conspicuous Consumption in International Relations*

- (Chicago, IL, 2018); Lorenzo Cladi and Andrea Locatelli, "Why Did Italy Contribute to UNIFIL II? An Analytical Eclectic Analysis," *Italian Political Science Review* 49, no. 1 (2019): 85–97.
- 24 See Allan Dafoe, Jonathan Renshon, and Paul Huth, "Reputation and Status as Motives for War," *Annual Review of Political Science* 17 (2014): 371–93.
  - 25 See David A. Lake, *Hierarchy in International Relations* (Ithaca, NY, 2009); Marina G. Duque, "Recognizing International Status: A Relational Approach," *International Studies Quarterly* 62, no. 3 (2018): 577–92.
  - 26 Quotation marks surround the adjective, for it really is not a simple task to take an accurate measure of relative capability – that is, power – a point argued most persuasively in Carsten Rauch, "Challenging the Power Consensus: GDP, CINC, and Power Transition Theory," *Security Studies* 26, no. 4 (2017): 642–64.
  - 27 See Steven Ward, "Lost in Translation: Social Identity Theory and the Study of Status in World Politics," *International Studies Quarterly* 61, no. 4 (2017): 821–34.
  - 28 See Steven Ward, "Logics of Stratified Identity Management in World Politics," *International Theory* 11, no. 2 (2019): 211–38.
  - 29 Renshon, *Fighting for Status*, 21–24, 35–36.
  - 30 The literal allusion here is to Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (1992): 391–425.
  - 31 Examples include Paul Bezerra, Jacob Cramer, Megan Hauser, Jennifer Miller, and Thomas J. Volgy, "Going for the Gold versus Distributing the Green: Foreign Policy Substitutability and Complementarity in Status Enhancement Strategies," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 11/3(2015), 253–72; Patrick Rhamey and Bryan Early, "Going for the Gold: Status-Seeking Behavior and Olympic Performance," *International Area Studies Review* 16, no. 3 (2013): 244–61.
  - 32 Steven Ward, *Status and the Challenge of Rising Powers* (Cambridge, 2017).
  - 33 For instance, Wohlforth, "Unipolarity, Status Competition."
  - 34 Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000* (NY, 1987), 206.
  - 35 William A. Renzi, *In the Shadow of the Sword: Italy's Neutrality and Entrance into the Great War, 1914–1915* (NY, 1987), 252. Italy did not initially declare war against Germany, delaying doing so until late August 1915.
  - 36 Brian R. Sullivan, "The Strategy of the Decisive Weight: Italy, 1882–1922," in *The Making of Strategy: Rulers, States, and War*, eds. Williamson Murray, MacGregor Knox, and Alvin Bernstein (Cambridge, 1994), 335.
  - 37 Francesco L. Galassi and Mark Harrison, "Italy at War, 1915–1918," in *The Economics of World War I*, eds. Stephen Broadberry and Mark Harrison (Cambridge, 2005), 276–309.
  - 38 Sullivan, "Decisive Weight," 321.
  - 39 Brunello Vigizzi, *L'Italia neutrale: L'Italia di fronte alla prima Guerra mondiale*. vol. I (Milan, 1966), 80. Unless otherwise noted, all translations from the Italian are the authors'.
  - 40 For a good overview, William A. Renzi, "Italy's Neutrality and Entrance into the Great War: A Re-examination," *American Historical Review* 73, no. 5 (1968): 1414–32.
  - 41 Renzi, *Shadow of the Sword*, 160–61.
  - 42 Richard F. Hamilton and Holger H. Herwig, *Decisions for War, 1914–1917* (Cambridge, 2004), 198.
  - 43 The allusion here is to the thirty-fourth president's famous warning, on leaving office in January 1961, that the country's national interest risked becoming hostage to a self-serving "military-industrial complex".



- 44 For instance, Scott Nearing, *The Great Madness: A Victory for the American Plutocracy* (NY, 1917).
- 45 Richard A. Webster, *Industrial Imperialism in Italy, 1908–1915* (Berkeley, CA, 1975).
- 46 *Ibid.*, 42. Also see idem, *L'imperialismo industriale italiano 1908–1915: Studio sul pre-fascismo* (Turin, 1974).
- 47 Renzi, *Shadow of the Sword*, 253.
- 48 R.J.B. Bosworth, *Italy and the Approach of the First World War* (NY, 1983), 15.
- 49 Antonio Varsori, *Radioso Maggio: Come l'Italia entrò in guerra* (Bologna, 2015).
- 50 Galassi and Harrison, "Italy at War," 303; Renzi, *Shadow of the Sword*, 239.
- 51 This is the gravamen, for instance, of the charge that alliance commitments provided the structural context for converting what would otherwise have remained a limited Balkans war into a global conflagration in August 1914. For that allegation, see Richard N. Rosecrance, "Allies, Overbalance, and War," in *The Next Great War?: The Roots of World War I and the Risk of U.S.-China Conflict*, eds. Richard Rosecrance and Steven E. Miller (Cambridge, MA, 2014), 45–55; and Scott D. Sagan, "1914 Revisited: Allies, Offense, and Instability," *International Security* 11, no. 2 (1986): 151–75. Also implicit in the war origins paradigm is the "Balkans-inception thesis", the best exemplar of which is Christopher Clark, *The Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914* (MY, 2013).
- 52 Renzi, *Shadow of the Sword*, 5. A separate Austro-Italian protocol in 1887 added the terms of Article 7 and, with treaty renewal in 1891, became embedded in the text as Article 7.
- 53 *Ibid.*, 63.
- 54 Leo Valiani, "Italian-Austro-Hungarian Negotiations 1914–1915," *Journal of Contemporary History* 1, no. 3 (1966): 130. Also see Timothy W. Crawford, "The Alliance Politics of Concerted Accommodation: Entente Bargaining and Italian and Ottoman Interventions in the First World War," *Security Studies* 23, no. 1 (2014): 113–47.
- 55 Augusto Torre, "Il primo conflitto mondiale (1914–1918)," in *La politica estera italiana dal 1914 al 1943*, ed. idem (Roma, 1963), 1–28.
- 56 *Ibid.*, 6. The Marquis di San Giuliano served as Italy's foreign minister when the war began, remaining in this position until his death in October 1914.
- 57 David Stevenson, "From Balkan Conflict to Global Conflict: The Spread of the First World War," *Foreign Policy Analysis* 7, no. 2 (2011): 172.
- 58 A claim made, for instance, in Vasquez et al., "ConflictSpace of Cataclysm," 156.
- 59 See Girolamo Arnaldi, *Italy and Its Invaders* (Cambridge, MA, 2005).
- 60 Renzi, "Italy's Neutrality," 1415. Although the word in quotations is the authors, the idea conveyed in the word is Renzi's.
- 61 Valiani, "Italian-Austro-Hungarian Negotiations 1914–1915."
- 62 Alexander De Grand, *The Hunchback's Tailor: Giovanni Giolitti and Liberal Italy from the Challenge of Mass Politics to the Rise of Fascism, 1882–1922* (Westport, CT, 2001), 202.
- 63 Aldo A. Mola and Aldo G. Ricci, eds., *Giovanni Giolitti: al governo, in Parlamento, nel carteggio* (Foggia, 2007), 33.
- 64 Gooch, *Italian Army*, 53.
- 65 See Daniel L. Byman and Kenneth M. Pollack, "Let Us Now Praise Great Men: Bringing the Statesman Back In," *International Security* 25, no. 4 (2001), 107–46.
- 66 Martini diary, 2 May 1915, in G. De Rosa, ed., *Diario: 1914–1918* (Milan, 1966), 401.
- 67 Antonio Salandra, *La neutralità italiana: Ricordi e pensieri* (Milan, 1928), 88.
- 68 Quoted in Giovanni Artieri, *Il re, i soldati e il generale che vinse* (Bologna, 1951), 13–14.



- 69 *Ibid.*, 27.
- 70 Georg Alexander von Müller, *The Kaiser and His Court: The Diaries, Note Books, and Letters of Admiral Georg Alexander Von Müller, Chief of the Naval Cabinet, 1914–1918* (London, 1961), 80.
- 71 Denis Mack Smith, *I Savoia re d'Italia* (Milan, 1990), 86.
- 72 Andrea Ungari, *La guerra del re: monarchia, sistema politico e forze armate nella Grande Guerra* (Milan, 2018).
- 73 This statute is available on the Italian Chamber of Deputies' website: <https://storia.camera.it/norme-fondamentali-e-leggi/nf-statuto-albertino>.
- 74 Regarding those checks and balances, the *locus classicus* is Edward S. Corwin, *The President: Office and Powers*. 4th Revised ed. (NY, 1957).
- 75 Justus Doenecke, *Nothing Less Than War: A New History of American Entry into World War I* (Lexington, KY, 2011), 293–96. In 1812, the war resolution passed in the House by a vote of 79–49 and the Senate 19–13. Kevin P. Phillips, *The Cousins' Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (NY, 1999), 336.
- 76 Frederic L. Paxson, *American Democracy and the World War: Pre-War Years, 1914–1917* (Boston, MA, 1936), 14.
- 77 On that election, see S.D. Lovell, *The Presidential Election of 1916* (Carbondale, IL, 1980); and Nicole M. Phelps, “The Election of 1916,” in *A Companion to Woodrow Wilson*, ed. Ross A. Kennedy (Chichester, 2013), 173–89.
- 78 John Dos Passos, *Mr. Wilson's War* (Garden City, NY, 1962).
- 79 Robert W. Tucker, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great War: Reconsidering America's Neutrality, 1914–1917* (Charlottesville, VA, 2007), 20–21. Wilson routinely ignored counsel tendered not only by cabinet colleagues, but also by his ambassadors in key European postings, including Britain and Germany. *Apropos*, Wilson considered his ambassador to Berlin, James Gerard, to be “an idiot”: Wilson quoted in Harvey A. DeWeerd, *President Wilson Fights His War: World War I and the American Intervention* (NY, 1968), 17–18. As for London, Wilson remained consistently mistrustful of advice sent by his ambassador, Walter Hines Page, despite erroneous claims made by some that Wilson was too much under Page's influence, “perhaps simply because he liked him and both were Southerners. Page had fallen under the influence of the government to which Wilson had accredited him. He thereby lost all influence at the White House, inclining the President to believe almost the opposite of anything Page recommended”: Robert H. Ferrell, *Woodrow Wilson and World War I, 1917–1921* (NY, 1985), 90.
- 80 The most compelling rendition of this thesis appeared almost 70 years ago: Robert Endicott Osgood, *Ideals and Self-Interest in America's Foreign Relations: The Great Transformation of the Twentieth Century* (Chicago, IL, 1953).
- 81 See, on this point, Katherine C. Epstein, “The Conundrum of American Power in the Age of World War I,” *Modern American History* 2, no. 3 (2019): 345–65; B.J.C. McKercher, “Chrysalis of Power: American Foreign Policy, 1919–1941,” in *A Companion to U.S. Foreign Policy, Colonial Era to the Present*, ed. Christopher Dietrich, vol. I (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 2020), 345–81.

## Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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