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International Identities in the 13th Century Latin Christendom. A Concept of Lordly Identity

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Making sense of politics is a fascinating endeavor. Analyzing ways that peoples organize and manage their societies throughout the millennia offers a gripping insight into the extraordinary powers and capabilities of the human mind. The same goes for complex methods of overcoming conflicts and inducing cooperation between organized societies that happen to make contact through economic or cultural exchange, or by the sheer fact of existing on adjacent territories. Social reality has been always in constant flux – periods of growth and prosperity will give way to decline and poverty, societies incessantly redefine themselves, and political challenges, both domestic and foreign (to use these contemporary categories across historical eras), remain on the table for coming generations, no matter what political system they happen to live in.

For a historian willing to explore the political realities of a past society there is always a methodological problem to grapple with at the start. It generally boils down to the question to what degree the contemporary mind can effectively interpret, explain and understand social arrangements of a distant foreign land, to which unmediated access is not available. In other words, is it sufficient to follow popular scientific knowledge that the *homo sapiens* species has remained biologically unaltered for the last 30,000 years to conclude that there are transhistorical rules (inscribed either in the human genome or in humans' brain design or – more broadly speaking – in human

nature) which govern how people interact with one another and, by extension, how organized societies manage their mutual relations? To what extent does a historian's sheer biological community with the subjects of his inquiry, as members of the same species, appear conclusive and effective for making sense of political arrangements, actions and motivations occurring in different times, across different cultures, and in diverse locations?

There is no easy way to a satisfactory answer to this dilemma. It goes beyond scientific powers to determine whether humans are exclusively rational in their political reasoning, or exclusively irrational, emotional, and contingent, acting on urges and desires that come and go depending on circumstances. It is essentially a matter of individual conviction whether to assume that humans come to the social world with fully developed powers of the mind to ponder, evaluate, and judge the existing social conditions and to make rational choices that maximize rewards and minimize punishments, or that human rationality is conditioned by the society in which one lives, that is by norms and regulations imposed by its political (in this case) culture. The more one considers culture to be formative for human behavior, the more essential it becomes to embrace cultural manifestations in history while providing analyses of political phenomena.

This article builds on an observation that medieval politics in the thirteenth century tends to be approached by standard political history as if centralized statehood (and its international implications) was an ahistorical phenomenon existing in all ages. This approach implies that, for instance, the main international players in Central Europe were states in their then-existing forms: Hungary (Kingdom of Hungary), Bohemia (Kingdom of Bohemia) and a diversity of Polish duchies (with an intensifying program of unification leading to the kingdom of Poland). Taking this perspective, to suggest that the political motivations and actions of dukes and kings are rational and motivated by raison d'état has been a popular practice over many decades, and thus it is a possible way of interpreting medieval politics. However, to my mind, it painfully ignores the otherness of medieval political culture, repeatedly causing confusion, misinterpretation, and occasionally misjudgment about the actions and behaviors of then-international actors.

This article proposes an amendment to the conventional approach by taking a culture-specific turn and introducing the concept of lordly identity. It comes with an assumption that standard international

agents in thirteenth century Latin Christendom were lords – and thus, not states – that is, members of a social elite, dominating over greater or smaller pieces of land and over people who lived on them.[1] Consequently, the term "international relations" has been replaced here with a more precise and less confusing expression: "inter-lordly relations", which postulates that medieval politics in the thirteenth century occurred essentially between the members of social elites rather than between organized institutions (states) or between nations (as the history of the nineteenth and twentieth century would strongly evoke).

The notion of lordly identity makes clear references to conceptual frameworks developed in international relations (IR) theories. It is based on a constructivist approach (itself inspired by social psychology) that powerfully entered the IR field in the 1990s with scholarly contributions concerning international cooperation by Alexander Wendt, preceded by arguments developed by the English School.[2] The fundamental concept behind these approaches contends that international actors develop ways of mitigating conflict and promoting cooperation by establishing a form of international (intergroup) society, which is governed by worked-out norms and regulations in the process of mutual interactions. Wendt proposes that in such a self--defined-by-practice society its constitutive members, international units, assume certain roles and identities that motivate their behaviors and forge political interests. This proposition points strongly to cultural settings as the natural environment in which actors interact and thus shape the social rules of behavior.

By developing a concept of lordly identity, this article attempts to inspire and strengthen medieval historian's explanatory powers. It draws attention to IR assumptions and arguments about international politics that often remain little known and obscure to political historians of the Middle Ages. The first section of the article begins with a few comments on the Realist tradition in the IR field to make two important points: 1) it is a way of thinking that builds

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[1] It is beyond the scope of this article to substantiate this claim. It has been done on another occasion. See forthcoming: W. Kozłowski, *"International" Christian Society and Its Political Theology in the Thirteenth-Century Latin Christendom*, in: *Premodern Kingship and Contemporary Political Power*, ed. K. Mroziewicz, Aleksander Sroczyński, Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016.

[2] K.E. Jørgensen, *International Relations Theory: A New Introduction* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 21.

its argument on a set of assumptions that appear most natural for many historians and thus offers a relatively painless introduction to theoretical thinking about the international; 2) Realism, and its various denominations, has been the most popular (and perhaps most contested) paradigm in IR scholarship; thus it became the point of departure for Wendt's theorization, which questioned some Realist tenets and supplanted them with new precepts.

The subsequent sections put forward the concept of lordly identity. It is essentially a theoretical consideration that exploits Wendt's ideas and categories and translates them into medieval thirteenth-century political contexts, with illustrative references to Władysław Łokietek, the famous thirteenth- and fourteenth-century Polish duke (and king).

In general, what follows is an invitation to revisit the conventional way of making sense of medieval politics by bringing into the picture inspiring perspectives drawn from the field of IR theories. To be sure, the concept of lordly identity as a tool for understanding the mechanisms of thirteenth-century inter-lordly politics is still in the process. Generalizations that occur in the text may seem unsubstantiated, but for the sake of brevity it was impossible to provide additional material supporting my claims.

Before Identities – The Realist Tradition in IR Theories and Medieval Politics

Kenneth Waltz's study, its vehement criticism notwithstanding, would be a good point of departure. Waltz's *Theory of International Politics*[3] is recognized as being "among the finest products to be based on rationalist assumptions", and the neorealist current in the field of IR theories has been mainly associated with Waltz's writings.[4] He has been acknowledged by some as the leading contemporary neorealist thinker.[5]

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[3]   K.N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979).
[4]   K.E. Jørgensen, *International Relations Theory…*, p. 84.
[5]   R.H. Jackson and G. Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations: Theories and Approaches* (Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 73.

Realism is a major tradition of thinking about international relations[6] which traces its philosophical assumptions to the works of Thucydides, Machiavelli, Hobbes, and Rousseau, yet itself was born in the inter-war period, and reflected the nineteenth-century concept of *Realpolitik*. It grew up and came to maturity chiefly in the United States and over the decades has contributed considerably to the field of IR theories.[7]

The fundamental assumptions shared by all variants of the Realist tradition can be easily found in any textbook dealing with IR theory. For this reason, I do not intend here to provide the more extensive characteristics of the realist strand. I shall make here two essential points instead.

First, the realist tradition (Waltz's perspective included) was created and elaborated primarily in the twentieth century, and was devised to grapple with the international system as observed in that period. It was never purposefully designed to deal with politics of past societies, although it claimed validity for systems populated with centralized states, since among its fundamental principles have been: 1) "a conviction that international relations are necessarily conflictual and that international conflicts are ultimately resolved by war"; and 2) "a high regard for the values of national security and state survival".[8] As a result, realism adopted an approach to international politics that recognized states as the only meaningful agents on the international stage[9] (it was an arbitrary decision made for the sake of the coherence of the theory)[10] and which essentially focused on matters of war and conflict.[11] All this appears to undermine any profit from utilizing realist approaches in analyzing medieval inter--lordly politics, since in many respects these were different from the contemporary international arena.

Second, however, the realist tradition rests on pessimistic assumptions about human nature and holds a conviction that humanity is generally doomed to live life in a state of permanent conflict. It does not claim that war is perennial but rather it underlines the impossibility

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[6]   A. Wojciuk, *Dylemat Potęgi: Praktyczna Teoria Stosunków Międzynarodowych* (Warsaw: Wydawnictwa Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego, 2010), p. 23.

[7]   K.E. Jørgensen, *International Relations Theory…*, p. 79.

[8]   H. Jackson and G. Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations…*, p. 59.

[9]   J. Czaputowicz, *Teorie Stosunków Międzynarodowych: Krytyka I Systematyzacja* (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 2007), p. 29.

[10]   K.N. Waltz, *Theory…*, p. 93.

[11]   K.E. Jørgensen, *International Relations Theory…*, p. 78.

of creating an enduring peace on the international level. The field of international politics, unlike domestic politics, which is organized according to a hierarchy of authorities and offices, suffers from the lack of a global government which could control and eliminate conflicts between states, as a regular government is designed to do at the level of domestic affairs. One of Waltz's most important arguments was the assertion that any international system was decentralized and anarchical by nature, for its parts are formally equal, none is entitled to command and none is required to obey.[12] Following these presumptions, the argument could be (and has been) made for the universalistic capabilities of the realist theory, i.e. that with its pessimism about humans (as preoccupied with their own well-being and competing with one another)[13] and about states (the human's "equivalent" in the international world), realism is applicable throughout the ages, and does not have to confine its explanatory powers solely to contemporary politics.[14] Hence, for instance, Markus Fischer has applied realism to medieval Europe,[15] because he believes that "feudal actors" in essence behaved as modern states do, and this because, following Waltz's assertions, "the conflict and power politics are a structural condition of the international realm – present even among individuals in a stateless condition".[16]

On the other hand, Paul Schroeder, a historian of the modern period, made a deliberate attempt to test the principles of neorealism (as he saw them) against the historical evidence that he had been familiar with, and he eventually contended that the Waltzian international theory's assumptions, although simple, parsimonious, and elegant, nevertheless are simultaneously unhistorical, unusable, and wrong.[17] Nevertheless, to Schroeder's dismay, his polemists, IR theorists, declared that regarding his examples – which he had believed devastating for the theory – "no evidence could be more compatible with a neo-realist reading of international relations".[18]

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[12]   Cf. K.N. Waltz, *Theory*, pp. 88–89.

[13]   H. Jackson and G. Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations*…, p. 59.

[14]   Cf. K.N. Waltz, *Theory*…, p. 117.

[15]   M. Fischer, "Feudal Europe, 800–1300: Communal Discourse and Conflictual Practices," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): pp. 427–66.

[16]   *Ibidem*, 428.

[17]   P. Schroeder, "Historical Reality vs. Neo-Realist Theory," *International Security* 19, no. 1 (Summer 1994): p. 129.

[18]   C. Elman and M.F. Elman, "History vs. Neo-Realism: A Second Look," *International Security* 20, no. 1 (Summer 1995): p. 184.

Jackson and Sorensen's textbook delivered a fancy summary of Waltz's model:

> [It] seeks to provide a scientific explanation of the international relations system. His explanatory approach is heavily influenced by positivist models of economics. A scientific theory of IR leads us to expect states to behave in certain predictable ways. In Waltz's view the best IR theory is one that focuses centrally on the structure of the system, on its interacting units, and on the continuities and changes of the system. In classical realism, state leaders and their international decisions and actions are at the centre of attention. In neo-realism, by contrast, the structure of the system that is external to the actors, in particular the relative distribution of power, is the central analytical focus. Actors are relatively unimportant because structures compel them to act in certain ways. Structures more or less determine actions.[19]

In other words, Waltz's model – so influential and powerful across the IR discipline – has not considered states to have identities, which would affect their behaviors and construct specific roles to play in the system. Instead, international politics boils down to balancing uneven distributions of power in the system, forcing international units to take actions to maximize their power and thus secure individual survival.

Waltzian neorealism assumed that the structural anarchy, that is, the absence of a system-wide government, compels international units – independently from their leaders' characteristics and their internal political system – to pursue self-seeking politics predominantly concerned about relative gains and maximization of power. The lack of effective system-wide authority instills distrust between international agents and hence impedes possible cooperation. As a result, conflict at the international level erupts, in a sense, due to natural causes, that is, the international environment is *per force* hostile to all its members and does not leave much room for non--threat-driven behaviors.

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[19]   R.H. Jackson and G. Sørensen, *Introduction to International Relations*, pp. 73–74. Waltz explained: *The ruler's, and later the state's, interest provides the spring of action; the necessities of policy arise from the unregulated competition of states; calculation based on these necessities can discover the policies that will best serve the state's interests; success is the ultimate test of policy, and success is defined as preserving and strengthening the state – structural constraints explain why the methods are repeatedly used despite differences in the persons and states who use them*: K.N. Waltz, *Theory…*, p. 117.

Nevertheless, the anarchy-hierarchy dichotomy proposed by Waltz's model does not suffice to provide a well-grounded explanation of "inter-lordly" mechanisms in the thirteenth-century. Leaving aside the sophisticated medieval reflections about power and authority (*potestas*), and judging solely from a vantage point that embraces political practice throughout the century, it seems clear that there was no Latin Christendom-wide government, and thus system-level anarchy prevailed. But – at the same time – this anarchical fabric of the inter-lordly system was strongly mitigated by the dominating political culture, which promoted hierarchy – yet in a form that was not recognized by Waltz. Medieval inter-lordly hierarchy was not similar to domestic structures of government that impose functional differentiation by introducing separate agencies to pursue specific goals within the system. It was not, therefore, an effect of the progressive sophistication of a state's administration, rationally invented and developed by human factors.

To the contrary, the hierarchy that dominated the thirteenth--century inter-lordly environment was perceived as God-given in the first place, and then customary and of ancestral inheritance. It functioned as a cultural context and framework for anarchical (self-seeking and power-building-centered) practices.

Hence, the Waltzian anarchy-hierarchy dichotomy has not been enough to elucidate the motivations and behaviors of medieval lords. Another approach is needed that allows for a mode of coexistence between the anarchical structure (engendering distrust, self-regard, and conflict) and the hierarchical culture that provides building blocks for creating political interests, promotes ways of establishing peace and order, and nurtures ideas necessary to rekindle trust and the will to cooperate.

This approach, which leads to establishing the concept of lordly identity, presumes that a lord would learn the arcana of politics by osmosis; in other words, by absorption of what he observed among his peers. I argue that the political practices and examples that he could witness – principles, means, methods, strategies, goals, and the entire mindset for how to think about inter-lordly matters – all constituted factors that provided a pool of political choices, suggested algorithms of behavior, and crafted interests and laid foundations for dynastic and political identities.

The Power of Ideas – Constructivist Approach in IR Theories

Using the term "identity" in the context of international relations is not an innovative move whatsoever, because it already has a quite rich literature and has been related to the constructivist strand in IR theorizing (to be explained below). What is, however, a pioneering venture here is an attempt to develop the content of lordly identity, which has been initially modeled on how international identities are normally constructed, but has had to be crafted to the realities of the thirteenth-century inter-lordly system in Latin Christendom.

In 1992 Alexander Wendt published an article in which he attempted to introduce constructivist social theory into the realm of IR.[20] He advanced his argument against neorealist positions (introduced above) by claiming that self-help and power politics *do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy*.[21] In other words, he believed that competitive anarchy was not a product of the immutable and ahistorical structure of any international system (as Waltz strongly suggested), but it was rather socially constructed by actors through their international practices. Hence, he maintained:

If states find themselves in a self-help system, this is because their practices made it that way. Changing the practices will change the intersubjective knowledge that constitutes the system.[22] … Competitive security systems are sustained by practices that create insecurity and distrust. In this case, transformative practices should attempt to teach other states that one's own state can be trusted and should not be viewed as a threat to their security.[23]

Looking at neorealism from this perspective made its convictions seem less transhistorical laws but rather a self-fulfilling prophecy that encourages certain behaviors and removes from sight their alternatives.[24] Wendt put forward two fundamental principles of constructivist social theory: 1) that people act towards objects, including other actors, on the basis of the meanings that the objects have for them, and that it is collective meanings that constitute the structures which

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[20] A. Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics," *International Organization* 46, no. 2 (Spring 1992): pp.391–425.

[21] *Ibidem*, p. 394.

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 407.

[23] *Ibidem*, p. 421.

[24] Cf. *ibidem*, p. 410.

organize our actions;[25] 2) that the meanings in terms of which action is organized arise out of interaction.[26] Consequently, actors do not have a self before they interact with an other;[27] to put it differently, unlike in the neorealist approach, international actors shape their interests and self-understandings by participation, that is, they do not come to politics with nature-given competitive interests but they rather learn and acquire them by observation and experience (imitation and social learning).

In 1999, Wendt advanced his argument in a book on the social theory of international politics.[28] This work did not make any direct references to the medieval inter-lordly system and was primarily focused on the contemporary state system. His objective was to propose alternative logics of anarchy that allow for various types of cooperation at the international level. He, therefore, followed the neorealist assumption that the system's structure was anarchy, defined as the absence of centralized authority, but he sought to prove that this anarchy was compatible with more than one kind of structure and logic.[29] He claimed that the system's "political culture is the most fundamental fact about the structure of an international system, giving meaning to power and ontent to interests, and thus the thing we most need to know to explain".[30]

In Wendt's opinion, anarchy *per se* is somewhat of a blank chart that receives content on the basis of what states put on it.[31] Briefly put, he believed that self-help and competition in the international environment could be only one of the possible forms of anarchical structure. The way the system operated depended on how states perceived each other in the first place: either as enemies or as rivals or as friends.[32] According to Wendt, the neorealist logic is the logic of enemy; the other logics would, however, evolve from systems, in which shared ideas exist.[33] He argued:

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[25]   *Ibidem*, pp. 396–97.

[26]   *Ibidem*, p. 403.

[27]   *Ibidem*, p. 402.

[28]   A. Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

[29]   *Ibidem*, pp. 246–47.

[30]   *Ibidem*, p. 250.

[31]   *Ibidem*, p. 249.

[32]   *Ibidem*, p. 247.

[33]   *Ibidem*, p. 253.

> Rather than follow Neorealists in focusing first on material structure, therefore, I believe that if we want to say a small number of big and important things about world politics we would do better to focus first on states' ideas and the interests they constitute, and only then worry about who has how many guns.[34]

There is no room here to elucidate the entire argument that Wendt put forward. Suffice to say that his positions have won recognition and popularity in the IR field (as an innovative approach to viewing international politics),[35] although they have also ignited a hot debate and have been criticized from various standpoints.[36] What matters here, however, is that Wendt provided another toolkit for investigating and explaining international phenomena that, in different aspects, seem complementary to the Waltzian analysis (and to the realist tradition in general).[37] His insistence on the significant power of ideas, which create and reproduce social norms, regulations, and even types of social beings (states, lordships etc.), coincides with my general observations about the hierarchical cultural script that mitigated and somehow governed the thirteenth-century inter-lordly anarchy.

Towards the Content of Lordly Identity

Fundamental for establishing the concept of lordly identity is the assumption that the thirteenth-century inter-lordly system in Latin Christendom developed its own logic and distributed knowledge among its members, defining a form of a society of lords. This knowledge was shared by the inter-lordly units and thus, according to Wendt's formulation of "society", those units were induced to *follow most of the rules of their society most of the time*.[38] This collective knowledge and understanding was **inter-subjective**, that is, it persisted "**beyond the lives of individual social actors, embedded in social routines**

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[34]   *Ibidem*, p. 256.

[35]   K.E. Jørgensen, *International Relations Theory…*, pp. 155–80.

[36]   For a brief overview see: Ch. Epstein, "Constructivism or the Eternal Return of Universals in International Relations. Why Returning to Language Is Vital to Prolonging the Owl's Flight," *European Journal of International Relations* 19, no. 3 (September 1, 2013): pp. 499–519.

[37]   See, for instance, Barkin's book which is precisely an attempt to establish common grounds for realist and constructivist approaches: J.S. Barkin, *Realist Constructivism* (Cambridge, UK; New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[38]   A. Wendt, *Social Theory…*, 20, 209.

**and practices as they are reproduced by interpreters who
participate in their production and workings**".[39] Simultane-
ously, this shared knowledge was not definite and fully established
but rather constantly co-constituted and in motion, for – simply
put – "people and society construct, or constitute, each other".[40]

Władysław Łokietek, to take an example, was born into the
thirteenth-century Christian society that on the inter-lordly stage was
dominated by lords conventionally seeking domination and control
over people and territories (lordship-building activities). Therefore,
Łokietek – as highborn and thus automatically predestined to main-
tain, reproduce, and enhance his status within the society – had
to acquire lordly identity (mostly by observation, imitation and par-
ticipation) in order to fulfill the role that the current political cul-
ture prescribed him. In brief, he had to determine who he was (self-
-understanding) and what he wanted (self-interest) as a lord; both
elements he could learn from the culture he was raised in.

Wendt defined identity as:

> A property of intentional actors that generates motivational
> and behavioral dispositions. This means that identity is at
> base a subjective or unit-level quality, rooted in an actor's self-
> -understandings. Identities are constituted by both internal and
> external structures (John thinks he is a professor; his students
> think the same).[41]

Paraphrasing Wendt's definition, lordly identity is a property of lords
that forges their dispositions for certain motivations and behaviors
and originates in how they understand their lordly roles in society.
Moreover, lordly identity is not an individual trait specific to each
lord but it is rather a collective understanding (inter-subjective)[42] of
what it means to be a lord (i.e., a member of the social elite) that is
produced collaboratively by intentional practice, and is individually
acquired by observation, imitation, and participation.

To be sure, any attempts to scrutinize political ideas and under-
standings that in the thirteenth-century Latin Christendom governed
behaviors of political actors, outside the intellectual elite (who were the

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[39]   J.S. Barkin, *Realist Constructivism…*, p. 26.
[40]   *Ibidem*, p. 28.
[41]   A. Wendt, *Social Theory…*, p. 224.
[42]   That is, existing beyond lives of individual actors.

only ones familiar with accessible literary works), seem shaky in terms of empirical groundings. For instance, Andrzej Marzec was right to point out that the impact of the idea of the unification of the kingdom of Poland at the turn of the fourteenth century (eventually carried out by Łokietek in 1320) – broadly and eagerly discussed in the Polish historiography for the last hundred years[43] – on the Polish society cannot be assessed, and it is very hard to identify to what extent ducal and baronial motivations were shaped by this idea.[44]

Lordly identity is not about individual and personal characteristics. Contrary to this perhaps intuitive preconception, lordly identity encompasses inter-subjective features that can be traced and identified as routinized practices, that is, standard behaviors pertaining to "what lords usually do when they interact with one another". My assumption is that lordly identity, as a cultural and collective concept, was drawn from one major source: inter-subjectively grounded norms, patterns, practices, and routines observable in, say, Łokietek's inter-lordly environment. Consequently, by speaking for instance about Łokietek's lordly identity I am invoking a large degree of correspondence between his own behaviors on the inter-lordly stage and practices observed among other contemporary lords in his neighborhood; this correspondence implies Łokietek's ascription to the culturally and collectively constructed lordly identity by making it largely his own. To say it differently, Łokietek's lordly identity entails focusing on his compliance to inter-subjective lordly identity rather than on his unique self-perception as a lord (principally unavailable to a historian due to the lack of relevant source material).

The theoretical concept of lordly identity offers interpretative and explanatory benefits, but its limitations need to be acknowledged. Determining lordly identity can be a useful tool for a historian to provide more imbedded and meaningful insights into how the thirteenth-century inter-lordly system operated. Nevertheless, lordly identity does not explain everything in lordly actions. But it brings some order and structuring into their historical interpretation. Namely, it could be expected that lordly identity functioned as a powerful and self-reproducing

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[43] See Tomasz Jurek's preface to the reprint edition: O.M. Balzer, *Królestwo Polskie: 1295–1370* (Kraków: Towarzystwo Naukowe "Societas Vistulana," 2005), pp. IX–XIII.

[44] Cf. A. Marzec, "Między Przemysłem II a Władysławem Łokietkiem, czyli kilka uwag o Królestwie Polskim na przełomie XIII i XIV wieku," *Roczniki Historyczne* 78 (2012): pp. 98–99.

inter-subjective cultural script that strongly influenced individual lords in terms of their self-understandings, motivations and behaviors.

Since human societies are complex phenomena, I am not suggesting that lordly identity was the only factor that motivated lords' behavior. While theorizing about how lords identified their political goals and interests, anthropological claims about human nature cannot be ignored. Considering the international realm as the domain of international anarchy, Wendt noticed, by virtue of empirical findings, that states "may indeed have a predisposition to be self-interested, since the members of human groups almost always show favoritism toward each other in dealing with the members of out-groups".[45] Moreover, he recognized "fear of exploitation" as a genuine concern in the conditions of anarchy[46] and that *egoistic identities and interests are initially dominant* and constantly resist attempts of cooperation.[47] Remaining in agreement with this statement I would assume lords to take up lordly identity as a mode of behavior, and yet to remain predisposed to self-interest in crafting their inter-lordly objectives.

Despite lords' predispositions to self-regarding actions on the inter-lordly stage, the constructivist approach that I am taking here presupposes that lordly identity is the essential forge of lords' political interests.[48] Wendt differentiated two types of interests: 1) objective, which are "needs or functional imperatives which must be fulfilled if an identity is to be reproduced;" 2) subjective which refer to "those beliefs that actors actually have about how to meet their identity needs, and it is these which are the proximate motivation for behavior".[49]

Since Wendt argued for the existence of state identity, he also accepted anthropomorphizing states. Thus he understood them as real actors "to which we can legitimately attribute anthropomorphic qualities like desires, beliefs and intentionality"[50] and identified them as corporate

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[45] A. Wendt, *Social Theory*…., p. 322.

[46] *Ibidem*, p. 348.

[47] *Ibidem*, pp. 363–64. Earlier, Wendt asserted: "I argue in conclusion that states' interpretations of these needs [the national interests – wk] tend to be biased in a self--interested direction, which predisposes them to competitive, 'Realist' politics, but that this does not mean that states are inherently self-interested"; *ibidem*, 198.

[48] A. Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It…," p. 398.

[49] A. Wendt, *Social Theory*.., p. 232.

[50] *Ibidem*, p. 197.

agents that possessed capacities for institutionalized collective action,[51] and hence in practice they functioned as state-society complexes.[52]

Nation states, which remained at the center of Wendt's theorization, developed national interests. By analogy, lords worked out lordly interests. National interest – as Wendt put it – is a set of the objective interests of state-society complexes, consisting of four needs: 1) physical survival; 2) autonomy; 3) economic well-being; and 4) collective self-esteem.[53] The latter, in his understanding, "refers to a group's need to feel good about itself, for respect or status. Self--esteem is a basic human need of individuals, and one of the things that individuals seek in group membership".[54] Bisson's studies on power in the High Middle Ages could exemplify an enduring tendency throughout the centuries that the practice of domination (i.e., wielding power over people and territory) defined nobility and, all in all, satisfied the first three needs (from the list above) of individuals (as well as lordships and states alike).[55] Nevertheless, the fourth one, related to honor and prestige, was more culture-specific and required a certain channeling of sheer power, so that a power-holder could be respected within his society for the way of exercising his domination.

As noted, lordly identity is considered here as that which strongly contributed to constructing lordly interests, that is, their way of being in the inter-lordly system. Wendt acknowledged that determining one state identity across the international system cannot be sufficient, because it would be too simplistic, for states have more than a single political interest (generated by state identity), which they pursue. Therefore, Wendt elaborated a system of identities that are all grounded in the fundamental "personal/corporate" identity.[56] In his understanding, those sub-identities spring from the principal identity and although they are dependent on the latter, they still engender specific interests, and hence making such distinctions appears useful and worth risking additional confusion.

Wendt argued: "We have many identities. So have states. Each is a script or schema, constituted to varying degrees by cultural forms,

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[51]   *Ibidem*, p. 43.
[52]   *Ibidem*, p. 234.
[53]   *Ibidem*, p. 198.
[54]   *Ibidem*, p. 236.
[55]   T.N. Bisson, "The 'Feudal Revolution,'" *Past & Present* 142 (February 1994): pp. 6–42. See also: *idem*, *The Crisis of the Twelfth Century: Power, Lordship, and the Origins of European Government* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2009).
[56]   Cf. A. Wendt, *Social Theory*…, pp. 224–230.

about who we are and what we should do in a certain context".[57] For the sake of states, he distinguished the following sub-identities: 1) "type" identity which is a social category or label applied to persons who share (or are thought to share) some characteristics; 2) "role" identity which reveals a mode of relations between Self and Others; 3) "collective" identity which brings the Self-Other distinction to a certain form of identification; it is usually issue-specific and causes Self to be categorized as Other.

Wendt introduced this system of identities as appropriate to modern states. To illustrate his point about how various kinds of identities translate into the language of objective interests he took the United States as an example.[58] In his view, the U.S.'s principal identity ("corporate") is that of a state; this identity requires monopoly on organized violence. The U.S.'s "**type**" identity emphasizes that it is a capitalist state and thus it requires enforcing private property rights. Its "**role**" identity stresses its hegemonic role and demands from it to uphold this position. Finally, its "**collective**" identity points to solidarity with other Western states as a necessary condition to remain a member of the West. An analogical proposal for identifying the most essential elements of lordly identity is displayed in Figure 1 at the end of this article.

Wendt's proposition is open for debate. However, in as much as this approach has never, to the best of my knowledge, been applied to medieval inter-lordly realities, it seems inspiring to adapt analogical distinctions to the concept of lordly identity and thus expand its theoretical capacities.

Lordly Identity – Concluding Remarks

Lordly identity is a theoretical construct borrowed from the constructivist approach in IR theories. It is based on the assumptions that 1) people are attracted to things they value; 2) values and objects of interests are collectively constructed in a given society by constant interaction of its units through imitation and participation; 3) the thirteenth-century inter-lordly system in Latin Christendom functioned as a form of international society; and 4) this society of lords developed collective and inter-subjective values and objectives that were sought by its members in most cases and for most of the time.

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[57]   *Ibidem*, p. 230.
[58]   Cf. *ibidem*, p. 232.

Lordly identity is a property of lords that forges their interests to be pursued in the inter-lordly realm and derives from how they understand their lordly roles in society. It is not, however, an individual trait specific to each lord, but it is rather an inter-subjective understanding of what it means to be a lord (a member of the social elite) that is produced collaboratively by intentional practice within the society of lords, yet individually acquired by observation, imitation and participation. Lordly identity is a compound comprising a number of sub-identities (principal, type, role, and collective; see the proposal in Figure 1). All of these identities are largely responsible for engendering particular political interests, and thus inspire lords to behave in a certain manner in interaction with one another.

Figure 1. This article builds on an observation that medieval politics in the thirteenth century

Name	Description	Induced Interests
Lord (constitutive norms)	**Principal identity** as the personification of monarchical and hierarchical lordship	Remain a member of the social elite, that is, hold a lordship
Family Leader (social purpose)	**Type sub-identity**; a social category or label applied to persons who share, or are thought to share, some characteristics	Promote family; build up position as an influential family leader; dynastic politics – secure the future of offspring
Title Seeker (relational comparisons)	**Role sub-identity** that exists only in relation to Others who may recognize it or not; there must be thrones and titles available and recognized as assets in the inter-lordly arena in order to claim them	Expand power and prestige, and thus reach the highest ranks in the society, by gaining new lands and assuming new titles
Member of Latin Christian Community (cognitive model – worldview; theory of interpretation)	**Collective sub-identity** that takes the relationship between Self and Other to certain level of identification	Conform with other Christian rulers; adopt worldviews, hierarchies, rules and principles required by membership in the Latin Christian community

Summary

This article builds on an observation that medieval politics in the thirteenth century tends to be approached by standard political history as if centralized statehood (and its international implications) was an ahistorical phenomenon existing in all ages. Taking this perspective, to suggest that the political motivations and actions of dukes and kings are rational and motivated by raison d'état has been a popular practice over many decades. However, the otherness of medieval political culture seems to be overlooked. This article proposes an amendment to the conventional approach by taking a culture-specific turn and introducing the concept of lordly identity. It comes with an assumption that standard international agents in thirteenth century Latin Christendom were lords (not states).

The notion of lordly identity makes clear references to conceptual frameworks developed in international relations theories. It is based on a constructivist approach proposing that international actors develop ways of mitigating conflict and promoting cooperation by establishing a form of international (intergroup) society, which is governed by worked-out norms and regulations in the process of mutual interactions. In such a self-defined-by-practice society its constitutive members assume certain roles and identities, which affect their behaviors and shape political interests. By developing a concept of lordly identity, the article attempts to inspire and strengthen medieval historian's explanatory powers. It draws attention to IR assumptions and arguments about international politics that often remain little known and obscure to political historians of the Middle Ages.