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Abstract

The article introduces a new explanation of international order that focuses on representants. Representants are practices, artefacts and language that stand in for the international system's units in international fora. They are crucial for international relations, given that international relations deal with a macro-realm that can never be fully present, but needs to be made concrete in specific localities. Representants have four interrelated effects: (1) They define the units of the international system; (2) They legitimize them; (3) They provide them with differential degrees of power; (4) They serve as tools for governing. When representants are seriously challenged, orders are in crisis; when new representants emerge, a new order has taken hold. The paper develops a mechanism of change emerging from struggles over representants. It studies the transition from the medieval order of universal monarchy to an order of divine right absolutism. Representants, such as gothic cathedrals, the mass, and coronation rituals maintained the medieval hierarchical order with the pope/emperor at the apex. The Reformation provided the last step in kings' challenge to the medieval order. Kings adapted existing representants, so that they would portray the independence of kings from the papacy/emperor, and simultaneously position kings above feudal lords.

International Relations scholarship has explained international order by focusing on coercion, shared interests, legitimacy, or a combination of these. To these explanations, I add one that highlights the importance of representants. Political rule is too abstract to ingrain itself and produce order, and coercion alone can neither bring about order nor fully destabilize it. Order has social foundations. For social actors to be able to communicate with one another and have shared assumptions about a given order, political rule needs to be represented. Representants establish collective societal understandings about the nature of authority and its configuration. No international order can exist without representants. When existing representants are seriously challenged, orders are in crisis. When new representants are socially recognized a new order has emerged. Representants play a crucial and irreducible, although not an exclusive role in order maintenance and change.

This paper expands on the existing constructivist literature on international orders by highlighting the constitutive dimension of materiality. While constructivists typically underline the importance of identities, ideas, and norms for order maintenance and change, they often do not theorize how these abstract concepts are materialized at the everyday level of practical politics. This project started out as an effort to operationalize the explanatory leverage of social epistemes for understanding international order

change, as it has been developed in Ruggie's seminal article.¹ It finds inspiration from New Materialist scholarship and the visual turn, but adds a focus on long-term macro processes of changes of international orders to this literature.

The focus of the paper is to introduce the concept of representants into International Relations. Representants are those practices, artifacts, and language, that stand in for an entity as a whole when that entity can otherwise not be present in its entirety. Diplomats represent their states in negotiations, Cartesian maps represent the territorial state, and GDP represents a country's economy. Representants visualize political authority and its configuration. They are crucial in international relations given that the localities in which international relations take shape are, to some extent, removed from the domestic realm, and that international relations by their very nature deal with a macro realm that can never be fully present. IR's macro-concepts are expressed in and through specific representants that exist in concrete micro-spaces such as the United Nations General Assembly, the palace of Versailles, or the gothic cathedral, the places where international relations take place. These representants are then transmitted to the larger public through the various media characteristic for a given epoch. Through representants IR practitioners come to apprehend the characteristics of the international system's units. The units' defining features and their relations to each other need to be seen and known for practitioners to be able to interpret and act upon them. Representants order relations and allow people to govern from a distance. Each epoch has its own representants, which establish who counts in a given constellation and who is powerful in relation to whom.

There is always a gap between representants and what they are representing. A fully accurate representation is impossible. The extent of this gap determines the independent constitutive effects of representants on an international order. The same gap also provides an opening through which actors can challenge existing representants and thus an international order. Actors are likely to dispute representants if they fear a deterioration of their social standing, or would like to enhance their position, and cannot do so with the available representants. These struggles over representants follow a performative logic. The most important factor for determining success is that the new

¹ Ruggie 1993.

representants need to be socially recognized. If new representants emerge, the configuration of authority changes and a new form of order takes hold.

Empirically this paper focuses on the transition from a medieval order of universal monarchy with the pope and/or the emperor at its head to a dynastic order of divine right absolutism. At a time when Europe was scattered into innumerable feudal lordships, and power did not extend very far, a semeiotic web of representants,² including gothic cathedrals, the mass, Christian liturgy, and imperial ceremonial among others portrayed a universal hierarchical order in Christendom with the pope and/or the emperor at its head. The coronation ritual played a special role. Thanks to the coronation, kings could distinguish themselves from other feudal lords.³ Simultaneously they required the pope's and/or the emperor's benediction to perform the act, which ensured the pope's and the emperor's position at the top of the hierarchy. With technological progress, and a monetization of the economy, travel increased, direct contact between rulers intensified, the material power basis of rulers grew, and the reach of their power extended. While the Pope and the Emperor sought to further enhance their standing, kings became increasingly less willing to accept papal and imperial superiority. Yet, kings still required the pope's and/or the emperor's benediction to distinguish themselves from other feudal lords. To rid themselves from papal and imperial superiority, while maintaining their position vis-à-vis other lords, kings sought to modify existing representants. It was only with the advent of Protestantism that the European hierarchical order with pope and emperor at the top finally collapsed. Two processes were crucial in this regard. First, iconoclasm, the demolition of religious imagery, statues, and architecture, lead to the destruction of Catholic representants that upheld the hierarchical order. Second, kings adapted and repurposed existing Catholic representants for their own needs, to represent their own power, and thus established a territorially constrained hierarchical order with the king at the top. An order based on divine right absolutism emerged as a result of these struggles over representants.

The paper first introduces the concept of representants, and distinguishes it from other cognate terms in International Relations, such as symbols, simulacra, or

² Osiander 2007; Teschke 1998.

³ Reynolds 1997, 259–66.

inscriptions. In contrast to these other concepts, representants stand in for the units of the international system, they include as well as exclude features from those units, and they contain symbolic as well as functional dimensions. Second I define international orders as configurations of authority, and draw attention to a gap in the literature, namely a lack of focus on the constitutive dimension of materiality for international order formation, that representants can fill. Third I develop a mechanism of change in international orders based on changes in representants resulting from struggles over those representants. I then illustrate these theoretical claims on the transition from a medieval order of Universal Monarchy to an order based on divine rights absolutism. The medieval as well as the early modern order primarily relied on mechanisms of legitimation to maintain themselves. Constructivist scholars have directed attention to the importance of ideas for legitimating these orders, and have occasionally empirically studied representants as carriers of those ideas, but they have not explicitly theorized their role. The subsequent section highlights how the medieval order of universal monarchy was maintained through a semeiotic web of representants consisting of gothic cathedrals, the mass, and the coronation ceremonial among others at a time of a small concentration of coercive capabilities. Sixth, I focus on the Reformation to show how kings challenged the established medieval order to enhance their own standing through a double move of destroying the representants of the established order in iconoclasms, and appropriating those representants so that they served to express kings' territorially delimited authority. In the conclusion, I allude to the significance of representants in the contemporary era. The types of representants one needs to focus on are different, but representants still play an important role in questions over the recognition of sovereignty, as well as the recognition of new forms of political authority, such as of indigenous communities or the European Union.

Defining Representants

Representation in its broadest sense means that 'something not literally present is considered as present in a nonliteral sense.'⁴ Pitkin differentiates between three kinds of representation. First, a formalistic representation either provides an authorization to

⁴ Pitkin 1972, 9.

someone to act on somebody else's behalf, or establishes someone's accountability to somebody else. Second, representation can signify that objects or people can stand for something else, either descriptively or symbolically. Third, representation can mean the 'proper relation between a representative and those for whom he acts.'⁵ This third meaning of representation as political representation is the one most commonly used in political theory and political science more generally. However, in this paper I direct attention to the second meaning of representation, namely the standing for, or the 'bringing into presence of something previously absent, or the embodiment of an abstraction into an object.'⁶ I highlight that this form of representation also has important political consequences, which tend to be overlooked.

I call these forms of representation representants.⁷ The term representants focuses on objects, language, and practices that stand in for something else, rather than on the activity of representing human beings engage in with their full agency. However, the term representants also suggests that a certain independent effect emanates from these representations. They have a force of their own; they make people do things. First, as descriptions representants make people deduce specific characteristics about the object that is being represented. These descriptions always include elements that render representants similar to the object they are representing, and they also always incorporate a certain distance to the object they represent. Otherwise it would not be a representation, but the object itself. In these elements of inclusion and exclusion lies representants' constitutive effect. Second, as symbols, representants are 'the recipient or object of feelings, expressions of feeling, or actions intended for what [they] represent(s).'⁸

In this paper, the focus will be on such representants that stand in for the units of the international system. Given representants' productive and performative role, the people they are addressed to need to be able to perceive them. This means that in international politics representants are either quite prominently on public display or emerge in

⁵ Ibid., 12.

⁶ Pitkin 1972, 3.

⁷ The term representant leans on Latour's (2005) concept of the actant. The term of the actant suggests that objects can have a certain agency within broader actor-networks, that is in interaction with human beings and other objects. The term actant is significantly broader than the concept of representant I propose here, but I decided to evoke the term actant in the concept of the representant to allude to a certain independent force that emanates from representants.

⁸ Pitkin 1972, 99.

international interactions. Moreover, there are connections that link representants to the units they stand for. Political elites are explicit about creating these ties, because people have to unequivocally understand what is being represented. Public display and a link between a representant and the object it represents are the necessary, but not the sufficient conditions for artifacts, practices, and language to operate as representants. They create propensities for representation. Whether something ultimately counts as a representant depends on societal recognition. Representants can only fulfill their function if they are socially identified to do so. This is to a large extent contingent on whether representants ‘resonate with what is already there.’⁹ Representants are not stand-alone entities, but take up meaning in a relational web of practices, artefacts, and language. It is the semeiotic web generated between representative objects, practices, and language, and the interactions between them that shapes international order. Individual representants need to fit/ be made to fit, perhaps not entirely frictionlessly, but fit nonetheless, into this societal web.

From the above it is also apparent what is not a representant. Namely, anything that does not stand for the units of the international system, is not on public display or does not emerge in international interactions, and anything that is not socially recognized as a representant does not count as a representant. For example, broad ideas, law, theoretical treaties, domestic administrative structures, bureaucracies, tax systems, agricultural production, raw materials, geographic terrain, etc. are not representants. Yet, representants can refer to these features. So for example economic production is not a representant, nor is geographic terrain, but GDP, or Cartesian maps have been representants.

Representants have four interrelated effects: They establish shared understandings of which kinds of units exist in international politics, because they render them visible. Those actors who do not have representants cannot be seen; they do not exist. Second, representants legitimize those international actors and create allegiances to them through the emotional responses and activities they generate. Third, given that representants characterize those actors, they also establish the metric based on which comparisons

⁹ Hopf 2018, 697. Basing himself on Searle (2010) Adler (2019) calls this collective recognition deontic power.

between actors become possible. Metrics can only incorporate the features that are included in representants, and they typically focus on those features the representants highlight. Representants thus endow actors with differential degrees of power. Fourth, representants are tools with the help of which those actors order and govern their relations, because it is with the help of representants that their relations are defined vis-à-vis each other. Given these four effects of representants, representants have a constitutive impact on the conception of international order.

Representants are key to ‘how the state [and other entities] come(s) to be imagined, encountered, and reimagined by the population,’¹⁰ and by political elites, and thus established as social facts. Just as the nation is an imagined community, ‘because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the mind of each lives the image of their communion,’¹¹ so the state and other international political entities are imagined. Without representants it would be impossible to conceptualize in simple schemata the vastness and complexities of experiences that people associate with the state and other units of the international system. The macro-level, ‘as part of our structures of relevant orientation’ becomes knowable through its micro-level instantiations.¹² Representants visualize (and sensitize in other ways) the shape of political entities, and their relation to each other. A focus on representants requires a shift in attention away from the disembodied concepts of high politics and towards the concrete local and place-bound everyday manifestations of political activity.¹³ Representants are a part of everyday experiences, and people rarely notice their constitutive effects. In this sense representants play a key role in naturalizing international actors.

Representants share some similarities with discourses in that they construct reality and have a productive and performative dimension,¹⁴ but they also differ from discourses because they contain additional material features that discursive approaches neglect. Discourse analysis pays attention to the positionality and situationality of the speaker,

¹⁰ Scharma and Gupta 2006, 34.

¹¹ Anderson 1991, 8.

¹² Coulter 2001, 34.

¹³ Bourdieu 1990; De Certeau 1990.

¹⁴ Milliken 1999.

analyses material culture as a text, and highlights the material effects of discourse, for example in the form of speech acts.¹⁵ Representants, however, as elements of material culture, and thus necessarily hybrids – neither immaterial ideas nor purely material artefacts – allow us to identify additional features of materiality and types of meaning making that discursive approaches neglect. First, representants are the material expression of ideas, and their materiality influences what can be expressed and how it can be expressed, for example depending on what is technologically possible. Their materiality thus shapes, but does not determine, which meanings can emerge. Second, the materiality of representants implies that they can be sensually perceived, through vision, sound, touch, or smell, and thus gives rise to a phenomenological dimension, that creates certain affects in the audience. Through this sensual perception some meanings can emerge regardless of context, even if many are still context dependent.¹⁶ In this particular dimension meaning emerges not from how different people interpret a specific object,¹⁷ but from ‘certain standpoints, using the basic measures given by human bodily size or the capabilities and limitations of human sensory abilities.’¹⁸ For example, the gothic cathedral inspires awe in part by its size in relation to the human body that is located in it or next to it. Third, the materiality of representants means that they can have a functional dimension: people can do things with them; they can be tools to act upon the world.

Some scholarship in international relations has already directed attention to representational effects with concepts such as status symbols, simulacra, and inscriptions. While the concept of representants I propose here shares important similarities with these cognate terms, it also adds a new emphasis. In addition to directing attention to the role of *symbols* for creating legitimacy and evoking a certain allegiance,¹⁹ representants also describe the units of the international system, and thus define their image. An emerging status literature highlights how the public display of *status symbols* (such as aircraft carriers or nuclear weapons) is crucial for establishing a state’s rank in the international hierarchy while relatively invisible domestic features (like lacking sanitation) get

¹⁵ Doty 1993; Waever 1995.

¹⁶ Author 2017.

¹⁷ Such an understanding implies a notion of the ‘passive, projected-upon object’ (Zuckert 2003: 226).

¹⁸ Zuckert 2003, 221.

¹⁹ McNamara 2015.

sidelined.²⁰ The concept of status symbols focuses on how societal rank can be deduced from the status symbol, whereas representants can communicate a larger array of qualitative characteristics about the units.

Representants also differ from *simulation* and *simulacra*, two concepts Cynthia Weber introduced from Baudrillard into international relations. Representants always refer to an object that they are representing, the units of the international system. Although this relationship can be a cultural one, ‘the relationship between a signifier and a signified remains within a logic of representation so long as it is held that a signifier must refer back to a signified.’²¹ Conversely, in simulation there is no object outside of speech. The object emerges in the act of speech, and does not precede it. Simulation characterizes ‘a chain of interchangeable signifiers.’²² In a logic of simulation the constitutive claims are more radical than the ones I propose here for representants.

Another cognate concept are *symbolic forms*, which Bartelson introduced from Ernst Cassirer into the discipline. Symbolic forms ‘exist independent of their linguistic and material instantiations and instead condition the possibility of both.’²³ They are broad, abstract categories that exist in an ideational ether. Bartelson gives sovereignty or linear perspective as examples. By contrast, representants are concrete material and observable manifestations; I would argue they can bring symbolic forms into existence, not vice versa.

Lastly, the term *inscription* refers to the technological devices that make ‘distant events and processes visible, mobile and calculable in terms of documents, charts, forms, reports, signs and graphs.’²⁴ How phenomena, such as the economy, migration flows, or climate change are visualized shapes how policymakers think about them and the governing practices that emerge.²⁵ Regarding one particular inscription device, the map, Branch demonstrated how it visualized the territorial state and led to its conception.²⁶ Yet, Branch focused exclusively on maps, and did not discuss how maps could be one

²⁰ Gilady 2017; Paul, Larson, and Wohlforth 2014.

²¹ Weber 1995, 7.

²² Weber 1995, xi.

²³ Bartelson 2014, 13.

²⁴ Walters 2002, 84.

²⁵ Allan 2017.

²⁶ Branch 2011.

example of a broader category of phenomena. While maps are inscriptions and representants, inscriptions are both, a broader and a narrower category than representants. They are broader than representants in the sense that they represent not only the units of the international system, but potentially any large phenomenon. They are narrower in the sense that not all representants are inscriptions. Inscriptions entail a formalized key on the basis of which the object gets transferred onto its representation. This is not necessarily the case for all representants. For example, flags, crowns, or representative buildings characterize and define the units of the international system, but through an artistic and symbolic expression, rather than a mathematical formalization.

In sum, none of the cognate terms introduced into IR fully capture the concept of representants, which are objects, practices, and language that are socially recognized to stand in for the units of the international system, given that those units are too vast and complex to ever be fully present in international interactions. Representants describe and define those units, and thus influence international order.

Existing Explanations of International Order

According to the most common definition of international order in the literature international orders are governing arrangements between states.²⁷ For example, for Bull international order is a patterned regularity between sovereign states to maintain the independence of states, and ensure a modicum of peace and stability between them with the help of such fundamental institutions as diplomacy, international law, great powers, or the balance of power. Yet, this definition of international order is limited to the state system. A broader definition of international order, particularly important for a *longue durée* approach would encompass ‘a systemic configuration of institutionalized power and authority (sovereignty, heteronomy, suzerainty, empire, etc.)’, in addition to ‘an architecture of fundamental rules and practices that facilitate coexistence and cooperation between loci of authority.’²⁸ In this paper, the primary focus will be on this configuration

²⁷ Bull 1977; Ikenberry 2011; Sorensen 2011.

²⁸ Reus-Smit 2013b, 167.

of authority, as representants have the most direct constitutive effect on this component of international order, although they also influence fundamental rules and practices.

Several authors in the IR literature have taken a historical road to analyse how changes in unit characteristics effect international order change (Blaydes and Chaney 2013; Nexon 2009; Spruyt 1996; Teschke 1998). These approaches provide valuable insights about the dynamics of state formation, and potentially the formation of other units in the international system. Yet, it is not immediately obvious how the domestic character of the units translates into international order dynamics, given that international politics is to some extent removed from the domestic realm, and domestic features need to be translated into the international sphere.

For traditional materialist scholars the international order changes, when the distribution of material capabilities in the system changes.²⁹ Coercion and material capabilities certainly play some role for order maintenance and change, but theoretical approaches that focus primarily on coercion omit how highly centralized orders can exist with little coercive capacities, and vice versa.³⁰ Paradoxically, in the medieval period an ordering principle of universal monarchy with the pope and emperor at the top existed in an international system with very decentralized material capabilities. Neither the pope nor the emperor had the coercive resources to control Europe, yet rulers deferred to their authority. Furthermore, with the increasing centralization of material capabilities, the main ordering principle decentralized; it moved from universal monarchy to an order based on divine rights absolutism.

At a more general level, traditional materialist approaches have been unable to explain qualitative change in international orders, because they exclusively focus on the functional dimension of materiality.³¹ They can explain a higher or lower degree of centralization in a particular order, but they struggle accounting for the emergence of a qualitatively different kind of order. They omit that material changes can have constitutive effects and create new meanings.

²⁹ Gilpin 1981; Monteiro 2014; Waltz 1979. Other materialist scholars focus on the role of technological change, to understand international order change (Strange 1996).

³⁰ Deudney 2007; Gilpin 1981; Waltz 1979.

³¹ Ruggie 1982.

Constructivist scholars have also not directed attention to the constitutive dimension of materiality. They left materiality in the domain of realists, neoliberal institutionalists, and perhaps marxists, and instead focused on the qualitative changes in international orders that occur because of the emergence of new ideas, norms, and identities.³² Yet, the mechanisms through which identities, ideas and norms get instantiated at the daily practical level of politics and obtain systemic effects are often not fully theorized. Constructivist concepts such as identities, ideas, and norms are abstracts/abstractions. To study them empirically it is necessary to operationalize them and pin down where they came from, how they spread, and how they are sustained over time. One area of empirical focus has been analyzing theoretical treatises.³³ While these texts have doubtlessly influenced scholarly debates, the transmission mechanism through which scholarship affects practical politics is not self-evident.

Other scholarship has analysed political elites' discourses and their contestations.³⁴ Although this work effectively manages to operationalize broad ideas by empirically focusing on elites' practical language usage, strategies of contesting and obtaining new forms of political power do not end with specific rhetorical practices. Language practices are not sufficient to obtain a certain status. A focus on more material features is key to understand international hierarchy and the position of individual actors in it. Paradoxically, there is a need to bring the material back in.

One way to do that is to cumulatively add up ideational and material features. Thus Phillips analyzed the combined effects of legitimacy crises and Deudney's concept of violence interdependence on change in international orders.³⁵ The material and the ideational factors are not merely cumulative: a symbiosis needs to prevail between the order's legitimating principle and the institutionalized practices of violence. Ultimately this perspective provides an explanation of whose ideas spread, but not how, i.e. through which media, they spread and obtain practical effects.

I propose a materialist explanation that supersedes either discourse or the old functionalist materialism, and also goes beyond the sterile debate that has emerged

³² Philpott 2011; Reus-Smit 2013a; Ruggie 1993.

³³ Bartelson 2005; Owens 2015.

³⁴ Bukovansky 2002; Crawford 1999; Park 2017.

³⁵ Phillips 2011.

between them. This aligns the present article with New Materialist approaches,³⁶ and the aesthetic and visual turns in International Relations,³⁷ but adds a *longue-durée* focus on international order transformations to this scholarship. Theoretically the aim is to anchor the big macro-processes of international order stability and change in the everyday. The focus is on scaling up (from New Materialist and much of practice scholarship) and scaling down (from traditional scholarship on transformations of international order) at the same time. The goal is to identify how concepts such as ‘state’ or ‘power’ obtained their materiality that statesmen and policy-makers acted upon. A focus on representants permits us to understand how ideas are instantiated at the daily, practical level of politics, and simultaneously adds a constitutive dimension to material reality.

A Mechanism of International Order Change Based on Changes in Representants

Representants form a necessary condition for order maintenance. It is through a semeiotic web of representants that a configuration of authority emerges in international politics. Representants constitute the form international political authority takes; they visualize its shape. When representants are highly contested, international orders falter, because actors have no longer a shared understanding of how the international order looks like, and cannot coordinate their behavior. Simultaneously, any order change includes a mechanism of changes in representants. The mechanism this paper focuses on highlights the role of struggles between political elites over getting specific artefacts, practices, or language socially recognized as representants.

For a process of change in international order to get triggered, some actors need to seek a change in existing representants. Such actors who fear a weakening in their position in the existing order, or who would like to enhance their standing, and cannot do so by resorting to available representants, can try to change representants. Actors might be encouraged to reevaluate their positioning in an order following the emergence of new ideas, changes in their material capabilities or other technological changes. Thus material factors, such as technological change, or changes in the distribution of material

³⁶ Aradau 2010; Bennett 2010.

³⁷ Fierke 2012; Hutchinson 2016.

capabilities, as well as the emergence of new ideas can be the initial triggering conditions that bring about changes in representants, and they can find expression in representants, but in the last instance the authority in the international order and its distribution is defined by representants. Representants are not proxies either for material factors, or for ideas, because neither material factors nor ideas are one to one translatable into representants. Both are multiply realizable. Multiple different representants can be developed with the same material resources, and a specific idea can take different representational forms. It is necessary to pay attention to how specifically material resources and ideas take shape in representants to understand the concrete form authority and its distribution takes in the international system. Contestations over representants develop their own dynamic, and follow a performative logic. To understand the specific shape the configuration of authority takes, it is worth directing attention to these dynamics.

At times representants can change in mutually harmonious agreement among all the actors involved,³⁸ but changes in representants are more likely to result from ‘symbolic struggles over the perception of the social world.’³⁹ Those whom existing representants favour are not very likely to give up on these representants. The ensuing symbolic struggles can be integrated in violent military struggles, occur in addition to them, or sometimes in lieu of them. If actors want to change their societal standing, they will focus on changing representants ‘meant to display and to throw into relief certain realities’ to manipulate ‘the image of one’s position in social space.’⁴⁰ Actors might seek to introduce representants into an order that will portray them in a particularly advantageous light, and thus put them in a more elevated position. They might rely on old representants that they transpose into an order other ‘than that in which they were originally acquired’, and adapt them in the process.⁴¹

Rulers’ public staging of representants and their frequent repetition is consequential, because it is important ‘that ‘everyone can see’ that everyone has seen that things have

³⁸ Neumann and Pouliot 2011.

³⁹ Bourdieu 1989, 20.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Thompson 1984.

changed.⁴² New representants cannot be simply imposed by force, they need to be socially recognized. Simultaneously they do not always follow a normative logic, but contain an important performative dimension, and are constrained by material and technological features. Once the dominant representants change, and the entire semeiotic web of representants adapts, actors will see the world differently, and will adjust their behaviour accordingly. A new societally recognized conception of order has emerged. The process of change is gradual, drawn out over several centuries. In many ways international orders are continuously in processes of transition, where the present order reflects features from the past and foreshadows the future.⁴³

From *Monarchia Universalis* to Balance of Power

The transition from a medieval order of universal monarchy to an order based on kingly divine right absolutism illustrates the relevance of representants in international order change. The empirics serve to provide illustrative vignettes of the framework's heuristic utility, rather than a definitive demonstration of its sufficiency as an alternative account, which would warrant a much lengthier treatment.⁴⁴ The case exemplifies how a certain hierarchical conception of order progressively got challenged by new representants.⁴⁵ The historical case is an instance of a completed process of order change that can serve as an inspiration to understand current and hitherto incomplete dynamics of international order change.

The Contribution of Representants to Existing IR Historical Accounts of the Medieval to Early Modern Transition of International Order

The bellicist argument is one of the most popular arguments for elucidating the emergence of the state system. Tilly famously explained the transition from the medieval to the early modern order with the slogan ‘war made the state and the state made war.’⁴⁶

⁴² Swidler 2001, 87.

⁴³ Adler 2019.

⁴⁴ I thank R2 for suggesting this approach to me.

⁴⁵ The analytical focus is on general tendencies, and the empirical analysis concentrates on the continental European centre of the order at the time. Not all local peculiarities can be accounted for in an analysis that extends over several centuries and a vast geographic region. The hope is that the study nonetheless captures the broad trends of European order formation and transition in that period.

⁴⁶ Tilly 1975, 42.

The explanatory mechanism proposes that rivalry between different powers on the European continent required those powers to develop a state apparatus and standing armies to defend themselves against their competitors. This, in turn, was very expensive and demanded the collection of taxes from subject citizens. Citizens revolted against tax-collection, which resulted in war and led to the further consolidation of the state apparatus. In the process weak states disappeared, and powerful states increased their territory.

However, selection processes through war occurred extremely rarely, and many small polities survived for long periods.⁴⁷ In Tilly's interpretation any actor who is more powerful than the others could develop a strong state. In this model kings had no particular advantage compared to their rivals.⁴⁸ Yet, the importance of the unique legitimacy kings enjoyed compared to lesser feudal lords becomes apparent when we realize that dynastic consolidation rather than military conquest was the key dynamic for state consolidation. As Gorski and Scharma remark, 'the bellicist model implies that dynasties were eliminated on the battlefield. In truth, most died in bed – the marriage bed or the sick bed. The laws of fertility and mortality had a much greater impact on dynasties than any putative laws of geopolitics.'⁴⁹

A second stream of arguments centers on comparative economic advantages. Spruyt argued that an increase in trade in the thirteenth century diminished the power of the Church, the Empire, and feudalism and set into motion processes that led to the emergence of three alternative types of polities—city states, city leagues, and the territorial state.⁵⁰ The territorial state won out against its competitors, because it had economic advantages in that it was better at standardizing weights and coinage, and instituting uniform adjudication. The centralization of authority also helped to coordinate activities internationally with other actors. There are two difficulties with this argument. The first one is an issue of timing. Most historical scholarship today agrees that the Church, empire, and feudalism prevailed for much longer, and coincided with city leagues, city states and the embryos of territorial states, although fully fledged territorial

⁴⁷ Spruyt 2017; Gorski and Scharma 2017.

⁴⁸ Spruyt 2017, 77.

⁴⁹ Gorski and Scharma 2017, 110.

⁵⁰ Spruyt 1996.

states emerged much later, as did uniform adjudication.⁵¹ Secondly, it is difficult to argue that trade and a monetization of the economy introduced a selection mechanism based on economic efficiency. The core motivations that animated the overwhelming majority of European kings and aristocrats followed a representative logic, often against economic rationality.⁵² Budgets were not unified, kings often did not know what exactly their income was, the monarch did not have unified control over his territory,⁵³ and other political entities could at times be economically more efficient, but lacked institutionalized authority to be fully recognized as leading political actors.⁵⁴ A logic of economic efficiency only animated most European rulers from the enlightenment onwards.

These observations seriously challenge the explanatory power of brute materialist interpretations of order change. The empirical evidence suggests that procedures of legitimation did the bulk of the work of order maintenance, and coercion operated merely at the margins. To understand the transition from a medieval order to an order of divine rights absolutism it is key to understand these legitimation procedures.

Most scholars in this vein of thought have directed attention to new ideas that emerged during the Reformation. Notably, Philpott argues, the Reformation led to a secularized notion of politics, a separation between religious and secular authority, which was the foundation for the sovereign order.⁵⁵ For Reus-Smit it was ‘the issue of liberty of religious conscience’ that impacted on the emergence of the sovereign order.⁵⁶ Yet, many of the ideas that transpired during the Reformation did not actually work in practice. For example, Protestants had to relinquish on Luther’s doctrine of two kingdoms, a separate religious and worldly sphere, when they required worldly protection. Ultimately the Reformation resulted in a dedifferentiation between church and state.⁵⁷ Furthermore, shortly after the Thirty Years War Louis XIV reversed France’s politique solution of religious toleration in the edict of Fontainebleau, and prosecuted Huguenots, because they

⁵¹ Abramson 2017; Branch 2011; Osiander 1994.

⁵² Anderson 1998, 64/65; Elias 1969; Roosen 1976, 53.

⁵³ Anderson 1998, 97-100; Gagliardo 1991, 273-79; Kann 1974, 119-131; Tilly 1975.

⁵⁴ Gagliardo 1991, 304; Mori 2010, 18.

⁵⁵ Philpott 2001, 108.

⁵⁶ Reus-Smit 2013a, 50.

⁵⁷ Gorski 2000.

did not fit into his legitimization strategy of divine right absolutism.⁵⁸ More complex legitimization mechanisms are at stake that are worth analyzing in more depth.

In their empirical accounts, many scholars who discuss the relevance of the Reformation for international order change already implicitly refer to the importance of representants, but they have not explicitly theorized their role for order stability and change.⁵⁹ So far there has also been an implicit assumption in the literature that representants mimic ideas, that they are the material expression of specific ideas.

As I will demonstrate below, representants do have to some extent an independent and not fully predictable logic that leaves its own mark on events and on the ways in which orders develop and maintain themselves. I will argue that representants played a key role in providing kings with the legitimacy vis-à-vis both the centralizing tendencies of the empire and the papacy on the one hand, and against lesser feudal lords on the other hand. In the process representants played a significant part in the transition from a medieval order of universal monarchy to an order of divine right absolutism.

A Medieval Order of Universal Monarchy

Localism and decentralization marked the Middle Ages because as long as the economy was not fully monetized, it was impossible to accumulate sufficient material resources to effectively control large stretches of territory.⁶⁰ Most people were self-sufficient, precious metals were in short supply, and money was not even considered a means to accumulate wealth.⁶¹ And yet the Middle Ages are characterized by their hierarchical international order, defined by the concept of *Monarchia Universalis*, or empire, with the pope and/or the emperor at the head of the structure.⁶² Political fragmentation and universal hierarchy concurred. While ‘for the illiterate peasants that constituted the vast majority of Christendom, the boundaries of both economic activity

⁵⁸ Nexon 2009, 240-1.

⁵⁹ Nexon 2009, 204; Phillips 2011, 65; Philpott 2001, 124; Reus-Smit 2013a, 91.

⁶⁰ Osiander 2001; Wickham 2017.

⁶¹ Cipolla 1956; Pirenne 1962.

⁶² Bosbach 1988. Imperial and papal authority both claimed to be universal in time and space. Both were at the apex of the hierarchically structured concept of empire that found its *raison-d'être* in its divine provenance, even in secularized Roman law tradition. The fundamental source of the pope's and the emperor's power was the same, not any form of tangible military might, but God's will, as expressed through representants (Kantorowicz 1957; Ullmann 1949).

and collective identification did not extend far beyond the local parish,⁶³ the emperor (and the pope) were ‘distant, semi-mythical figure(s),’ who ‘played an important part in the christian cosmos.’⁶⁴ Given that people’s daily experiences were highly place-bound, and conditioned by economic and technological development,⁶⁵ how could the emperor, the pope, and the Church in general maintain such a strong and geographically extensive degree of authority that persisted for long periods of time?⁶⁶

The conventional constructivist argument would focus on ideas, mainly by analyzing theological, legal, and philosophical treaties. But at a time when even many kings were illiterate the effects of these texts must have been limited.⁶⁷ ‘The early and high Middle Ages’ were ‘periods when gestures, insignia, and visible ceremonies played a more important role than political tracts or written agreements, if there were any.’⁶⁸ The point is not merely that artifacts, embodied practices, and the spoken word were more effective forms of communication, but that, in Gorski’s paraphrase of Van Engen, to ‘focus solely on doctrine and belief is to fundamentally misapprehend the nature of medieval religion, which centered on liturgy and ritual’.⁶⁹ Pope and emperor used specific representants, the most important of which centred around the Church building, the mass, coronation rituals, and the crown. They served not only to represent an existing authority, but to create that authority. The audience for these representants spread beyond those in whose immediate vicinity they occurred, first through oral accounts and later by media such as paintings, pamphlets, and woodcuts.⁷⁰ The point is not that ideas or material resources did not matter – they certainly did – but ideas came integrated within specific representants, while material resources created those representants, and then found expression in them.

Universal Monarchy was a mental construct that was not backed up by sufficient coercive power, and never transformed into an actual form of rulership, but it found expression in specific representants. Because of space constraints I focus on the main

⁶³ Phillips 2011, 139.

⁶⁴ Osiander 2001, 123.

⁶⁵ Osiander 2007, 367.

⁶⁶ While all of these entities were locally embedded into feudal structures, the pope, the emperor and the Church were simultaneously able to project a universal authority that reached beyond those feudal structures.

⁶⁷ Chaloupecký 1946.

⁶⁸ Bak 1990, 8.

⁶⁹ Gorski 2000, 145.

⁷⁰ Hartmann 1988.

representants of Universal Monarchy identified through an inductive analysis. Just as some texts operate as ‘monuments’, that is key texts, to which other texts refer themselves (Laclau and Mouffe 1985), there are some anchoring representants other representants depend upon within a broader semeiotic web of representants.⁷¹

In the high Middle Ages the church was the highest and most majestic building in town, and played a key part in people’s lives which were organized around the mass.⁷² The Church visualized the hierarchical medieval order. Notably gothic cathedrals were constructed during the high and late Middle Ages to express the Church’s divine power. The vaulted ceilings and the play of light from the sun’s rays through stained-glass windows inspire awe; they create the impression of a boundless, infinite space. The sheer height of the gothic cathedral rouses obeisance, as experiences of height and magnitude cause feelings of the sublime.⁷³ The cathedral towers are pointing to the sky to establish a direct connection to God’s presence in a skilful use of the divine, vertical dimension. These phenomenological experiences must have been multiplied in a medieval society accustomed to small, wooden houses and modest arrangements. The gothic cathedral expressed the Church’s power. This other-worldly space could have only been built with God’s help, and it visualised his presence.

⁷¹ For anchoring practices see Swidler 2001.

⁷² Harna and Fišer 1995.

⁷³ Zuckert 2003.



Figure 1. Cathedral of Reims by Domenico Quaglio (1787-1837). Source: Wikimedia Commons



Figure 2. Interior of St. Veits Cathedral, Prague, Czech Republic

In gothic cathedrals the ‘principle of progressive divisibility’ marks the entire building down to its smallest component.⁷⁴ This principle is the physical expression of a hierarchical order. The layout is the direct result of ‘a mentality which deemed it

⁷⁴ Panofsky 1951, 48.

necessary to make faith “clearer” by an appeal to reason and to make reason “clearer” by an appeal to imagination, [and] also felt bound to make imagination “clearer” by an appeal to the senses.’⁷⁵

While the gothic cathedral conveyed a precise message to its visitors, it also provided the frame for ceremonies. The altar is the most sacred place in the church. It structures the entire church space into more and less sacred places, and thus it marks people’s positions in the hierarchical order. These hierarchies found expression during quotidian ceremonies, such as the mass, and also during extraordinary ceremonies like the coronation. During most of the coronation ritual the king was seated on ‘a slightly elevated platform, accessible by a few steps, situated in the center, reaching the edge of the choir, that is, touching the line that separates the laity from the clergy,’⁷⁶ as described in the *ordo* of Reims from around 1230.

The coronation was the crucial inauguration ritual of rulership in medieval Europe. As a representant, it enacted the God-given hierarchical order. Through the coronation the king obtained his authority from God, mediated by the archbishop as the representative of the pope, who had the right to reverse the act and depose the king by excommunication.⁷⁷ The coronation was an extraordinary spectacle that placed the lords in the audience and the clergy, as well as the king on the stage.⁷⁸ The special space of the church, the coronation insignia, the solemnity of the gestures, sacred music in the form of the *Laudes*, and incense all transmitted the magical character of the event to the congregation.

In the early and high Middle Ages the coronation itself, neither a pre-existing entitlement nor pre-existing material power, was the act that established the king’s authority.⁷⁹ Efforts to institute primogeniture, the right of the first-born son to succeed on his father’s throne, were usually ineffective when they were merely declared, and lead to

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 38.

⁷⁶ Le Goff 1990, 51.

⁷⁷ Graham 1959.

⁷⁸ Le Goff 1990.

⁷⁹ Some believes about the sacrality of kingship have been transmitted from the pagan past, but they were translated into Christian ceremonial, notably the unction performed during the coronation (Oakley 2010). Furthermore, kings relied in their rulership on a sense of community, on respecting existing customs, and on consulting different parts of society, but what set the king apart from other feudal lords was the crown and the coronation (Reynolds 1997).

frequent succession crises.⁸⁰ Thus, Gorski and Sharma's focus on the introduction of a new family regime for ensuring the dynastic stability of kingdoms is incomplete without acknowledging the key role representants played for acquiring dynastic recognition.⁸¹ The coronation and the unction visibly demonstrated the king's divine right to rule and thus positioned him above the other feudal lords.⁸² In an analysis of the Scandinavian countries Hoffmann concludes that 'the introduction of coronation and anointing was motivated in all three Nordic kingdoms by the same concerns: to narrow the claim to the throne from the entire stirps regia to a particular dynasty and even further, to secure the succession right of the oldest legitimate son of the ruler and so secure the stability of the kingship.'⁸³ The coronation established a king's authority, and was not merely a spectacle that represented an already existing authority.

The coronation was the crucial representant that permitted kings to acquire a legitimate standing vis-à-vis lesser feudal lords. At the same time the coronation ensured the supreme authority of pope and emperor.⁸⁴ Only an archbishop could perform the coronation. The pope decided upon the distribution of archbishoprics, and he also confirmed the nomination of every archbishop. Furthermore, the emperor and the pope could both establish kingdoms. For example, the emperor provided a crown to the Czech lands in the form of a fief and the king elect had to come pick up his coronation insignia from the Holy Roman Emperor prior to the coronation.⁸⁵

The coronation insignia, most prominently among them the crown, played a crucial role in the coronation; as holy objects they increased the ceremony's sacredness.⁸⁶ The objects themselves contain a 'holy "power" (Hosius 1572) that is transmitted to their bearer' via the verbal and embodied practices that constitute the ceremony.⁸⁷ The imperial crown together with the coronation clothing have been preserved from Charlemagne's coronation.⁸⁸ The imperial crown, the worthiest of all, is an iconic

⁸⁰ Le Goff 1990.

⁸¹ Gorski and Sharma 2017.

⁸² Reynolds 1997; Oakley 2012; 2015.

⁸³ Hoffmann 1990, 142.

⁸⁴ Le Goff 1990.

⁸⁵ Harna and Fišer 1995.

⁸⁶ Schütte 1995.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 421. Author's translation from German.

⁸⁸ Woolley 1915.

representation of the heavenly Jerusalem as it appears in the epiphany of John: ‘Nothing of what the apostle describes has remained without replication on the crown.’⁸⁹ The bearer of the crown was entitled to unlimited worldly rule and to heavenly rule on Jesus’s side in the afterlife.⁹⁰

Many other representants completed the semeiotic web of representants. For example, in the linguistic realm, the universal reach of Latin as the language of the educated classes, international interaction, and the Church had the functional effect that it allowed for easy communication, but it also ideationally established a singular space reminiscent of the Roman empire, and whose imagined centre was Rome. The roots of the Roman Empire were also maintained in the title of the Holy Roman Empire, which persisted even though the Holy Roman Emperor never actually controlled Rome.

Some concrete effects resulted from the Christian hierarchical order, for instance, the universal reach of canon law, or the emperor’s and the pope’s dispute-settling powers.⁹¹ A few examples demonstrate that the pope’s and the emperor’s authority was not a mere chimera. Hagender mentions a letter King Henry II of England sent to the emperor Friedrich Barbarossa in 1157, in which Henry II transfers the power of disposition to Barbarossa so that the latter brings the internal difficulties of the kingdom into order according to the will of the empire.⁹² Henry II writes that he will behave in obedience to the emperor because the emperor has more dignity and authority. Another example, which substantiates the possible real effects of the emperor’s power, stems from the Czech lands, where Otakar II refused to accept his feudal rights from his competitor Rudolf Habsburg, who became Roman King (the king of the German lands, who had the entitlement to become emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, but had not yet been crowned as such). As a result, Rudolf removed the feudal rights from the Czech king and put an anathema on him. The anathema led to an open revolt of the Czech lords, culminating in Otakar II’s murder and a period of lawlessness in the Czech lands.⁹³ Contrary to the

⁸⁹ Decker-Hauff qtd. in Ott 1995, 550. Author’s translation from German.

⁹⁰ Hagender 1985.

⁹¹ Bosbach 1988; Hall 1997.

⁹² Hagender 1985.

⁹³ Harna and Fišer 1995.

bellicist argument, the case demonstrates that as soon as the king lost his legitimacy, his material power was insufficient to ensure his position against lesser feudal lords.

The *Monarchia Universalis*, the idea of a unified Christian world ordered by a clear hierarchical principle, was a mental construct with several real, material consequences attached to it. It was about the possibility of papal and imperial authority, about a de jure authority that could become a de facto authority, in some instances.⁹⁴ However, the *Monarchia Universalis* was far from ever becoming an actual political entity.⁹⁵ We can best understand the distance between political reality and its imagination by conceiving of universal monarchy as an aid for conceptualizing international dynamic processes. Just like the balance of power, universal monarchy was deemed a tendency towards an ideal-type goal, a reference-point for evaluation.⁹⁶

The progressive transition from the medieval order to an order based on dynastic absolutism required two concomitant processes: the up-scaling of local authority and the down-scaling of imperial authority. Kings in their dynasties became the key actors in the new order. While some authors focused on the ideational effects of Protestantism to highlight how kings won out against the Pope's and the Emperor's universal authority,⁹⁷ others directed attention to material factors to explain how kings succeeded against lesser feudal lords. Yet, the latter overstate the role of material coercion and understate the importance of legitimacy. While the former, have generally omitted that kings had to not only rid themselves of papal and imperial supremacy, but simultaneously ensure their privileged position vis-à-vis lesser feudal lords. In the following account I propose that representants played a crucial role in this development.

Increasing Threats to Kings' Status and their Ensuing Desire for Independence from Universal Monarchy

The initial triggering conditions that launched the process of changes in representants lay in an increased frequency of travel and a gradual monetization of the economy, processes, which started in the second half of the 12th century and continued over the next

⁹⁴ Hagender 1985.

⁹⁵ Koebner 1961.

⁹⁶ Bosbach 1988, 127.

⁹⁷ Reus-Smit 2013a.

few centuries.⁹⁸ Improvement of ‘the infrastructure of travel’ (enhanced roads and shipbuilding, and the emergence of traveler handbooks) lead to an effective shrinkage of distances.⁹⁹ Direct contact between rulers intensified. A monetization of the economy occurred because of an improved agricultural production, which permitted an increased division of labor, and allowed for the accumulation of wealth. Because of these developments the material power basis of the emperor, kings, as well as feudal lords increased, which strengthened the opportunities for solidifying state apparatuses.¹⁰⁰

Kings became more active internationally, and were at this international level increasingly confronted with the immanent reality of the pope and the emperor, who had previously operated as distant, semi-mythical figures. The pope and the emperor intermittently sought to assert their supremacy over kings,¹⁰¹ for example Boniface VIII in the papal bull *Unam Sanctam* from 1302,¹⁰² or later Charles V, who sought to materialize universal monarchy into an actual form of rulership. Under the new circumstances these efforts appeared significantly more threatening, and simultaneously made those assertions feel more inadequate than they had in the past. Kings responded in kind. From the 14th century onwards kings started to challenge the supremacy of pope and emperor.¹⁰³

Despite the increases in material capabilities, coercive force was still insufficient to ensure the obedience of subjects towards their kings, or even to ensure kings’ predominance over other feudal lords.¹⁰⁴ Kings rather had to rely on a higher degree of legitimacy, which they obtained by virtue of being crowned, and from the sacredness they acquired from the unction performed during the coronation.¹⁰⁵ Yet, kings relied on the pope and the emperor to bestow them with the necessary legitimacy for their rule via the coronation. Hence, to ensure their independence, kings had to resort to changes in representants. Struggles over representants ensued, which initially primarily centered

⁹⁸ McNeill 1982, 7; Wickham 2017, 121-39.

⁹⁹ Pounds 1990, 253.

¹⁰⁰ See also Abramson 2017; Latham 2012; Phillips 2011, 77; Spruyt 1996, 26; Tilly 1993; Wickham 2017, 142.

¹⁰¹ Oakley 2012; 2015; Osiander 2007.

¹⁰² Bartelson 2010; Koebner 1961.

¹⁰³ Hall 1997; Latham 2012; Osiander 2007.

¹⁰⁴ McNeill 1982, 105

¹⁰⁵ Osiander 2007, 368-371; Reynolds 1997, 259-66.

around the coronation ceremonial.¹⁰⁶ The period of the Reformation, on which this section focuses, was the last stage in these controversies, and the stage which entailed the most far reaching and profound changes in representants. Two concomitant processes occurred that definitely destroyed universal monarchy and led to the establishment of divine right absolutism in its stead: (1) Iconoclasm destroyed the representants supporting the medieval hierarchical order with the church, the pope, and the emperor at the center of it; and (2) kings' appropriation and repurposing of the Church's representants served to creatively re-allocate political authority to kings to consolidate a monarchical authority that was internally hierarchically structured, but externally independent. Populations accepted this new authority as it was based on already known forms.

Struggles between Protestant Kings and the Emperor/Pope over Representants

When Charles V, elected emperor in 1519, appeared to intend the full materialization of the *Monarchia Universalis* under his rule,¹⁰⁷ kings were particularly alarmed, and felt an urgency to clearly institute their juridical and factual autonomy.¹⁰⁸

The emergence of Protestantism provided rulers and political elites with the final means to curtail the emperor's and the pope's power, after long drawn out struggles that had lasted over two centuries. The Reformation emerged as a reaction against the alleged decadence of the Roman Catholic Church.¹⁰⁹ Its key carriers were disaffected clerics who developed new ideas of religious worship and communitarian organization. A network of clerics spread those ideas in sermons held in the vernacular and through printed woodcuts, pamphlets and satirical pictures. Kings were able to use this movement to their advantage.

The destruction of the Catholic Church's representants in the form of iconoclasm was the crucial mechanism through which the Roman Church lost its position in the Protestant lands. The iconoclasm was a process of destroying representants to undermine the existing form of order. Martin Luther considered ceremonial one of the main sources of

¹⁰⁶ Kantorowicz 1957; Oakley 2012; 2015.

¹⁰⁷ Bosbach 1988, 35.

¹⁰⁸ Anderson 1998, 102.

¹⁰⁹ Reus-Smit 2013a, 89.

papal power. In Luther's understanding ceremonial included not just ritual practices, but also the church building, and people's dress. He described the 'pope as the Anti-Christ and the Roman curia as a devil's court who need the implementation of unified ceremonial, a ceremonial centralism and imperialism, to bind the Christians of all countries to their power and to soak the soul out of their bodies and the money from their pockets.'¹¹⁰ The mass formed a central component of Luther's ceremonial critique, which he combined with a critique of the Old Testament in favor of the New:

And it is not appropriate to build this or that Church or to decorate it in certain ways or sing in certain ways; and by the way neither organs nor altar decoration, nor vases, nor paintings, and all of that which now is in the Lord's house. Since all of these are merely shadows and schemes of the things themselves and puerilities. Namely every day is festive, every meal permitted, every place holy, every time is fasting time, all dress is permitted; everything is free, but one should proceed in modesty and with love, as the apostle taught.¹¹¹

Although Luther himself rejected iconoclasm, because he feared for the threat to law and order it generated, he was nonetheless opposed to the Church's use of representants, at least initially. Many other reformation preachers in turn actively promoted iconoclasm.¹¹² Accordingly, riots of spontaneously formed mobs, such as the 'Beggars' in the Netherlands destroyed Church images, statues of saints, altars, and crosses. Sculptures were often decapitated, and left in their original location to demonstrate the humiliation and punishment of the authority they were representing. Images were smeared with blood, burned on the stake, or thrown in wells. Those considered to have miracle-bearing powers were often destroyed or removed first to demonstrate the images' lack of magical power to save themselves.¹¹³ In other instances, Reformers (sometimes with the help of state authorities) purposefully organized themselves to remove imagery and decorations and keep them in storage untarnished. At times, they gradually adapted church buildings, occasionally also in an effort to prevent riots.¹¹⁴ In still other instances

¹¹⁰ Berns 1995, 163. Author's translation from German.

¹¹¹ Luther qtd. In Berns 1995, 166. Author's translation from German.

¹¹² Cuneo 1996.

¹¹³ Michalski 1993, 77.

¹¹⁴ Anderson 1998; Bergsma 1994; Cameron 2012; Collinson 1994; Michalski 1993.

state authorities prohibited the conduct of Catholic masses and ordered the removal of religious imagery.¹¹⁵

Instead of catholic representants Reformers designed new representants that were in line with their ideas: 'The physical layout of the liturgy was decisively and visibly altered across the country for perhaps the first time. Vestments and ornaments were drastically simplified, leavened bread was given in place of communion wafers into the laity's hands, and tables in the body of the church replaced altars in the chancel.'¹¹⁶ Simple windows replaced stained glass.¹¹⁷ Clerics translated bibles into vernacular languages and held the services in the vernacular.¹¹⁸ This helped to remove the mysticism from the service, as ordinary people could now understand the service and reflect upon it, and did not have to rely on the service's ceremonial features to acquire a sensual perception of the divine from the ceremony. The changes in representants directly challenged the Pope's, the Roman Church's, and the Emperor's authority.

Many kings used the Reformation's serious challenge to the Church's authority, and positioned themselves at the head of the newly emerging national churches. Henry VIII declared himself head of the Anglican Church and denied the pope's authority to rid himself of the Catholic Church's overlordship.¹¹⁹ The Scandinavian kings similarly took control of the emerging churches, made the Protestant belief uniform in their realm, and outlawed dissent.¹²⁰ In England, Sweden and Denmark kings created state churches as 'departments of states.'¹²¹ In other cases, notably, the Netherlands and Switzerland, animated by a less-orchestrated and more spontaneous popular movement of dissent, the Reformation nonetheless permitted political elites to establish their de facto and de jure independence from pope and emperor.¹²² The national churches became the legitimating force for the new rulers; through them rulers obtained their legitimacy directly from God

¹¹⁵ Cuneo 1996.

¹¹⁶ Cameron 2012, 288.

¹¹⁷ Gorski 2000.

¹¹⁸ The translation of the Bible into the vernacular carried with it huge societal consequences that are well beyond the reach of this paper. Here I merely wanted to briefly allude to the representative effects of the event.

¹¹⁹ Cameron 2012; Collinson 1994.

¹²⁰ Grell 1994.

¹²¹ Cameron 2012, 180.

¹²² Scribner 1994.

without the need for the pope's or the emperor's mediation.¹²³ In Reus-Smit's words 'rejecting the transnational authority of the Church did not entail a rejection of Christianity per se, rather the natural and social universe was re-imagined to invest territorial monarchs with authority direct from God.'¹²⁴

While changes in representants were the most powerful and effective means to weaken the Catholic Church's reach and hence the associated ordering mechanism of universal monarchy, they were also the most contested in the population. Even in countries such as the Netherlands, Switzerland, or Germany, where Protestantism spread 'from below', the new religion was unpopular among the majority of the population,¹²⁵ let alone countries such as England, Denmark, or Sweden, where kings imposed it 'from above.'¹²⁶ People did not understand the reformers' theologically abstract arguments very well, but they cared about the images of Jesus and Mary who they could pray to for miracles, the elevation of the host which was supposed to bring them luck, and the street plays that would entertain them. In brief, they cared about the representants they were used to.¹²⁷ The Protestant representants did not acquire societal recognition, because they failed to fit with preceding representants, and they did not evoke the necessary affect in the population. Their effectiveness was challenged. Contested Protestant representants indicate how it is the representants that constitute authority, rather than agents' ability to determine that specific practices, artifacts, or language represent authority. The popular opposition demonstrates that even when representants derive initially from particular ideas they can nonetheless develop their own dynamic that is worth analyzing independently.

The discontent with the Reformation went at times so far that, for example, the Swedish King Gustav Vasa had to appease the masses by promising that 'all good old Christian customs may be confirmed and maintained, and the Lutheran heresy and the evil communications that go with it be clean done away,'¹²⁸ although eventually he did not keep these promises. In the Czech lands king Frederick V lost popular support

¹²³ Saever, 1982.

¹²⁴ Reus-Smit 1999, 93.

¹²⁵ Anderson 1998, 140; Bergsma 1994, 76; Cameron 2012, 390.

¹²⁶ Collinson 1994; Roberts 1968; Saever 1982, 278.

¹²⁷ Bergsma, 1994; Cameron 2012, 309; Grell, 1994; Roberts 1968.

¹²⁸ Qtd. in Roberts 1968, 87.

following the removal of images and statues from St. Vitus cathedral, which ‘in some ways was unquestionably one of the causes of his isolation and his defeat in the battle of the White Mountain.’¹²⁹ The defeat cost him his rule. In England Henry VIII felt that ‘attacks on traditional religious practices agitated an otherwise docile and obedient people,’ who was willing to accept the break with Rome.¹³⁰ An English bishop had warned that the iconoclasm would be directed against the king, as it was removing the base of his power, even if it was the king who orchestrated it.¹³¹ Yet, the popular contestation did not lead kings to backtrack on Protestantism per se. They rather appropriated the Catholic representants for their own purposes to maintain a regionally constrained power, independent from Rome, albeit one that was still internally hierarchically structured.¹³²

Although Luther initially rejected the appropriateness of ceremonial in the religious realm, over time, as a result of popular opposition, he came to change his opinion, and established the utility of ceremonial to appease the people who were still attached to the traditional ordering elements and signs of the Pre-reformation mass.¹³³ Many Lutheran Churches reintroduced or kept altars, paintings, and statues of saints in their buildings, and the priests often elevated the host in the mass and continued to drink the consecrated wine,¹³⁴ thus retaining the hierarchical distinction between laity and clergy. In England Henry VIII decided to maintain the cathedrals that hard-liner Protestants so despised,¹³⁵ while English Protestant bishops under Elizabeth I’s reign feared being dismissed for complaining about the elaborate clerical vestments and the crucifix and candles forming a little altar in her chapel.¹³⁶

¹²⁹ Michalski 1993, 84.

¹³⁰ Duffy 1992, 387.

¹³¹ Michalski 1993, 85.

¹³² Cameron 2012, 283-90; Grell 1994; Roberts 1968, 120. Calvinists retained far fewer Catholic forms than Lutheranism and, not coincidentally, many Calvinists as well as their enemies identified Calvinism with Republicanism. This caused significant challenges for the recognition of Calvinists either on the domestic front (such as in France), or internationally (as was the case for the Low Countries) (Roosen 1976; Watson 1992).

¹³³ Berns 1995; Cameron 2012.

¹³⁴ Grell 1994.

¹³⁵ Collinson 1994.

¹³⁶ Cameron 2012; McCoy 1990.

Protestant rulers adapted Catholic representants for their own purposes. They appropriated Catholic representants as a means of creatively re-allocating political authority and tethering it to themselves via the capture and repurposing of representants from the old order to establish a new order. The Catholic Church lost its power to function as the transmitter of God's will in the coronation ritual. This power transposed almost unnoticed to the national level, first to the Protestant churches, from where it could be transferred to the secular sphere. In fact, having the possibility to name their own archbishop was one of the main reasons secular rulers were so eager to promote the Reformation.¹³⁷ Once in Protestant hands the ritual itself definitely lost its initiating meaning. Thus, Anglican Archbishop Cranmer proclaimed during his sermon at Edward VI's coronation that kings 'be God's Anointed, not in respect of the oil which the bishop useth, but in consideration of their power which is ordained (...) and of their persons, which are elected of God and imbued with the gifts of his Spirit for the better ruling and guiding of this people. The oil, if added, is but a ceremony: if it be wanting, that king is yet a perfect monarch notwithstanding, and God's Anointed as well as if he was inoiled.'¹³⁸ This differs markedly from one century earlier when Nicholas of Clamanges 'assured Henry V of England that it was by divine ordination and via the sacred anointing with chrism that Christian kings were to be viewed as "holy, after the likeness of priests".'¹³⁹ With the progression of the Reformation there was no doubt left that the king was king by divine right, from the moment of his birth; it was no longer the unction performed during the coronation that provided him with his sacrality.

Yet, kings continued to use the coronation ceremony as an important spectacle to visualize their legitimacy and their sacred right to rule. The ceremony remained crucial because it established vivid images of power and authority. By employing splendor, magic, and skillful staging, the king himself resembled God.¹⁴⁰ The king could rid himself of the superior papal and imperial authority while maintaining a crucial advantage over other lords, thanks to this historical and regularly reenacted connection to the sacred and the divine.

¹³⁷ Roberts 1968.

¹³⁸ Qtd. in McCoy 1990, 218.

¹³⁹ Oakley 2015, 131.

¹⁴⁰ Kantorowicz 1957.

To more firmly establish the divine right to rule, kings adapted other initially papal and imperial representants in the semeiotic web for their own purposes, such as the ceremonial practices of Christian liturgy, which they transposed into practices of courtly ceremonial. Making use of courtly ceremonial, kings instituted a hierarchically structured order of the realm within the palace walls that was bodily experienced on a daily basis by the guests who entered the edifice and even more so by the aristocrats who permanently resided there.¹⁴¹ In the same way in which the altar structured the church space into more and less accessible spaces and thus ensured physical hierarchies, the throne, or in Louis XIV's case the bed, structured the accessibility of spaces in the palace.¹⁴² Louis XIV mastered the art of ruling his kingdom through the courtly ceremonial at the palace of Versailles, and others sought to imitate him as best they could.¹⁴³ Kings also transferred papal diplomatic practices of exclusive and singular diplomatic representation into the secular realm, so that one diplomat only represented a singular ruler, and each diplomatic mission had a single head.¹⁴⁴ The distinction that only sovereign powers could send ambassadors was fully established by the end of the seventeenth century.¹⁴⁵

The imitation of papal and imperial ceremony was aided by Luther's critique of ceremonial, which approved of and even advocated for princely ceremonial, while fiercely denouncing its religious counterpart. In reference to a Bible passage Luther confirms the princes as 'earthly gods' -- a highly welcome statement because it provided the necessary legitimacy for rulers to stage themselves as pagan gods – Apollo, Heracles, Venus or Jupiter – without having to fear committing blasphemy.¹⁴⁶ Henceforward the prince himself could be a deity because representants portrayed him as such.¹⁴⁷

Together with these representants kings transposed the concept of a unified hierarchically structured space to the national level. They also transferred linguistic forms from the religious into the secular realm. Thus, Henry VIII terminated in 1533 'papal jurisdiction on the grounds that "this realm of England is an Empire"' ¹⁴⁸ 'governed by

¹⁴¹ Berns 1995.

¹⁴² Hartmann 1988; Schütte 1995.

¹⁴³ Elias 1969.

¹⁴⁴ Mattingly 1963, 22.

¹⁴⁵ Anderson 1993.

¹⁴⁶ Berns 1995; Sommer-Mathis 1995.

¹⁴⁷ White 1964.

¹⁴⁸ Qtd. in Hamilton and Langhorne 2011, 38.

one supreme head and king, and having the dignity and royal estate of the imperial crown of the same.’¹⁴⁹ To provide the necessary legitimacy to this invented imperial crown, Henry VIII had the Italian historian Polydore Vergil write a history of England, the *Anglica Historia*, in which he stated that England’s imperial title was of ancient standing, directly transmitted from the emperor Constantine.¹⁵⁰ The slogan ‘*rex imperator in regno suo*,’ the king is emperor in his realm, which had first been coined in the thirteenth century, became the motto that grounded the independence of kings. The concept of Rome as the actual or imagined center of the Universal Monarchy transferred to the secular realm in the form of the capital city as that one center of the common fatherland.¹⁵¹

The changes in representants resulted in universal monarchy’s disappearance as Europe’s ordering mechanism. By the time of the Peace of Westphalia it was clear that universal monarchy was no longer Europe’s defining order. In its stead, the changes in representants established the understanding that a series of independent states that were internally hierarchically structured co-existed in the international system. *Monarchia Universalis* was from now on considered a threat that could endanger the newly emerging order.¹⁵² The concern over universal monarchy formed the foundation on which balance-of-power thinking could emerge as a new ordering principle, as a mechanism to balance against any potential universal monarch.¹⁵³

Conclusion

This paper highlighted the constitutive dimension of representants for international orders. By doing so it anchors large scale and long-term macro-processes of international order change in everyday small-scale practices and artifacts. It further highlights the constitutive dimension of materiality that operates to some extent differently, but by no means less significantly than the constitutive dimension of discourses.

¹⁴⁹ Qtd. in Kantorowicz 1957, 228.

¹⁵⁰ Koebner 1961; Cameron 2012.

¹⁵¹ Kantorowicz 1957.

¹⁵² Bosbach 1988.

¹⁵³ Anderson 1993.

Representants constitute political authority and its configuration. Given that international actors deal with a macro-realm that can never be fully present, representants play a key role for establishing shared understandings about what it is that political actors are governing. Representants are such artifacts, practices, and language that make the units of the international system present in international politics. Representants include certain elements that make them look similar to the object they are representing, and they also always exclude certain features. In these inclusions and exclusions lies representants' independent constitutive effect. Notably, representants define and characterize the relevant units of international politics. By doing so they legitimize them as international political actors. Representants position those units in relations to each other and thus endow them with differential degrees of power. Lastly, representants serve as tools with which international actors order their relations.

Representants intervene in processes of order transformation, and are a critical if underappreciated dimension of political ordering. They intersect through multiple channels with material and ideational dynamics, but in the last instance authority and its distribution in international politics gets defined by representants. Material and ideational factors can shape representants, but they do not determine them, as material and ideational features are multiply realisable. It is necessary to pay attention to how specifically material resources and ideas take shape in representants to understand the concrete form authority and its distribution takes in the international system.

Actors struggle over representants. Notably those who fear that their standing in an order is threatened or who want to improve their position, and cannot do so with the available representants, can seek a change in representants. The societal recognition of new representants plays a key role for the establishment of a new order. Dominant representants cannot be imposed by force, nor do they follow a purely normative logic, but they contain an important performative dimension. Societies at large need to accept key representants as appropriately reflecting their vision of the world.

The paper demonstrated the relevance of representants on the example of international order change from a medieval order based on universal monarchy to a Post-Westphalian order based on divine right absolutism. Specific representants, such as the gothic cathedral, coronation ceremonials, and Christian liturgy established a hierarchical

order in the Middle Ages in the absence of sufficient coercive capacity to impose such an order. With a monetization of the economy and technological advancements that made travel easier, the material power basis of kings, feudal lords, and the emperor increased and direct contact between political rulers intensified. Kings felt increasingly uneasy about the emperor's and the pope's possibilities to translate their *de jure* authority into a *de facto* authority. The emergence of Protestantism provided kings with the final push to rid themselves of imperial and papal authority, while ensuring their legitimacy above feudal lords. In iconoclasms Protestants, at times supported by state authorities, destroyed the Church's representants that defined the hierarchical medieval order. At the same time kings appropriated the Church's representants to demonstrate their divine right to rule and establish a domestic hierarchical order while ensuring their international independence. They modified the coronation ceremonial, adapted Christian liturgy into courtly ceremonial, and declared themselves emperors in their own realms. These changes in representants played a crucial role for ensuring the legitimacy of dynastic rule.

Representants continue to play a significant role in today's post-enlightenment world, but the types of representants scholars have to focus on are different. For example, representants are crucial for the recognition of sovereign statehood. Some states have very weak domestic state apparati, but are recognized as sovereign states, because they have a seat at the United Nations, a demarcated territory on maps, a government, and diplomatic representation. Entities that aspire to sovereign statehood focus on acquiring the relevant representants. Palestine obtaining a seat of a non-member observer state at the United Nations, and Mahmoud Abbas being allowed to sit in the beige chair reserved for heads of state about to take the podium at the UN, are of such significance, because these are representants that indicate sovereignty, and specific consequences in international law are attached to them. In negotiations in Geneva between Russia and Georgia over South Ossetia and Abkhazia, Russia was extremely adamant about the seating arrangement, because Russia did not want to indicate that South Ossetia and Abkhazia had the same status as the independent states at the table. An observer to those negotiations remarked as much: 'The question of status is obviously the question that is everywhere. Where people sit over lunch is status related.'¹⁵⁴ Sovereignty is tied to

¹⁵⁴ Field notes from the Political and Security Committee of the European Union, 16th of December 2014.

specific representants, which becomes most apparent when a particular entity's sovereignty is contested.

By contrast, other entities want to be recognized as legitimate actors, but not necessarily as sovereign states; they therefore develop alternative representants. In the emergence of these alternative representants the beginnings of entirely new orders may lie. For example, indigenous communities started their campaign for aboriginal rights in Australia first with a beach umbrella, which they upgraded to a tent embassy.¹⁵⁵ Even when the Australian government refused to recognize the tent embassy and provided the communities with the opportunity to move into more permanent premises, the indigenous communities stuck to their tent embassy as a more authentic expression of their identity. In the European Union, in turn, the European Parliament develops representants that make the European order resemble a democratic federal state. For example, the parties in the European parliament now nominate prior to European elections Spitzenkandidaten, top candidates for each European party, with the understanding that the top candidate of the party who wins the elections to the European Parliament will become the next president of the European commission. This arrangement is not stipulated anywhere in the treaties, nor have member states agreed to it; on the contrary, they fiercely contest it. Yet, with this and similar staged performances the European Parliament adopts representants that are known from domestic politics, and therefore runs a chance of being successful. The aim is to enhance the power of the EP, and to make the EU look more democratic, but, if successful in the longer term, a change in these representants invariably entails a change in the European order.

To this date struggles over representants play an important role in international politics, and are worthy of analysis in their own right. By directing attention to them, IR scholars might uncover hitherto undervalued dynamics and new trends.

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¹⁵⁵ Constantinou and Der Derian 2010.

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