

In this piece, Ruggie seeks to use the transformation from the medieval system to the modern international system as historical leverage to discredit a Waltzian perspective that takes sovereignty for granted and maintains an exaggerated focus on relative power capabilities. His primary concern is the "principles of differentiation" that have separated the two epochs. By this he means the conceptions of property rights, the juridical and administrative relationships, and the normative customs that specified who the relevant actors were at any given time and the legal and normative obligations which set the parameters on their interactions. In this vein, Ruggie compares feudal lord-vassal relations, which carried explicit notions of social obligation, to the modern conception of private property, which holds that ownership is isomorphic with the right to exclude others from the ownership or use of a given item. The administrative differences, in his view, rested in the relative fixity of territorial boundaries and the exclusivity of rule within those boundaries. In the medieval case, one finds a "patchwork of overlapping and incomplete rights of government" as well as a kingdom-hopping ruling class while in the modern scenario one finds that jurisdictional domains are exclusive and fixed. For Ruggie, these differences matter to the extent that they allow him to make the claim that anarchy did not imply sovereignty in the medieval system. Because one does not find exclusive notions of property rights in the medieval world, one does not find the forms of "sociality" that one would expect of sovereign nation-states interacting in an anarchic environment. This allows Ruggie to insinuate that the applicability of third image realism ala Waltz is limited to the modern world and that had "differentiation" been rightly conceptualized as problematic, Waltz could not have abandoned a focus on domestic political life.