

# Reconstructing World Politics: The Emergence of Global Civil Society

Ronnie D. Lipschutz

Modern environments and experiences cut across all boundaries of geography and ethnicity, of class and nationality, of religion and ideology: in this sense, modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a paradoxical modernity, a unity of disunity: it pours us into a maelstrom of perpetual disintegration and renewal, of struggle and contradiction, of ambiguity and anguish.

Marshall Berman<sup>1</sup>

To talk of civil society is to reserve the priorities of political economy. It is to assert that human beings and their desires can alter otherwise determinant structures. It is to open unexpected possibilities rather than to focus on the conditions that make defeat inevitable. It is to believe that not only change will happen, but that it probably has already happened – even without our knowing.

Alan Wolfe<sup>2</sup>

## Global Civil Society and the World Today

Amidst the vociferous debates underway about the nature of state action, the structure of the international system, and the 'true' nature of international relations,<sup>3</sup> there is an emerging recognition that the focus on 'structure' and 'process' as the central concerns of the discipline is too limiting; the neo-classical approaches tend to ignore or downplay other forces at work in world

---

An earlier version of this paper was presented at the annual meeting of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, USA 31 March–4 April, 1992. In writing it I have benefitted from discussions with many people, including members of the Board of Studies in Politics at University of California at Santa Cruz, David Meyer, Paul Wapner, Dan Deudney, Alan Durning, Judith Mayer, James Rosenau, Michael Barnett, Beverly Crawford, Ole Weaver, Alan Gilbert and James Der Derian.

1. Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts Into Air* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1982), p. 15.

2. Alan Wolfe, 'Three Paths to Development: Market, State, and Civil Society,' Paper presented to the International Meeting of NGOs and the UN System Agencies, Rio De Janeiro, 6–9 August 1991, p. 1.

3. An example of the latest stage in this debate – between constructivism and realism – can be found in Alexander Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It: The Social Construction of Power Politics', *International Organization* (Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992), pp. 391–425; and Markus Fischer, 'Feudal Europe, 800–1300: Communal Discourse and Conflicting Practices', *International Organization* (Vol. 46, No. 2, Spring 1992), pp. 427–66, and citations therein.

politics. Both the 'neorealist' and 'neo-liberal' approaches remain state-centric, regarding states as dominant and able to minimise the influence or significance of other, non-state, actors. Comparisons of the medieval system with the modern state system, as a means of addressing disputes between neorealists and institutionalists, are also in vogue.<sup>4</sup> Was medievalism similar to the current system or was it different? Who were the legitimate actors? How was the system constituted? Was sovereignty the same or defined differently? These debates are somewhat sterile, for they centre on comparisons of static, idealised social and political arrangements, and fail to say very much about how the two systems coexisted during the period of transformation, or how participants could have been aware that a transformation was underway. By arguing that transformation can be detected only when direct, and successful, challenges to the territorial state take place, many of these writers disregard the nature of social transitions and the ways in which social arrangements sometimes succumb to attacks from within.

By adhering to a state-centred approach, and placing such stringent conditions on the detection of transformation, these writers may be ignoring the emergence of a parallel arrangement of political interaction, one that does not take anarchy or self-help as central organising principles, but is focused on the self-conscious constructions of networks of knowledge and action, by decentred, local actors, that cross the reified boundaries of space as though they were not there. This arrangement, or 'global civil society', is not new. Indeed, it is difficult to determine its origins, but it may already have done much to modify and dampen the conflictual nature of a socially constructed anarchy.<sup>5</sup> Significant today, however, is the growing 'density' and visibility of global civil society and its impact on the socially constructed realm of international politics. A number of writers have raised the notion of global civil society, in one form or another. Hedley Bull speculated on a 'new mediaevalism';<sup>6</sup> James N. Rosenau has written about 'sovereignty-free actors';<sup>7</sup> and the terms 'international civil

---

4. See, for example, Fischer, 'Feudal Europe', *op. cit.*, in note 3; Stephen D. Krasner, 'Westphalia', Paper prepared for SSRC Conference on Ideas and Foreign Policy, Stanford University, April 1991; John G. Ruggie, 'Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations', *International Organization* (Vol. 47, No.1, Winter 1993), pp. 141–76. Ken Booth observes, somewhat tongue in cheek, that 'By the 1980s, the academic study of international politics had itself become an anarchical society.' 'Security in Anarchy: Utopian Realism in Theory and Practice,' *International Affairs* (Vol. 67, No. 3, July 1991), p. 530.

5. This notion is borrowed from Barry Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, 2nd ed. (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1991). I will also argue below that anarchy is, in fact, a fiction.

6. Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1977), pp. 254–76.

7. James N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics: A Theory of Change and Continuity* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990).

society' and 'global civil society',<sup>8</sup> are becoming increasingly familiar to members of the discipline.

Why is the notion of global civil society significant and worth closer investigation? There are, I think, two reasons. The first is that there is not one, but many heteronomous<sup>9</sup> transnational political networks being established by and among actors within civil society who themselves are, in a sense, 'imagined communities',<sup>10</sup> and who are challenging, from below, the nation-state system. The second reason is that the growth of global civil society represents an ongoing project of civil society to reconstruct, re-imagine, or re-map world politics. As this project proceeds, civil society is becoming global and therefore a political force to be reckoned with in a way that has not been the case since the medieval period. This is not to suggest, however, that the nation-state, as an actor, is finished – indeed, it is likely that the nation-state will be around, in one form or another, for some time to come. Yet, as Alan Wolfe suggests, change is happening, even if we are not fully aware of it, which we cannot ignore if we are to portray accurately contemporary international relations.<sup>11</sup>

The term 'civil society' is used mindful of its association with the 1989 and 1991 revolutions against Communism, and as a means to escape from what Crawford Young has called the 'cast-iron grid [of the state system that] exercises a transcendent despotism over reality'.<sup>12</sup> Our current notions of civil society are informed by the recent experiences of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, where the term was applied to those aspects of social and cultural life

---

8. See, for example, Stephen Gill, 'Reflections on Global Order and Sociohistorical Time', *Alternatives* (Vol. 16, No.3, Summer 1991), p. 311, where he uses the term global civil society; Ken Booth, 'Security in Anarchy', *op.cit.*, in note 4; Paul Wapner, 'Ecological Activism and World Civic Politics', Paper prepared for a panel on the Role of NGOs in International Environmental Cooperation and Security, International Studies Association Conference, Atlanta, 31 March–4 April 1992; and Paul Ghils, 'International Civil Society: International Non-Governmental Organizations in the International System', *International Social Science Journal* (Vol. 133, August 1992), pp. 417–29.

9. 'Heteronomous', in this case, implies that these networks are differentiated from each other in terms of specialisations: there is not a single network, but many, each fulfilling a different function. For a discussion of the term in the medieval context, see John G. Ruggie, 'Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis', *World Politics* (Vol. 35, No. 2, January 1983), pp. 273–4.

10. The term is from Benedict Anderson who writes: 'Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. Javanese villagers have always known that they are connected to people they have never seen, but these ties were once imagined particularistically – as indefinitely stretchable nets of kinship and clientship.' *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 1991), p. 6.

11. Wolfe, *op.cit.*, in note 2, p. 1.

12. Crawford Young, *The Politics of Cultural Pluralism* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), p. 66. The state-centred systemic model is a 'transforming theory' or model that originates in the practices of state diplomacy, is appropriated by those who study these practices and which, in turn, influences those practices. See David Dessler, 'The Use and Abuse of Social Science for Policy', *SAIS Review* (Vol. 9, No. 2, Summer-Fall 1989), pp. 222–3.

that had not been captured or colonised by the totalitarian state.<sup>13</sup> In what used to be called 'the West', the idea that one might even think about civil society in similar terms has always been a non-starter. Yet, in a sense, even societies in the West have been 'colonized' by their states. First, in the sense that the state has taken control of certain political realms, such as foreign policy. As a result, the notion that foreign policy could be conducted autonomously of a state's bureaucratic apparatus has little credence, either in terms of effectiveness or legitimacy.<sup>14</sup> Indeed, the idea that the international state system is the place where politics across borders happens has delegitimised even the conceptual possibilities of political action outside of a state framework. Second, as a consequence of this statist monopoly, in liberal economies only the realm of consumption has been left to civil society: one's politics are what one consumes – thus to consume 'Green' products is to be a 'Green'. However, as I will argue below, it is the very homogeneity and pervasiveness of this consumer culture – and its extension to institutionalised politics as an historical process – that has opened up a political space for the revival of civil society.<sup>15</sup>

This paper starts with some brief descriptions of global civil society, while recognising that we are not yet in a position to begin to construct definitive guides to it.<sup>16</sup> The notion of civil society is then discussed, showing how it might be applied to global politics, and how it is different from other current concepts in international relations theory and international political economy. Then it looks at the emergence of global civil society as an historical process arising from the conjunction of three changes: first, the 'fading away' of anarchy among states and its replacement by a different type of norm-governed global system rooted in the global capitalist consumer culture; second, at the functional, micro-level, the inability of states to deal with certain social welfare problems resulting in increasing efforts by non-state actors to address them; and, third, the crumbling of old forms of political identity, centred on the state, and the growth of new forms of political and social identity that are challenging the Gramscian hegemony of statist world politics.

### The Character of Global Civil Society

What exactly is encompassed by the concept of global civil society? To find it, we have to look for political spaces other than those bounded by the parameters

---

13. See, for example, Jonathan Schell, 'Introduction,' in Adam Michnik, *Letters from Prison and Other Essays* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1985); and Zbigniew Rau (ed.), *The Reemergence of Civil Society in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991).

14. See, for example, the attack on 'local foreign policies' by Peter J. Spiro, 'Taking Foreign Policy Away from the Feds', *Washington Quarterly* (Vol. 11, No. 1, Winter 1988), pp. 191–203.

15. Stuart Hall has developed this idea in detail. See, for example, 'Brave New World', *Socialist Review* (Vol. 21, No. 1, 1991), pp. 57–64, and especially pp. 62–3.

16. Hall suggests that there may be no map but, rather, '[A] network of strategies and powers and their articulations....' *Ibid.*, p. 64.

of the nation-state system. The spatial boundaries of global civil society are different, because its autonomy from the constructed boundaries of the state system also allows for the construction of new political spaces.<sup>17</sup> These political spaces are delineated by networks of economic, social and cultural relations, and they are being occupied by the conscious association of actors, in physically separated locations, who link themselves together in networks for particular political and social purposes.<sup>18</sup> The concept of epistemic communities, recently explored by Peter Haas, is one example of such networks although, as defined, epistemic communities are oriented directly toward input into the policymaking processes of the state.<sup>19</sup> While the participants in the networks of global civil society interact with states and governments over particular policy issues, the networks themselves extend across levels of analysis and state borders, and are not constrained by the state system itself. A few examples of such networks will illustrate how they are constituted and who belongs to them.

### *Environment and Development*

One political space in which global civil society is particularly visible is that surrounding environmental politics. In the sphere of environmental activities, we see a growing number of transnational networks oriented around common strategies and goals.<sup>20</sup> All of these networks exist under the over-arching rubric of a general environmental ethic – or ‘operating system’ – although the actors involved in the various networks, and the relations between them vary significantly. Some networks are quite consciously anti-state, others are oriented toward state reform, some simply ignore the state altogether. Greenpeace, for example, constitutes by itself a global network involved in both both anti-state and state-reforming tendencies simultaneously; its members participate in actions against state organisations even as they lobby national legislators.<sup>21</sup> The Asian Pacific People’s Environmental Network, based in Penang, Malaysia, is made up of both urban and rural organizations, and operates at both international and regional levels. The International Network for Environmental Management is a

---

17. ‘Ecological issues are in many respects politically and ideologically unoccupied territory; and thus the object of attention from diverse ideological standpoints.’ Alan Scott, *Ideology and the New Social Movements* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1990), p. 107.

18. See Hall, ‘Brave New World’, *op. cit.* in note 15, p. 63. I am not referring to ‘social movements’ in the general sense, although they do constitute part of global civil society; rather I am focusing on networks of action and knowledge that are much broader in scope.

19. Peter Haas (ed.), ‘Knowledge, Power, and International Policy Coordination’, *International Organization* (Vol. 46, No. 1, Winter 1992), special issue.

20. The notion of networks is briefly addressed by Sidney Tarrow, ‘National Politics and Collective Action: Recent Theory and Research in Western Europe and the United States’, *Annual Review of Sociology* (Vol. 14, 1988), pp. 431–3. For a more formalistic description of networks, see David Knoke, *Political Networks: The Structural Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990) esp. pp. 76–81.

21. See, for example, Paul Wapner, *Making States Biodegradable: Ecological Activism and World Politics*, Draft Manuscript (American University, Washington, DC, 1991).

## Millennium

global industrial association. A growing number of these networks are being organised around concepts of place, nationality, culture, species and specific issues.<sup>22</sup>

Environmental networks are also becoming development networks. In the Third World, a burgeoning number of small-scale organisations, that are largely independent of the overarching state, are engaged in the provision of a vast range of services to marginal and neglected populations.<sup>23</sup> Often, these organisations are tied into the global political system through transnational alliances established with other organizations in the North. One example of such an alliance is the program 'From the Ground Up,' administered by the Centre for International Development and Environment of the World Resources Institute.<sup>24</sup> NGO activities at the June 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development were co-ordinated through extensive transnational alliances and networks of communication. According to some reports, NGOs influenced the tone and content of some of the agreements and charters under negotiation at the conference.<sup>25</sup> The Global Forum taking place in parallel with the conference led to further growth in these networks.<sup>26</sup>

### *Human Rights*

The example that most immediately comes to mind when we speak of human rights organisations is Amnesty International. But human rights networks are much more extensive than local chapters of Amnesty. A broad range of organisations has come into existence as a response to the global institutionalisation of norms relating to human rights.<sup>27</sup> While the gradual emergence of these norms can be traced back some decades, a major impetus to the development of human rights networks came with the signing of the Helsinki Accords in 1975. One of the three 'baskets' in the agreement specified the

---

22. See Gareth Porter and Janet Welsh Brown, *Global Environmental Politics* (Boulder, CO: Westview, 1991), pp. 56–60.

23. There is a growing literature on the importance of such groups in a local context. See, for example, David Korten, *Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda* (West Hartford, CT: Kumarian Press, 1990); Alan B. Durning, *Action at the Grassroots: Fighting Poverty and Environmental Decline* (Washington, D.C.: Worldwatch Institute, Jan. 1989); and Robin Broad, John Cavanagh and Walden Bello, 'Development: The Market is Not Enough', *Foreign Policy* (Vol. 81, Winter 1990–91), pp. 152–60.

24. See the informational brochure provided by Centre for International Development and Environment of the World Resources Institute, 'From the Ground Up: Improving Natural Resource Management by Documenting Grassroots Experience in Sustainable Development', no date; and also issues of the *NGO Networker*, a newsletter published by the World Resources Institute (Washington, D.C.).

25. Conversation with Frances Spivy-Weber, Director, UNCED U.S. Citizens Working Group on Forests, 7 March 1992.

26. Nira Broner Worcman, 'Local Groups Think Globally', *Technology Review* (Vol. 95, No. 7, October 1992), p. 36.

27. See, for example, Edward A. Gargan, 'India Rights Group's Cry: Police Rape and Torture', *New York Times*, 14 October 1992.

observance of human rights by all signatories, including those from the Soviet Bloc, and legitimated the establishment of groups to monitor governmental observance. Although these groups were routinely suppressed by Eastern Bloc governments, many of them eventually became part of the 'civil societies' that brought down the European Communist regimes.

One contemporary development is the increasing linkage between human rights groups and environmental organisations. The logic of such an association arises from concerns that large scale, environmentally destructive projects often displace large numbers of the poor and disempowered, whose rights to land are routinely ignored. The shared objectives of the two different types of groups mean that co-operation makes a great deal of sense. To the extent that health and welfare are also increasingly seen as human rights, the role of environmental degradation in undermining them is another basis for working together.<sup>28</sup>

### *Indigenous Peoples*

Another rapidly growing network in global civil society is composed of groups of indigenous people, that is, tribes, clans, societies and cultures that pre-date the arrival of colonialism and/or the mass urbanisation of populations. The following story may illustrate the nature of such networks. During the fall of 1991, Jan de Vos, an anthropologist who works with Indian societies in the Lacandon forest of the southern Mexican state of Chiapas, was invited to a meeting of Lummi Indians in the Pacific Northwest by environmental groups working with the Lummi. He was to speak on efforts by the Lacandon and Maya Indians to establish new sovereignty claims in Chiapas. The Lummi were interested in establishing connections with the Indians of Mexico for purposes of political organisation and solidarity.<sup>29</sup> These types of connections among indigenous peoples are steadily increasing in number.<sup>30</sup>

---

28. For an overview of the roles of non-governmental organisations in human rights work, see Henry J. Steiner, *Diverse Partners: Non-Governmental Organizations in the Human Rights Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Law School/Human Rights Internet, 1991).

29. Jan De Vos, seminar, University of California, Santa Cruz. De Vos' work is only in Spanish. See, for example, *La pas de Dios y del rey: la conquista de la selva lacandona, 1525-1821*, 2nd ed. (Mexico, D.F.: Secretariat of Education and Culture of Chiapas, Foundation of Economic Culture, 1988). What is ironic about efforts by the Maya to consolidate their sovereignty claims along North American Indian lines is the fact that the sovereign Indian tribes of North America did not possess territorial sovereignty, or even a tribal identity, prior to the arrival of Europeans. The governments of Britain, France and the United States more or less 'created' them via the various treaties concluded during the nineteenth century. The loop does not end there. Various 'nations', such as the Iroquois, did exist prior to the European arrival. To a large degree, however, Europeans imposed (or imagined) sovereignty and territory where none had previously existed. But it is interesting to note the claim that the Iroquois 'created' the United States, proposing that it be developed along federal lines. See Jack Weatherford, *Indian Givers: How the Indians of the Americas Transformed the World* (New York, NY: Crown, 1988).

30. John Brown Childs, 'Rooted Cosmopolitanism: The Transnational Character of Indigenous Particularity', Stevenson Programme on Global Security Colloquium,

Similar global linkages exist or are developing on the basis of a broad range of other social and political issues. There is a well developed global network of organisations concerned about AIDS.<sup>31</sup> Anti-abortion activists in the United States are establishing linkages with their foreign counterparts, especially in Europe. And transnational linkages among peace and anti-nuclear movements have been noted since the 1950s.<sup>32</sup>

It is, however, legitimate to ask how great the impact of these networks of global civil society really is on the state system. Are they able to influence not only the behaviour of some governments in special circumstances, but also patterns of world politics more generally? Do they somehow alter the anarchic system based on power, wealth and self-reliance? And, if not, why should we pay any attention to this phenomenon? The following section argues that the concept of global civil society is both meaningful and useful, and reflects and helps us to understand rapidly changing world politics.

### The Concept and History of Global Civil Society

Ken Booth observed recently that:

Sovereignty is disintegrating. States are less able to perform their traditional functions. Global factors increasingly impinge on all decisions made by governments. Identity patterns are becoming more complex, as people assert local loyalties but want to share in global values and lifestyles. The traditional distinction between 'foreign' and 'domestic' policy is less tenable than ever. And there is growing awareness that we are sharing a common world history....The [metaphor for the] international system which is now developing...is of an egg-box containing the shells of sovereignty; but alongside it a global community omelette is cooking.<sup>33</sup>

Booth's omelette includes a variety of ingredients: international regimes,

---

University of California at Santa Cruz, 19 October 1992.

31. See, for example, Roger Coate and Kurt Will, 'Social Networks Responding to Aids: Travel Restrictions and the San Francisco Boycott', Paper prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Atlanta, Georgia, 31 March-4 April, 1992.

32. See, for example, David Meyer's paper, 'How the Cold War was Really Won: A View From Below', Paper prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association, Vancouver, British Columbia, 1991; and David Meyer and Sam Marullo, 'Grassroots Mobilization and International Politics: Peace Protest and the End of the Cold War', *Research in Social Movements, Conflict and Change* (Vol. 14, 1992), p. 99-140. A number of other observers and writers have begun to speculate on action within these political spaces. See Chadwick F. Alger, 'The World Relations of Cities: Closing the Gap Between Social Science Paradigms and Everyday Human Experience', *International Studies Quarterly* (Vol. 34, No. 4, 1990), p. 494; and Paul Wapner, 'Ecological Activism and World Civic Politics', Paper prepared for delivery at the Annual Meeting of the International Studies Association Conference, Atlanta, 31 March-4 April 1992.

33. Booth, 'Security in Anarchy,' *op. cit.*, in note 4, p. 542.



international society, diplomatic culture and neoliberal institutions, all the components of what Buzan might call a 'maturing – if not mature – anarchy.'<sup>34</sup> Why should global civil society be added to what is, already, a fairly piquant recipe?

All of these concepts are, in the final analysis, overwhelmingly state-centric. All are part of the menu of choices available to national governments as they struggle to maintain their shreds of sovereignty. Although the concept of international regime has not, after twenty years of debate, been clearly defined, international regimes do seem to be artifacts of state power, inasmuch as they serve the specific interests of state and governments.<sup>35</sup> Hedley Bull, of course, wrote about an 'international society' and although he suggested that alternative future world orders might be 'neo-medieval' in form, his conception of international society remained centred on states.<sup>36</sup> Diplomatic culture is an idea whose use and utility seem to have waned. Once it could be applied to an elite society of cultured, educated diplomats, who as representatives of their states' interests frequently met in a variety of different venues to deal with a wide range of issues. While such diplomats can be found, even today, most have been replaced by technically competent experts whose knowledge and experience are limited to very few issue areas, and who do not have the cultural background evident in the old diplomacy.<sup>37</sup> Neoliberal institutions, according to Robert O. Keohane, simply represent the increasing socialisation of states, such that 'much behavior [in international politics] is recognised by participants as reflecting established rules, norms, and conventions, and its meaning is interpreted in light of these understandings.'<sup>38</sup> But who, except the most shortsighted realist has ever suggested that states were never socialised? Buzan's notion of a maturing anarchy, in which rules and mutual respect for sovereignty become the norm, comes much closer to an accurate, and realistic, description of international politics today.<sup>39</sup>

---

34. Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, *op. cit.*, in note 5, pp. 174–81.

35. Stephen Krasner (ed.), *International Regimes* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1983). The concept of 'regime' can, of course, be applied in many contexts, domestic as well as international. Indeed, according to Oran R. Young, a regime is simply one form of social institution that has been given a distinctive name. See, *Resource Regimes: Natural Resources and Social Institutions* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1982). To be sure, there are international regimes administered by non-governmental organisations (for example, the CITES regime), but they are still the creation of states.

36. Bull, *Anarchical Society*, *op. cit.*, in note 6, pp. 13 and 264–76.

37. Indeed, Raymond Cohen has recently argued that, because of the spread of the state system beyond Europe, the notion of diplomatic culture is no longer very useful at all. See, *Negotiating Across Cultures* (Washington, DC: U.S. Institute of Peace, 1991).

38. 'Neoliberal Institutionalism: A Perspective on World Politics', pp. 1–20, in Robert O. Keohane, *International Institutions and State Power*, (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1989), p. 1.

39. Other provocative analyses of the 'globalization' of politics are: Evan Luard, *The Globalization of Politics: The Changed Focus of Political Action in the Modern World* (London: Macmillan, 1990); and Leslie Sklair, *Sociology of the Global System: Social Change in Global Perspective* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991). Luard maintains a focus on the primacy of the state; Sklair uses neo-marxist ideas to

Global civil society differs from all of these. It has to recognise states, but it is not state-centric. The notion of civil society – from the Latin *civilis societas* – was originally used to refer not to those societies that existed within individual states or organised polities, but to the condition of living in a ‘civilised’ community sufficiently advanced to have its own legal codes – *jus civile* – above that of individual states. Thus, barbarian and pre-urban cultures were not considered civil societies. Subsequently, the concept underwent a bifurcation as it was adapted to meet the needs of various political theorists. Locke contrasted political or civil society with the paternal authority of the state of nature, whereas for Hegel and Marx, civil society, or *bürgerliche Gesellschaft*, referred to the state of human development reached by advanced peoples, where the economic and social order moved according to its own principles, independent of the ethical demands of law and political association. Unlike Locke, Hegel and Marx thought civil society to be self-seeking and lacking in the moral cohesion of primitive societies. Current usages focus mostly on the social, cultural, economic and ethical arrangements of modern industrial society considered apart from the state, and regard civil society as a realm that is somewhat autonomous of state control and, in particular, totalitarian control.<sup>40</sup>

Returning to the original Latin concept of civil society, a *civilis societas*, or civilised community is defined as having its own legal codes, as opposed to those of individual states. The networks that I have described here are all united, more or less, by common norms or codes of behaviour that have emerged in reaction to the legal and other socially constructed fictions of the nation-state system. The end of the Cold War has also given a particular impetus to global civil society, in that history has begun again, rather than ended.<sup>41</sup> One result is that a politics of collective identity is developing around the world. In some places, such politics are expressed via nationalism; in others, through identities based in civil society.

While global civil society must interact with states, the code of global civil society denies the primacy of states or their sovereign rights.<sup>42</sup> This civil society is ‘global’ not only because of those connections that cross national boundaries and operate within the ‘global, nonterritorial region’,<sup>43</sup> but also as a result of

---

describe the ongoing battle of societies against global capitalism.

40. I owe most of the content of this paragraph to consultations with Peter Euben, but have also drawn on Wolfe, ‘Three Paths to Development,’ *op. cit.*, in note 2. However, in today’s world, civil society is never completely insulated from the state, since it tends to occupy those ‘spaces’ not controlled by the state.

41. James Mayall argues, albeit in a somewhat different context, that the universalisation of the state represented an attempt to ‘“freeze” the political map and bring history to an end...[which] seems unlikely to succeed’. *Nationalism and International Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 56. The Cold War brought some degree of stability by freezing the political map; its end signals the restarting of history.

42. This point was suggested to me by Alan Gilbert. As argued below, global civil society may be a reaction to the Gramscian hegemony of the state system.

43. John G. Ruggie, ‘International Structure and International Transformation: Space, Time, and Method,’ in E.O. Czempiel and James N. Rosenau (eds), *Global Changes and Theoretical Challenges* (Lexington, MA: Lexington Books, 1989), p. 31.

a growing element of global consciousness in the way the members of global civil society act. This is most evident in what Daniel Deudney has called 'green culture as earth nationalism',<sup>44</sup> but was also visible in the peace movement of the 1980s, as well as other contemporary networks, such as those organised around indigenous peoples, AIDS and human rights. These functional and conceptual processes lead to what Alberto Melucci calls the 'planetaryization' of action, creating a 'transsocietal order' that 'challenges not only the cultural shape of international relations but the logic governing them.'<sup>45</sup>

Why is global civil society emerging at this historical juncture?<sup>46</sup> We can account for the phenomenon in three linked ways. Historically, at the end of the twentieth century we see the leaking away of sovereignty from the state both upwards, to supranational institutions, and downwards, to subnational ones. This is the culmination of the long term socialisation of all remaining geographical territory (including some ocean and excluding Antarctica) into nation-states, and shorter term integrative processes set loose in the aftermath of the Second World War.<sup>47</sup> This loss of sovereignty is also a consequence of a shift away from anarchy as the central organising principle of the international system. Second, global civil society is emerging as a functional response to the decreasing ability and willingness of governments to undertake a variety of welfare functions. Finally, global civil society is a form of large scale resistance to the Gramscian hegemony of the current international system. These points will be considered in the rest of the paper.

---

44. Daniel Deudney, 'Global Environmental Rescue and the Emergence of World Domestic Politics', in Ronnie D. Lipschutz and Ken Conca (eds), *The State and Social Power in Global Environmental Politics* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1993).

45. Alberto Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, in J. Keane and Paul Mier (eds), (London: Hutchinson Radius, 1989), pp. 74 and 86.

46. It is conceivable that global society existed earlier, in the form of the Church, medical and missionary organisations, as well as the slavery abolitionist movements of the nineteenth century. What is important is the leakage of sovereignty and responsibility away from the state to other actors, imbuing the latter with constitutive rights – in much the same way as seems to have been the case in medieval society. On constitutive rules and rights, see, for example, Ruggie, 'International Structure', *op. cit.*, in note 43; David Dessler, 'What's at Stake in the Agent-Structure Debate,' *International Organization* (Vol. 43, No. 3, Summer 1989), pp. 441–73; and Ronnie D. Lipschutz and Judith Mayer, 'Not Seeing the Forest for the Trees: Rights, Rules, and the Renegotiation of Resource Management Regimes', in Lipschutz and Conca (eds), *The State and Social Power*, *op. cit.*, in note 44.

47. The globalisation of liberalism, along with a number of other integrative processes, is actively transforming the classical nation-state. This process and recognition of it is not new, but it does seem much more conspicuous than it once was. See Roland Robertson, 'Mapping the Global Condition: Globalization as a Central Concept', pp. 15–30, in Mike Featherstone, (ed.), *Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1991).

### Not Anarchy but Society

Global civil society mirrors the type of supra-national civil society that existed before the seventeenth century. Prior to the Treaty of Westphalia and the emergence of the state system, there existed a relatively vibrant trans-European civil society, linked to territories but not restricted to territory.<sup>48</sup> This society was based on the religious structures and strictures of the Catholic Church, whose universal spiritual and temporal authority was recognised as standing above that of the rulers of individual bits and pieces of territory. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the various treaties and settlements that ended the Thirty Years' War, 'demolished the remnants of the medieval political organization.'<sup>49</sup> Following Westphalia, 'the international system would be viewed as a society of legally equal states, each exercising sovereignty within well-defined frontiers and subject to no higher secular authority.'<sup>50</sup> The ideal of centralised temporal authority was never restored in Europe, and decentralisation was also accompanied by the gradual disappearance of the various other political units and arrangements that had made the region such a heteronomous system. Although efforts were made, throughout the ensuing four centuries, to reconstitute a central sovereign, often in the form of empire, all such projects failed. By the end of the Second World War, the end of the European colonial empires was in sight, and the principle of the sovereign state as the highest form of political organisation in the international system firmly entrenched.<sup>51</sup>

In a sense, Westphalia represented a coup from below. Sovereign princes revolted against a universal authority that, in theory if not in practice, claimed the right to interfere with their rule and the right to raise coalitions against both political and religious heretics. In place of a universal authority, the princes created an anarchy amongst themselves. This not only protected them against external meddling, since there was no longer a universal sovereign, it also ensured that they could exercise absolute authority within their own territories, with no fear that anyone else would intervene. Westphalia was a consolidation of sovereignty that, previously, had been distributed among many actors and

---

48. See John G. Ruggie, 'Continuity and Transformation', *op. cit.*, in note 9, pp. 274–5.

49. Richard W. Mansbach, Yale H. Ferguson and Donald E. Lampert, *The Web of World Politics: Nonstate Actors in the Global System* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1976), p. 8. It is probably safe to say that the process was not this sudden. Remnants of the common fields in England continued to exist into the nineteenth century; enclosure of the commons began long before 1648. See, for example, William N. Parker and Eric L. Jones, (eds), *European Peasants and Their Markets: Essays in Agrarian History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1975).

50. Mansbach, *et. al*, *The Web of World Politics*, *op. cit.*, in note 49, p. 8.

51. The end of the Soviet Union, possibly the last great empire, seems to confirm the triumph of state sovereignty, as the individual republics go their separate ways. It is unlikely, however, that the type of sovereignty these republics will exercise will be anything like the absolute domestic sovereignty exercised by the main combatants of the Second World War or the two Superpowers in the post-war period.

entities.<sup>52</sup> In the ensuing state system the norms of anarchy, self-reliance, absolute sovereignty within the state, and no authority outside of it prevailed.

Anarchy often appears to be a fact of international life, akin to an enduring physical – if not metaphysical – constant of the international system. But is it? Anarchy is a word with multiple meanings. It comes from the Greek *anarkhos*, meaning ‘without a ruler.’ In everyday conversation, we take it to mean political disorder and chaos whereas, in the language of international relations, it implies the absence of an overarching sovereign or ruler. The condition of international anarchy has, we are told, certain implications for the behaviour of states. As Kenneth N. Waltz wrote in *Man, the State, and War*:

With many sovereign states, with no system of law enforceable among them, with each state judging its grievances and ambitions according to the dictates of its own reason or desire...a state has to rely on its own devices, the relative efficiency of which must be its constant concern.<sup>53</sup>

In *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz went further observing:

To achieve their objectives and maintain their security, units in a condition of anarchy – be they people, corporations, states, or whatever – must rely on the means they can generate and the arrangements they can make for them-selves. Self-help is necessarily the principle of action in an anarchic order.<sup>54</sup>

Waltz likens states in the international system to corporations in the market. As firms in the marketplace seek to maximize profit, so states in the international system seek to maximize security. Firms are constrained in their freedom by laws inherent in the structure of markets. Similarly, states are constrained by structural features of the international system. The structure of markets is a function of the number and size of firms. The structure of the international system is a function of the number of and the distribution of capabilities among states. According to Waltz, however, these structural features in no way alter the principle of self-help. Yet, self-help is a principle only in a specific type of anarchic order: one

---

52. Ruggie makes the point that, ‘...in its proper modern usage, [sovereignty] signifies a form of legitimation that pertains to a system of relations.’ ‘Continuity and Transformation’, *op. cit.*, in note 9, p. 276.

53. Thus Waltz sees anarchy as an enduring feature of the international system. By implication, only a world state, the emergence of which is unlikely in a system regulated by the balance of power, could put an end to anarchy. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Man, the State and War: A Theoretical Analysis* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1959), p. 159.

54. Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1979), p. 111.

which seeks to mimic the primordial 'State of Nature'. Since the state of nature among human beings has never existed, the argument is an empty one.<sup>55</sup>

Anarchy has another meaning: the absence of any cohering principle, as in a common standard or purpose.<sup>56</sup> The conventional assumption in international politics and law is that if a system of rule does not have a centralised body enforcing the rules or law, there can be no cohering principles. This assumption of anarchy is maintained even when such a set of principles does exist and is subscribed to by a majority, because, it is argued, it is impossible to protect against 'defection' and the 'free rider'.<sup>57</sup> But neither markets nor the international state system are anarchic in this second sense; indeed, they can be regarded as being strongly institutionalised.<sup>58</sup> For example, a fundamental rule of the marketplace is: do not hurt your partner in exchange. Thus, while transactions made under duress or threat of force might involve exchange, they do not constitute a market.<sup>59</sup> Similarly, the international system, while possibly disorderly, is not an anarchy. Clearly, wars do break out, and at any given time there are wars being fought somewhere in the world, but for the most part, states are highly socialised and observant of rules of interaction.<sup>60</sup>

As Albert Bergesen has pointed out, the notion of anarchy is something of a social construction or, rather, a veil we choose to throw over the conduct of international politics. Bergesen argues that a form of culture – diplomatic

---

55. As I point out in *When Nations Clash: Raw Materials, Ideology, and Foreign Policy* (New York, NY: Ballinger/Harper and Row, 1989), p. 244, Waltz goes on to argue that there are no rules constraining either corporations in the market or states in the international system. This is however disingenuous. As far as the market is concerned, this assertion is put to rest by Robert Heilbroner in his, *Behind the Veil of Economics: Essays in the Worldly Philosophy* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton, 1988).

56. These definitions of anarchy are taken from *The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language* (Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin, 1981).

57. On the difficulties of collective action, see Mancur Olsen, *The Logic of Collective Action* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); and Russell Hardin, *Collective Action* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982). For critiques, see Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons: The Evolution of Institutions for Collective Action* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), ch. 1. On the possibilities of co-operation under anarchy, see the work of Robert Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation* (New York, NY: Basic, 1984).

58. On the market as a social institution, see Robert Heilbroner, 'Behind the Veil of Economics', in *Behind the Veil of Economics*, *op. cit.*, in note 55, pp. 13–34. For a more general discussion of the nature of social institutions, see Oran Young, *Resource Regimes*, *op. cit.*, in note 35.

59. It could be argued that it is only the presence of the state as controller that allows markets to function, and that without states there would be no exchange but only coercion. This is belied by historical evidence of the existence of markets even under conditions where state authority is demonstrably absent. See, for example, Parker and Jones (eds), *European Peasants and Their Markets*, *op. cit.*, in note 49.

60. These include not only regimes as commonly defined, but other mutually observed practices as well. See the discussions in Friedrich V. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions: On the Conditions of Practical and Legal Reasoning in International Relations and Domestic Affairs* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); and Nicholas Greenwood Onuf, *World of Our Making: Rules and Rule in Social Theory and International Relations* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 1989).

language and systems of representation – must precede, and makes possible, the interaction of states:

The modern state does not start out in some rude state of 'international nature' without a common culture or social relations to go forth and contractually form diplomatic language, international regimes, and all the other culture collectively known as the international system.<sup>61</sup>

States in a so-called anarchy do not operate in an empty social vacuum; international political space is permeated with norms and rules, albeit ones we often pretend not to see. Alex Wendt argues that even 'self-help' is a rule, or rather, an institution, that is endogenous to what appears to be an anarchic system.<sup>62</sup> This implies that states, or their sovereigns, must agree that self-help will be a rule, and they can only reach such an agreement if they already have a basis for concluding such a contract. By doing so they establish another social rule. International society, therefore, exists.

The closest mainstream international relations scholars have come to addressing this point can be found in Barry Buzan's notion of a 'mature anarchy'.<sup>63</sup> He argues that there are different degrees of anarchy, ranging from an international approximation of the Hobbesian State of Nature to one in which various sets of international norms and rules are respected and observed by all states. He calls the former an 'immature' anarchy, and the latter a 'mature' one.<sup>64</sup> 'An extreme case of immature anarchy', he writes:

[W]ould be one in which the units themselves were held together only by the force of elite leadership, with each state recognizing no other legitimate sovereign unit except itself, and where relations among the states took the form of a continuous struggle for dominance. Such a system would approximate chaos.<sup>65</sup>

'At the other end of the spectrum', he continues:

---

61. Albert Bergesen, 'Turning World-System Theory on its Head', in Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity* (London: Sage, 1990), p. 76.

62. Alex Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', *op. cit.*, in note 3, pp. 391–426.

63. Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, *op. cit.*, in note 5. Mainstream international relations scholars are, however, beginning to struggle with institutional approaches. See, for example, Robert O. Keohane, 'Neoliberal Institutionalism', *op. cit.*, in note 38.

64. Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, *op. cit.*, in note 5. Those who adhere to the notion of a primitive anarchy fail to recognize that the Hobbesian 'State of Nature' never existed. Jane Goodall has shown that even our primate relatives have societies – albeit fairly simple ones. See, *The Chimps of Gombe: Patterns of Behaviour* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1986). This type of work suggests that human social organisation preceded the state as well as the socially-constructed 'State of Nature'.

65. Buzan, *People, States and Fear*, *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 175.

[A]n extremely mature anarchy would have developed as a society to the point where the benefits of fragmentation could be enjoyed without the costs of continuous armed struggle and instability. The mechanism behind this would be the development of criteria by which states could both consolidate their own identity and legitimacy, and recognize and accept each other's.<sup>66</sup>

But even in Buzan's universe, the nation-state system continues to be an anarchy. His immature anarchy is, indeed, anarchic, since there seems no way to tell what is a state and what is not. The error in his formulation is the implication that the mutual acceptance of each other's identity as state, through the 'development of criteria', could occur without a rule-based system already in place.<sup>67</sup>

Following Bergesen, we can begin to see that the 'international system' is not the unordered anarchy posited by Waltz and other neorealists. As Friedrich Kratochwil, Nicholas Onuf and Alex Wendt have noted, it is characterised by a great deal of order, explicit as well as implicit.<sup>68</sup> This order is significant in tempering what might otherwise be an even more violent world. The international state system is not the untrammelled anarchy we are often told it is; indeed, it is not an anarchy at all. This last point has important implications for the emergence of global civil society.

Two further points are relevant. First, given the above, international anarchy must be regarded as a social construction, rather than some sort of objective, material reality, because it has come about as an implicit agreement to function under anarchic conditions; that is, on the basis of the rules of self-help and autonomy. (Indeed, the Treaty of Westphalia could be seen as an explicit social contract institutionalising these rules<sup>69</sup>). This then becomes a rule conditioning the relationship between states. A social construction does, of course, have material consequences and constrains action as well as perception, so arguing that anarchy is a rule does not mean that it does not have effects. Second, if this willful rule of anarchy is to be replaced or displaced, it need not take place via the universal state or sovereign; the emergence of a universally shared system of norms should be adequate. As I will suggest below, the emergence of such a system of norms during the twentieth century has played a major role in the emergence of global civil society.

How does the argument presented here differ from Buzan's mature anarchy? In a mature anarchy, there are norms and rules shared among states; states respect each other and are, in Buzan's words, 'strong as states'. A mature

---

66. *Ibid.*, p. 176.

67. Ruggie, 'International Structure', *op. cit.*, in note 43.

68. Kratochwil, *Rules, Norms, and Decisions*, *op. cit.*, in note 60; Onuf, *World of Our Making*, *op. cit.*, in note 60; and Wendt, 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', *op. cit.*, in note 3.

69. This is the essential point of Wendt's article 'Anarchy is What States Make of It', *op. cit.*, in note 3. Bergesen, citing Durkheim, writes that the 'contractual order was not the source of society but society the source of contracts.' in, 'Turning World Systems Theory', *op. cit.*, in note 61, p. 78.



anarchy 'would still place a high value on political variety and fragmentation,' and various norms relating to noninterference in internal affairs and respect for different organizing ideologies would hold sway.<sup>70</sup> The system remains a self-help one, and states remain the 'keepers' of the order (in both senses: stability and hierarchy). Nothing is said, however, about what happens to other actors in this anarchical soup: they are presumed either to remain under the jurisdiction of individual states or to pose challenges that must be met by states if the latter are to retain their dominance – thus the logic of the 'sovereignty at bay' argument.

A global political system operating under universally shared norms is not the same as a mature anarchy. In being applied and observed, such norms do not distinguish among actors. Thus, for example, the norm or principle of self-interest can be applied with equal alacrity to individuals, groups, corporations or states. The self-interest of a state will differ from that of an individual, but this is a matter of scale and subject, and not norm content. Once such 'rules of the road' become universally internalised and generally observed, the distinction among actors, for the purposes of norm observance, becomes less relevant.

Prior to Westphalia and the wars leading up to it, the Catholic Church was seen as a universal sovereign. Such wars as took place concerned either cultural-religious issues or dynastic succession. Arching over this, admittedly violent, scene was, nonetheless a set of universal rules whose fundamental validity was not challenged seriously until the wars of the Reformation. Under the protection of this system of rules, all sorts of trans-European transactions and activities took place, external to the ongoing wars and inter- and intra-dynastic violence. The fact that actors in this system took different political forms was largely irrelevant, since the criteria for participation were rooted in Christianity rather than territory.

This set of overarching rules was replaced by territorial sovereignty as the criterion for membership in the 'new' international system, and sovereignty was restricted to dynastic rulers governing specified territories. All other individuals became the subjects of the system, rather than its 'citizens'. From the late eighteenth century, however, this system started to crumble, as dynastic sovereignty came to be replaced by popular sovereignty. The state was no longer legitimated by the characteristics of its ruler, it was legitimated by rules, imposed, at least in theory if not always in practice, by its people. Subjects became citizens, and states became the representatives of their citizens with respect to the international system. The movement away from states as representatives of individual sovereigns toward states as representatives of citizens is not yet at an end. Indeed, the further transformation of the relationship between state, citizen and system is taking place as a corresponding set of norms associated with late twentieth century civilization become more widespread.

These are the norms of liberalism, especially those associated with human rights (and individual self-interest), that, during the past few decades, have

---

70. Buzan, *People, States, and Fear*, *op. cit.*, in note 5, p. 176–7.

become a central focus of international politics. The state remains a principal political institution in global politics, but the individual is sovereign. Such an assertion is not meant to suggest the 'end of history' – indeed, it is the momentary triumph of this set of overarching norms that also leads to the resistance we see in various forms, including nationalism. Nonetheless, one consequence of the winding down of the Cold War is a commitment to one particular form of social organization overriding all other possibilities. For the moment, the alternatives seem to have vanished.<sup>71</sup> This means, therefore, that the particular function filled by the state in the anarchic system – mediation between systemic and domestic realms – is lessening in importance. The state may continue to fulfill other functions but, even here, there is a growing tendency to slough off such functions.

Gene Rochlin describes an interesting analogue to the role of overarching norms in the world of personal computers and their operating systems. He writes:

At first glance, the desktop PC market may look quite anarchic. There is hardly any major item of electronic equipment in an office that is less regulated by national entities than is the desktop computer. Individuals and businesses are relatively free to buy equipment of any type from any manufacturer, and to install whatever software they want. However, underneath the anarchy lies a de facto standardization of operating system that guarantees that the brand of computer purchased, as well as the peripherals, are essentially ergonomic and personal adaptations to the individual user.<sup>72</sup>

Rochlin notes that Apple runs a closed shop; in essence, it dictates the form and functioning of any computer carrying its logo. Within the universe of MS-DOS systems, however, there is a wild flowering of possibilities for developing computing architectures, in terms of software as well as hardware. This variety is made possible only because of the existence of the universal standard which provides the basis for mutual communication and social rules. In this universe, the ordinary indicators of power – epitomised by giant corporations such as IBM – seem less relevant than the ability to adapt rapidly to new configurations. Even Apple, in its developing alliance with IBM, is beginning to recognise that its share of the computer universe is, in some sense, shrinking in the face of what is the dominating norm of that universe.

---

71. This is not to suggest that peace is necessarily at hand; only that inter-state war is becoming much less common, while intra-state war is increasing in frequency. Conflict may also be reconstituted in other, non-state spheres of human social relations, for example culture. For a provocative suggestion of this, see William S. Lind, 'Defending Western Culture', *Foreign Policy* (No. 84, Fall 1991), pp. 40–50.

72. Gene I. Rochlin, 'Jacking Into the Market: Trans-National Technologies and Global Securities Trading', Paper presented to the Third International Conference on Large-Scale Systems, Sydney, Australia, July 1991, pp. 6–7. My emphasis.

The newly dominant 'operating system' in global politics – liberalism with the individual at its core – has come to fill a role similar to the system of rules and rule promulgated by the Church prior to Westphalia (or the operating standard in today's computer world). Admittedly, there are problems with this notion because, unlike the rules of the Church, the norms of liberalism have little to say about everyday social and ethical behaviour, except to place *homo economicus* at the centre of the world (the notion of human rights, not always observed, sets standards for behaviour). But, significantly, the very vagueness of these rules means that a high degree of diversity and heterogeneity, and a broad number of activities, are possible under the umbrella of liberalism. The principles of economic and political liberalism thus come to represent something like the *jus civile* of the civilized community, existing above the laws of individual states.

However, it should be recognised that the dominance of the norms of liberalism does not mean that everyone is committed to them: resistance to the implications of these norms is being expressed in the cultural sphere as much as the political one. What the domination of liberalism does do is to begin to make possible the substitution of new global social constructions in place of the older one of anarchy. It is under the umbrella of these emerging social constructions that new forms of non-state global political activity – global civil society – are emerging.

### State Incompetence and Social Competence

A second cause for the emergence of global civil society is functional in nature, resulting from what states – more precisely, national governments – are able and willing to do in this changing global system.<sup>73</sup> The state had its origins not in the desire to provide welfare services to the population of a given territory, but, rather, as Charles Tilly observes, in defence 'governments are in the business of selling protection...whether people want it or not'.<sup>74</sup> The first modern states came about as sovereigns in competition with one another mobilized force to secure and expand their national territories. In doing so, they became wealthier and more secure. States did not enter a world that was a *tabula rasa*. As Joel S. Migdal points out:

When the new state entered into the tumble of history's events, it did not do so in splendid isolation. It appeared with a handful of other similar political entities that together constituted a new state system...From the time that states began to appear in northwestern Europe four hundred to five hundred

---

73. It is possible that the emergence of the universal norms of liberalism – which places a premium on individual 'self-help' – is a driving force behind the declining competence and willingness of governments.

74. Charles Tilly, 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', in Peter B. Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer and Theda Skocpol (eds), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), p. 175.

years ago and form a state system, they gravely threatened not only one another but also all other existing political forms....<sup>75</sup>

In the course of pursuing security and territorial expansion, sovereigns found it expedient to conclude compacts with their populations offering protection in exchange for the revenues and manpower to fight wars of national security. Sovereignty became the *sine qua non* for the state in this socially constructed anarchy, delineating not only the territory within which the state was supreme, but also specifying a broad and growing number of functions that fell within the exclusive jurisdiction of national governments.

This process may have reached its apotheosis by the mid-twentieth century, during the Second World War, when total societal mobilisation was undertaken by both the eventual victors and vanquished.<sup>76</sup> But this global war also had the paradoxical effects of forever destroying the compact between society and state, for two reasons. First, the Second World War showed that the state, in the pursuit of security and other national goals, was willing to sacrifice untold numbers of its citizens. The advent of the Nuclear Age and Mutually Assured Destruction only made this contradiction sharper: the world could be destroyed in order to make it safe for the principle of state sovereignty and the insulation of one state from another. Second, in the effort to bring all of society within its grasp for the purposes of total mobilisation – a process that established a model for governing in the future – the state made available to its citizens the tools and skills that would ultimately undermine the compact. Consequently, during the fifty years following the outbreak of the Second World War, the affairs of state continued to be pursued much as they had been in earlier decades, even as the basis for the system of sovereign states was being undermined internally.

The advent of mass mobilisation and large scale warfare also led to the emergence of the welfare state. This amendment to the original compact, was, in part, a result of the Industrial Revolution and its spread throughout Europe. If citizens were to fulfill their part of the deal, they had to be able bodied and supportive of the government. Hence, states increasingly found it necessary to intervene in the workings of the market to ensure that support from their populations would be forthcoming. This meant better working conditions and higher living standards, as well as mass education to achieve socialization and training compatible with developing technology. Since the middle of the twentieth century, as the security and protection function of the state became easier to flaunt but more and more difficult to fulfill (for although new armaments, promising greater levels of protection and deterrence, could always be procured, the possibilities of actually securing populations in the event of war

---

75. Joel S. Migdal, *Strong Societies and Weak States: State-Society Relations and State Capabilities in the Third World* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), p. 21.

76. Alan S. Milward, *War, Economy and Society 1939–1945* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1977).

decreased), the welfare function of the state came to dominate, reaching its apogee in the countries of Western Europe.

At this point however, a problem begins to emerge: growing state incompetence as against growing societal competence. Although anti-statist ideology has been alive and well in liberal democracies for many decades, the general trend following the Second World War was growing expectations in terms of the quantity and breadth of services provided by government bureaucracies. The paradox here is that the growing cost of providing such services, ultimately paid through the tax base, has now begun to generate a backlash amongst those who provide the revenues. Furthermore, the commitment to economic liberalism and efficiency prevalent in the last decade has put further pressure on governments to balance budgets and reduce welfare expenditures. As the shortfall between revenues and costs increase, cutbacks in the welfare function follow, with the result that services deteriorate. This, in turn, leads to a gradual delegitimation of the state and a growing reliance on society to find other ways of fulfilling the welfare function.<sup>77</sup>

The state has also begun to fall short in another way. As it loses competence, and begins to shed functions, it also loses the ability to manage. This is especially true when governments are vast range of highly complex problems rather than just the more traditional ones, such as war and finance. This point is seen vividly in terms of environmental quality. While the state's provision of environmental protection is relatively recent, this service has come about as a direct result of the growing welfare function discussed above. The first generation of environmental protection functions in the industrialised world tended to focus on industrial externalities, such as air and water pollution. A second generation has more to do with the maintenance of the 'resource base' that underpins global civilisation, including protection of the atmosphere, soil and forests. (A third generation will, probably, involve major changes in economic practices, which may further undermine the state.) In maintaining the resource base, the problem is not so much pollution as it is depletion of renewable resources, such as forests, and lack of control over poisons that unintentionally waft across national borders, such as the nuclear radiation from Chernobyl.

The appropriation of resources generally takes place under property rights arrangements developed or sanctioned by the state and, in some cases, via delivery systems managed by state agencies. These agencies have been established by state bureaucracies for managing the exploitation of supply rather than the reduction of demand.<sup>78</sup> As a result, they suffer from an institutional

---

77. Thus, the growing move toward privatisation of municipal services in the United States, as well as efforts to privatise health services in Britain and reduce welfare services in Scandinavia.

78. This contradiction is evident in the central command bureaucracies of the old Soviet Union. Many of the original management agencies, such as the United States Forest Service, were established to conserve resources through rationalised management, but not for purposes of protection. See, for example, Samuel P. Hays, *Conservation and the Gospel of Efficiency* (New York, NY: Atheneum, 1980).

## Millennium

inability to respond to depletion in such a way as to ensure the protection of the resource and the long term sustenance of the material base. This occurs even as failure to do so promises to have serious health and welfare effects over the longer term. Consequently, environmental degradation is fuelling a growing demand for services that governments are ill-equipped to afford and which, in many instances, go against the property rights arrangements sanctioned by those governments.<sup>79</sup>

The growing incompetence of national governments is not, however, matched by a similar process within the societies they govern. This phenomenon can be explained by reference to a set of dynamics initiated during the Cold War. The mobilisation of manpower, industry and technology during the Second World War – best epitomised perhaps by the Manhattan Project's rapid development, construction and use of the atomic bombs – re-emerged in industrialised countries, and especially the United States, not long after the end of the war, for several reasons. First, government was now manifestly much larger than it had been in 1940, if only because there was now much more to 'manage'. Prior to the war, most bureaucracy and diplomacy was left in the hands of a relatively small and elite political and economic cadre. This group was ill-equipped to deal with the growing range of United States political, economic and military activities after 1945, and this placed a premium on the creation of a class of technical and bureaucratic managers to operate government agencies and research institutions.<sup>80</sup>

Second, the extension of American national interest to all parts of the globe meant that specialised knowledge about foreign societies and their politics and economics was essential if the 'free world' was to be managed for the benefit of the United States. This requirement generated a demand for specially trained individuals to staff embassies, the State Department and other agencies, at home and abroad, that dealt with foreign affairs. Finally, the emergence of a scientific problem solving paradigm as the dominant model for managing the new global system, created a need for large numbers of individuals trained in a variety of scientific disciplines. This approach also became the basis for the prosecution of the Cold War, as various educational and technical operations were integrated into the national 'defence'.

To meet this demand, the system of higher education in the United States grew enormously. Growing numbers of highly skilled individuals were trained and graduated, with the expectation that they would find employment in universities,

---

79. This point is developed in greater detail in Ronnie D. Lipschutz, 'Local Action, Bioregional Politics, and Transnational Collaborative Networks in Policy Responses to Global Environmental Change', Invited paper delivered to a panel on 'Global Environmental Change: The International Perspective' as part of a symposium on 'The Human Dimensions of Global Environmental Change' at the 1992 Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, Chicago, 3–6 September 1992.

80. Note that the upper echelons remained in elite hands until well into the 1960s and even 1970s; see, for a discussion of this, Richard Barnett, *Roots of War* (Baltimore, MD: Penguin, 1972).

the corporate world, or government. The growth in educated cadres was not limited to the United States, because the American model was universalised. Foreigners were encouraged to come to the United States – indeed, their way was often paid – to acquire the skills and training necessary to rationalize their own societies.<sup>81</sup> Other countries began to recognise the prestige inherent in systems of higher education, as well as their need for trained individuals in order to compete in this new global system. In many countries, students expected to find employment after college with their own national governments or state-owned industries. However, the supply of competent individuals began to exceed the demand for their skills. Moreover, the failure in Vietnam demonstrated that even the mass mobilisation of expertise, by the government, in pursuit of national goals could not guarantee the desired outcomes. The result of the Vietnam fiasco was the breaking open of the culture of expertise, with all of its restrictions, and the appearance of competing centres of expertise, skills and knowledge. This was epitomised in, for example, the proliferation of think tanks in the United States and their spread abroad.<sup>82</sup> This spread has been greatly assisted by certain technologies, although not necessarily in the way often presented by the media.<sup>83</sup>

James N. Rosenau has taken particular note of the growing analytical skills and capabilities of what he calls ‘powerful people’, arguing that:

The advent of postinternational politics...has developed...from fundamental and enduring changes in the analytic skills and cathetic capacities of people. It is not the attitudes of citizens toward politics that are transforming world politics, but their ability to employ, articulate, direct, and implement whatever their attitudes may be.<sup>84</sup>

Frequently, the rise of ‘powerful people’ is attributed to the ‘communication/computer/information revolution’, as though the simple absorption of data and precedent is all that would be necessary to effect the political mobilisation described by Rosenau. This is an incomplete explanation of the phenomenon. It is not the contact itself but the ability to use data as knowledge that is the critical element – data are the electronic bits transmitted by communication systems; knowledge involves having the skills to use the data

---

81. This continues to be the case today, as evidenced by the high proportion of non-American citizens receiving doctorates in scientific and engineering fields.

82. The mad rush by a wild variety of experts to offer advice to the republics of the former Soviet Union on a private basis reflects, on the one hand, this diffusion and dispersion of expertise and, on the other, the desire to experiment with their solutions in a promising social laboratory. Or, it may just be a ‘full-employment’ programme for these people. See Robert Blackwill and William Hogan, ‘An Army of Experts-in Residence’, *The New York Times*, 11 September, 1991.

83. David Meyer has pointed out that ‘international educational networks are transnational and cosmopolitan by nature’, bound together by international languages, research methods and hardware. Personal communication, 6 November 1991.

84. Rosenau, *Turbulence in World Politics*, *op. cit.*, in note 7, p. 334.

toward specified ends. The relevant skills have been spread, perhaps unwittingly, by the growth in post-secondary educational institutions around the world, as well as by changes in the world economy. Because political systems are so diverse, the particular channels of articulation of this new competence vary from one country to the next. However, the general effect is one of the creation of networks of global political activity in parallel to the state system. These networks are not totally insulated or isolated from the state system, since states are omnipresent, and often seem almost omnipotent. They do, however, enjoy a certain degree of autonomy precisely because states are not omniscient. States that seek to suppress the activities of these networks often find themselves criticized, and sometimes isolated, by others.

New information technologies facilitate the flow of data, but they do not facilitate the transmission of knowledge. Technology is more than hardware and software; it is also a system of social organisation for application. Without social organisation, data are nothing.<sup>85</sup> For the most part, the claim that information technologies, such as television, computers or fax machines, somehow empower people is incomplete. Most of the information transmitted via the media is either very raw and without context – for example, the transmissions on the Cable News Network from Jerusalem during the 1991 Gulf War, showing television correspondents trying to put on gas masks; or so highly processed that it conveys a message with a misleading meaning – for example the Pentagon's admissions that the 'smart' weapons, which figured so prominently in press conferences, represented only a small fraction of the ordnance dropped on Iraq. The high cost of television time means that only those with ample media budgets are able to get their views across, and whatever passes for analysis is usually compressed into small sound bites or two minute visuals.

While news of a revolution in one country might influence activities in another, the causal connection is generally weak; revolutions take place only where certain features of a political system are shared and conditions are already conducive to such upheavals.<sup>86</sup> Fax machines and computers, while providing greater latitude in terms of the cost and shape of what can be transmitted, do not enhance the capabilities of those receivers who do not already possess the social organisation to use these tools effectively. Their influence on mass political empowerment and mobilisation is often overrated.<sup>87</sup> This does not mean that

---

85. See, for example, Langdon Winner, *Autonomous Technology: Technics-out-of-Control as a Theme in Political Thought* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977); Michael F. Maniates, *Organizing for Rural Development: Improved Cookstoves, Local Organizations, and the State in Gujarat, India* (Berkeley, CA: Energy & Resources Group, UC-Berkeley, Ph.D. Dissertation, 1990), pp. 26–32; and Ronnie D. Lipschutz, (ed.), *Borrowed from Our Children: Ethics, Economics, and Ecological Sustainability for a Secure World*, Ch. 2, (manuscript in review).

86. Having said this, there is strong evidence that the overthrow of the old regimes in Eastern Europe were linked. See, David Meyer, 'How the Cold War Was Really Won', *op. cit.*, in note 32.

87. Fax machines were supposed to have provided an important communications channel during the Tiananmen protests in Beijing in 1989 and the August 1991 coup attempt in



such communication systems are irrelevant, only that an analysis that attributes excessive political power to their control is incomplete.

Curiously, the technologies that have had the most effect on generating 'people power' are those that have produced inexpensive global transportation. Chadwick Alger mentions wide-bodied jets as a crucial technology in the rise of world cities, and they have also been important in the emergence of global civil society.<sup>88</sup> In the past, caravans, ships, and then trains opened up contact between civilisations. But these forms of transportation were often quite restricted: only the relatively wealthy frequently travelled both ways, most travellers were restricted to the one-way passage. Immigrants tended to move only in one direction, and those that returned home rarely ventured abroad again. Within continents, travel was easier but, even the across United States, rapid two-way mobility was limited. The proliferation of jets and air travel since the 1960s has created an era of relatively cheap and easy global travel.

Although most of the world's people cannot afford the price of long distance air travel, many can, and they travel for a variety of reasons, all of which lead to cross-cultural fertilisation and activities. People travel to teach, to learn, to buy, to sell, to kill and to heal. In doing so, they learn new ways of doing things, including new forms of social organisation, and they come to see the costs of old ways of doing things. Information is taken back home and used to change ways of life and patterns of social activity. People discover that there are other ways to live, and other places to live in, and they do both.<sup>89</sup>

Travel is more than just a means of getting about, it is a process of knowledge exchange – not just data transmission – that allows all kinds of political and social transactions to take place outside of the purview or control of governments. This process has enough local consequences to effect global politics.<sup>90</sup> This argument is, in a sense, an extension of Rosenau's 'powerful people' paradigm mentioned above. The key difference between his explanation and mine is not the utility of new information or technologies, but the discovery of new ways of doing things, of acting, of engaging in political and other activities. It is new forms of social organisation and social practice, and not hardware alone, that have global political effects. Finally, even if the total number of people engaged in these practices is limited, their cumulative impact may be substantial because of their dominant role in production and the reproduction of societies.

---

the USSR. In both cases, the social organisation was in place to use the information flowing out of the fax machines.

88. Alger, 'The World Relations of Cities', *op. cit.*, in note 32.

89. This does not imply a homogenisation of culture, however, since new forms of social organisation are often adapted for local conditions. For a fascinating exposition of this process, see Arjun Appadurai, 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy', in Mike Featherstone (ed.), *Global Culture* (London: Sage, 1991). pp. 295–310.

90. See Saskia Sassen, *The Mobility of Labour and Capital: A Study in International Investment and Labor Flow* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

## Production and Reproduction

In a recent book, Kenichi Ohmae exalts what he calls the 'borderless world'.<sup>91</sup> In this world, he claims, the state and its borders are no longer important. What is important is consumption, and consumption knows no borders. He suggests that the key concern is not where a product originates, but the value it delivers. Consumers are interested only in being able to buy the highest quality goods at the lowest possible price, and they would prefer that governments interfere as little as possible in this activity. In the 'borderless world', we are all consumers; indeed, we begin to define ourselves by what we consume, and it becomes central that we have free access to information about products. As Ohmae puts it:

Today, of course, people everywhere are more and more able to get the information they want directly from all corners of the world. They can see for themselves what the tastes and preferences are in other countries, the styles of clothing now in fashion, the sports, the life-styles.<sup>92</sup>

This does not mean that preferences are universal; clearly they differ, for example, among Japan, Europe and the United States. But it does suggest that, rather than being identified by our country of origin, we are, or will be, defined by our brand names: the Pepsi Generation, Bennetton kids or part of the Gap. Do Ohmae's views make any sense? Does it seem logical that under the principles of liberalism we would replace national loyalty with brand loyalty?<sup>93</sup> David Harvey has written that:

...the shifting social construction of time and space as a result of the restless search for profit creates severe problems of identity: To what space do I as an individual belong? Do I express my idea of citizenship in my neighborhood, city, region, nation, or world?<sup>94</sup>

In the final analysis, brands fail to offer a sufficient anchor for identity, for either groups or individuals. Even if we wear brand names on the outside of our clothing, it hardly seems plausible that all the owners of Levi's Jeans will organise as a political or social force. The construction of identity through the consumption of mass-produced goods creates an undifferentiated agglomeration and, ultimately, fails to serve even individual self-interest.

---

91. Kenichi Ohmae, *The Borderless World: Power and Strategy in the Interlinked Economy* (New York, NY: HarperCollins, 1990).

92. *Ibid.*, p. 19.

93. Certainly, this seemed to be the stance of Michael Jordan at the Barcelona Olympics, when he refused to wear the United States national uniform because it was supplied by Nike and not by the company that he endorsed.

94. David Harvey, 'Flexibility: Threat or Opportunity', *Socialist Review* (Vol. 21, No. 1, January 1991), p. 77.

Flexible production, touted as a means of meeting differentiated wants, and thereby creating differentiated identities, does little better. Stuart Hall has suggested that these new systems of production associated with the globalisation of liberalism actually serve to destroy or undermine the older bases of political and social identity. He observes that:

'Post-Fordism' is also associated with broader social and cultural changes. For example, [among these are] greater fragmentation and pluralism, the weakening of older collective solidarities and block identities and the emergence of new identities associated with greater work flexibility, the maximization of individual choices through personal consumption....In part, it is us who are being 're-made'....The 'self' is experienced as more fragmented and incomplete, composed of multiple 'selves' or identities in relation to the difference social worlds we inhabit....<sup>95</sup>

This fragmentation of self, Hall goes on to observe, has led to an:

[E]normous expansion of 'civil society,' caused by the diversification of the different social worlds in which men and women can operate....Of course, 'civil society' is no ideal realm of pure freedom. Its micro-worlds include the multiplication of points of power and conflict. More and more our everyday lives are caught up with these forms of power, and their lines of intersection. Far from there being no resistance to the system, there has been a proliferation of new points of antagonism, new social movements of resistance organized around them, and, consequently, a generalization of 'politics' to spheres which hitherto the left assumed to be apolitical....<sup>96</sup>

As the ideas and modes of production of liberalism have become the 'operating system' in the West, South and, now, the East, identification with the nation-state as the primary social grouping has begun to wither. Yet, individualised identity, based on consumption and the market, is an insufficient basis for establishing new identities. As a result, therefore, we see the rise of new forms of collective identity. In those places where the nation has been suppressed, or where 'nations' have not existed for decades if not centuries (e.g. Catalonia, Languedoc and Lombardy), we see the stirrings of new nationalisms. In places where nationality does not map simply onto territory, or in social realms where nationalism is often not a respectable basis for identity (especially among the intelligentsia), we see new forms of group identity being created, including some that are very cosmopolitan. Examples of these include the human rights and environmental groups described earlier, as well as feminism, gay and lesbian identities and religious fundamentalism. These new identities are part and parcel of the emergence of global civil society.

---

95. 'Brave New World' *Socialist Review*, *op. cit.*, in note 15, p. 58.

96. *Ibid.*, p. 63.

What, ultimately, is the cumulative effect of global civil society on world politics? Here we need to turn to theories of social reproduction and transformation. Robert Cox's work on production and historical structures provides one possible way of understanding this process.<sup>97</sup> 'Production', according to Cox:

...creates the material base for all forms of social existence, and the ways in which human efforts are combined in productive processes affect all other aspects of social life, including the polity. Production generates the capacity to exercise power, but power determines the manner in which production takes place.<sup>98</sup>

This is the basis for his understanding of world order and how it changes. Elsewhere in his work he characterises his approach as one based on the notion of historical structures, one that:

...focuses on the structures that constitute the framework or parameters for action and that shape the characters of individual actors....Actors are conditioned by the resources, norms, expectations, and institutions of the societies in which they grow up. They are limited by the social-economic and military-political pressures of their environment. They are products of history.<sup>99</sup>

Historical structures are those institutional practices that make up the fabric of any society. They prescribe what is expected and proscribe what is forbidden. They condition human behaviour, if not its nature, and exercise a constraining influence over the possibilities for individual action in history.<sup>100</sup> Historical structures, according to Cox, exist in the *longue durée* described by Fernand Braudel. Cox also suggests that:

Participants in a mode of social relations of production share a mental picture of the mode in ideas of what is normal, expected behavior and in how people arrange their lives with regard to work and income....Specific social groups tend to evolve a collective mentality, that is, a typical way of

---

97. What follows is informed and inspired by Robert W. Cox, *Power, Production and World Order* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1987); Stephen Gill, Robert Cox and Kees Van Der Pijl, 'Structural Change and Globalising Elites: Political Economy Perspectives in the Emerging World Order', Prepared for the International Conference on Changing World Order and the United Nations System, Yokohama, Japan, 24-27 March 1992; Stephen Gill, *op.cit.*, in note 8, pp. 275-314; and Eric Laferrière, 'The Globalization of Politics: Environmental Degradation and North-South Relations', paper presented at the annual Conference of the Canadian Political Science Association, University of Prince Edward Island, Charlottetown, 31 May-2 June 1992.

98. Cox, *Power, Production and World Order*, *op. cit.*, in note 97, p. 1.

99. *Ibid.*, p. 38.

100. *Ibid.*: see also, Lipschutz, *When Nations Clash*, *op. cit.*, in note 55, Ch. 2.

perceiving and interpreting the world that provides orientation to action for members of the group.

The first set of ideas he calls 'ethics'; the second, 'rationalities'.<sup>101</sup> Ethics and rationalities are 'intersubjective', in that they can only be really understood from within the classes and social groups that practice them. The implication of Cox's argument is that ethics and rationalities are, in Marxist terms, superstructures that serve to maintain the social order. It is the relationship of production to power that counts and results in the continual reproduction of historical structures.

Cox's framework makes a great deal of sense. But, he gives too much emphasis to the relations of production and not enough to the relations of social reproduction. Certainly, in normal times, a society's viability is heavily dependent on the material base; ideologies or, in Cox's words, ethics and rationalities, legitimate the system of social relations and assign roles to individuals and classes within that society. However in a time of crisis, when the contradictions become too great for the everyday machinery to manage, his framework is less appropriate. First, Cox puts a great deal of emphasis on the state, as the place where contradictions are resolved and where social adaptation is, in effect, legislated. Hence, if capitalist production is in crisis, a new 'social structure of accumulation' will be put into place, helped along by new social relations orchestrated by the state.<sup>102</sup> Second, Cox seems to take as given the ability of the state-society to adapt to crisis without any fundamental disruption in social relations. Finally, his virtual fusing of society and state eliminates any possibility of change emerging from non-hegemonic sources within society.

This framework can usefully be reconsidered using a different language. We can envision society as the aggregation of a number of social institutions whose function it is to fulfill the needs and demands of the members of that society. These social institutions may have a material function, for example, food production. Or, they may have an ideational purpose, such as a school or church.<sup>103</sup> To be sure, there are ideational elements to food production, as well as material elements to schools and churches. In a well-functioning society these social institutions mesh smoothly with each other. Members of society are assigned various roles; indeed, given the number of social institutions in any society, they each occupy multiple roles. In fitting together, and operating smoothly, the arrangement of the parts serves to legitimate itself.

Marx argued that what seems 'right' is not necessarily the same as one's 'real' interests; this was his point about the working class gaining consciousness and making history. But it is often difficult to know what one's real interests really are. Are they with history? With the self? Somewhere else? In any event, so long

---

101. Cox, *Power, Production and World Order*, *op. cit.*, in note 97, pp. 22 and 25.

102. *Ibid.*, pp. 46-7.

103. I recognize that schools and churches could be seen as simply legitimising power relations within a society. No doubt, such institutions do serve to socialise members of society into the given order, but they can also have the effect of destabilising the given order, sometimes even when there is no material reason for this to happen.

as one's apparent interests are being served by state and society, the individual has little reason to challenge the logic or order of the arrangement. This goes doubly for those who exercise power, either as political leaders or as economic elites. We would not expect change, or agitation for change, within a society that seems to its members to function properly and legitimately.

If the material base of the society is threatened, and the system begins to operate in a more faltering fashion, and the mode of production is less and less able to meet the needs and wants of the society, then the 'real' interests of society may become obvious to some, who will begin to make an effort to reform or reconstruct the social system. In such an instance, we are likely to see frantic efforts to restore equilibrium, to bring society back to where it once was. The current debates in the United States over free trade versus protectionism have this character. One side argues that free trade will create new jobs, by implication re-employing those thrown out of work by the new 'social structure of accumulation'. The other claims that such re-employment can only occur if barriers to trade are re-established, which will allow American industries to retool and rehire. The disagreement here is over means, and not ends. What we see being discussed in this instance is a crisis of means towards an agreed end, and not a crisis of the system as a whole.

If the threat to the material base is not immediate, but emerges over the longer term,<sup>104</sup> it is likely that structures of reproduction and legitimation will be challenged by those who are slowly becoming aware of this crisis as a result of their training and their relationship to the state, that is, the intelligentsia, the educated, and the 'powerful people'. From the source of social legitimation – social elites – there emerges a challenge to the social order and to what Cox calls the Gramscian hegemony of the elites. In the long term, it is these types of challenges, and not only changes in the modes of production, that serve to alter political practices. Ultimately, it is simultaneous individual resistance to the consumer culture of global capitalism and collective resistance to its short and long-term effects that give life and power to global civil society.

### Some Concluding Thoughts on Global Civil Society

In this paper, I have suggested that the emergence of global civil society can be explained by interacting phenomena, at the macro, or structural, level, and at the micro, or agency, level. At the structural level, I argued that anarchy, as the organising principle of the international system, is withering away. This is the result not so much of sudden changes in the global political scene – a shift from bipolarity to multipolarity or unipolarity – as the long-term acceptance of liberalism as a global 'operating system,' with all the short and long-term

---

104. I should note, however, that in many parts of the world, the threat to the material base is immediate. Because of social complexity, however, these parts lack the autonomy to address those threats in an immediate fashion. For an explanation of 'social complexity', see Lipschutz, 'Local Action', *op. cit.*, in note 48.

contradictions that such a shift may entail. Moreover, the provision of security by states has become problematic not only because of the destructiveness of military technology but also because of the growing 'density' of the global system. This, paradoxically, provides the political space for non-state actors to create alliances and linkages across borders and around the globe that, in the longer term, may serve to undermine particular 'historical structures' and create visible changes in world politics.

At the level of agency, national governments are unable, or loathe, to provide the kind of welfare services demanded by citizens, who are more and more aware of what they want and how they might get it. The micro response is to find new ways of providing these services, and citizens are increasingly capable of doing this. Moreover, while many of these efforts are locally focused, they are not limited in terms of adopting forms of social organisation applied elsewhere around the world. Indeed, the transfer of knowledge is facilitated by the various types of communication and transportation hardware that are also a consequence of the conditions of post-Second World War global structure. The results are networks of skilled individuals and groups, operating in newly politicised issue areas, who are helping to modify the state system. Thus, we see the interaction of agency and structure contributing to the emergence and growth of global civil society.

It should be noted, however, that the emergence of global civil society will not necessarily lead to a more peaceful or unified world. On the one hand, it is entirely possible that the effect may be the opposite: the emergence of a neo-medieval world with high levels of conflict and confrontation.<sup>105</sup> On the other hand, there may be promise in this for the future. As Stephen Gill has suggested, some of the processes discussed here could:

...open up new potential for counterhegemonic and progressive forces to begin to make transnational links, and thereby to insert themselves in a more differentiated, multilateral world order. This would be a way to advance the process of democratization of an emerging global civil society and system of international political authority....This might then provide the political space and social possibility to begin to mobilize for the solution to deep-seated problems of social inequality, intolerance, environmental degradation and the militarization of the planet.<sup>106</sup>

In the final analysis, it is important for us to begin to recognize such

---

105. In retrospect, Hedley Bull's characterisation of the 'new mediaevalism' seems quite accurate. *The Anarchical Society*, *op. cit.*, in note 6, pp. 254–5 and 264–76. The neo-medieval world will be a patchwork, a pastiche of political and economic actors, engaged with each other, and in conflict, too. Global civil society may well be only one part of this world. See also Booth's discussion of medievalism in 'Security in Anarchy,' *op. cit.*, in note 4.

106. Gill, 'Reflections,' *op. cit.*, in note 8, p. 311.

## Millennium

possibilities, for it is in describing them that we can begin to undertake the reconstruction of world politics that will make them possible.

*Ronnie D. Lipschutz is Assistant Professor at the Board of Studies in  
Politics, University of California, Santa Cruz, CA, 95064*

---