

## **Pictorial Theories of Global Politics: Why anarchy has retained its paradigmatic position.**

*Abstract: It has recently been pointed out that Kenneth Waltz based his seminal theorization of anarchy on a pictorial view of theories as essentially 'pictures, mentally formed' and that this provides his main buttress against theoretical criticism. This paper asks what other pictorial theories are in operation in the discipline and finds surprisingly few. Copious criticism of 'anarchy' as a theory has not resulted in a host of rival pictorial theories of world politics being developed and the lack of rival 'theories' leaving critics dependent upon anarchy. The paper begins with a note on the pictorial understanding of what a theory is before it investigates alternatives including hierarchy, anarchy, empire and network. It concludes that anarchy and hierarchy remain the only two pictorial theories of political structure in town and that this is a constraining factor in the development of fresh theoretical perspectives on world politics. The example of the Global Polity Approach which aimed to start from a new unit of analysis but lacked precisely its own pictorial theory of political structure is offered as a demonstration of the power of the unchallenged model of anarchy.*

Paper prepared for the ECPR Standing Group on International Relations conference in Stockholm, 9<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> Sept. 2010.

*Comments welcome! Do not cite etc.*

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In a recent article Ole Waever examines Kenneth Waltz's theory of theory, pointing out how the seminal work *Theory of International Relations* subscribes to a particular 'pictorial' idea of what a theory is (Waever 2009). This is a long overdue reflection on what kind of a thing it is that IR scholars have been fighting over for now over 30 years. A 'theory' in this sense is not the same as a general approach such as constructivism or Marxism and would also differ from 'laws' e.g. that democracies do not go to war with each other. Laws establish a relation between variables, whereas a theory, following Waltz (who was following an emerging post-positivist consensus at the time) can be thought of as a 'picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity. A theory is a *depiction* of the organization of a domain and the connections among its parts' (Waltz 1979: 8 – emphasis added). According to this idea (apparently quite standard in the philosophy of the natural sciences (Frigg 2006)) models or graphic representations do not simply illustrate a theory but in some ways *are* the theory (2009). Since this pictorial theory of theory provides the foundations of what is widely regarded as the most influential theory in the discipline, understanding why Waltz preferred this theory of theory and how it influenced his extremely powerful articulation of structural realism is, as Waever points out, fascinating for its own sake and crucial for understanding how Waltz currently defends the theory. But it also raises the question of what other pictorial theories there are available in the discipline, which in many ways remains so very circumscribed by the model of anarchy and the debate about it. Waever also notes, for instance, that most of Waltz' 'grandchildren' have not tackled his theory at this level, mostly articulating theory of a kind he specifically warned against (looking for laws from empirical patterns, for example). To this can be added that Waltz's critics have also not tended to articulate alternative theories of political structure content instead with criticizing Waltz'

specification of anarchy, or dismissing the idea of structural models all together.

Neoliberalism famously accepted the structural model of anarchy but added institutions, non-state actors and focussed on cooperation where and when it happened. Wendtian constructivism sought to provide a different ontology to anarchy but remained focussed on anarchy as a social structure. English School writers saw an anarchic system but also a international society underpinning this (Bull 1977) and recently the idea of a world society has been developed further (Buzan 2004). Again no alternative pictorial model of political structure is explored or promised. Post-structuralists have revealed the discourses behind anarchy and deconstructed them and their pivotal concepts such as sovereignty and national security, pointing to the contingent and political nature of these (Walker 1993, Bartelson 1995, Campbell 1998). Post-internationalist perspectives such as that of James Rosenau (1990, 1997) and Ferguson and Mansbach (2006), Mansbach (2000) continue to provide copious criticisms of the model of an anarchy of states pointing to the many 'changes' in the international system and complications that make the idea of a system of neatly ordered sovereign states in a system more a myth than reality. But these descriptions are again based on the model of anarchy and make sense in relation to that in a 'post-this' 'non-that' mode of thinking that leans on the very model that it hits out at. Anarchy still seems to be posing the questions, even when it is not given as the answer.

After all the years of debate and criticism of *Theory of International Politics* this observation raises the surprising question of what – or even whether – other 'theories' or political structure in the pictorial sense are in operation in the discipline of International Relations (IR). Waltz himself claimed that societies can either be hierarchical or anarchical and that mixtures of anarchy and hierarchy do not constitute a third kind (1979). Much critical has been said about this assertion, and the idea that hierarchy and anarchy are the only theories of

International Relations (IR) will rightly seem preposterous if by ‘theory’ we mean any work that departs from mere description. However, if ‘theory’ is used more particularly in the pictorial sense as a ‘picture, mentally formed’ that allows a delineated field to be understood, then the question of an alternative model of political structure for grouping units and understanding their dynamics has at any rate been attempted surprisingly little. Most alternative notions of political structure such as suzerainty (Watson 1992) heterarchy (Ruggie 1998) or hegemony (Watson 1992) locate themselves upon a continuum between the ideal types of hierarchy and anarchy or constitute a mixture of the two. Furthermore, in rejecting the theory of anarchy as incomplete or misleading, critics of neorealism have very often rejected the very idea of models as ways of simplifying complex reality concerning political structure. Theories of anarchy and parsimony have been viewed as two sides of the same coin. This has left little in the way of simplifying tools for heterodox scholars to reach for when describing global politics – hence the penchant for complexity and network metaphors such as the ‘complex interdependence’ (Keohane and Nye) ‘fuzzy borders’ (Christiansen) or the ‘nebuleuse’ (Cox). Moreover, this lack of rivals for hierarchy and particularly anarchy, I would venture, provides part of the explanation as to why Waltz’s structural theory of anarchy still holds such paradigmatic sway within the discipline: additions and complications to the standard model stand little chance of displacing the model of anarchy, just as a scientific paradigm in Kuhn’s sense can survive even huge amounts of falsification so long as a rival theory is not presented (Kuhn 1962).

This article surveys the theoretical landscape of IR at precisely this level of theory as pictures, mentally formed. Although this definition of theory appears idiosyncratic and can easily be dismissed as too limited, dismissing its significance and failing to apply it as a

prism for viewing other theories of world politics so would obscure an important point: scholars will be very familiar with claims about the conditions of hierarchy and the logic of anarchy, while those challenging that dichotomy within IR have largely had to make do with emphasising the breakdown, corruption and transformation of existing or traditional (state) boundaries, the crossing of the domestic-foreign frontier, the mythical nature of the Inside-Outside distinction (Walker 1993) or with positing notions of ‘turbulence’ or the compound term ‘fragmegration’ (Rosenau 1990, 1997) or other non-model concepts such as ‘complex multilateralism’ which operate within existing discourses of International Relations. The scenario of an undergraduate student of IR pronouncing on ‘the logic of [something other than anarchy]’ is not easily conjured up, or not in my mind, at least. The whole post-international approach is dedicated to – even defined by – showing how the model of the international system falls short because the system either never was a neat anarchy of hierarchical states or is changing and becoming more complex with the addition of other actors and institutions. To some degree the discipline of IR is defined by the use of the ‘theory’ of anarchy even if much of the discipline is hostile to the model. This tension is dogging the discipline while probably also preventing it from becoming a subdiscipline of World or Global Politics, that could be imagined as a discipline with multiple pictorial theories of political structure.

The paper begins with a note on the pictorial understanding of what a theory is before it investigates alternatives to anarchy currently deployed in IR including hierarchy, anarchy, empire and network. Finally it is suggested that this notion of theory potentially provides a way of organizing theories of world politics that does not rely on the anarchy-fixated history of the discipline of IR that helps perpetuate its narrow theoretical focus and prevents it from

evolving into Global Politics. So far, however, it concludes that anarchy and hierarchy remain the only two pictorial theories of political structure in town and that this is a constraining factor in the development of fresh theoretical perspectives on world politics such as the Global Polity Approach which lack a unit of analysis that is different from hierarchy and anarchy.

## **Theory**

Theory is many things to many people. To answer the question of what theories of global politics we have at our disposal, we first need to consider briefly what is meant here by a theory. While the main thrust of the argument in this paper challenges Kenneth Waltz' claim that there can be only two basic theoretical models of political structure applicable for politics in a society – anarchy or hierarchy – his consideration of what a theory actually is, though flawed, is potentially useful. In his book *Theory of International Politics*, Waltz (1979) expends some considerable energy on defining what he thinks a theory is, presenting a relatively well defined 'theory of theory' (see Wæver 2009) not least compared to other theory-builders in the discipline who either do not discuss what a theory is, or treat it summarily (e.g. Lebow 2008). As mentioned he argues that a theory is or should be thought of as a 'picture, mentally formed, of a bounded realm or domain of activity. A theory is a depiction of the organization of a domain and the connections among its parts' (Waltz 1979: 8).

This definition, though not uncontentious, has three main elements relevant for expanding the range of theories in circulation. Firstly, with the idea of a theory being 'mentally formed' he rejects that theories can be inductively gleaned from data and thus that a new theory can only

arise if a new reality has emerged. A theory is *distinct* from reality and is arrived at by moving away from reality, not towards it: ‘to claim that it is possible to arrive at a theory inductively is to claim that we can understand phenomena before the means for their explanation are contrived’ (Waltz 1979:7). Waltz quotes Albert Einstein’s words that ‘there is no way from experience to the setting up of a theory’ (ibid.). Of course this contains an element of polemics since theories are not grasped out of thin air but inspired by something, including (in some way) data and prior knowledge about a field, which must have been grasped using another theory. None the less, there must be an element of a ‘leap’ from one theory to another as the movement to a new one cannot be bridged by evidence alone. Thus the creative aspect of theory-construction is emphasized by Waltz and this is an important point for anybody aiming to begin afresh, unsatisfied with the arrangement and framing of evidence generated by the international system model. This also drives home the point that pointing out myriad symptoms of globalizing politics as post-internationalists have tended to, is not the same as developing an alternative theory of world politics.

Secondly, Waltz points out that theories are also simplifications that help make sense of a certain limited field (1979, 2004). As a simplification a theory does not correspond exactly to the field it depicts (selecting elements of reality for the purpose of inquiry). Waltz is critical of political scientists who write of theoretical models as though they were of ‘the model airplane sort’ (Waltz 1979:7). If the problem with post-internationalism is its reliance on complexity and additional variables framed by the same underlying model of inter-state anarchy, then adopting this view of theory as a simplifying device is also a potentially useful antidote to simply amassing more anomalies in relation to the state system model. We are looking for a new simplification. Moreover, if simple correspondence is not the basis of a

theory the legitimacy of a new model is not tied to the idea of fundamental change in the world out there.

Finally, and perhaps most interestingly, for Waltz a theory is in an important way also ‘a picture’: ‘A theory (...) is not a collection of variables’ it is, literally, a *depiction*:

*Interviewer (Ole Wæver)*: So when you say theory is a ‘picture’ mentally formed, ‘picture’ is to be taken relatively literally. There is something graphic to it?

*Kenneth Waltz*: Yes, it is a picture, but of course ‘mentally formed’ / that is important too! (Waltz 2005 in Hansen & Wæver 2005).

The pictorial idea of a theory is different from most commonsense understandings or politics textbook definitions which (usually implicitly) rest on the idea of a theory as a set of propositions about causes and effects, something Waltz rather considers to be a set of ‘laws’. For Waltz, laws ‘establish relations between variables’ but do not explain that relation (1979:1). For that we need theory. We can observe the regularity of sunrise and sunset, without understanding why they occur as they do: ‘rather than being mere collections of laws, theories are statements that explain them’ (1979:5). Even though he uses the term ‘statements’ here and his theory is of course also presented in textual form in *Theory of International Politics*, a central element of the theory is constituted by the diagram or model (Wæver 2009). For followers of such a picture-theoretic approach models always play an important role and to some extent ‘are’ the theory: ‘it is models that are the primary (though by no means the only) representational tools in the sciences’ (Giere 2004:747).

The model-oriented theory of theory has grown in popularity in the philosophy of science literature, displacing the older ‘received’ or syntactic view of theories as axiomatic

statements and laws, such that ‘it is now part and parcel of the official philosophical wisdom that models are essential to the acquisition and organisation of scientific knowledge’ (Frigg 2006:49). Whether ‘theory’ should be reserved solely for this level of theory is doubtful even for those pushing for a model-centric view of theory (Giere 2004:746). After all, at base, theory is simply ‘the task of making the world or some part of it more intelligible or better understood’ (Viotti & Kauppi 1993:3). However, in this case, understanding theory in terms of a pictorial model that structures knowledge with a view to making the world more intelligible is useful because it shifts attention to a relatively neglected level of theory in the debate about IR and globalization. Compared to the huge debate on the need for supplementary *variables* to complement the Waltzian theory of states in anarchy populated by neoclassical realists and post-classical realists (Wivel 2000, Rose 1998, Escude 1998) as well as neoliberal institutionalists and post-internationalists (Nye & Keohane 1977, Keohane & Nye 1997), a wholly insignificant amount of energy has gone into developing alternative theories in the sense of pictures, mentally formed, to make sense of the structure of the field. Challenges to Waltz’ theory have in other words generally not been at the level of theory as he understands it. As Wæver puts it:

Waltz’s academic grandchildren build theory according to a positivist manual very far from chapter 1 of *TIP* [*Theory of International Politics*]. Not only do they violate his injunctions against add-ons to the theory (be that as it may, it is in some sense a tribute to his triumph: he has already said it all; we need to move on), they do not build the new theories in his style but adopt ideas of theory that he explicitly warned against’ (Wæver 2009: 214)

The idea of models structuring scientific knowledge ‘below’ the level of statements also offers an understanding of why extensive liberal criticism of neorealist oversimplification has not unseated the model of anarchy as the dominant theory. Alternative laws and variables have been advanced, but not ‘theories’. Complexity or additions of new variables in post-

internationalism do not represent a new theory of international relations in the Waltzian sense. On the contrary they depend upon the same underlying model of the international system. Rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic would not have changed its course and saved it from calamity.

If few have (or indeed if anybody has) built 'new theories in [Waltz's] style' this may be in large part due to the way he hoisted the ladder up after himself. Hierarchy and anarchy are defined as each other's opposites and form a continuum creating the illusion that all the possibilities are contained between two ideal typical models and the scale that they define. Waltz warns his readers that 'a new concept [beyond hierarchy and anarchy] should be introduced only to cover matters that existing concepts do not reach' (1979:116). Mixtures and borderline cases do not represent a third type: 'To say that we have borderline cases is not to say that at the border a third type of system appears' (Waltz 1979:116). Given this, there may seem little point in looking for other theories of politics.

However, Waltz seems to have forgotten his own theory of theory according to which theories consist mostly of omissions. If, as he writes, 'the infinite materials of any realm can be organized in endlessly different ways', and theories are created not by induction from many observations but by the flash of 'brilliant intuition' (1979:9), then there will always be scope for new theories, even without major change in society. There will by definition always be 'matters that existing concepts do not reach' and hence always scope for the introduction of new theories. Of these we ask not 'are they true' but 'are they useful', as Waltz points out.

Furthermore, while Waltz hails simplification as the source of a theory's strength, this is plainly also the source of weakness. Richard Ned Lebow's view of a social theory as a

construct that helps us structure and understand reality by describing the relationship between the parts and the whole (2008:42) has parallels with the Waltzian idea of a useful picture, mentally formed, depicting how units relate to each other. But Lebow more honestly admits that theories have a ‘down-side’: ‘They ignore or dismiss certain problems, discourage certain kinds of inquiry and encourage the kind of cognitive constituency that leads us to assimilate discrepant information to our expectations’ (Lebow 2008:34). If we are bound to simplify in order to explain or understand (Waltz), but simplification also distorts (Lebow), the best we can do is to have more theories at our disposal such that distortions balance each other or at least do not get reified as singular truths. We need to have a real choice about what aspects of reality we wish to select and understand.

The argument of this paper is therefore not the usual Waltzian one – that post-internationalism, by moving descriptively closer to reality by adding complications, loses explanatory power as such. To my mind, the problem is not the lack of parsimony (historical explanations and thick description are surely useful forms of explanation too). In any case the predictive power of the Waltzian structural theory (that anarchy forces balancing, for example) relies ultimately on discursive structures that cast identities and interests in a particular way (Wendt 1999). The problem for IR lies instead in the hidden *reliance on the same theoretical model* behind such ‘more accurate’ descriptions that sacrifice parsimony: parsimonious monoculture, so to speak. A certain theory (anarchy) has monopolised the field providing the theoretical scaffolding even for descriptive ‘bunch of variables’ theories of international relations including neoliberal and post-international critiques of the structural realist model of states in anarchy.

None the less, there are alternative theories (even in the Waltzian sense) already in circulation besides that of anarchy. ‘Hierarchy’ is the obvious alternative model suggested by Waltz as theoretically possible in the international realm (in his dichotomy societies are hierarchical if they are not anarchical) but in practice this is unlikely, due amongst other things to the logic of balancing, which will tend to maintain a bi- or multi-polar anarchy. Most people, specialist or lay, would have little trouble drawing hierarchy pictorially in the classical pyramid shape with the sovereign at the top. Limited credence has traditionally been given to the idea of there being a *global* hierarchy, especially if this is taken to mean a global state. But the theory is out there and is beginning to be taken up anew (Wendt 2003, Shaw 2000, Ougaard 2004, Weiss 2009). That said, until now, anarchy has ruled fairly supremely, challenged mainly by generally non-pictorial notions of complexity e.g. ‘complex interdependence’ (Keohane and Nye) or more recently more sociological substantial notions of complexity (Urry, Lash & Urry, Bell 2006). Theories of empire are a possible exception to this pattern (if they are not classed as a variation on hierarchy) as they posit a centre-periphery model that has been depicted and specified in various ways (see below). These models or theories have lived on the outskirts of or outside the discipline of IR of course, but have been prominent in other disciplines such as historical sociology and IPE (although this is beginning to show signs of changing – see Nexon & Wright 2007, MacDonald 2009). Additionally, ‘the network’ as a picture, mentally formed, of world politics is a late but promising arrival to which we give more attention below.

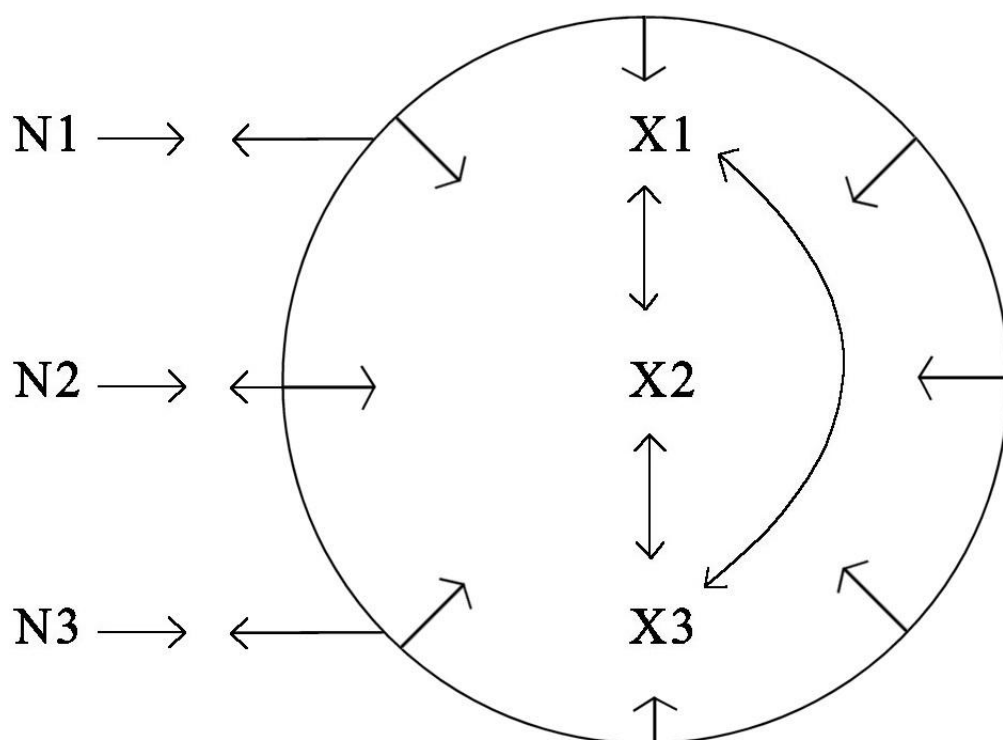
Thus, assuming Waltz’ theory of theories as pictures, mentally formed, that underlay and structure various explanations of world politics – but challenging his claim that there are a limited range of such theories – we now consider briefly what theories we have at our

disposal when analysing world politics as social scientists. The aim here is not to comprehensively assess accounts of global politics, but to glean the pictorial theories of political space behind them. With the theory of theory outlined above, we gain a vantage point from which we get an overview and classification of familiar theories in the field without going via the usual IR-typology of Realism, Liberalism and Radicalism/Marxism. That trinity grew out of the debate about the international system model and is as such (post)international itself.

### **Anarchy**

As a theory of world politics, anarchy is the familiar one of individual, self-contained units (states) that live separately yet within a ‘system’. A system has in turn been defined by Bull as a situation in which connections between units are significant enough to force them to take each others’ actions into account (1977). An anarchic system is, as we know in IR, not necessarily one of permanent conflict or chaos but one in which there is no Leviathan and in which every unit is ultimately responsible for its own survival and formally equal to other units. Constructivists such as Wendt have made the point that not even balancing of power or security seeking is a necessary element of anarchy since this depends upon the character of the units and their notion of what the structure consists of (1999). In Waltz’s analogy with micro-economics, firms in an oligopoly are assumed to be fundamentally like units living with similar imperatives, although they vary in size. Cutting to the bone then, anarchy is about a system of distinct but formally like units who govern themselves while taking account of ‘others’ – indeed that is all that is pictured. The graphic depiction of anarchy is well known from Waltz 1979, emphasizing the formal equivalence of the units in a system and their internal ordering lacking a sovereign power with a monopoly on the (legitimate) use of force (Figure 1). This is the basic model of anarchy that Waltz claimed was the most

accurate theory or 'prototype' of the international system (and later he claimed it was applicable to other kinds of units such as tribes, nations, oligopolistic firms or street gangs (Waltz 1990: 37, quoted in Buzan and Little 2009)). If the pictorial theory of theory is adopted, this is the essence of his theory of anarchy:



**Figure 1 Waltz' model of anarchy (1979, 100)**

The circle represents the systemic effect, which affects the interactions of states and their attributes. N1, 2 and 3 are internally generated impulses from the states generating X1, X2, and X3 external effects, but the structure affects both. Because the units are assumed to be interested in survival and placed in a self-help environment, Waltz held that they would seek to maximise their relative power and from there he read off the idea of the balance of power and other classical realist themes regarding the function of the structure of anarchy. There is little point in revisiting such well-trodden territory, which can be read in Waltz or they key

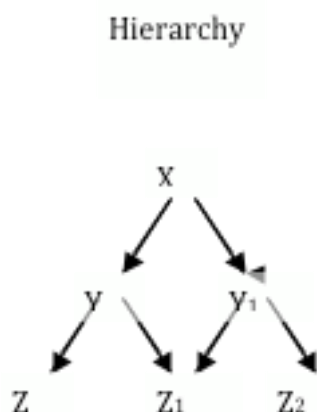
texts of realist scholarship as well as any standard IR textbook (Waltz 1979, Mearsheimer 2001).

The significant point in the context of sorting through the available theories (pictures, mentally formed) of world politics is the idea suggested in Chapter 1 that the many additional variables offered by critics of the bald states-in-anarchy model offer in themselves no alternative theory of political structure. They rest their accounts on the model of anarchy with its distinction between domestic and foreign policy, state and non-state but emphasize additional variables: Neoliberal Institutionalists focus on institutions, regimes, non-state actors; Post-classical Realists reintroduce statesmanship and domestic political variables into the systemic model refined by Waltz; Neo-classical Realists introduce extra variables mediating between the anarchic structure and foreign policy such as culture or institutions; English School theorists view the system of states to be embedded in a society of states, etc.. Although these accounts of world politics in some way explicitly criticize the systemic model of anarchy, their critique confirms the model as the basic imaginary of international relations from which reality deviates in various ways. Constructivist scholars, such as Alexander Wendt, who emphasize the constructed nature of the anarchic international system, contest how anarchy came and what it is made of but do not offer an alternative structural model and definitely not one that can be depicted. 'Anarchy is what states make of it', but what else are actors making: hierarchies, empires, networks, polities, etc.? Even post-structuralists sooner offer deconstruction of the Inside/Outside distinction of the international system model than the construction of a new distinction (Walker 1993). On top of this explicit theorizing in terms of the model of anarchy, the standard jargon of international relations derives in large part from it.

Even so, not all accounts of world politics take their point of departure from that model. Wæver is, strictly speaking, wrong when he makes the point elsewhere that we cannot go from complexity to a description of the reality of the world. The only way we have of articulating the complex reality of world politics is to say that ‘the distinction between domestic and international has broken down’ (2004:16).

### **Hierarchy**

The other model mentioned (though not studied) by Waltz and easily recognized by all is the model of hierarchy. In Figure 2, X represents the hegemonic unit, and Y, Y1 and Z, Z1 and Z2 represent subordinate units that can have different characteristics as X has a monopoly on the use of violence or maintains order by some other means (Lebow *Tragic vision*) and so allows for functional differentiation. This picture, mentally formed (though that happened at least as long ago as Hobbes’ *Leviathan*), is in current discourse paradigmatically connected to the idea of statehood in which authority is organized in terms of the state having a monopoly on the (legitimate) use of force within the remit of a territory. In principle, hierarchy is more than this standard definition includes and can be based on other forms of power than a monopoly on the legitimate use of force, such as discipline (Parent & Erikson 2009, Larner & Walters 2004, Dean 1999). But hierarchy has typically figured as a model in IR in terms of the alter ego of the anarchic international system on the ‘inside’ of the sovereign states that comprise the system. So in essence, ‘in hierarchical systems, power is centralized in the hierarch’ (Parent & Erikson 2009:132).



**Figure 2 Model of Hierarchy (Corry 2006)**

Despite Waltz' dismissal of hierarchy as a model not applicable to world politics it has also been used to imagine or describe a global hierarchy. While political debate in the 1930s was awash with references to world government, the idea was long considered practically unrealisable and politically unpalatable (Weiss 2009). The end of the Cold War provided some renaissance of the idea of deploying the model of hierarchy in analysis of world politics. Eduard Luard wrote of 'world society' as a 'single, interrelated political organism,' or a 'world political system' (1990: 4-5, 17, quoted in Ougaard 1999:2). Similarly Dieter Senghaas uses the terms 'global governance' and 'world domestic policy' (*Weltinnenpolitik*) interchangeably (1993), noting that global governance is a 'tempting concept, since it presupposes the notion of the world as a unity' (1993:247). Earlier the idea of 'international relations as a prismatic system' (Riggs 1961) suggested that the concept of the developmental or 'prismatic state' could be borrowed from development theory (concerned with states with a variety of levels of development within them) to investigate whether the core ingredients of a developing 'world polity' – i.e. evolving shared identities and institutions allowing for the authoritative allocation of values, and popular consensus on rules of the game worldwide – is

emerging. Conceptual tools applied to analysis of the international system were derived from analysis of domestic, hierarchic order (Rochester 1974:8).

Today, neofunctionalist and neo-Marxist global state approaches provide the most explicit attempts to apply the model of a global hierarchy, though more in descriptive than prescriptive terms. Alexander Wendt speaks of the logical evolution towards a world state explicitly modelled on the 'domestic' state as functions of governance spill-over creating a demand for ever larger political units (Wendt 2003). Martin Shaw provides the best known contemporary theory of a global state based on neo-marxist ideas about violence, legitimacy and state structure (see also Robinson 2001). Shaw is promising from a global polity perspective because globality for him involves a transformation of the national-international nexus itself rather than a simple tipping towards the international: 'Accounts of transnationalism hardly amount to theories of globality' (Shaw 2000:89). Although states remain and inevitably form an important part of global politics, in a global setting 'tensions [between national and international] reappear in novel terms, which are increasingly relativised by the greater consciousness of the global human whole' (Shaw 2000:26). Within this emerging globality, Shaw argues that global state functions are gradually becoming globalized. This creates a nascent western-global state 'conglomerate' of powerful units centred on the lone superpower, the US, and shared institutions like NATO:

'The globalized Western state-conglomerate, or global-Western state for short, is an integrated authoritative organization of violence which includes a large number of both juridically defined states and international interstate organizations.' (2000:199).

The global or 'western-global' state has internal structures strong enough to redefine ideas about national interest and sovereignty while it acts outwardly in relation to elements of world politics still outside it as a partially hegemonic bloc: 'not only is western state power

exercised world-wide, but it has a general (if strongly contested) global legitimacy'. (2000:200). For Shaw, other theories of global governance underestimate the 'striking difference between nation-states within the West and outside it' (2000:202). A new distinction beyond the national-international is thus offered as fundamental: 'the Western state functions as a single centre of military state power in relation to other centres' (2000:200).

Similarly focused on the politics of globalization, though with a focus on a wider range of state functions than those related to violence and war-making, Morten Ougaard borrows concepts originally refined in domestic neo-marxist state theory such as 'superstructure', 'persistence function', and the 'reproduction of relations of power'. Ougaard's project is also motivated by a wish to go beyond the model of the state system as a modified anarchy and he urges 'a holistic perspective on world politics as an integrated phenomenon' (2004:5). This he achieves in a powerful analysis of a growing global superstructure of institutions: 'the rise of a global political superstructure can be theorized as the uneven and partial globalization of the various aspects of statehood. (2004:196.)'. Like Shaw's, Ougaard's analysis leads him to identify a global state-like construction based on the major western powers and global institutions. For him the 'global polity' is made up of:

'the core of industrialized market democratic countries in an increasingly integrated institutional infrastructure of national governments and international institutions marked by dense contacts, routinized information exchange, mutual surveillance and peer pressure, strong analytical and statistical resources, and a capacity for development of joint strategies and policies' (p199).

Shaw and Ougaard largely succeed in offering an alternative to standard accounts of (modified) international anarchy. They begin from a different unit of analysis than the model

of anarchy. Basing their account instead on hierarchy they posit a global state-agent with a (relatively) ordered and pacific inside and a relatively anarchic outside. Both theorists implicitly and explicitly measure the 'global superstructure' in relation to the idea of a hierarchic state able to command resources, build institutions and secure legitimacy and loyalty. Ougaard's account of the global polity is openly based on a domestic analogy – something which he argues is legitimate, indeed indispensable, provided such domestic analogies are not used 'uncritically' (2004:4). Both emphasize the 'incomplete' nature of the global state which insulates somewhat against realist counterclaims about the continued primacy of state sovereignty and the persistence of an underlying anarchy, but also suggests that the global state process, over time, will or could be 'completed'.

This is perfectly legitimate and thanks to a repertoire of state theory concepts both offer explanations and analysis of the globalization of power structures often lacking in economic or sociology-oriented globalization perspectives that begin from the model of anarchy. But they do not fundamentally expand our range of political models beyond the familiar dichotomy of hierarchy and anarchy, transferring the model of hierarchy familiar from comparative politics and methodological nationalism to the global level. Both warn against the uncritical use of concepts developed in a domestic setting. Yet it is hard to see how their global model of hierarchy differs from that of standard domestic state theory. For Ougaard the global political system can now be viewed as an integrated whole with state-like qualities: 'interests are articulated and aggregated, decisions are made values allocated and policies conducted through international or transnational political processes' (2004:5). The global state is for them, like the model of the domestic sovereign state, by definition relatively pacific internally, institutionalized, territorially anchored and possesses agent qualities, able to act towards an 'outside'. While this sheds light on important questions

concerning world politics, it also inevitably obscures other questions which are key to the idea of a global polity.

Firstly, with global state theory there will be a strong propensity to find internal cohesion and ‘actorness’ in a global state when envisaging it as a domestic state writ-large. The plausibility of the global state argument in fact depends on the internal cohesion of the bloc or the uniformity of the global superstructure and critics were for this reason quick to charge that the global state could easily break up, making it essentially a multilateral form of cooperation between states rather than a new state formation (Hirst 2001). A global state thus conceived is predicated on the weakening of nation-state constructs and excludes by definition radical opponents of the West. The global state is considered as a kind of actor rather than as a structure (unlike an anarchy and the theory of polity suggested below). Similarly, the idea of ‘global public goods’ which also explicitly rests on an analogy between domestic public goods and global ones, assumes the existence of actors that share a common interest in internalizing externalities as well as general agreement as to what are externalities in the first place and who the legitimate stakeholders are (Kaul & Mondoza 2003). This is domestic hierarchy writ large.

Secondly and linked to this is the fact that the idea of a global society hovers around the notion of a global state since state theory has assumed the rough coincidence of societies and states (societies creating states of a certain kind in traditional Marxist historical thinking, gaining autonomy from society in later iterations). Ougaard and Higgott identify a ‘growing sense of “community”’ (Ougaard & Higgott 2002:3) as a central characteristic of what they see as an emerging Western global polity. Shaw’s global state derives its cohesion in part from a common awareness of human society on a world scale (‘society becomes global when

this becomes its dominant, constitutive framework' 2000:12) and externally his global state has 'a general (if strongly contested) global legitimacy' (2000:200). Even for the more institutionally focussed Ougaard the 'global polity' is characterized by assumptions of international cohesion: 'dense contacts, routinized information exchange, mutual surveillance and peer pressure, strong analytical and statistical resources, and a capacity for development of joint strategies and policies' (2004:199). A global polity would in contrast be open to the idea of even extreme tension and strife within it and need not be based on a notion of shared principles or institutions (see Chapter 4).

Thirdly, global state theory gives priority to institutions, institutionalisation and hierarchic bureaucracy. These are core connotations linked to the concept of a state. Shaw's emphasis on the shift towards consciousness of the world as one place is at the crux of his idea of 'global', but neither global consciousness nor global discourse figure prominently in his idea of a global Western state bloc, which is rather based on control over means of violence. The same goes for Ougaard's global superstructure, which is conceived of mainly in terms of institutions. The polity approach offered here in contrast puts global discourse at the heart of the emerging global polity in terms of the social construction of global governance-objects and the way subjects put (or do not put) such objects at the heart of their political identities.

Finally global state theory tends to bring with it certain assumptions concerning territoriality. The global state is for Shaw limited to the same area as the global-Western transnational socio-military formation maintaining a 'territorial base' defined by 'the areas controlled by its component state units' (2000:201). Like Shaw's, Ougaard's analysis leads him to identify a global state-like construction based on the major western powers and global institutions. Seyom Brown, in another conception of a 'world polity', defines it as the totality of political

relations on the Earth exercising authoritative distribution of (certain) values across the globe (Brown 1996, 6). This brings a very wide concept of polity to bear in an attempt to understand the proliferation of trans-border processes, actors and identities without having to prove the existence of a unified set of institutions normally associated with the concept of a state. But it replicates on a planetary basis the conventional definition of politics as the authoritative distribution of values for a society within a territory (in this case the territory is the whole of the planet). (It also remains theoretically weak because a simple sum of the political relations going on on planet Earth would logically have existed at all times and therefore does not provide additional analytical leverage on what logic or inner workings or limits of a global polity were or when one could be said to have emerged). Reliance on the model of hierarchy appears to lead these theorists to import the baggage of the state era in the form of the idea of territoriality. A global polity must be conceivable without such an assumption.

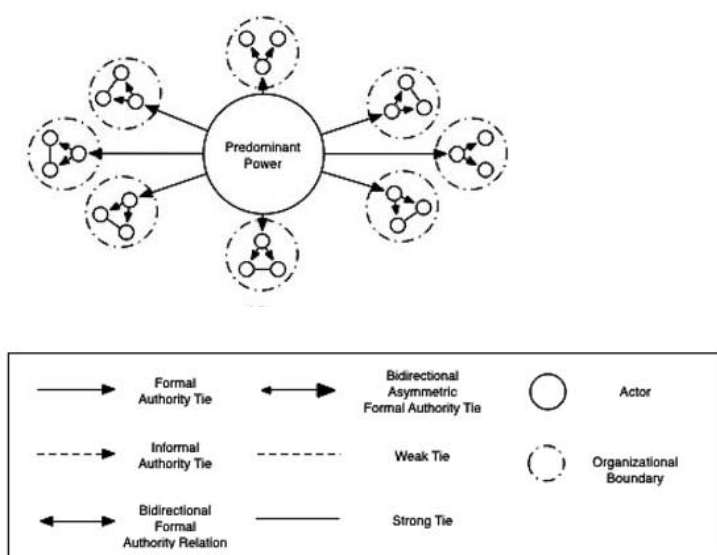
In sum, using the model of the hierarchic domestic usefully points up certain features of world politics that tend to get neglected in the anarchy-based literature that highlights differences and divisions among states or complications to anarchy. After all, the inattention to hierarchy in mainstream International Relations is principled and systematic, not inadvertent (Lake 2009) and domestic analogies are one kind of antidote to this. But they have their own biases from its import of assumptions derived from domestic states in that the homogeneity of the quasi-global state is overrated just as domestic order has been idealized and contrasted international disorder (Walker 1993) and again the non-western or hostile political elements of global politics are written out of the narrative. The form of authority evoked by the global state model is that of legally sanctioned, territorially delimited rule ultimately backed by the use of force. This close association between the model of hierarchy

and the idea of a bounded 'civil' society reflects the dominance of Westphalian thinking about the global state (Bartelson 2006). In terms of getting beyond the hierarchy-anarchy dichotomy, global state theory does not do it.

## **Empire**

More promising is the deployment of models of empire to theorize global politics (Galtung 1971, Hardt & Negri 2001, Callinicos 2009, Barkawi and Laffey 1999, Colas 2007, Munkler 2007, Nexon & Wright 2007)). The basic model of political structure in such accounts is not a sovereign authority ruling a single jurisdiction or territory but, at its simplest, a core ruling various peripheries, usually at a distance and not solely through military coercion. The concept of empire usually, though not always, implies a wider set of social, cultural and political mechanisms than simple military dominance by which the centre controls the periphery although this broad notion of power is not what distinguishes a theory of empire from superficially similar theories of hegemony or unipolarity, based on a theory of anarchy. Instead, empire can be differentiated from 'hegemony' in terms of a different model of political structure. Analysis of hegemony and 'imperial overstretch' touch on imperial themes and are quite common (e.g. Burbach & Tarbell 2004, Snyder 1991) but remain theorized with the premise of 'states under anarchy' and focussed on the hegemon rather than addressing the imperial character of international relations more generally (Barkawi 2009). Hegemonic stability theory, for example, implies dominance of one unit over other formally equal ones (a uni-polar anarchy in effect) while empire relaxes the assumption of formal equality between units and depicts satellites attached to a centre in varying ways (Munkler 2007:6, Nexon & Wright 2007). The model of empire theorizes dependent units as segregated from one another and governed through different kinds of contract, isolating them from each other in a divide and rule logic as opposed to the balance of power or bandwagoning logic of

states in anarchy (Nexon and Wright 2007). Nexon and Wright, building on earlier diagrams and theories of imperialism developed by Galtung (1971:89) and dependency theorists depict empire as a ‘rimless hub-and-spoke’ structure, where the imperial authority maintains ties with each satellite without them connecting up together. The interests of the centre or elite of the imperial power chimes with the peripheral elites. Each periphery is isolated from the other ones. The dialectical view of history where identities are seen as relational is a fundamental critique of the Newtonian worldview of discrete colliding units that underpins the states in anarchy model.



**Figure 3 Model of Empire (Reproduced from Nexon & Wright 2007, 257)**

Instead of no unit differentiation as in the model of anarchy, the theory of empire predicts differential treatment of satellites and different qualities in ties between centre and various peripheries. This prevents peripheries in having similar interests and in making common cause against the imperial power. Divide and rule, it is claimed, is the primary logic in this kind of political structure and dependency and autonomy are the key dynamics. Whereas ‘hegemony’ naturally fixes focus onto the hegemonic unit, a theory of ‘empire’ shifts

attention to the relations constituting dependency and domination. The favourite subject matter of hegemonic power theory based on the model of anarchy has been major wars between great powers thus obscuring smaller (but significant) wars and more pervasive or subtle exploitative relations between the strong and the weak (Barkawi 2009). As such, theories of empire, though largely written on the edge of mainstream IR theory, are an efficient if underused antidote to the Westphalian bias of the 'states under anarchy'-model (Laffey & Barkawi 2002) as well as the domestic idea of hierarchy just identified. According to Barkawi, 'the modern world took shape around the imperial encounter between Europeans and the Americas, Africa and Asia' yet 'security studies and IR lack a coherent and developed body of inquiry on questions of empire' (Barkawi 2009:2).

Despite Waltz' dismissal of theories other than anarchy and hierarchy, empire appears to conform to his criteria of theory: a picture, mentally formed, that helps explain a limited field. Empire is a model that implies a dominant core and a coerced periphery, which, if the task here is to move beyond the models of anarchy and hierarchy in analysis of global politics, empire is only of limited use. Empire, like global state theory, arguably remains a version of the model of hierarchy. It defines political structure in terms of relations of super- and subordination albeit without the unitary and territorial assumptions written into discourses of sovereignty. Furthermore, territoriality often remains inscribed within the complex of ideas that the term empire activates. The concept of 'global empire' would thus for most people imply domination of a centre over the entire or all parts of the globe. Hardt and Negri suppose this with their notion of Empire as a worldwide but decentred power structure (although they now see such a thing only as 'emerging') (2001:20), though they also blend this with the idea of a global 'network' (see below).

## **Other metaphors**

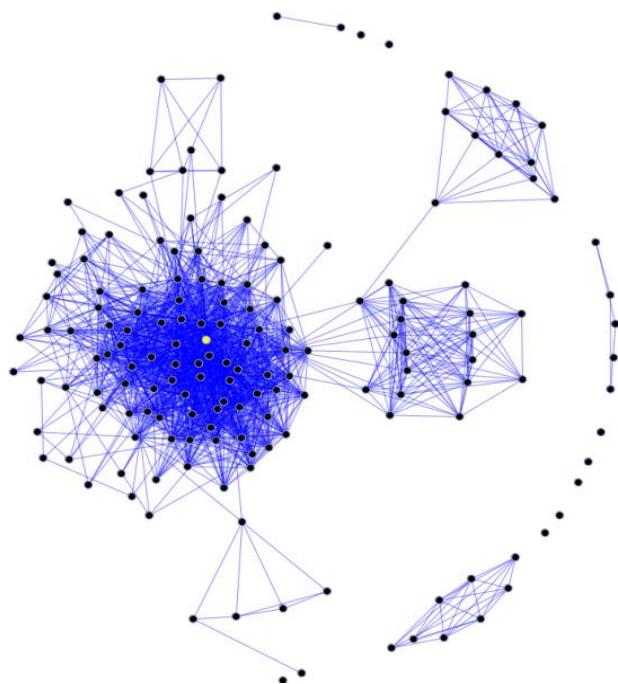
Besides anarchy, hierarchy and empire, other concepts are being drawn upon in the effort to characterise world politics beyond hierarchy or anarchy, the best example being the recently popular concept of network. The network concept has gained in popularity particularly via the spread of ideas about the information society and theories of globalization that emphasize interconnectedness and new or dynamic social and technological constellations (e.g. Castells 1996). International relations are being seen explicitly through the prism of social network theory or using ‘network’ as a metaphor for a kind of political structure that is neither characterized by hierarchy nor anarchy but by loose and changing links and nodes (Keck & Sikkink 1998, Castells 1996, Slaughter 2004). For Keck and Sikkink, for example, Transnational Advocacy Networks affect state behaviour by agenda-setting, campaigning and mobilization across borders. Many kinds of actors make contact with each other on single issue basis or in alliances that change, linking non-state groups and states in new ways (1998). As a metaphor, network appears useful to capture such non-hierarchical information and value-based political structures that straddle ‘traditional’ (i.e. state) boundaries or ones that cross the domestic-international threshold (Keck & Sikkink 1998). Anne-Marie Slaughter points to networks of governmental organizations that link up alongside the traditional state-to-state diplomatic links (2004). World culture and world polity research emphasizes the networked character of the global polity as a “unitary and social system, increasingly integrated by networks of exchange, competition, and cooperation” (Boli & Thomas 1997:172, Beckfield 2010). Others have highlighted how social network theory can highlight the key role of social entrepreneurs who exploit ‘network-holes’ allowing them to influence and reorganize the structure of international politics (Goddard 2009). Perhaps most famously Hardt and Negri suggest that a global network of power and resistance, which they (in this context confusingly) label ‘Empire’ has emerged out of a hyper-capitalist modernity

(2001, 2004). This worldwide power structure is depicted as inherently complex, ‘without a head’ and with shifting nodes of power and counter-power, empire being challenged by ‘the Multitude’ – an equally networked and centreless movement of social forces. For them ‘network has become a common form that tends to define our ways of understanding the world and acting in it’ (Hardt & Negri 2004,142).

While there are social phenomena that fit the network metaphor well, the question is whether it constitutes a theory of world politics in the sense of theory specified above – ie. a picture, mentally formed, that orders and makes sense of a complex reality specifying relations between units? Organizational theory has hailed networks as the third organizational structure after hierarchy and the market (roughly equivalent to anarchy which Waltz of course moulded on economic theory) (Powell 1990). But despite this, and despite their value in imagining social relations anew, such uses of the network term remain unspecified in structural terms, difficult to picture, and typically rely on complexity (often explicitly defined in relation to the supposed simplicity of hierarchy or anarchy) for what analytical power they have. Is there, then, a theory of networks if theory is understood in the Waltzian sense? Networks are defined simply as a set of units (or nodes) with connections between them (Castells 1996:501, Kadushin 2004:3). We know that unlike hierarchies these nodes-with-connections constellations are not fixed or constituted by a dominant node or sovereign. Unlike anarchies the nodes in a network are not necessarily functionally equivalent or in competition. Beyond that, however, networks can in theory be structured in any number of ways and any use of the network concept needs to be followed up by a specification of the structure. Slaughter defines governmental networks very broadly as any ‘pattern of regular and purposive relations among like government units’ (2004:14). That something is ‘a network’ thus tells us little of the nature of the relations between units except possibly that

they are not fixed or hierarchical (since we would then call them ‘structures’ or ‘hierarchies’, respectively) although it does allow us to investigate empirically how the nodes in a network are arranged (e.g. Beckfield 2010). Keck and Sikkink do specify their understanding of networks more fully defining them as essentially cooperative organizations ‘characterized by voluntary, reciprocal, and horizontal patterns of communication and exchange’ (1998:8). But this positive vision of networks is not theoretically founded and it remains unclear why a network could not coerce or contain vertical patterns of communication and exchange – the coercive (if complex) nature of the global networks for Empire is the crux of Hardt and Negri’s argument, indicating that networks need not be voluntary, reciprocal or egalitarian: whereas The Multitude is ‘an open and expansive network in which all differences can be expressed freely and equally, a network that provides the means of encounter so that we can work and live in common’ (2004:xiv), ‘Empire spreads globally its network of hierarchies and divisions that maintain order through new mechanisms of control and conflict’ (2004:xiii).

For the purposes of this argument it suffices to point out that a network can assume any number of basic morphologies and cannot thus be likened to a theory of political structure such as hierarchy. As such it is also not suited to the function of providing a new picture, mentally formed way of simplifying reality. As Alison Cavanagh puts it ‘(w)here networks are called upon as an explanatory device, this is usually in the context of an appeal to complexity and the need for further information, rather than a different schema’ (Cavanagh 2007: 50). In fact, apart from the vague connotations of cooperation attached to it, the network concept functions very much in the same way as the concept of ‘system’ understood as a set of interconnected units. Figure 4 depicting a social network below illustrates the point.



**Figure 4** Example of a social network diagram (DarwinPeacock, Collective Commons License, Wikipedia [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sna\\_large.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Sna_large.png))

To say that a global network exists is to say that units interact on a global scale which is equivalent to the idea of a global system. This stays at a level of abstraction above that of anarchy, hierarchy and empire.

Other metaphors exist that attempt to capture non-hierarchical yet also non-anarchic political structures. Saskia Sassen's use of the term 'global assemblages' arguably provides a new way of conceiving of political units, suggesting novel constellations of key elements of the nation state (territory, authority and rights) but is deliberately left un-theorized (Sassen 2006:3).

Geographers such as Nigel Thrift work creatively with new forms of social space, also making use of the 'assemblage' term defining it in terms of familiar elements put together in a novel way that 'breathes life into the elements that compose it and induces a novel perception of reality' (Thrift 2001:421). However, to qualify as a theory of political structure such notions need to specify how such constellations are put together. Not all assemblages

are hierarchies or polities, in other words, and so this concept is also of a different order to the one we are looking for here. Sassen's work on a 'global city' uses city as a metaphor, appealing to the city state as a geographic but not sovereign centre with links to other like units. Again 'city', though an intriguing metaphor, is not a generic structure specifying how elements relate to each other.

Others, like Ruggie, have employed compound terms like the concept of heteronomy to denote interwoven and overlapping jurisdictions (Ruggie 1998, 23-24. See also Onuf & Klink 1989). 'Heterarchy' has likewise been defined as a structure in which each element is either unranked relative to other elements, or possesses the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways (Crumley 1995) typically applied to structures such as the EU (Neyer 2003, 689) or Medieval Christendom (Ruggie 1998: 149). However, with heterarchy we learn that 'political authority is neither centralized (as under conditions of hierarchy) nor decentralized (as under conditions of anarchy) but shared' (Neyer 2003, 689). Political authority is shared, but no picture of how this sharing takes place is offered – at least not in the model of heterarchy. In terms of theories of political structure we are little wiser on what a heterarchy is and we are left with largely negative definitions.

Finally, *society* has also been used as a metaphor for describing the character (or rather the context) of world politics. Again, 'global society' or 'world society' makes intuitive sense and suggests a unit of analysis that may be deemed plausible or useful to those who buy into the idea of persistent world-wide social relations and integration. But it does not describe a theory of politics in our sense. Instead it provides a thick notion of an integrated global social body with some form of community of shared *Gemeinschaft* norms or – in the thinner *Gesellschaft* sense – a more abstract world system of connected parts (Albert 2007:171). Both

uses of society indicate interconnectedness without specifying the structure of the interconnections, i.e. without specifying a theory of political structure. For example, the World Society-concept (Buzan 2004) has been used to suggest that an increasingly dense system of interaction between *non*-state actors, i.e. a ‘non-state system’, is also developing providing common norms, identities and regimes – a society – regulating the behaviour of the system of non-state units. This Buzan dubs ‘world society’, in what is essentially a parallel notion to the more famous English School notion of ‘international society’ – the set of norms, values and institutions within which the international system of states is embedded (Bull 1977). Both these English School concepts are based on some idea of norms and perspectives shared by members of the system, i.e. a thicker concept of society, that constitutively relies on a form of normative integration (Albert 2009:127, see also Albert 1997, 2004). The idea of normative global integration excludes opponents of any global political entity marginalising the ‘dark side’ – or more generally any actor not a member of the global western conglomeration (see Shaw 2000). This is a part of a global polity in the terms advanced below. Moreover, as mentioned, ‘society’, though a useful concept for considering normative integration globally, is not a theory of political structure.

The more radical-liberal notion of ‘global civil society’ adopts the ‘civil society’ concept and deploys it to understand changes in global politics where non-state and trans-border movements and actors have played a role in the affairs of states and institutions of global governance (Keane 2003, Kaldor 2003). The use of ‘civil society’ has been criticized for bringing assumptions of a civil, pacific and benevolent sphere derived from a conceptual universe reliant on the existence of a (liberal) state into the global sphere where no such state can be found (Bartelson 2006). But it has also been defended as a step in the transformation of discourses about the state, power and resistance in globalized societies (Corry 2006).

Regardless of whether the term global civil society amounts to a domestic fallacy or a globalist discursive move, it does not pretend to be a theory of global politics as such. Instead it resembles more a specification of the theory of states under anarchy: transboundary non-state actors are seen not as a sphere of politics that runs parallel to the state system as in Buzan's terms, but rather as a 'society' with shared norms and values that engages in a process of negotiation (or confrontation) with states and state-based centres of power (such as international organisations and leading states) (Kaldor 2003). As Martin Shaw puts it: "international relations theory must itself generate new synthetic approaches, which do more than integrate societies in a subordinate role into a perspective centered on the state system" (Shaw 2000b).

#### Conclusion:

Thus, although all these theories (hierarchy and possibly empire), metaphors (network, assemblage, city, society) and compounds (heterarchy, heteronomy) help us grapple with the inadequacies of the model of anarchy in some way, none of them have provided a theory of world politics that is not ultimately dependent predicated on the models of anarchy or hierarchy – the two models that make up the backbone of the dominant narrative of system of internally hierarchic states arranged anarchically. Moving beyond post-internationalist epistemological positions is thus unlikely as long as pictorial theories of political structure that stem from the Westphalian age set the terms of description and hypothesis-generation in IR. The discipline of IR, while it will continue to grapple with 'anomalies' and import sociological theories to analyse the nature of social relations in 'international relations', will not move far beyond a post-international paradigm.

Theories of globalization are taught in university courses as a subsection of IR.

To finish off, one illustration of the way the international theories (hierarchy and anarchy) perpetuate international thinking can be offered. Efforts aimed at finding a new model of political structure and therefore a new fundamental distinction to proceed from has already been suggested by a few approaches (explored below) but called for most explicitly by the global polity approach<sup>i</sup> (Higgott & Ougaard 2002, Brassett & Higgott 2003). This recommended a ‘reversal of strategy for theory-building’ (Ougaard & Higgott 2002: 30): instead of always beginning from the model of the international system and then adding *n* number of complications, its authors urged us to begin with ‘a conception of one world political system, or an aspect of world politics, and then add the complications arising from the persistent reality that this system lacks a unified authority structure and has formally sovereign states among its fundamental building blocks’ (Ougaard & Higgott 2002:30). They saw this reversal as a necessary methodological move to avoid framing global politics in terms of modified anarchy rather than because they were claiming the wholesale disappearance of the state system: ‘the point is not that states have become irrelevant (...) but that the intellectual starting point is the system as a whole’ (ibid.). An alternative analytical starting point would short-circuit the statist wiring of IR providing the option of a fresh look at contemporary world politics. They were not alone in thinking that without a new model, statism’s ‘impoverished pictures of morphology’ as Martin Coward puts it, remains at the root of a sterile state-versus-global debate (2006). This pits the new as the inverse of the old, maintains the future of the state as the central question of globalisation, and perpetuates the conceptual universe and questions that came out of the old models centred on sovereignty and the security of like units in an anarchic world.

However, even an approach such as the global polity approach that aims very self-consciously to go beyond post-internationalism struggles to free itself of the usual post-

international narrative. For Richard Higgott and Morten Ougaard a global polity is deemed to consist of a combination of a) interconnectedness between whole societies (rather than just international diplomacy between states), b) an ever thickening web of international institutions, c) the weakening of the nation-state as a container of politics and d) the increased relevance of ‘discourses of globality’ (Ougaard and Higgott, 2002:2-13). Although motivated to ‘develop a notion of totality that transcends the state-centred perspective in a conscious theoretical fashion’ (Ougaard, 2002:30) the first three of these criteria are precisely complications to the international model while the last one remains underspecified and underdeveloped. In short: the promise of a methodological reversal – to find an alternative theory to start out from ‘a conception of one world political system, or an aspect of world politics’ – has not been honoured. The post-international problem has not been tackled head-on through a search for an alternative model, ‘polity’ essentially implying modified anarchy or incomplete global hierarchy. I have attempted to provide a generic and pictorial theory of polity elsewhere by suggesting a new definition of polity – the term ‘polity’ having already begun to fill the need for a term that helps us speak about political units without activating the models of the Westphalian age (Corry 2010).

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<sup>i</sup> Global polity writers are not alone in trying to move beyond the state system-model but their idea is explored here as the most theoretically conscious attempt to go beyond the post-international perspective.