The concept of international system
as a unit of analysis

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Abstract
This article takes the view that the concept of international system is a unit of analysis like the established units for the students of international relations, such as states, international bodies, and so on. Having presented a survey of the historical usages of the concept, the paper outlines the three understandings of international system in the twentieth century. It concludes by arguing that the concept of international system, however it is defined, constitutes a unit of analysis for it is, in any case, either an explanatory tool or an ontological entity.

1. Introduction

"Is there an international system?" The question is not an erroneous one. Or it is. It has two implications: on the one hand, the problem of whether an international system really exists; and on the other hand, the impression that international relations as an anarchic realm are not likely to form a system. In this paper, after elaborating on these implications, I shall...
first present the historical background of the concept of international system. Then the three understandings of the concept in the twentieth century, namely, the accounts of the realist school, the behaviouralist school, and the English school, will be examined. I shall conclude that international system actually constitutes a unit of analysis for the students of international relations.

In its first implication, the question refers to what may be called the ontological issue -whether an international system exists 'out there' in reality; or whether it is analytically constructed by the student, thus existing not in reality, but in the perception of the student. Put in this way, the question does not seem erroneous for since Plato's formulation of the realm of Ideas as distinct from the realm of Appearances and the establishment of the Cartesian duality of mind and body, it has been one of the major characteristics of the modern thought to conceive existence (ontology) separate from analysis/knowledge (epistemology).

Both positions have their adherents. An international system, like all social systems, is "not (a) natural system", according to Haas (1975: 170). It is created by the will of man and changes when man changes his mind. It is an analytical tool to aid our thinking. Lampert and his co-authors, too, deny any ontological existence to the international system: "Systems do not exist 'out there' awaiting discovery." They represent a device for ordering the reality in concern. "Systems do not exist apart from the perceptions of those who create them." This perception is based on, among other things, "sustained interaction" between the actors. "The stronger the sustained interaction and the more interdependent the linkage, the more powerful will be the quality of 'systemness'" (Lampert et al., 1978: 146). However strong this sustained interaction and powerful the quality of systemness may be, they do not add up to a system as an entity, but to one as an analytical device by which we impose order on the relations.

Those students who have adopted the analytical notion of the system derived from the ahistorical conceptions of the Bertalanffyian general systems theory (GST), and the Parsonsian and Eastonian frameworks have usually considered the international system analytically, without giving it an ontological existence. Many of the conceptualisations that emerged in the

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1 For an examination of the unit of analysis see Yurdusev (1993).
2 The accounts of the writers said to have adopted a 'systems analysis' approach and carried out their analysis within a social scientific or behaviouralist perception, especially in the United States, owe much to the conceptions developed in other fields. von Bertalanffy who...
late 1950s and 1960s such as those of Kaplan (1957/1964), Rosecrance (1963), McClelland (1966), and Singer (1969), could be considered as such. According to Little (1985: 80), this conception (the denial of the ontological existence of the international system) results from the positivist commitment of scholars of the day. Positivists treated it as a mental construct in order to make sense out of observed regularities.

Others have argued that an international system does exist in reality. Especially those whom Little (1985: 89) calls “the British idealists” and who could possibly be placed within the English school of International relations have a view of a factually existing and historically developing international system. The two most prominent members of the School, M. Wight and H. Bull, as pointed out by Forsyth, conceived their international systems (‘states-system’ for Wight and ‘society of states’ for Bull) entirely in empirical or factual terms (Forsyth, 1978: 412, 415). Wight's three states-systems (the Hellenic-Hellenistic or Graeco-Roman, the Chinese between the collapse of the Chou Empire in 771 B.C. and the establishment of the Ts'in Empire in 221 A.D., and the Western systems) and Bull's five examples of international society (the classical Greek city-state system; the international system formed by Hellenistic kingdoms in the period between the disintegration of Alexander's empire and the Roman conquest; the international system of China during the period of Warring States; the states system of ancient India; and the modern states-system which arose in Europe and is now world-wide) are all historically existing systems (Wight, 1977: 22; Bull, 1977: 15-6). More recently, another student has suggested that we should regard “the real world of international relations as a fully developed system with its own logic and an existence wholly independent of our study of it” (Banks, 1987: 342).

is said to have fathered the general systems theory by establishing a universal hierarchy of systems from geography and physics through botany and society to transcendental systems, stripped away the historical existence of a system (1973: 26-7). Likewise, both Parsons and Easton denied the ontological existence to their social and political systems and conceived them analytically (Parsons, 1966: 104; Easton, 1965: 38).

4 Not all authors whom one could identify with the School seem to agree upon the ontological existence of an international system. According to C. A. W. Manning, ‘the world society’ or ‘the society of states’ is an ‘abstraction’ and ‘notional’. The sovereign states which composed the international society are notional beings. The assumption of an international society composed of sovereign states bound by international law is the premise of the process in which the world treats itself, conventionally, as one. Though it is a notional society, since it is a notion prevalently held, argues Manning, it could be seen as a thing ‘out there’ (1962: 23, 27, 41, 30-31). Similarly, although J. Mayall, at first, declared that “a world-wide international society exists” (1978: 136), recently, he has contended that unlike states which exist and have boundaries and populations, the international system “has
Those who are in the view that an international system began with the emergence of the modern nation-states and has been existing since then, consider the international system factually existing independent of our analysis.

The so-called ontological issue (whether an international system exists out there in reality or built in the perceptions of the analyst) is, I contend, misleading. It is nothing but a re-expression of an old debate—the debate coming from the Cartesian duality as one sees it in the distinctions of mind/body, theory/facts, object/subject, and so on. To conceive a system in one’s mind, distinct from reality, one needs to disassociate himself from his ‘facts’. This is the positivist conception which has been widely refuted in the literature of the philosophy of science. One cannot completely refrain himself from getting involved in his objects and vice versa. The question thus becomes erroneous.

Those who have an analytical notion build their conception through the use of interrelations of, say, states or societies. After all, human beings, societies, and groups do exist, and so do the relations among them. One cannot make a clear-cut demarcation between analysis and reality. An international system is both analytical and real.

The second implication of the opening question of the paper results from a particular understanding of the concept “system”. This view assumes that the concept of a system implicates order, absence of anarchy, and a cooperative relationship. As a result, it is rather difficult to associate international relations—an arena of disorder—with the state of systemness. The question then seems not to be erroneous. In this understanding, the reaction of some students of systems analysis against the realist conception

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no concrete physical existence; its boundaries cannot be demarcated even in principle—what on earth could lie beyond the boundaries of the international political system—and one certainly cannot go there” (1990: 7).

P. Wilson has argued that for the English School, particularly for Bull and Manning, international society is an idea, a product of thought and has no objective existence ‘out there’. Their answer to the question ‘Does an international society actually exist?’ is that it does if states and statesmen believe it does and act accordingly. If they do believe so, then, it may be said that, ‘in effect’ such a society does ‘in fact’ exist (Wilson, 1989: 53). The problem with Manning’s and Mayall’s views and Wilson’s argument seems to be the meaning of ‘existence’. If it is to be understood as the tangible physical existence, occupying a certain place in the space and directly sensible, then, not only the international system, but any system or society can hardly be said to exist. However, I do not think that the meaning of the word ‘existence’ can be confined to such a narrow definition. In fact, Manning and Wilson (I suspect Mayall, too) appear to be aware of this.
of international relations as anarchical, is clearly discernible. "It is simply erroneous," contended Russett, "to think of international politics as anarchic, chaotic, and utterly unlike national politics" (1965: 57). Thinking about the world as an international system has, according to Modelski, helped the scholars of international relations to view it as one interdependent whole that exhibits the qualities of coherence and persistence; this view is a prime antidote to the characteristics of anarchy. The view that international relations form an international system which is based on the premises of coherence, regularity, and persistence, has, Modelski argues, been corrective to the image of chaos (1970: 629; 1972: 6-7). The concept of a system, even if it implicates the state of orderliness, can hardly be confined to this particular understanding. Again, the question turns out to be erroneous.

2. System: what is it?

The crux of the problem then comes down as to what a system is. Stated simply, a system is a set or complex of elements or parts which itself forms an entity having its own identity distinct, not separate, from the elements or parts of which it is composed. A system is a whole entity in the sense that it is more than the sum of its parts. It is true, a system cannot be conceived without its parts, but there is more to it. What makes a set of elements a system is something beyond, or more than, the individual parts themselves. It is the property of wholeness or 'systemness' which can be described as the fact that when the elements are influenced by each other and thus cannot go it alone, their behaviour cannot be explained without taking the others' into consideration. This mainly comes from their being in interrelation or in interaction with each other. Interrelation is the basic condition, a pre-condition, of a system. Isolated parts can hardly be expected to constitute a system.

The fundamental idea, or the first property, of the concept of a system is the interrelation or interrelatedness which lies at the basis of every system. One may suggest other implications or connotations of the concept of a system such as interdependence or mutual dependence, interaction,
organisation, order, cohesion, purposefulness\textsuperscript{6}, unity, persistence, linkage, causality, regularity, structuredness, inclusiveness, and universality\textsuperscript{7}. It is these characteristics that make the set or the complex in question a system. All these properties, at the most fundamental level, come from the interrelation or interrelatedness of the parts.

There may be two main elements of a system: parts and interrelation\textsuperscript{8}. Parts as members of a system may be taken to be the building blocks of the system. The implication of this statement leads us to the idea that an entity which has no other parts except itself is not a system. Only the divisible things could be conceived as systems. However, I would think that the issue of divisibility leads us to an endless path. Moreover, something which is not divisible means a complete whole. Nevertheless, systems in social arena are, by definition, complex, not single wholes.

The second constitutive element of a system may be distinguished as interrelation or interrelatedness which is the core of the system. It is the element that makes the entity in question a system. When parts are in interrelation or in interaction they necessarily influence each other. The repetition or the establishment of the interrelation(s) leads to institutionalisation. A relationship is never a one-way phenomenon. Even the most powerful factor or actor confronting another and determining it (a kind of relationship) would not be in the same state as it was before the process. It gets influenced by the process itself.

To sum up so far, parts interact with each other and they get influenced by their interaction and behave differently. This is the beginning of the formation of a system. The more it gets institutionalised, the higher the systemness is. Thus, a continuum of systemness ranging from the state of gathered parts just beyond the situation of isolated parts to a totally integrated

\textsuperscript{6} Hobbes, one of the thinkers who first used the word, defines a system as follows: “By SYSTEMES; I understand any number of men joined in one Interest, or one Business” (1983: 117).

\textsuperscript{7} One of the definitions of the word ‘system’ provided by the Oxford English Dictionary is as follows: “The whole scheme of created things, the universe” (1989, vol. 17: 496).

\textsuperscript{8} It is a commonplace practice in the literature of the behaviouralist systems analysis that environment with which the system is in exchange constitutes the third element (von Bertalanffy, 1973: 90; Parsons, 1971: 2; Easton, 1965: 69-73). Of course, this element is significant in defining and distinguishing a system. However, I think, it is not a main constitutive element, but a natural result of the first two elements. A system is basically constituted by its internal dynamics, not by the external impressions upon it. Otherwise, it would not be a distinct system but a part of another system.
and united state can be defined. The continuum extends from a mere relationship to a complete cohesion. In this continuum, for example, a group of people watching a movie at a cinema represents the least degree of systemness; different groups or societies or states which are in interaction may constitute a low or middle degree of systemness; and an integrated society or state may be taken as an example of a higher degree of systemness while an intelligence agency or an army unit as an example of the highest degree of systemness. To turn back to the earlier question, a system does not necessarily involve orderliness or a cooperative relationship. An entity consisting of interrelated elements still qualifies as being a system, even though it may seem chaotic.

3. The earlier accounts

Although the system approach has gained popularity in International Relations as well as in other disciplines with the advent of the behaviouralist conception—commonly known as the ‘systems analysis’—after the Second World War, and although there could still be discussions on whether an

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9 The first attempt to apply the GST in International Relations seems to be by McClelland’s 1955 article. He put forward some premises upon which the attempt was to be built: International Relations as a discipline is not limited to the official political relations between sovereign states, it comprises all organisations and entities and all international relations. It is an interdisciplinary study. It can be analysed from the point of a general function, mode of approach, focus, and method. A general discipline must encompass all these aspects. The problem is to integrate these different aspects and to arrive at a satisfactory theoretical formulation. There must be an organising idea or concept such as plan, equilibrium, organisation, field, and open systems. It is McClelland’s view that the GST has the potential to provide an organising idea and to coordinate several approaches to the study of international relations. Through its method of perspectivism it supplies various conceptual schemes which encourage the selection and organisation of data. McClelland also makes the point that in a GST approach to international relations “power, action, and capabilities must be seen simply as functions in system organisation.” For him, states and other organisations in international relations are all open systems. This open system thinking in International Relations leads the inquiry away from a concern with the accumulation of power to an emphasis on adaptive action (McClelland 1955: 28, 31, 33). In these ideas, some of which (e.g., the widening of international actors) were well ahead of the day, one could detect the influences of the reaction against traditional realist views and of the GST and systems analysis as well. However, just like in the case of the GST and systems analysis in other disciplines, these propositions remained general and abstract. McClelland did not specify those “conceptual schemes” for selection of data and organisation of several approaches to international relations.
international system exists or not; the idea of an international system, in its broad sense, meaning the system embracing more than one organised socio-political body, can be found before the twentieth century, and even before the emergence of the modern international system, as inter-societal relations have always been existent. The idea of an international system was, argued Wight, already well-established in the discipline and could be traced back to Grotius who “brought the word ‘system’ into the vocabulary of international politics” (1977: 113). Little takes the roots of the systems approach back to the classical balance of power theory from the seventeenth century onwards. Holism as the defining characteristic of a systems approach, according to Little, has traditionally provided the dominant mode of analysis in International Relations (1978: 217). This view which takes the origin of the idea of an international system to the seventeenth century, derives from the phenomenal emergence of the modern nation-states or the modern states-system. Thus, the idea of an international system becomes a reflection of the historical formation of an international system as an entity.

The view that sees the historical appearance of the idea of international system as being the same as the emergence of the modern international system cannot be maintained. It is not the idea of an international system that came into existence in the seventeenth century, but a particular conception with a particular type of an international system. If the term ‘international system’ is to be understood as the ‘system of sovereign nation-states embracing the whole globe’, then, it is only in the second half of the

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10 There is a controversy around the question of when the modern international system -sovereign states-system- came into existence. It is a common-place view to start with the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 as Little does. Wight disagrees with this common dating. He notes that, conventionally, the modern states-system is argued to have originated at the end of the fifteenth century with the Burgundian succession and the invasion of Italy by France (1494). One may, however go further back. The Congress of Mantua was, for example, the first pan-European gathering. The Peace of Lodi and the Most Holy League of Venice in 1454 founded the Italian Concert and the first system of collective security. Westphalia became the legal basis of the states-system, not the beginning. For Wight, “at Westphalia, the states-system does not come into existence: it comes of age” (1977: 111-4, 152). Hinsley proposes another starting date: the eighteenth century. For him, “a new European states’ system emerged in the eighteenth century, and not at an earlier date. ... It was during the eighteenth century that the actuality and the conception of a collection of great powers in Europe finally replaced an earlier framework of existing fact and inherited thought in which, while more than one state has always existed, it had been natural for one Power to be raised above the rest and impossible for that Power’s pretensions -resisted though they had always been by other states- to stop short of the control and protection of Christendom” (Hinsley, 1963: 153).
twentieth century that an international system defined as such came into being. If the global coverage is dropped from the definition, then, we see an international system in the classical Antiquity: the Hellenic-Hellenistic system (Wight, 1977: 46-72). One may even consider the existence of a wider ‘internationalness’ in the states-systems of antiquity than it may seem at first glance. Because of the interdependence between the cultures and systems of power of the Hellenic states-system and the Persian Empire, argues Wight, their relations often appear neither as the conflict of the civilised with barbarians nor as a clash of civilisations, but as “an ideological struggle within a single community” (1977: 105).

As a corollary to this, we see the arguments for an international system in the sense that the whole world constitutes a unity. The Sophists in the fifth century, Wight suggests, were beginning to deny the antithesis of Hellenic and barbarian, and to assert, in some sense, the unity of mankind. Such a view appears in Euripides and in the early cynics (Wight, 1977: 86). Parkinson agrees with this view. He argues that the earliest appearances of the idea of an international system can be traced back to the Stoics. “To the Stoics, the world was a unit irrespective of the manifold particularism which it displayed, an object from which to extract a set of laws.” In the Roman Empire, this view was transformed into *jus gentium* -the law common to all people making up of the Roman Empire. The basic idea (in Stoicism) was a conception of a naturally preordained universe (Parkinson, 1977: 10, 12-3). The Stoic view of the world as a preordained unit, and Roman *jus gentium* stand in contrast to a separate, isolated picture of the world and in line with the conception of systemness and universality.

The notion of systemness and universality was carried into the religious doctrines of the Middle Ages. Despite the seemingly anarchical picture of the feudal period, in the Christian doctrine, the same universality has been enlarged to include all Christian people under one single Christendom, but at the exclusion of non-Christians (Parkinson, 1977: 14-7). Despite the universalist claims of the Christian doctrine and the dominance of the Church, one may surprisingly find that Saint Augustine, the most prominent founder of the Christian doctrine, seems to have preferred a system of small political bodies to the Roman Empire centuries before the emergence of the modern states-system and the ideas about the states-system advanced by thinkers such as Grotius, Pufendorf, Vitoria and Suarez from the seventeenth century onwards. Augustine wrote: “If men had always been thus conditioned, the kingdoms of the earth would have continued little in quantity, and peaceful in neighbourly agreement. And then many kingdoms would have been in the world, as many families are now in a city” (1945:
Similar notions of universality and inclusiveness found in Christianity could also be seen in Islam. Even though the concepts of Dar-el-Islam, the Muslim world, and Dar-el-Harb, the world outside with which the Muslims are at war, imply a division; the concept of Dar-el-Amman, the world at peace, with its all-embracing nature eliminates this division (Parkinson, 1977: 19). What is striking in the idea of a system in the Stoics, Christianity, and Islam is that it was a common principle or a generally applicable notion that made the world a system, rather than the interactions or relations of separate units as it is understood in the system conceptions of the modern period.

The conception of an international system composed of separate states rather than of a single inclusive body was developed with the emergence of the modern states-system from the fifteenth century onwards. The earliest appearance of the term ‘states-system’ is, Wight notes, in Pufendorf’s writings (1675). He defines a states-system as “several states that are so connected as to seem to constitute one body but whose members retain their sovereignty.” Wight gives another early use by Montague Bernard as “a group of states having relations more or less permanent with one another” (Wight, 1977: 21-2). In 1806, Heeren defined a states-system as “the union of several contiguous states, resembling each other in their manners, religion and degree of social improvement, and cemented together by a reciprocity of interests” (Heeren, 1834: vii-viii).

The conception of an international system during the modern period until the twentieth century may be examined under two headings: the Grotian and the Hobbesian conceptions. In Grotius’s understanding of an international society the heavy influence of the earlier Christian view and the impact of the emergence of sovereign nation-states are apparent. He presents a dual or concentric conception of an international society. According to him, there is an outer circle that embraces all mankind under a natural law; and an inner circle, the corpus Christianorum, bound by the law of Christ. The inner circle is unique. Wight (1977: 128) argues that Grotius still accepts the traditional Christian view of history implicitly and does not have sufficient knowledge of the non-European world to develop a more complex picture.

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Although I have largely relied on Wight’s analysis of the international thought (1966a; 1966b; 1977; 1987), I have omitted his third category, the Kantian conception. Disregarding states as a fictitious reality of international relations and arguing for a ‘community of mankind’, its practicality set apart, the systemness of the Kantian position in terms of inclusiveness and universality is self-evident.
Although Grotius still preserves the idea of the Christendom of the Middle Ages, his understanding of the Christendom as an international society is not the same as the Medieval conception. Bull (1966c: 52) stresses that the notion of an international society, in Grotian terms, derives from the solidarity of states with respect to the enforcement of international law. States show a solidarity in this respect and thus form a society. Bull (1966c: 68) also adds that in Grotius's system, the members of international society are ultimately not sovereign states but individuals. The conception of a society formed by states and sovereigns is secondary to that of the universal community of mankind. While for Grotius international society (even if it is conceived to be the world of Christendom) is formed by the solidarity of states in enforcement of the international law, in the Medieval Christian conception the Christendom (as a society or system) is formed not by the solidarity of sovereign states, but by the encompassiveness of Christianity, that is, of the Church.

The Grotian tradition holds that the sovereign states do form a society through their continuous relations with one another. It is a society regulated and governed by custom, international law, diplomacy, the balance of power and alliances (Wight, 1987: 223). In sum, the Grotian conception of an international system implies a solidary and a cooperative relationship besides mutual dependence. It is more than an 'international system', it is an 'international society'. In other words, it has a higher degree of systemness. The impact of the Grotian conception of an international society could be seen in the conception of an international system by the English School of International Relations in the twentieth century.

The Hobbesian or realist account of an international system rejects the view which takes Christianity as a basis for an international society, but retains the secular version of the natural law. It also shares the Grotian view that the international system consists of sovereign states and not of the Church organisation, but rejects the idea that it is derived from the solidarity of these states. For the realists, what makes the world a system is not the

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12 How far Hobbes could be associated with the realist tradition is a matter of disagreement. While Wight includes Hobbes in the realist tradition with Machiavelli (Wight, 1987: 222), Beitz argues that Hobbes’s conception constitutes a ‘paradigmatic case’ for the realist doctrines in the literature of international relations (Beitz, 1979: 27-8). Forsyth challenges these views, arguing that Hobbes stands within the tradition of Natural Law together with Pufendorf (Forsyth, 1979: 209). In this paper, however, the ‘Hobbesian’ conception is understood as what is meant by it in the literature rather than what Hobbes himself meant.
solidarity of states, but rather the competitive relations so that they are in constant struggle with each other. Hobbes defines system as a group of men who have come together around an interest. Although he does not explicitly specify the interest which makes a system, it is, I suspect, in the final analysis, the need to survive. In other words, all states want to survive. They have to get on with each other. The issue of survival makes them to be dependent on each other and forms the basis of an international system.

Unlike the Grotian view, the Hobbesian conception of international system does not implicate a solidary or an ordered characteristic, but one of mutual dependence. Wight is thus right. The Hobbesian conception does not involve a notion of international society (Wight, 1987: 222). Yet, it still has a conception of an international system, perhaps, with a lesser degree of systemness. This Hobbesian notion of an international system constitutes the basis of the realist conception of an international system in the twentieth century.

Despite the fact that the Grotian and Hobbesian conceptions of an international society, or an international system, have different characteristics, they involve an essential common point, namely Eurocentricism. For them, an international society or an international system was meant to be the society formed by the European states, i.e., the European states-system. Of course, this was a restatement of the Medieval distinction of Christendom versus non-Christendom in the form of Europe versus non-Europe. In fact, it is true that the international system in the sense of sovereign nation-states system emerged in Europe. It has been commonly argued that the present international system or society is an expanded and extended version of the old European states-system (Wight, 1977; Keens-Soper, 1978; Forsyth, 1980; Bull and Watson, 1984). The nation-states system which emerged in Europe in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries embraced the whole world in the twentieth century.

Bull and Watson, in their introduction to their edited work of 1984, expressly state that the global international society of today is in large part the consequence of Europe’s impact on the rest of the world over the last five centuries. It was the expansion of Europe that first brought about the economic and technological unification of the globe. The authors stress that it is not only a geographical expansion but also the adoption of the originally European institutions by the new states that shaped the present international system. The division of mankind and of the earth into separate states, the mutual acceptance of the sovereignty of states, international law regulating the coexistence and cooperation, diplomatic conventions facilitating the intercourse of the states are all the legacy of Europe. The authors thus conclude that “it is not our perspective but the historical record that can be called Eurocentric” (Bull and Watson, 1984: 1-2).
The present conceptualisations of the international system in the discipline of International Relations contain the premises of those earlier approaches outlined above as well as that of the behaviouralist systems analysis. I shall examine the conceptualisations of international system in the twentieth century under three headings: 1) the realist account of states-system, 2) international system conception of systems analysis, and 3) the account of international society or system of states by the English School.

4. The realist conception

The twentieth century realist conception of the international system shares much of the insights of earlier (Hobbesian) realist account. Of course, it looks impossible to conceive of a realist notion of a system if the term is identified with orderliness and solidary state. However, earlier we have made it clear that the system concept does not necessarily require orderliness and solidarity, but the interrelation and interdependence of the elements (actors, states) so that each one has to take into account the others’ behaviour and gets influenced by others. It is in this sense that the realist notion of an international system could be described. This view defines the international system in terms of its structural state. As Smith has observed, the realist “accords primacy by definition to the (unchanging) structure of the system.” (Smith, 1987: 199). In fact, such a conception of a system seems to be quite static, unchanging and unchallengeable, as if it is formed once and for all.

We may exemplify the realist notion of an international system by the works of two prominent scholars. The first one is Morgenthau who describes an essentially anarchical picture of international relations. In his view, “politics, like society in general, is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature” and man, by nature, has a drive for power, and he is basically power-seeking. “The struggle for power is universal in time and place and is an undeniable fact of experience.” Therefore, “international politics, like all politics, is a struggle for power” (Morgenthau, 1961: 4, 27, 33). It seems that for Morgenthau it is those unchallengeable laws of nature coming from the struggle for power or survival that hold international relations as a system. What is more, Morgenthau elevates balance of power to a universal concept determining the behaviour of states. He identifies the balance of power as a “self-regulating mechanism” (Morgenthau, 1961: 190). According to Morgenthau's conception, an international system is a static system determined by the laws of human nature.

The second example I shall give is the system conception developed by Waltz who is considered to have formulated a more powerful and
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well-organised realist or, perhaps more properly, neorealist view of international relations and international system. Starting from his early works we see that Waltz emphasized the idea that international relations should be considered from a point of the whole. He stressed that, though the actions of states make up the substance of international relations, the international political environment has much to do with the ways in which states behave. In international politics, everyone’s strategy depends upon everyone else’s (Waltz, 1959: 12-4, 122-3, 218, 236-8). In his later works he has made the same point. He argues that the similarities of outcomes in international relations persist, patterns recur, and events repeat themselves endlessly, despite the fact that actors vary. He thus concludes that systemic forces other than the units are in play, for the variety of actors and their interactions are not matched by the variety of outcomes (Waltz, 1979: 66-9).

Having stressed the systemic nature of international relations as such, Waltz defines a system as “a set of interacting units.” He distinguishes two main components of a system: the systems-level component and the unit level component. “At one level,” states Waltz, “a system consists of a structure, and the structure is the systems-level component that makes it possible to think of the units as forming a set distinct from a mere collection. At another level, the system consists of interacting units” (Waltz, 1979: 40-1; 1988: 618). It is obvious that the units of the system in question, the international system, are the states. But, what is the structure which is, he makes it clear, the basic systemic force or component?

According to Waltz, it is the structure that is responsible for the persistence of outcomes or recurrences of patterns for “the structure of a system acts as a constraining and disposing force.” It “designates a set of constraining conditions” and “acts as a selector, but it cannot be seen, examined, and observed at work” (Waltz, 1979: 69, 73). The structure is defined by the arrangement and positioning of the parts, by how they stand in relation to one another. The arrangement or positioning of parts takes place under three factors which Waltz sees as the defining elements of the structure. The first is the ordering principle of the system, the principle according to which the parts are organised. The specification of the functions of the differentiated parts constitutes the second element of the structure. This element which is existent within a state does not hold for international

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14 A good collection of the discussions on neorealism can be found in Keohane (1986). Waltz, in his 1988 article, publicly calls himself a ‘neorealist’ by speaking of his “own formulation of neorealist theory” (Waltz, 1988: 615).
relations for there is no functional differentiation among states in international relations. The third element of the definition of the structure is the distribution of capabilities among the units, implying that changes in the relative capabilities of the units can change their arrangement (Waltz, 1979: 79-82). It is clear that the main defining element of the structure is the ordering principle. Then, the question is what the ordering principle is in the international relations. It is self-help. It, Waltz explains (1979: 90-1), emerges from the coexistence and coactions of the states. The international system thus becomes a self-help system in which units (states) are, in order to endure their survival, expected to take care of themselves.

The conceptualisations of the two authors are, as seen, very much similar. For the realist conception, an international system is an anarchical system formed by the states seeking for endurance of their survival. The structural arrangement of the states, an anarchical arrangement, conditions the behaviour of the states and makes them dependent upon one another. This structural mutual dependence of the states makes international relations a system. Though the arrangement of the states are anarchical, it can be seen that the realist system conception ultimately depends on the fact that states are in interaction or, in Waltz's term, they coexist and coact. Without interrelation, the units (states) can hardly coexist and coact and one cannot speak of the structural arrangement (any arrangement, for that matter) of the parts.

5. The behaviouralist conception

Parallel to the respective trends in other social sciences, the international system conception of systems analysis became popular in the United States in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. We see a proliferation of accounts of international relations undertaken in the name of systems analysis and also an increase in the use of the term 'international system'. But, as mentioned earlier, neither the system concept nor the system account of international relations were a novelty. Then, what is the distinctive nature of the 'new' accounts called 'systems analysis' or 'systems theories'? For Spiro, "the point here is simply that the novelty in political science [in International Relations] is not systems theory as such, but the tremendous self-consciousness about systems theory" (Spiro, 1966: 42). One has the right to ask to what extent it is justifiable that the earlier scholars were not conscious of systems theory or systemness of their field because they did not use the systems discourse or systems analysis. Spiro is far from persuasion in his reasoning; it is definite that this line of argument lacks precision.
Little has a different explanation for the distinctiveness and proliferation of systems analysis in the post-war era. According to him, systems theory was "the master plan" of "a new generation of Americans", who were under "the pervasive influence of behaviouralism" and attempted "to establish the scientific credentials of International Relations" (Little, 1985: 72). The association of behaviouralism and systems analysis looks very much persuasive. The studies carried out under the name of 'systems analysis' in sociology, political science and international relations appeared in the same years. Therefore, it was not, alas Spiro, a self-consciousness about system theory, but an importation of behaviouralist conception of system theory (systems analysis) and the behaviouralist domination in the United States, that constituted the novelty of system theory in the second half of the twentieth century.

Methodologically, two ways of identification of international system may be specified within the systems analysis approach: one is the deductive method and the other is the inductive derivation of an international system. This is in line with the general course followed in the formation of the General Systems Theory (GST) and systems analysis in other disciplines. The deductive analysis of international system depends on Ashby's conception of a system (or GST) - considering all possible models of a system. In Burton's words, it implies "the use of 'axiomatic' propositions or 'givens' derived at one level of analysis, as the basis for logical extensions to others" (Burton, 1974: 27). Kaplan's conception of an international system is the typical example arrived at through deductive method.

Kaplan, who is the most persistent advocate of systems analysis, defines a system, or a system of action, as "a set of variables so related, in contradistinction to its environment, that describable behavioural regularities...

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15 Asby, a proponent of the GST, for instance, distinguishes two main lines within the GST. One is developed by von Bertalanffy, going upwards from empirical to abstract conceptualizations. This view takes the world as we find it, examines the various events that occur in it - ecological, physiological, social, and so on - then draws up statements about the regularities that have been observed to hold. This method is essentially empirical. The other method, which Ashby himself says to have followed, starts at the abstract and general - downward from the abstract and general. Instead of studying first one system, then a second, and then a third, and so on, it considers the set of "all conceivable systems", then reduces the set to a reasonable size (Ashby, 1958: 2). One can easily see that the two lines expressed by Ashby depend upon the inductive-deductive dichotomy which is very much disputable. Human mind, when examining an event, follows both deductive and inductive methods at the same time, for these two techniques can hardly be separable. Furthermore, Ashby leaves us wondering about how to specify "all conceivable systems".
characterise the internal relationships of the variables to each other and the external relationships of the set of individual variables to combinations of external variables." For Kaplan, "any set of specified variables may be considered a system. Napoleon, the Columbia River, and a dinosaur may be considered a system" (Kaplan, 1964: 4). As I mentioned earlier, for the students of systems analysis, an international system is analytical, formed by the analyst. If the analyst specifies a set of elements which are, he believes, in interaction, then, that set forms a system. This is why Kaplan considers Napoleon, the Columbia River and a dinosaur to be examples of a system.

Kaplan, in line with Ashby's conception of a system (or GST), proposes some, not all, possible models of an international system. He says that only two of the models, the 'balance of power' system and the loose bipolar system, have historical counterparts. The other models are a product of "plausible reasoning" (Kaplan, 1964: 21; 1966a: 471). When it comes to describe these 'historical' international systems, it is fairly evident that, for Kaplan, an international system is a system made up of the interactions of the actors or elements which are basically states, blocs and universal organisations. It is the interactions and the patterns of repeatable or characteristic behaviour that give rise to an international system. One cannot help agreeing with Bull that Kaplan's historical models have been quite common place ideas among the students of international relations and thus there is no need to formulate some distinct 'models' (Bull, 1966a: 371-2).

Kaplan suffers from the idea that one can distinguish analytical and ontological systems.

The second method of systems analysis starts from the individual elements and their relations (interactions). An international system is constructed through a generalisation process upon those interactions. This is the path of von Bertalanffy. In International Relations, McClelland is the most typical representative of this approach. For him, "the conception of the international system is an expanded version of the notion of two actors-in-interaction." All the exchanges, transactions, contacts, and actions of every kind cutting across the boundaries of the separately constituted societies of the world are included. Moreover, the stream of these

16 Kaplan specified six models of international system devised in 1957: the 'balance of power' system; the loose bipolar system; the tight bipolar system; the universal system; the hierarchical system in its directive and non-directive forms; and the unit veto system (1964: 21). In 1966, he extended the number of models to ten by suggesting four additional models: the very loose bipolar system; the detente system; the unstable bloc system; and the incomplete nuclear diffusion system (Kaplan, 1966a: 486).
actions and responses extends to the past and tomorrow. “This total picture is the reference intended in the term the international system” (McClelland, 1966: 20). Although he does not specify explicitly, for McClelland, the basic elements of the international system remains to be the states. He builds his conception of an international system upon the behaviour of nation-states. “A nation's international behaviour,” says McClelland, “is a two-way activity of taking from and giving to the international environment. All the giving and taking, when considered together and for all the national actors, is called the international system” (McClelland, 1966: 90). He extends this consideration of all giving and taking together to its utmost limits. The international system constitutes the most encompassing system. It has “no environment unless the 'platform' of the physical world 'upon' which it operates is so considered. ... It stands at the apex in the hierarchies of social organisation” (McClelland, 1958: 237-8). This is how McClelland tries to construct the international system as the highest stage of the systemness through generalisation from the interactions of two actors.

Although their procedures seem to differ, both conceptions had the same idea of a system as formed through the interactions of elements and had many characteristics in common. In fact, theorists who stand at one side of the deductive-inductive dichotomy made the use of the techniques of other side, because deductivism and inductivism cannot be separated completely. Ultimately, whatever method they profess to have used, all of them relied upon the basic premises of systems analysis and used the language popularised by the GST and systems analysis together. The assumptions upon which the GST, the Parsons' social system and the Eastonian political system were constructed have explicitly or implicitly been transferred into the centre of their formulations of an international system.

The functionalist understanding of the Parsons' social system involves four functions, namely, pattern-maintenance, integration, goal-attainment, homeostatic mechanisms, and boundaries

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17 Dougherty and Pfaltzgraff summarise the common concerns of writers who use systems theory as follows: 1) the internal organisation and interaction patterns of complex elements hypothesised or observed to exist as a system; 2) the relationships and boundaries between a system and its environment and, in particular, the nature and impact of inputs from and outputs to the environment; 3) the functions performed by systems, the structures for the performance of such functions, and their effect upon the stability of the system; 4) the homeostatic mechanism available to the system for the maintenance of steady-state or equilibrium; 5) the classification of systems as open or closed, or as organismic or non-organismic systems, the location of subsystems within systems, the patterns of interaction among subsystems themselves, and between subsystem and the system itself (1981: 150).
and adaptation (Parsons, 1961: 38-40); and the Eastonian analysis of a political system relies heavily on the allocative function (Easton, 1965: 57). One may see the impact of this idea of the political system on the conceptualisation of an international system. In fact, Easton himself argued that international relations constituted a system. In the interactions among nations, we have "a genuine society", a system even though "it is at a less integrated and less rationalised stage of development than in national societies." Nevertheless, it is a separate system. Easton argues that the authoritative allocation of values does not necessarily require the existence of a well-defined organisation called the government. In international relations, surely, values are allocated and there are allocating agents. For Easton, these are great powers. “In the last resort, if any specific distribution of values, or if the general pattern emerging from individual private negotiations over time, does not accord with their conception of a desirable disposition of resources internationally, it has been normal for the great powers to step in to speak with the voice of international society. ... It is obvious that the international allocation of values is closely scrutinized by the great powers. ... The great powers, with lesser powers at the fringe, have always themselves assumed the obligation of fulfilling an obvious condition for the existence of any international contact" (Easton, 1971: 138-9).

Easton's claims of systemness to international relations have been challenged. Nicholson and Reynolds argue that international relations do not satisfy the conditions of a system required by the Eastonian framework. In international relations, the authorities, would-be-allocators of values, are unstable. Which authority for what demands and values is not certain. The flow of information about demands and the support for the authorities is neither constant nor persistent. There is a peculiar difficulty in the identification of the channels along which demands should flow. Furthermore, the effectiveness of outputs in mobilising support and the probability of compliance with allocating decisions are very low in the case of a global system (Nicholson and Reynolds, 1967: 23-7). All these characteristics of an international system, for them, render the Eastonian framework inapplicable in international relations. Nicholson and Reynolds conclude: The "discussion of the applicability of Easton's model to the global system has suggested that at almost every point the variables as he [Easton] conceives them are in the global system so shadowy, and the systemic paths as he defines them so indeterminable, that the usefulness of his model as an aid to understanding the global system as it exists is questionable. The global system is essentially anarchical - there are no authorities which can with sufficient regularity be identified, or whose allocation with sufficient frequency likely to be
accepted" (Nicholson and Reynolds, 1967: 29).

One can fairly argue that the Eastonian framework with its all or even some basic specifications and its meaning implicating orderliness and solidary coherence is not applicable in the case of the international reality, but one can hardly argue that some basic propositions of the Eastonian analysis (for instance, the conception of a system and politics in terms of the allocation of values) have not been influential on the conceptions of the students of international system. The Eastonian abstraction of a political system from the society (coming from Parsons) has explicitly or implicitly been at the heart of the international system conception, especially of the international political system conception, of many scholars of the day. In fact, for many writers, an international system has meant to be an international political system.

6. The English School's conception

The third conception of the international system in the twentieth century International Relations is the account of the English School. One could easily see the traces of the Eastonian framework in the following description of international relations in the mid-1980s: "There is no single government to allocate values for the world as a whole, but the values are allocated nevertheless. 'Who gets what, when, and how' is determined by power balances, ideological movements, tyrannical or democratic regimes, foreign intervention, booms and slumps of industrial production, patterns of trade within borders and across them - and much more" (Banks, 1984: 3).

The debate on 'the English School', which began with R. E. Jones's article (1981) was in fact the emergence of an old and implicit division between what may be called the 'American social scientific approach' and the 'English classical approach'. It was seen in the exchanges of Bull (1966a) and Kaplan (1966b) in the 1960s. It is true that International Relations as a separate discipline mainly developed in the United States within a social scientific conception. Hoffmann called it as "an American social science" (Hoffmann, 1977). As early as 1956, Grosser asked whether international relations were destined to remain "an American specialty" (Grosser, 1956). Lyons drew attention to the contributions made by French writers; however, while he spoke of the existence of "a distinctly British approach to international relations" (Lyons, 1986: 630), he did not see 'a distinctly French approach' (Lyons, 1982). If there is an 'English school' then how is it to be identified? Jones gives three elements distinguishing the writers of the English School: a broad commitment to international relations conceived as a distinct, even autonomous subject; setting a task for themselves to describe or examine the order the world as a whole exhibits on the basis of the structure of relations between 'sovereign nation-states'; and their style containing few statistics, no geometry, and less algebra, no mention of, or no rhetoric over, the so-called world problems of poverty, commodity prices, monetary reform and so on. For Jones, commitment to holism remains fundamental to the approach of the English
expressed their conception through the terms 'system of states', 'states-system' or 'international society'. On the basis of all these concepts lies the main

School and even this takes "an obsessive form" and consequently leads to a disregard for individual experience (Jones, 1981: 1, 3, 7). Objecting to Jones, Grader argues that there is no such thing as 'the English School'. Holism does not provide a basis for placing those scholars in some kind of school. She argues that "there is more merit in the suggestion that the identities of both 'the English School' and 'the British School' coalesce around the idea of international society." Even in this respect, she contends, one cannot envisage that the writers associated with the School were talking about the 'same international society'. They have their own distinct conceptions of an international society (Grader, 1988: 35, 38).

Wilson argues that, pace Grader, there is in fact an 'English School' and its approach can be characterised as holistic in the sense that the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts and has a life of its own. Moreover, the writers in the School practice 'holistic explanation'. The importance attached to the idea that states form a society unites the English School and distinguishes it from the others (Wilson, 1989: 49-50, 54-5).

I would say that we can fairly speak of the existence of an 'English School' of international relations having some kind of distinct identity. This does not mean that who is to be included within the English school is readily apparent. One may include as many names as M. Wight, H. Bull, C. A. W. Manning, F. S. Northedge, A. James, M. Donelan, M. Forsyth and M. Keens-Soper. Even, it has been suggested that the School has originated with Toynbee (Little, 1985: 82). Here, I shall largely rely on Wight and Bull's conceptions. Their views are not identical but they have their commonalities such as the concern for history and historical explanation, political classics, some kind of order, the conception of an 'international society', the avoidance of scientific jargon and so on.

It is Bull who has made a clear distinction between a 'system of states' and a 'society of states'. The former refers to a group of states which are in such an interaction as to make each consider the behaviour of others, and the latter implies a solidarity relationship in which the participants (states) are conscious of their common interests and values and, to this end, join in common institutions and agree upon a set of rules by which they are bound (Bull, 1977:15-6). Suganami makes a triple distinction between a 'community of states', a 'society of states', and a 'system of states' according to the degree of legal centralisation. He suggests that the existence of a 'supranational organisation' constitutes a sufficient condition for a 'community', the existence of the international organisation for a 'society', and the absence of any special organs implies that states form only a 'system'. As the level of solidarity heightens, the regulation by international law shifts from 'co-existence' to 'co-operation', thus, the law of co-existence indicates the existence of a 'system of states'; the law of coordination combined with the law of co-existence denotes the existence of a 'society of states'; and the expansion of the law of cooperation implies the coming-into-existence of a 'community of states' (Suganami, 1982: 67-8). Note that Bull's and Suganami's distinctions could be placed within what I have defined as the continuum of systemness. Although, in my definition, a high degree of systemness does not only involve a solidary and cooperative relationship, but a competitive one as well (for instance, Waltz's international system, though not a cooperative one, has a high degree of systemness), Bull and Suganami seem to equate the high degree of systemness with a solidary and cooperative relationship. Here is the concept of international society. In fact, all members of the English School seem to agree upon this solidary and cooperative characteristic whatever term they
definition of a system, an entity composed of elements in interaction. Wight seems to have adopted the meaning of the system given by M. Bernard as "a group of states having relations more or less permanent with one another." Here is Bull's definition: "A system of states (or international system) is formed when two or more states have sufficient contact between them to behave at least in some measure as parts of a whole" (Bull, 1977: 9-10). And Northedge: International politics form a system in the sense that "these politics add up to something more than the sum of the political actions of the constituent units in the system" (1976: 28). It is thus clear; an international system is the system composed of sovereign states in interaction. But this was also the conception we have found in the realist and behaviouralist schools.

It is the interpretation of the nature of the interactions which give rise to the formation of the international system that distinguishes the three approaches. For the realist school, the interactions of states derive from their seeking for their survival, and are anarchical, competitive, in the form of a struggle, however mutually dependent on each other. For the behaviouralist school, the nature of interactions could be competitive or solidary, in any case it is constructed by the analyst. For the English School, the interactions of states are solidary and derive from their common interests and values. At this point, an international system goes beyond a mere set of interrelations and becomes a particular set of interrelations which takes place in a common framework (culture) and in an orderly manner. And thus it becomes an international society.

This society (solidary/cooperative) element is common to all writers of the School. What Wight meant by a 'system of states' or 'states-system' was more or less a cooperative unity of states. He finds Heeren's definition of a states-system which comprises the resemblance of states in their manners and religion and their reciprocity of interests, "more precise" than M. Bernard's which does not include those properties. Moreover, he makes it clear that "a states-system will not come into being without a degree of cultural unity among its members" (Wight, 1977: 33). The element of cultural unity is, I suspect, conceived to be a factor that facilitates orderly and cooperative relationships of the states. Bull is much clearer: "A society of states (or international society) exists when a group of states, conscious of certain common interests and common values, forms a society in the sense that they conceive themselves to be bound by a common set of rules in their relations choose. The distinction between a society/community and a system is not an easy one, for all societies are also systems. Bull indeed acknowledges this difficulty (1977: 15).
with one another, and share in the working of common institutions" (Bull, 1977: 13). States which form a society, unlike those which form a system, are conscious of their common interests and values and join in common institutions. For example, Turkey was a member of the European-dominated international system in the nineteenth century, but became a member of the European-dominated international society only in the twentieth century. Northedge (1976: 24) qualifies his international system as an "intelligible, regulated and orderly set of relationships". Finally, for Donelan, states do form a society and "the pursuit of the common good" constitutes "the public philosophy of states" (Donelan, 1982: 156-7; 1990: 66). What are then the characteristics and institutions of this society?

The international society as conceived by the English School consists of states which are internally and externally sovereign. It is a unique and anarchical society without a common government. It is formed with the recognition by states of each other's sovereignty and of common interests. States recognising their common interests come together and set some rules by which their relations are to be regulated. The basic rule is to keep and adhere to the agreements made. An international society is manifested in certain institutions. The first one is diplomacy which provides the communication of the states. Second comes international law, the body of rules regarding proper behaviour and framework within which states can coexist without disorder. Great powers for 'policing', balance of power for the prevention of the society from transformation into an empire (a hegemonial rule), customs and conventions of war to regulate the conduct of wars, international organisations as mediators or facilitators of cooperation (of common interests) form the other institutions of the international society (Wight, 1977: 129-49; Bull, 1966a: 48; 1977: 13; Donelan, 1990: 59, 66-67; James, 1978: 97-104; Mayall, 1990: 2).

Described as such, one issue remains problematic for the international society of the English School: the problem of cultural unity. The cultural unity is conceived, at least by Wight and Bull, as one of the most important elements of an international society. The historical examples of Wight and Bull were all societies which sprang from a common culture defined by and in religion, or language, or ethnicity, or simply the way of life. The trouble is that the present international society does not seem to exhibit a cultural unity. Wight (1978: 290-1) acknowledges that after the French Revolution

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21 Wight and Bull expressed their views that the ultimate members of the international society are individuals (Wight, 1978: 106; Bull, 1977: 20-2).
of 1789 the international society has had no more a “common ethos” and the attempts to find an alternative common ethos have failed (1978: 290-1). Bull (1977: 257-8) draws attention to the decline of the element of society in the contemporary international society after the First World War as a result of the shrinking consensus about common interests and values, and of ideological divisions.

Nevertheless, Bull suggests that the cultural basis of today’s international society is the ‘culture of modernity’, which is not, he admits, clearly defined except for the fact that it is the culture of the Western powers. He argues that there is at least a common diplomatic or elite culture, but this common culture of diplomacy or the elite does not embrace a common moral culture or a set of common values (Bull, 1977: 39, 317). Mayall too, though drawing attention to the cultural diversity and its desirability, agrees with Bull that the “new world view of modernisation” forms the ground of general standards of the international society (Mayall, 1978: 129, 133-5).

The issue is not the degree of agreement on rules, norms, standards and values to form some kind of a cultural unity in the international society. Today, states share some common cultural tenets however it is defined, as Gong puts it: “In its different manifestations, the concept of a standard of ‘civilisation’ remains an integral aspect of contemporary international society” (Gong, 1984: 9, 248). The question is how far this common culture of modernity or standard of civilisation is understood in the same way by all states and how well it can form a basis for the orderly and cooperative relationships of the states so as to form a coherent unity.

To sum up, the English School, for me, has two merits. The first one is its historical analysis in the sense that the international system (society) is analysed and thus defined within its historical process. For the realists and behaviouralists, the historical process of the international system does not count much. The important thing, for the realist, is the anarchical positioning of the states and whether the states want to endure their survival. For the behaviouralist, it is whether he can detect behavioural regularities. Of course, if they were to be asked what international system they were describing, they would say the present system. But this is assumed, a given for them, not explained. On the other hand, for the student of the English School, it is a particular international system, emerged at a point in time and stopped at another or is still going on. Pace Wilson, international society of the English School, at least for Wight and Bull, does exist. The international society of today, for the English School, thus becomes an entity comprising not only of the present interactions of the states, but also of the accumulation of the past interactions (perhaps, of the future?).
The second merit of the international system conception of the English School is that it is, besides being solidary, voluntaristic in the sense that an international system (society) comes into existence when the constituent members view themselves as parts of a whole and their actions and behaviours are conditioned by this conception. In other words, it is formed by the volition of the members and within the historical process it gets institutionalised and gains the status of a society. Within these terms, for them, as expressed by Little, a colony of ants, for instance, does not form a system because the ants have no conception of the whole and they are not conscious of the existence of the system (Little, 1985: 89). This voluntaristic conception of the English School is in sharp contrast with the mechanistic and atomistic conception of the realist and behaviouralist schools.

7. How many international systems?

Having examined the three conceptions of an international system, I would like to take up the question as to how many international systems there are. Is there a single international system expressed as the international system or are there more? If the reference is to the whole globe or if the international system is to be understood as one embracing the whole Earth, then, one can speak of only one international system. However, this condition has been, as I have already mentioned, realised only in the second half of the twentieth century with the unification of the world in terms of economic process and political organisation as a result of the European expansion. (It is true there is no one single world government, but the form of political organisation, that is, sovereign nation-state, is the same everywhere in the world, even papacy has taken the status of a state.) Therefore, for today, we can speak of a single international system.

From the Parsonian social system conception, one may ask whether it is possible to speak of an international political system, an international economical system, an international social system, and so on. For the realists and in fact for many students, the question has never arisen, because they assumed the international system to be a political system (thus implying the possible existence of an international economic, or social, or cultural etc. systems). This assumption implicitly indicates that there may be many international systems. If a political international system can be defined, then, obviously other kinds of international systems (economical, social, cultural etc.) can also be defined. This is an issue which has mostly been taken upon by the students of the behaviouralist school.

Lampert and his co-authors (1978) object to the idea that there is only
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One international system. For them, an international system is constructed upon the basis of a particular issue. As a corollary to this, they argue for a "multiple issue-based systems" model of international relations. Thus, their answer to the question "Is there an international system?" is "Yes, there are many." International relations consist of many international systems built on multiple issues, with overlapping boundaries. There is no final answer to the question of how to differentiate one system from the other. The environment of an international system consists of all other international systems (Lampert et al., 1978: 147, 149-51). They seem to suggest that to analyse an international system one first needs to identify the issue upon which the system in concern has been (or to be) constituted. All interactions of all actors with respect to one particular issue make up the international system in question. However, this notion mainly depends on the view that issues are detachable.

The detachability of issues as political, economical, social, and so forth is very much disputable. It has not been accepted by all scholars, not even by the behaviourists. Singer rejects the multiplicity of international systems and argues for the different properties of one international system. "There is," contended Singer, "only one global system on and around the planet Earth, and that system may be thought of as having a range of political, economic, and social properties. ... It makes little sense to differentiate among polity, economy, and society, ... unless one is trapped in the functionalist matrix" (Singer, 1969: 30-5). Yet many have been trapped in that 'functionalist matrix' and have conceived the international system to be political. The authors of the English School, although their writings appear 'political' (and this is true for some, for instance, Northedge as the title of his seminal work shows), do not seem to have made a clear-cut distinction among the different aspects of an international system so as to conceive various international systems. Wight's systems of states and Bull's international societies, I suspect, cover all the aspects of social life, although heavily dependent upon the political.

To turn back to the initial question, if the international system is to be defined, and as it has been defined here as a set of at least two units (states) forming a system, then, one is justified to argue that there may be more than one international system not only in 'functional' terms but also in terms of the existence of different entities. In fact, as it is held, there were more than one international system before the Western international system embraced the whole world. For example, Wight's two earlier examples of the states-system were present at the same time in history. The question is whether different groups of states could form systems cutting their relations with others or with...
the dominant system. Nevertheless, today, the international system is only one. But it should be kept in mind that it is historical.

To conclude, it can be said that the concept of international system, however it is defined, forms a unit of analysis for the students of international relations. If it is conceived in realist terms as a structurally positioned situation of different bodies, it is a unit of analysis in the sense that it constrains the actions of the elements (states) for they have no way of getting out of this structural positioning and thus, they have to take into account the others’ actions if they want to survive. It is a unit also in the sense that it helps the student to understand recurrences and repetitions in the international phenomena. It is thus a static, constraining and deterministic unit.

If the international system is conceived in terms of the behaviouralist understanding as a set of interactions analytically constructed by the analyst, it is still a unit of analysis in the sense that it may serve as an explanatory tool, not as an entity. The behaviouralist international system is thus a unit not having its own existence or identity, but is given these properties by the analyst. It is a passive unit, actually, one might say, a non-unit.

If the international system is to be understood in the way as defined by the English School, it definitely forms a unit both in terms of an entity and as an explanatory concept in understanding the international human phenomena. It is an entity having its own existence developed through the interactions of the states which have recognised their common values and interests and thus created the international society with its institutions that are distinct from those that one finds within the constituent elements (states). Moreover, it is an entity with a life of its own ranging from some beginning point in time and going on within it or ending in it. Thus it has its own characteristics, rules, institutions, behaviours, patterns which are effective over the actions of the members (states). It is a unit as an explanatory concept since it helps the student to understand the events and occurrences of the international life, which one could not possibly explain within the individual states. The unit of international system of the English School is an active and alive unit.

The question is how far the (concept of) international system, being a unit of analysis in its different understandings as we have seen, could help us understand the human phenomena. It helps, but does not explain the whole human phenomena because it does not embrace all. It is true that an international system, whether it embraces the whole globe or some portion of it, is a system larger than its constituents, each of which relates to some part of human phenomena, though less than that which is referred by the
international system in question. And it is also true that international system(s) do(es) exist just as all other social systems or the social life itself exist(s). However, the international system(s) never embrace(s) the whole human phenomena because to assume so means to assume man to be a passive and inactive being unable to do anything against external impulses. But man is an active and a creative being able to respond to his environment and thus capable of change. What is more, man has an existence more than the existence of the international system(s). It is true that the international system(s) exist(s) just as all other areas of social life, but it owes its existence to man's existence just as man owes his to social life and thus to the international system(s). The international system(s) then comprise(s) some part of men's social life.

This brings us to the view that 'the ultimate members' of the international system(s) are men. I endorse this view that the starting point of the international system(s) is men, but qualify it as 'the men living in social groupings'. The state(s), international system(s), empires and other possible organisations are simply the institutions of the social life of men. And men's social life constitutes a totality or a whole, it is neither political, nor economical, nor ethical and so forth, but it involves all. Moreover, men's social life is not mainly conflicting or solidary, but again both. Furthermore, men are born into history and remain within it. The social life -and thus the international system(s)- is historical. It takes place and goes on within history and history consists of social life.

Men's social life takes different forms and manifests itself in different institutional bodies such as individual societies, states, empires, civilisations, ethnic groups (nations), religious groups, pressure groups, associations, and so on. Therefore, the normalcy of the states-system is, as Wight observed, 'an illusion'. Besides the international system(s) all these social bodies could be a unit of analysis to understand the human phenomena. To sum up, to know how far the (concept of) international system(s) could be helpful in understanding the human phenomena we need to examine how much of a place the international system(s) occupies in men's social life. This requires the examination of the international system(s) within history where the credit of the English School lies.
References


Özet

Bir analiz birimi olarak uluslararası sistem kavramı

Bu makalede uluslararası sistem kavramının uluslararası ilişkiler öğrencileri için bir analiz birimi olduğu vurgulanmaktadır. Kavram, tarihsel olarak ortaya çıkışı ve kullanılmasıyla yayılmış, yirmi-ci yüzyıl uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründeki kullanımları, biçimini oluşum ve uluslararası ilişkiler literatüründe kullanılan realist, davranışçı ve İngiliz ekollerinin tanımlamalarıyla üç kategoriye incelenmiştir. Uluslararası sistem, insanın sosyal yaşam çerçevesinde düşünülünce, nam tanımlanması tanımlanmış, uluslararası ilişkiler eğilimleri için, aslında bütün beşeri disiplinler eğilimleri için, bir açıklayıcı açı ya da onolojik entra öntüün ve bu durumda bir analiz birimi olarak sahipliği yarışmasına vurgulanmıştır.