Buzan and Little
Chapter 5
What defines a system?

- What types and levels of interaction define a system?
  - Can systems be purely economic?
  - What level of interaction qualifies as systemic?

- Political/military
  - High interaction capacity

- Economic
  - High to medium or even low interaction capacity

- Social
  - Lowest level of required interaction capacity
Defining the system

• Four possible options
  • Anything goes
  • Eliminate cultural/social element
  • Eliminate economic element
  • Disaggregate into sectors.

• Which one do Buzan & Little choose?
Three Types of System

Full International System
- High IC
- All Sectors

Economic International System
- Lower IC
- No Political/Military Sector

Pre-International System
- Low IC
- Mostly Socio-Cultural

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Buzan, Barry, and Richard Little. *International Systems in World History: Remaking the Study of International Relations*. Oxford University Press, 2000. © Oxford University Press. All rights reserved. This content is excluded from our Creative Commons license. For more information, see [https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/](https://ocw.mit.edu/help/faq-fair-use/).
Units

- What are units?
  - Sufficiently cohesive so as to have actor qualities
  - Must let go of the assumption that units take on a particular form.
Systems

• Mechanical
  • Most Realist and economic views of systems
  • Unity of Science
  • Interactions structurally determined

• Social
  • Perceptions major determinant of action
  • Remember: three kinds of system.
    • Nature of environment depends on the relative strength of all three
Peer Discussion

• What is International Society?
International Society

• Restated on page 104 (very important!)

• Units establish common rules and institutions for the conduct of relations

• International system (Hobbes), international society (Grotius), world society (Kant)

• Transition from international system to society requires mutual recognition and legal equality

• Cold War comprised of two international societies?
Structuration

• Have to find a way to allow for both agency and the influence of structure…
Moving forward

• Keep in mind these key questions
  • What is the scale of the system?
  • Linear or multiordinate?
  • What kind of units dominate the system?
  • High or low interaction capacity?
  • What types of processes define the system
  • What types of structure does the system possess?
  • How do units and structures interact?
Questions

• Any questions?