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Units of Analysis in the Study of International Relations

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Abstract:

This study examines changing perceptions and the units and levels of analysis through the emergence of new international relations such as terrorism in its two dimensions: the variety of threats patterns, and the differing forms of war and its paraphernalia, the clash of civilizations and globalization, technology and transformations in cognitive modes leading to the emergence of sub-level analysis units. Such as: ethnic groups – ethnic and multi-national corporations, civil society organizations and terrorist organizations.

Keywords: *Units of analysis, levels of analysis, the basic concept, terrorism, globalization, multi-national corporations*

1. Introduction

Social sciences suffer from wide differences in research methodologies, analysis tools and units; and the theoretical models used, especially in political studies¹. The political phenomenon was thus considered open to various explanations that, in many fields, could reach a high level of contradiction. This is mainly due to a number of reasons including: contrast in the researcher's intellectual experience, meaning the depth of his knowledge and familiarity with the philosophy and theories of science, which increases the degree of quality assurance in scientific research as a result on an increased depth and experience, or weakness thereof due to shallowness which is reflected on the utilities of scientific research, in addition to the predominance of the researcher's ideological intent, as most political studies tended to explain the varying explanations of studying political phenomena.

As such, the researcher became interested in choosing analysis units as a subject for his research, especially on the field of international relations due to the three following pillars:

- Upon thorough mapping of the indexes of a considerable number of international relations books and journals, the researcher found out that analysis units in international relations were never addressed in a separate and independent research. Instead, the topic is mentioned briefly in the introductions of books and studies under the subheading "Levels of Analysis"².
- Confusion between the two types of concepts: Basic concepts and analytical concepts.

1.1. Research Significance

1.1.1. Scientific Significance

The significance of the research in this regard comes from two perspectives. The first is the complexity and entanglement of international political phenomena and the multiplicity of their variables. The second is the appearance of new actors and phenomena such as globalization and feminism which changed and the concept of units and levels of analysis.

1.3. Practical Significance

Demonstrating the role of analysis units and its new levels such as globalization, feminism and postmodernism in analyzing international phenomena to rationalize the decision makers in states in light of the development of the concept of networked international relations meaning the entanglement of mutual influences without being limited to the main actor of the state.

¹Barakat N. (1983), Centers of Power in Israel, Dar Al-Jaleel Publishing, Amman, Jordan.

²Holsti, K.J., International Politics: A Frame Work for Analysis, Printice-Hall Wood Cliffs, New Jersey, USA, 1997, 3rd.ed, pp. 17.

1.4. Research Dilemma

Major search dilemma arises in answering a central question: what factors affecting change in the levels of analysis and the understanding of international relations?

The researcher answers the aforementioned main question through a group of sub-questions:

- What is meant by analysis units, levels and concepts?
- What is the role of globalization and technology in the change in analysis units?
- What is the effect of the change in the concept of power on the structure of analysis units?
- What is the impact of the shifts in sub-forms on analysis units?
- What are the outcomes of change in analysis units on understanding and explaining international political phenomena?

1.5. Research Approach

The researcher uses a descriptive approach through the following steps:

- Identifying the concept of analysis units, analysis concepts and the main concept in theoretical literature.
- Identifying the factors that influence analysis units such as globalization, technology, clash of civilizations and terrorism.
- Studying the interaction between the two previous steps all the way to the results of the interaction in understanding and explaining international phenomena among researchers.

1.6. Research Goals

The researcher aims to detect the transformation and transition in analysis units in international relations on the one hand, and uncover the factors affecting the creation of this shifting of the units of analysis.

1.7. Research Concepts and Units of Analysis

The researcher uses several analytical tools that mean those purely mental tools, and several concepts and theoretical models that the researcher uses to understand and analyze the relationships of the target reality.

Concepts as a tool of analysis what mean, as in philosophy of science, a mental perception of a certain reality that divides concepts into two types: concepts of political knowledge base, which mean the starting point or the center of attention around which political studies revolve. Concepts of analysis as mental tools for political analysis is concepts were brought from natural sciences into the field of social studies due to the leakage of the experimental scientific methods such as the structure, function, layout, and poise, and so on.

As such, the concept of power is considered essential in analyzing the national and international world of politics, Tan Morgenthau states in his publication titled *Politics among Nations*. In that book, he defines international life as an environment of conflict for power. Raymond Aron, on the other hand, in his book *War and Peace*, defines the core concept of the world of international politics is about "the unity of foreign policy" which mean that the state has two ways to achieve its security and interests: diplomacy and strategy³.

If we think about whom this power, which constitutes the core of the world of politics, is given to, we would be dealing with the unit of analysis. According to Bentley, the group in the American national politics is the analytical unit that holds power, whereas in the international world of politics, the unit of analysis is the state which possesses the tools for material coercion since they are the perfect order for the international community, as widely accepted among the scholars of law and philosophy. However, analytical units may change similarly to the change of concepts as analytical units. This change is considered as a shift or transformation. Therefore, we come up with the following:

- Units of analysis are the carrier of power as a basic concept in the analysis of international relations.
- Units of analysis change according to the change in basic concepts in political analysis, which in turn change according to the change in research methodology. From here, we conclude that units of analysis in international relations are unstable for reasons including:
- Changing realities and variables of international conflict, with international life witnessing a change in analysis methods in political studies.
- The great influence of technology, globalization, terrorism and the clash of civilizations.
- Reality and its observations are considered the base for exploring variables of a political phenomenon in international relations.

2. Factors Influencing Change in International Relations Study Analysis Units

Several factors emerged which had great influence on the analysis units in studying international relations. The most important of these factors are:

The emergence of terrorism as a phenomenon of violence aimed at achieving political results, particularly since the events of September 2001 ", as demonstrated by this occurrence of this variable in two key conclusions:

- Change in patterns of threats: The US report published by the Rand Corporation revealed a change in perspective which has led to a shift in future threat patterns which the report classified into two types: Cyber War and Net War.

³Abdel Hafez, A. (2000), *The Contemporary Political Perspective*, University House, Alexandria, pp. 72-73.

The first type includes threats based on information technology and electronic communications, whereas the second type, according to the report, includes terrorism, drug trafficking and arms dealing.⁴

- Different warfare forms and paraphernalia: The emergence of what is known as asymmetric warfare (Non-Symmetric War), and asymmetry here means the new nature and relatively low cost. The cost of the terrorist attack on September 11th, for example, in terms of training, planning, funding and implementation only cost about half a million dollars.⁵

All this has led to weakening of the role of the State and its regular army in the fight against terrorism, thus reducing the importance of adopting them as a unit of analysis in international relations due to the different pattern of threats and the nature and form of wars and paraphernalia.

Clash of civilizations: the emergence of the clash of civilizations as a perspective for explaining international relations is tied to the increasing emergence of terrorism. Some American thinkers, particularly Samuel p. Huntington, believe that terrorism represents a form of international conflict as much as can be viewed as a war between Muslims and non-Muslims; and war may evolve into a major clash of civilizations between Islam and the West, while another group of scholars believes that there is a civilized war anchored between Islam and the West. But there is a war between moderates and extremists within major civilizations: Islamic, Western Christianity, Judaism and Hinduism waging war on moderates both on those of their own civilization or on others. As confirmed by Graham Fuller and Thomas Friedman. That's why supporters of modernity and globalization in all civilizations must rally in against this wave of extremism and terrorism⁶.

All this led to the emergence of the cultural variable in explaining the phenomena of international conflict which strengthened the cultural dimension in international relations agenda, and led to the emergence of civilization as a new analysis unit in the studies of international relations, and it produced the following results:

- The emergence of a discourse of opposing centralities in interpreting relations between nations and peoples.
- The weakness of globalization as a unit of "analysis in international relations".
- The adoption of a new perspective that is related mainly to the changing patterns of culture and attempting to propose patterns of change and reform – especially in the Middle East- linked to human rights, empowerment of women, promoting democracy and strengthening non-governmental civil society organizations.
- The decline of the concept of traditional allies and re-establishment of alliance from a cultural and civilized perspective.

3. Globalization and Technology

If the traditional community is defined as the society that develops within limited technology which keeps it in a traditional reference unit, then by the advent of industrialization and expansion of markets and increased mobility both geographically, socially and economically, and with new transportation and new ways of linking the territories and different regions, with modern means of communication and its development and deployment, emerging new patterns and new standards and increase in scalability which speeds up the social and cultural change similarly⁷, which increases the chances of political instability, thus weakening the State's ability to adjust and control change, leading to the following results:

- The emergence of non-governmental civil society organizations as new mechanisms in the consolidation of interests and the formation of pressure groups are linked together horizontally away from state control, such as women's groups and environmental movements.
- A series of big changes at various levels locally, regionally and globally central geographical location and space shrinking and closeness has led to the emergence of such new definitions as globalization, which means, among other things, the dominance of typical world values over peoples, and also means a declining role of nation States. Also, within globalization, sovereignty and prevail shrinks in the face of capacities of individuals versus the growing role of private sectors and individual networks supported by the power of information and communications technology, and operating within intercontinental non-governmental organizations leading, with its outcomes which emerged from global economic relations, to the rise of a techno-industrial elite in the world that makes the decision, leading to: the emergence of new political and economic decision makers that rely on the secretions of various manifestations of globalization, affecting⁸units of analysis in interpreting international relations as a result of the change in the concept of power as a basic concept in international relations.

4. The Change in the Concept of Power in International Relations

The shift in data and indicators for analyzing the concept of power as a basic concept in the study of international relations is due to several factors, including:

⁴Ibrahim Mahmoud, A., *New Terrorism: The new shape of armed conflict on the international political arena*, Cairo, 147, pp. 50-51.

⁵ Ghali, B., *International Relations after September 11, 2001*, Cairo, *International Politics*, 147, p. 228.

⁶ Ibrahim Mahmoud, A., *New Terrorism*, op. cit., pp. 5-51 .

⁷ Al-Qasabi, A. (2003), *Political Development-Democratic Transformation*, *Dar Al-Asdiqa' Publishing*, pp. 228.

⁸Abdullah Al-Jawhar, H. (2001), *The Gulf Between Globalization and Economic Pressures and the Challenges of Regional Integration*, *International Policy*, pp. 11-13. See also: Roberts, T. (2004), *From Modernity to Globalization*, National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature, Kuwait, pp. 221-241.

- The emergence of such variables as terrorism, clash of civilizations, globalization and technology which produced new actors and members of the structure international system with a non-governmental nature in a horizontal frame under relatively similar interests worldwide⁹.
- As a result of the previous factor, the solid military power became incapable of fulfilling its political goals which affected one of the indicators of power analysis which is the effectiveness of power and speed of change in the power possessed by the state in light of international relations that witness increased globalization, which cause deep transformations in the overall perspective represented in new approaches of interpretation such as post-modernism and feminism.

5. Paradigm Shifts and Their Impact on International Relations Analysis Units

Post-modern perspective: The movement of cognitive perspectives is proposed by an elite group of scholars of jurisdiction as a result of the inability of old perspectives to address the recent developments in reality. Karl Popper calls this "the myth of the framework", which means a group of basic assumptions or main principles taken on a certain scope within a specialized academic framework¹⁰, leading to a scientific revolution that is reflected unto social and political research. The state, as analysis unit in the system of international relations came after the industrial revolution and the rise of capitalism¹¹, which is does not fit with international transformations, leading to the collapse of the myth of the framework in the system of international relations and resulting in different analytical units.

The post-incident perspective focuses on the following realities¹²:

- Increasing the degree of horizontal links between the people of the world.
- The need for democratic political reform.
- The consideration of the individual and his rights as more important than the interest of the nation-state (neo-liberalism).
- Denouncing the absolute in all of its rational and moral forms.

The postmodern and feminist trend, which is based on a nation-state as a patriarchal political system of varying degrees of paternity, individual consideration and freedom as the main unit of analysis, transformation from state and religion, and the consideration of human rights as the primary entry point for the dismantling of patriarchal societies and systems. This was accompanied by the transformation of the international economy into a global economy that transcended states in favor of multinational corporations as they were responsible for foreign direct investment.^{13,14}

All this establishes what Ulrich Beck called "global citizenship" which means, in one of its materializations, that national States give up parts of its authority and sovereignty to enterprises and institutions across borders and crystallized a new identity as junction points and coordinate cross-border dependencies resulting in comprehensive business States that are not subject to the priorities of Geopolitical calculations¹⁵

The units of analyzing international relations appear to be witnessing profound changes leading to different results by globalization and technology, new actors in international relations, movement to the cognitive perspective that establishes the analysis methodologies, fundamental analysis tools and different concepts, especially after the end of the cold war, that keeps pace with the cognitive peremptory mechanism which denies the accepted interpretative theory to create new scientific hypotheses through active dialectics¹⁶.

6. The Shift in International Relations Study Analysis Units

In light of what is mentioned earlier, power continues to constitute a core principle in building theoretical models for interpreting international relations, be they models of naturally occurring balance based on the concepts of norm and balance according to the principle of the balance of power presented by Morgenthau and Aaron, or patterned balance as described by Morton Kaplan and Karl Deutsch who theorized international relations as they should be, or the theory of decision-making according to Richard C. Snyder. However, the change that hit one of the indicators of power analysis in international relations is the effectiveness of power, in its military sense, in achieving its political goals due to a change of actors in power relations and the change in the pattern of issues which, in turn, had an impact on interactions and outcomes at the international level.¹⁷

In terms of the actors in the system of power relations, non-governmental organizations such as terrorist organizations, feminist and environmental movements have emerged. These organizations are based on priority issues such as: cultural identity, human rights and women's empowerment as a result of globalization and technology.¹⁸

⁹Al-Din Hilal, A. (1999), Recent Trends in Political Science, Scientific Committee for Science, Politics and Public Administration, Cairo, pp. 358.

¹⁰ Popper, K.; Al-Khawali, Y. (translator) (2001), Myth of the Framework, National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature, p. 60.

¹¹ Callot, M.; Kherfan, S. (translator) (2001), Future Visions, National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature, Kuwait, pp. 430.

¹² These data were collected from: Hatem, M. (2001), How the Gulf war Changed the AAua's Discourse on Arab Nationalism and Gender Politics, Middle East Journal, No.2, pp.228-295.

¹³ Fernea, E. (2001), The Challenges for Middle Eastern Woman in the 21th century. Middle East Journal. vol. 54, vo. 2, pp. 186-193.

See also: Marie Clark, A. (1998), The Sovereign Limits of Global Civil Society World Politics, 51, October, pp. 3, 34.

¹⁴ Hurst, P.; Jabbar, F. (translator) (2001), What is Globalization? National Council for culture, Arts and Literature, Kuwait, pp. 103-104.

¹⁵ Beck, U: What is Globalization? Camel Publishing, Germany, pp. 138, 185.

¹⁶ Al-Khouli, Y. (2000); The Philosophy of Science in the Twentieth Century, National Council for culture, arts and literature, pp. 445.

¹⁷ Booth, K. (1997), International Relations Theory Today, Polity Press, Cambridge, UK, pp.18-19.

¹⁸ O. Lerche, C. (1979), Concepts of International Politics in Global Perspective, Prentice-Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 3th edition, pp.11-14.

See also: Burchill, S. (1996); Theories of International Relations, Macmillan Press LTD, pp.210-275.

This shift in international relations study analysis units came as a result of a shift in the basic concepts and theoretical models of power relations between the state on the one hand, and non-governmental organizations in global space horizontally intertwined to serve their interests in specific issues. This shift is clarified in the following table:

Units of analysis	Basic concepts	Theoretical models
Ethnic groups Non-governmental	Civilization-culture	The theory of the clash of civilizations
Multi-national corporations and civil society organizations	Globalization	Theory of globalization and technology
Non-governmental terrorist organizations	Terrorism	The phenomenon of terrorism

Table 1: The Shift in Theoretical Models, Concepts and Units of Analysis in the Study of International Relations after the Cold War

** Prepared By the Researcher*

7. Points of Conclusion

There is a decline in the role of national states in adjusting the pattern of international conflict.

- The increasing role of ethnic groups and multinational corporations and terrorist organizations and other civil society organizations (feminist and environmental organizations) as units of analysis to study international relations.
- The change in the shape of international polarization from states against states to states against global civil society is difficult to adjust and control.
- Re-establishment of the role of cultural and religious values in shaping the concept of national interest.
- The emergence of new theoretical models for the interpretation and study of international relations.

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