

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTION

UPSC 2016 · 10 marks

Critically examine the functional and system approaches to the study international relations.

FLOW SNAPSHOT — how the answer moves

R1 both products of the behavioural turn → push IR past human nature → one to cooperation, one to structure **R2** two modern reactions against realism → institutions vs structure as the new lens

Intro routes

Mitrany, "form follows function" → technical tasks build institutions + peace → loyalty-transfer assumption fails (nation-state legitimacy) → **Haas** neo-functionalism + spillover → ECSC → political integration → limits: European-only, Westphalian state persists, Eurocentric → systems approach: structure shapes units → **Kaplan's** models (BoP / bipolar / universal / hierarchical / unit-veto) → critics: **Bull** (intellectual exercise), **Lieber** (testability)

Body flow

both remote from power, domestic politics, agency → systems too abstract and untestable; functionalism idealises cooperation and stays Eurocentric

Counter-view

R1 neither sufficient alone → functionalism reads cooperation, systems reads structure **R2** complement both by restoring power, history and agency

Conclusion routes

But the approaches emerged from the behavioural turn in International relations, as scholars tried to move beyond realism's focus on human nature. The functionalism moved towards cooperation and the system approach towards structure.

David Mitrany's functionalism held that "form follows function": states cooperate best on specific technical tasks done together. This builds institutions and peace. He assumed loyalty would shift from the state to functional bodies, but the nation-state's legitimacy made this unworkable.

Ernst Haas's neo-functionalism brought politics back through the spillover effect, for example European coal and steel community grew into political integration. But the approach rests on the European case, the Westphalian state persists and it remains Eurocentric.

The systems approach instead treats world politics as structure whose pattern shapes its units. Morton Kaplan modelled it through balance of power, bipolar, universal, hierarchical and unit-veto systems.

Hedley Bull dismissed it as an intellectual exercise & Robert Lieber doubted its testability.

Therefore, neither suffices alone. Both neglect power and agency & each needs perspectives that restore these to the study of world politics.