In the preceding chapter we have seen that Easton chooses "Systems Analysis" as his approach to political theory. This choice brings a conservative bias to his political science. Ever since its emergence in the social sciences, systems paradigm has been criticized for its maintenance bias. Critics have pointed out that this model is incapable of explaining social conflict and more particularly the processes of fundamental social change. A related issue has been that it assumes the existence of an equilibrating mechanism in the systems under study.¹ These criticism are invited by the very idea of "System", all systems do have boundaries. These boundaries separate them from their environments. The concept of system implies that it tends to maintain itself through various processes whenever it is disturbed, either from within or without its boundaries. The question of maintenance, therefore, occupies an important position in all systems analysis. An analysis of Easton's approach would reveal that in his analysis there are two different

approaches to the question of maintenance — one concerns itself with maintenance as such, the other aims at understanding how political systems manage to persist through change.

Concern for maintenance:

In an essay published in 1957, Easton makes his first attempt to develop a framework for the study of political systems. In this essay, he defines political life as a system of political actions. He holds that what enables the system to maintain itself are the inputs of various kinds to quote Easton:

> These inputs are converted by the process of the system into outputs and those, in turn, have consequences both for the system and for the environment in which the system exists. The formula here is very simple but as I hope to show also very illuminating. Inputs-Political Systems or processes-outputs,3 (Emphasis added)

It is clear that in this formula the political system is viewed as the "Processes" that convert inputs into outputs. Easton's systems analysis aims at finding out how these processes maintain themselves. In other words, his analysis seeks to find out how the system maintains itself. Easton sets this as one of the objectives of his analysis. While discussing inputs, Easton says that a political system must have continuing inputs to

3. Ibid., p. 6
The specific research task in this connection would be to identify the inputs and the forces that shape and change them, to trace the processes through which they are transformed into outputs, to describe the general conditions under which such processes can be maintained, and to establish the relationship between outputs and succeeding inputs of the system (emphasis added).

If the political system comprises these processes and if Easton is interested in finding out "the general conditions under which such processes can be maintained," then he is interested in finding the general conditions under which the political system maintains itself. This does give a maintenance bias to his framework. It could, of course, be argued on Easton's behalf that his analysis aims at finding out only how these processes maintain themselves in general irrespective of the maintenance or non-maintenance of a particular political process. Therefore, it is possible for him to claim that his framework does not aim at inquiring into the conditions of maintenance of a particular process or system. But if we examine his comments about integration of political systems, it becomes crystal clear that his concern for the maintenance of these processes amounts to a concern for maintenance of determinate political systems. Easton is of the opinion that because of the structural differentiations present in political

4. Ibid., p. 8
systems some amount of integration is necessary for each system. He hypothesizes, "if a structured system is to maintain itself, it must provide mechanisms whereby its members are integrated or induced to co-operate in some minimal level so that they can make authoritative decisions" (emphasis added).

The phrase 'structured system' can't refer to the processes is general. It can refer only to a particular process with its own structures. Therefore, structured system here would mean a determinate system only. These comments must, then, be read to mean that, political systems do provide mechanisms through which such integration is made possible and that the processes of integration help the systems to maintain themselves. Such an approach can't view the political system as one that can undergo changes.

In this essay Easton's discussion of support as a kind of inputs also reflects his concern for system maintenance. He identifies two kinds of basic inputs of political systems. They are demands and supports. In the preceding chapter we have discussed these inputs and their role in Easton's frame-work. Here the only point that concerns us is Easton's views about support as a mechanism of system maintenance. For him support constitutes either of overt actions or orientations or states of mind. This supportive state of mind is a deep seated set of

5. Ibid., p. 9
attitudes or pre-dispositions which helps the system to maintain itself. He writes, "supportive states of mind are vital inputs for the operation and maintenance of a political system" (emphasis added). Easton then goes on to assert that it is necessary to identify that typical mechanisms through which supportive attitudes are inculcated and continuously reinforced within a political system. Identification of such mechanisms would, of course, help the system to maintain itself.

We have already noted that in Easton's framework the political system converts inputs into outputs. These outputs act as inducement for supportive attitudes. To quote Easton, "outputs consisting of political decisions, constitute a body of specific inducements for the members of a system to support that system." But he is also aware that the level of support is not always dependent exclusively upon the outputs. If we assume that the outputs are the sole determinants of the level of support then, as Easton says, "we could scarcely account for the maintenance of the numerous political systems in which satisfaction of demands has been manifestly low, in which public coercion is limited and yet which have endured for epochs." Here again Easton's concern for the maintenance of political systems is evident; but what is more important is

7. Ibid., p. 12
8. Ibid., loc cit.
9. Ibid., p. 15
10. Ibid., p. 16
that he is suggesting the existence or some other means besides outputs through which systems build up mechanisms for self-maintenance.

Easton suggests that even when the political systems fail to produce outputs which can maintain the necessary level of supports they may be able to maintain themselves through, what he calls, ' politicization' or socialization. This term is defined as the process through which members of the society lean political patterns. He says, "through it a person learns to play his political roles which include the absorption of the proper political attitudes." These political attitudes on the other hand are viewed as generating and accumulating a strong reserve of support. He perceives politicization as the process through which attachments to a political system becomes built in to the maturing members of a society. He suggests that these attachments enable the system to acquire legitimacy. A system, Easton believes, is accepted as legitimate only when the basic political attachments become deeply rooted or institutionalized. Legitimacy contributes to the maintenance of the system. The following quotation makes the point clear:

... it is an empirical observation that in those instances where political systems have survived the longest support has been mobilised by an organised belief in the legitimacy of the relevant government and regimes.

11. Ibid., p. 17
12. Ibid., p. 18
Though this is an empirical observation and not a normative concern for maintenance, this observation becomes relevant to his framework only in the context of his over all concern for maintenance. If the focus is on "legitimacy of the relevant governments and regimes" then the concern is definitely for determinate political systems. When a system builds up legitimacy for a particular government or a particular regime it actually builds up legitimacy for that particular system. It is implied in Easton's argument that lack of legitimacy for government and regime would mean lack of legitimacy for the system itself. If legitimacy helps in maintenance of systems; it helps determinate systems only.

Easton suggests that it is necessary to understand the role of legitimacy for an understanding of the political life. He also suggests the kind of questions that could be investigated in this connection. A study of legitimacy in these lines, Easton seems to believe, will serve a particular purpose. He says:

"Answer to questions concerning the formation, maintenance, transmission and change of the standard of legitimacy will contribute generally to an understanding of the way in which support is sufficiently institutionalized so that a system may regularly and without excessive expenditure of effort, transform inputs of demands into outputs of decisions."\(^\text{13}\)

Since this conversion process is the political system itself, by studying legitimacy in this manner we shall be able to

\(^{13}\) Ibid., p. 18
understand how systems manage to maintain themselves.

The crucial question that he asks about the support to systems also indicates that he is interested in finding out how systems maintains themselves. Easton holds that support is necessary for system maintenance. He asks "how do systems typically manage to maintain a steady flow of support?" He then comments that without support a system will not absorb sufficient energy from its members to be able to convert demands into decisions. If support enables the systems to maintain themselves and if Easton's analysis aims at finding out how a steady flow of support is maintained then his analysis is concerned with the maintenance of political systems. An enquiry into how political systems maintain themselves may not have any normative bias. It could be argued that such an inquiry may in fact help in finding out how to change them. But such a concern with maintenance in a framework assumes that if the inputs keep on coming and right out puts are produced a system will continue to maintain itself. Maintenance then is viewed as the normal state; change is viewed as an aberration only. As Allen says, "The conceptual approach which assumes reality as basically static provides the framework for theoretical explanations which explains and justify the status-quo."
Role of Consensus:

We have seen that Easton defines support as a state of mind. He also believes that politicization leads to absorption of proper political attitudes. These ideas bring an element of consensus to his framework. A state of mind could not be imposed nor can absorption of proper political attitudes effected by force. Unless members of a system accept a particular set of values creation of a particular state of mind or absorption of proper attitudes are not possible. From this point of view a political system needs to be positively accepted by members.

Easton's treatment of the three objects of support makes this point further clear. According to Easton, support is fed into the political system in relation to three objects — the community, the regime, and the government. We have discussed these in the preceding chapter. Here we are concerned only with the role that consensus plays in the functioning of these objects.

In his discussion of these objects Easton takes up the political community first. He says, "no political system can continue to operate unless its members are willing to support the existence of a group that seeks to settle differences or promote decisions through peaceful action in common" (emphasis added).

This phenomenon is referred to as the political community. If it is assumed that the members of the political systems need to support such a group willingly, then it follows that there must be some consensus about it. Easton speaks of the willingness of the people, and willingness cannot be created by force.

The second object of support, Regime, is also viewed as based on a consensus. A regime in the Eastonian sense is consisted of all those arrangements that regulate the way in which demands put into the system are settled and the way in which decisions are put into effect. Easton says:

"They (These arrangements) are the so called rules of the game, in the light of which actions by members of the system are legitimated and accepted by the bulk of the members as authoritative. Unless there is a minimum convergence of attitudes in support of these fundamental rules, the constitutional principles, as we call them in Western society, there would be insufficient harmony in the actions of the members of a system to meet the problems generated by their support of a political community."16 (emphasis added)

If there is to be a convergence of attitudes and harmony of actions among the members there has to be a consensus. Easton admits this in the very next paragraph where he deals with the third object of support. The third object of support is the government.

"If a political system is going to be able to handle the conflicting demands put into it, not only must the members of the system be prepared to support the settlement of

16. Ibid., p. 13
these conflicts in common and possess some consensus with regards to the rules governing the mode of settlement; they must also be ready to support a government as it undertakes the concrete tasks involved in negotiating the settlements. Regimes, therefore, are to be based on consensus. He, of course, does not suggest that governments rule only by consensus. They may elicit support in many ways. They may persuade, acquire consent, or manipulate support. "But", he says, "it is a familiar axiom of political science that government based upon force alone is not long for this world; it must buttress its position by inducing a favourable state of mind in its subjects through fair or foul means." As we have argued above a state of mind cannot be imposed; it has to evolve. An approach that assumes that a government can continue for any length of time only if it can create such a state of mind implies that all continuing governments are run on the basis of such a consensus.

It is thus clear that in Easton's view supports for the political community, the regime and the government in any lasting political system are based on some consensus about these three objects of support. He further, argues that supports for these three objects are not independent of each other. They are closely intertwined. He is of the opinion that the presence of one is a function of the presence of one or both of the other.

17. Ibid., p. 13.
18. Loc cit.
types. In this sense they are indivisible. If supports for these three objects are intertwined and they are based on a consensus about each one of them, then it logically follows that the survival of the political system is also based on a consensus.

**Role of Equilibrium:**

Like consensus equilibrium too plays an important role in Easton's 1957 framework. It assumes that there is an equilibrating mechanism in every political system. Easton is aware that the members of the political systems may be engaged in both supportive and hostile behaviour; but he is interested in finding out the net balance of support.\(^{19}\) He also affirms that the input and the output balance is a vital mechanism in the life of a political system.\(^{20}\) If the life of the system is dependent on such a balance it would imply that equilibrium plays an important role in the political system.

Moreover, Easton views the political system as an open system and such systems as, we shall see, entails the idea of equilibrium. He says, "to distinguish a political system from other social systems, we must be able to identify it by describing its fundamental units and establishing the boundaries that demarcate it from units outside the system."\(^{21}\) It is not

19. Ibid., pp. 14-15
20. Ibid., p. 16
21. Ibid., p. 7
only that he sees the necessity of identifying these boundaries but he also considers the system as open to the influences from outside the boundary. He maintains, "the way in which a system works will be in part a function of its response to the total social, biological and physical environment." If the system is one which responds to the influence of the environment it must be an open system. Ken Menzies says, "an open system is boundary maintaining." An open and boundary maintaining system will necessarily have processes which will result in some features that serve to separate the system from its environment. Such features are the equilibria of the system.

Since Easton views the political systems as an open system, equilibrium necessarily plays an important role in his framework. The processes which enables the political system to make authoritative decisions, put together, are the features that serve to separate the system from its environment. This also is the point of equilibrium. So long as this equilibrium exists the authoritative decisions are possible. The decisions and the processes related to them are the features that separate the political system from its environment.

Handerson defines equilibrium as "a state such that if a small modification different from that which will otherwise

22. Loc cit.
24. Ibid., p. 125
occur is impressed upon a system, a reaction will at once appear, tending towards conditions that would have existed if the modification had not been impressed.\textsuperscript{25} Nagel also defines equilibrium point in similar terms.\textsuperscript{26} If an equilibrium exists there will also be forces that tend to recreate the equilibrium if it is disturbed. This idea is clearly evident in Somerhoff's treatment of the "directive correlation". He explains directive correlation in terms of a system's capacity to respond to a range of possible variations in the environment so that the system attains a focal condition.\textsuperscript{27}

Easton's political system as we have noted above is also viewed as a responsive system. It is capable of responding to a range of variations in the environment. Easton says, "much of what happen within a system has its birth in the efforts of the members of the system to cope with the changing environment."\textsuperscript{28}


\textsuperscript{28} Easton, "An Approach to the Study of Political System", op. cit., p. 8.
Here Easton uses the analogy of the biological system to explain his point:

In part, of course, the way in which the body works represents responses to needs that are generated by the very organization of its anatomy and functions; but in larger part, in order to understand both the structure and the working of the body, we must also be very sensitive to the inputs from the environments.29

In the biological system the concept of homeostasis plays an important role. It is assumed that there are a variety of mechanism to maintain fixed levels of blood-sugar, blood protein, fat and calcium as well as adequate supplies of oxygen, a constant body temperature. As Canon shows these mechanisms produce and restore homeostasis.30 Easton's view endows this tendency to the political system. All mechanism of support and integration in fact are supposed to produce this kind of a homeostasis, a steady state or an equilibrium.

The Shift:

It is clear from the above discussion that the concern for inquiry into the conditions of system maintenance, the role of consensus in his treatment of the objects of support and support in general, and the idea of a boundary maintaining open system which brings in the notion of equilibrium or homeostasis

29. Ibid., p. 8
give a maintenance bias to Easton's 1957 model for systems analysis. His approach, however, underwent a change during the eight intervening years after which, in 1965, he published two major books. 31

In these two books he emphasizes that his framework is not concerned with the system "Maintenance". He repeatedly asserts that systems analysis concerns itself with the question of system persistence and not system maintenance. He states in clear cut terms that there is a distinction between system persistence and system maintenance. He writes, "It is one matter to inquire into the conditions through which a system is able to maintain itself and quite another to seek to reveal the conditions of persistence." 32

We have noted that in his 1957 essay he considers inquiry into the conditions of maintenance of political systems to be the main task of research. In 1965 he sets a different objective for systems analysis. The central question he is concerned with now, is —- "regardless of time or place, what makes it possible for a system to assure the perpetuation of any means through which values may be authoritatively allocated, that is to permit the system to persist?" 33 In 1957 he was

31. Easton; A Frame-work of Political Analysis, op. cit.
   A Systems Analysis of Political Life, op. cit.
32. Easton, A Frame-work of Political Analysis, op. cit., p. 88
33. Ibid., p. 78
concerned with maintenance of the structured system; but in 1966 he does not consider particular structures and patterns any more important. Now he considers the life processes of political system more important. He holds that the important question that must be inquired into is how these processes manage to persist. 34 Persistence is considered to be a much broader concept than maintenance: "The idea of persistence extends far beyond that of systems maintenance; it is oriented towards exploring change as well as stability both of which may be interpreted as alternative avenues for coping with stress". 35 Persistence thus allows for the possibility of the continuance of a system through change, whereas the concept of maintenance is devoid of any such possibility.

This point is further stressed by Easton in his: A Systems Analysis of Political Life:

"The perspectives of a systems analysis of political life impels us to address ourselves to the following kind of questions: How can any political system ever persist whether the world be one of stability or of change." 36

The shift in his position regarding the main task of systems analysis is thus clear. He, of course, does not say it in so many words that his approach has undergone a change. However, the relevant question that arises is — why has Easton

34. Ibid., p. 83
35. Loc cit.
found it necessary to change his position? The theoretical reason for his preference for persistence as against maintenance is clear. This could be stated in just one sentence. Persistence is a term that can accommodate the idea of change, while maintenance cannot. If systems analysis aims at enquiring into the conditions of maintenance of political systems that will give it a static bias. Such a framework will fail to deal with change. Therefore, it is necessary to use a broader term. Thus, theoretically it is the necessity of accommodating the idea of change which makes Easton opt for persistence and shun maintenance.

To understand how Easton came to realize this problem we must look at what was happening in a sister discipline during the late 1950's. Systems approach was introduced in sociology much before its emergence in political science. The term system had been used by Spencer himself. It occupied a central position in Pareto's sociology.37 Pitirim A. Sorokin also advocated the idea of a systemic sociology.38 But it was Talcott Parsons who placed system in a seat of honour. He published his famous book, The Social System39 in 1951. This book was an attempt at developing a systems theory of society.

But before, 'system' could establish itself firmly in the discipline it came under fire. A number of critics pointed out its conservative bias. It has been argued that systems theory in sociology aimed at providing a justification for the status-quo. They argued that it was observed with the idea of maintenance and failed to deal with change. That emphasis on consensus and equilibrium gave it a static bias. During the fifties most of these criticism came from the European scholars and only with the publication of Barrington Moore and C. Whig Mills' books in the late fifties that the American sociology itself was enjoined.

Easton's first model appeared in 1957 and the critiques of systems analysis in sociology by Moore and Mills appeared in 1958 and 1959 respectively. Though Easton does not refer to any of these critics of systems analysis in sociology and seems to be blissfully unaware of these developments his new approach

Barrington Moore, Political Power And Social Theory (Havard University Press, Cambridge Mass. 1968)

must be understood in this background only. Easton's framework itself was not directly attacked; but Easton's incisive mind must have seen implicit in this attack, a criticism of his framework too. This may have been the reason why in the later books he takes to distinguish between maintenance and persistence. Philip Converse while reviewing Easton's *A Frame Work of Political Analysis* says that by opting for a broad concept of persistence Easton has successfully outflanked the critics of systems theory. Converse, however, does not point out that Easton's approach has undergone a change.

In 1965 Easton consciously attempts to save his framework from the stigma of stability bias. He tries to do this by replacing the term maintenance with persistence. He writes:

> Maintenance is too heavily charged with the idea of stability and, as normally used, quite alien to the idea of change. Hence, systems analysis delves into a theory that explains the capacities of a system to persist, not to maintain itself as this would be normally understood. It seeks a theory of persistence, not of self-maintenance or equilibrium.

This statement does not leave any scope for doubt that he is trying to respond to the line of criticism mentioned above. This, indeed, is an attempt to save his framework from a static bias. Whether he succeeds in doing so is a question which needs some discussion we shall turn to that question presently.

42. Philip, Converse, op. cit.
43. Easton, *A Frame Work of Political Analysis*, op. cit., p. 88
Persistence of Status-quo bias:

In the books published in 1965, Easton displays an awareness of the fact that there is a danger of systems analysis becoming status-quo bias. He attempts to avoid such a bias by focusing on the question of persistence instead of maintenance. But a mere change in terminology can not transform an essentially static analysis into a dynamic one. That is why even in 1965 volumes his framework remains static. Attempts at accommodating change by broadening the concept of persistence results merely, as we have noted in the preceding chapter, in swallowing all changes by 'system persistence'.

The question of system persistence, in the Eastonian sense, is the question of persistence of the life processes of systems. He writes, "Systems analysis is designed to clarify the consequences pertaining to the continued survival of some form of political life" (emphasised added). This of course implies that this kind of analysis is not concerned with the maintenance of determinate political systems and in that sense is not static in character. But despite this assertion this framework betrays a concern for maintenance of the systems under study. Moreover, the roles of consensus and equilibrium remains almost the same in this model also.

44. Ibid., p. 89. In an interview with the present author Easton reiterates this position. See, Appendix.
As in 1957 in 1965 also Easton views the political system as an open and responding system. He claims that the peculiar characteristic that political systems share with other social systems, and even some mechanical and biological ones, is that they are not necessarily defenseless in the face of disturbances to which they may be subjected. Easton proposes to begin "by viewing political life as a system of behaviour imbeded in an environment to the influences of which the political system itself is exposed and in turn reacts". Therefore, there is no scope for doubt about Easton's idea of a political system. It is an open boundary maintaining system, with a capacity to respond to stress.

As we have seen in our discussion of his 1957 model an approach that views the system as an open and responsive system can't do without the idea of equilibrium. Easton's treatment of support as an input also reveals that there is an element of homeostasis in his model. Support is considered a major index of stress; a fall in support would mean an increase in stress. "Where such support threatens to fall below a minimal level, regardless of the causes the system might either provide mechanism to revive flagging support or its days will be numbered." This is in tune with his view of the political

45. Ibid., p. 77
47. Easton, *A Frame-work of Political Analysis*, op.cit., p.124
system as a responding and persisting system. If a political system needs such a mechanism to survive, all surviving systems must possess such a mechanism. This argument implies that if there is a fall in support there will be a tendency in the system to find alternative sources of support. The level of support which enables the system to persist is the point of equilibrium.

The equilibrium perspective is reflected in the idea of the "critical range" also. The allocation of values for a society and the relative frequency of compliance with them are the essential variables of political life. "Stress will be said to occur when there is a danger that the essential variables will be pushed beyond what we may designate as their Critical Range."48 (emphasis in original). If a system is to persist, it must keep these variables within this critical range. Easton's responding political system will take steps to prevent such an event from occurring. The system may try to do this by mobilizing support for the objects of support, regulating demands, politicizing members or making changes in one or more of the objects of support. Such changes are aimed at enabling the system to persist "... every persisting system has homeostasis devices to help it cope with stress."49 What Bottomore says of the systems theory in sociology is true of Easton's systems analysis also.

49. Easton, A Framework of Political Analysis, op. cit., p. 95.
The essential idea upon which it rests is that every society should be conceived as a system in equilibrium; and that any disturbance of this equilibrium, if it occurs at all, should be seen as providing a responsive adaptation, so that equilibrium is restored and the society maintained in the original, or a slightly modified form.50

It is clear from our discussion above that Easton also views the political system as such a responsive system based on an equilibrium.

An approach that views the political system in this manner tends to underplay the role of conflict in society. It emphasizes the role of group and cultural factors. Very often social order is explained in terms of group or interest satisfaction. As Barrington Moore puts it,

in equilibrium theory the key assumption is that any social system tends towards a state of rest in which the conflicts and strains among its component parts are reduced to a minimum.51

Continuance of any political system, in Easton's opinion, depends upon the flow of required support. We have noted in the preceding chapter that such support is oriented towards the three political objects. Easton's treatment of these objects shows that even in his 1965 work consensus plays a major role in his framework. He seems to believe that these objects and

their smooth functioning is dependent on a consensus about their nature. The role of conflict and coercion is thus shown as almost non-existent. Support to these objects, in this view, is not extracted from the members. Easton suggests that members of political systems support these objects because they feel that they should support them. "The total input of support for a particular object is a measure of the intensity of individual feelings and behaviour together with the number of individuals involved...." 52 Easton, of course, does not imply that active support of all the members, or at least of a majority, is always necessary for persistence of a system. He is aware that a system may persist even with a minority support, provided there is no strong active opposition. 53 But such an approach plays down the role of coercion in political system. This approach gives the impression that all existing political systems are there because they are by and large accepted on the basis of some consensus. It seems to ignore the fact that very often coercion plays a dominant role in making a large section acquiesce, in the sense that they grudgingly agree to the prevailing arrangement.

In an attempt to define political community as an object of support Easton writes:

In the first place, it contains the suggestion that a group of persons are for one reason or

52. Easton, A Systems Analysis of Political Life, op. cit. p.166
53. Ibid., p. 166
another joined together in a common political enterprise. If this idea were not implicit, there would be little reason for turning to the idea of a political community at all. Community suggests cooperation of some sort. In the second place, it also implies that the way in which the common enterprise is conducted may vary with respect to the degree of cohesion or sense of community the members feel. A community is usually something more than just an aggregate. It is a group that may be bound by the subtleties of sentiment (emphasis added).

Here, the first implied notion, that is the common political enterprise is called by Easton "The Political community". The second, he calls "the sense of community". While the first needs only "cooperation of some sort", the second needs "cohesion". He views the sense of community only as a possible characteristic not an essential one. This would imply that what is necessary for the persistence of political system is cooperation of some sort, not cohesion or sense of community. This would make it appear as if Easton does not stress the need for consensus. "Cooperation of some sort" is possible even without a consensus; but "cohesion" and sense of community can develop only on the basis of a consensus. However, we need only to move a few pages ahead to find Easton emphasizing the importance of "sense of community". He says, "But if a sense of community fails to emerge and deepen over time, as a source of support, it may leave a system extremely vulnerable to stress". He cites the case of the Austro-Hungarian empire.

54. Ibid., p. 177
55. Ibid., p. 187
as an example where coercion and material reward kept the system going; but in the long run, the input of support was insufficient to hold the community together as an unified political system when it came under stress of military defeat. 56

The implication clearly is that if a system is to persist for any length of time, there must be a sense of community among its members. This is only one step short of saying that all persisting systems do have a sense of community. A sense of community, of course cannot be the result of unresolvable conflicts. The community cannot be coerced to develop such a sense. A feeling of solidarity resulting in political cooperation is possible only if the community has some consensus about the political division of labour. This mode of analysis creates the impression that a consensus regarding ends and means is the basis of a political community.

Easton's discussion of the second object of support also reveals the consensual element, Regime, as we have noted above in these pages, consisted of the rules of the game. Easton argues that every regime consists, in part, of a broadly defined underlying set of political values and principles, articulated or implicit, which impose constraints on the purpose for which the energies and the responses of the system may be committed. He asks "could a system persist without some minimal agreement or at least acquiescence, among the politically relevant members.

56. Loc cit.
about the broad values within the context of which outputs would be acceptable?" Though Easton uses the words "some minimal agreement or at least acquiescence," this must not lead us to believe that he views even acquiescence to the regime as sufficient for persistence of political systems. Because as we shall see presently he does not do so. He goes on to explain that we cannot expect to find an universal agreement about values and goals. He says,

> It seems reasonable to assume that systems will vary with respect to the degree of value consensus they display and level of generality at which it appears and that the group whose values do dominate, will also vary from a minority to a much larger number (emphasis added).

If Easton holds that systems may vary with respect to value consensus then he is obviously implying that some consensus is necessary. He only points out the possibility of variety of value consensus. In another passage he says:

> In general, the very nomenclature used to classify systems democratic, communist, authoritarian, traditional and transitional, modernizing, autocratic and the like—high lights differences in value premise of such systems.

Value premises of various types of systems may vary but the thrust of the argument remains that in each determinate political system there must be some value consensus on which

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57. Ibid., p. 195
58. Ibid., p. 198
59. Ibid., p. 195
the regime is based.

The third object of political support was called the government in 1957. Now, he calls it the authorities:

   Every system, we know, must be prepared to support some members who will be ready, willing, and able to pay some degree of special attention to seeing to it that differences are settled or handled in some way that is acceptable to the politically relevant at least.®0

The members of a system must provide enough support for these authorities; otherwise the system will fail to persist. But if the differences are settled in some way "that is acceptable to the politically relevant at least", then in all societies a large number of people who are politically not relevant will not willingly support the system. The system will have to resort to coercion to extract support from this section. Easton, however refuses to see this implication of his own argument. He argues that if the authorities impose themselves on the members it might work for a while but in the long run the support for the authorities must be based on the confidence of the members:

   If the members lose their confidence in the ability of any authorities at all to cope with the problems of the day, the effect on support to other levels of the system may be serious at least for the persistence of that kind of system.®1

(emphasis added)

60. Ibid., p. 216
61. Ibid., loc cit.
Confidence is a state of mind. It refers to a firm trust or belief. Such a trust or belief cannot be developed under coercion. It must come from within. Only if there is some consensus about the authorities and their mode of operation among the members of a system, will they have such a confidence.

Easton's analysis of the mechanism of support towards these three objects of support and the attitude of members towards them reveals the important role that consensus plays in his model. This role of consensus has far reaching consequences for his framework. A social reality may be viewed as one perceived by consensus or one ridden with contradictions as Allen says:

There is a qualitative difference between perceiving reality as consisting of systems pervaded by consensus with given structures capable of experiencing only limited changes in their superstructure, on the one hand and perceiving it as an interrelating entity, beset with contradictions which are capable of transforming it.62

A system which is based on consensus can neither have contradiction which could lead to qualitative changes nor can it allow possibility of confronting uncontrollable pressures for such changes from outside sources. To quote Allen again "such systems belong to the fantasy world of those who would like to put present structure in cotton wool and preserve them

for ever." This is not to suggest that there is no shared belief; there are. But they comprise a totality which possesses its own contradictions. There are attempts by social scientists at building, what is very often called, a conflict model of society as opposed to the consensus model. But these attempts define and analyse conflict in a manner as to prevent social scientists from viewing conflict as capable of altering structures. They do not view conflict as a permanent feature of the social reality. Why social reality must be viewed as beset with contradictions and how such a view is capable of perceiving social reality as a changing phenomenon is an entirely different question and is beyond the scope of this work. The point here is that a consensus view of the society has a static bias in the sense that it assumes that there is a consensus about the prevailing structures and therefore a qualitative change is not only not imminent, but is unnecessary. The consensual framework stresses a common obeisance by the general populace to values crucial to the society, acceptance of the basic legitimacy of existing structural forms, and suggests—while recognizing some differences and conflicts within society—the compatibility and reconciliability of differences rather

63. Ibid., p. 40
than the possibility of non-compatible non-resolvable difference.\textsuperscript{66} We can, therefore, conclude that despite his efforts to accommodate change and to remove the static bias from his frame-work by replacing the concept of system maintenance by system persistence, Easton's frame work remains static. That is the predicament of a systems analyst — however much he may try to accommodate change his framework in the ultimate analysis remains status-quoist.