• Questions?

Ah, the first day teaching Natural Selection is always the best day.

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What do you think Buzan and Little’s central argument or point is?
• Overview

  • Two main problems with mainstream theoretical conceptions
    • Closely tied to the Westphalian state system.
    • Distinctions between past and present minimized.

  • Three premises of the book
    • No existing approach explains the emergence of international systems
    • Theoretical understanding has been retarded by our lack of historical analysis
    • International system is the most effective unit for developing world history as well as advancing macro-analysis of social reality
• Overview

• Three major historical systemic turning points
  • 40,000 years ago: hunter-gatherers begin to engage in long distance exchange
  • 5,500 years ago: first state-like units begin to emerge and interact.
  • 500 years ago: emergence of modern sovereign state

• Does this present a problem for IR theory?
• Overview
  • How (or can) we think about the Soviet Union or Imperial Rome as international systems?
  • Neorealism: shift from hierarchy to anarchy that marks the most profound political change in world history
  • Buzan and Little: Change in the structure of the dominant units that represents the most fundamental transformation in international systems
Peer discussion

Buzan and Little have five critiques of modern IR theory. What are they and what do they mean?
• Chapter 1
  • What sort of interaction defines the international system?
  • Why has the nature of the international system gone unexamined in IR?
    • Presentism
    • Ahistoricism
    • Eurocentrism
    • Anarchophilia
    • State-centrism
  • What is the source of these characteristics?
• English School
  • English School plays an important role in the thinking of Buzan and Little
    • States form a society amongst themselves. This, combined with the structure of the international system, is the ‘states-system’
    • The complexity of the system depends on the complexity of the society.
      • States-system is temporally contingent: Different times will have different states-systems
      • Why? Different times have different international societies with different cultural underpinnings.
• English School
  • English School split into two primary camps
    • Pluralists
    • Solidarists
  • Like Wendt (constructivists), the English School recognizes three international societies
    • Realist
    • Rationalist
    • Revolutionist
• What is at stake?
  • Wallerstein: the great weakness of the social sciences is that they all operate on the basis of closed systems.
    • Why is this?
  • According to the authors, what is the significance of the concept ‘international system’?
Chapter 2

Three approaches to the system in IR
  - Behavioural
  - Neorealists
  - Constructivist

Buzan and Little alternative: Methodological pluralism
1. Explain Newton's First Law of Motion in your own words