

The Big Picture as an approach to the study of International Relations: Thinking with and beyond Barry Buzan

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Barry Buzan has had an impressive career, spanning more than five decades. He has made numerous contributions to a wide-ranging list of subjects within the International Relations (IR) discipline, and has also been a vocal supporter of building bridges to cognate disciplines. This panel features draft versions of contributions to a book (under contract with CUP) honouring Buzan's work by critically examining his ubiquitous focus on the big picture. In almost all of his work, Buzan adopts an approach that zooms out to the grand and holistic vista.

Buzan's big picture approach does not seem to lay claim to grand theory or universalism of either scope or explanation. Moreover, Buzan's approach does not appear to bind researchers to a specific epistemological or ontological outlook. The 'big picture' label captures Buzan's interest in developing analytical frameworks that render big and hugely complex issues easily accessible. It necessarily includes the building of bridges between distinct subfields (for example, between IPE, IR, security studies, area studies, sociology and so on) as well as between different theoretical approaches (realism, constructivism, liberalism, etc.). But can it be replicated by others? Is it useful? And what are its limitations?

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