



A Cultural Theory of International Relations

By Richard Ned Lebow

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A Cultural Theory of International Relations By Richard Ned Lebow

In this volume, Richard Ned Lebow introduces his own constructivist theory of political order and international relations based on theories of motives and identity formation drawn from the ancient Greeks. His theory stresses the human need for self-esteem, and shows how it influences political behavior at every level of social aggregation. Lebow develops ideal-type worlds associated with four motives: appetite, spirit, reason and fear, and demonstrates how each generates a different logic concerning cooperation, conflict and risk-taking. Expanding and documenting the utility of his theory in a series of historical case studies, ranging from classical Greece to the war in Iraq, he presents a novel explanation for the rise of the state and the causes of war, and offers a reformulation of prospect theory. This is a novel theory of politics by one of the world's leading scholars of international relations.

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Editorial Review

Review

"In this successor volume to *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, Ned Lebow sets out an even more ambitious project, aiming to develop not just a new paradigm for the study of International Relations, but a new Grand Theory for the social sciences as a whole built on the classical Greek understanding of the psyche as composed of spirit, appetite and reason, and of behaviour as driven by fear, interests and, given special emphasis, the search for honour. This project involves historical studies ranging over two and a half millennia, and in depth readings of many great thinkers; I suspect few readers will follow Lebow all the way to the conclusions he draws, but I am quite certain that everyone will enjoy the ride - it would be impossible to read this tour de force without having one's horizons widened."

Chris Brown, International Relations Department, London School of Economics

"Ned Lebow's record of research and publication in IR is second to none. What distinguishes it most of all above the common herd are not just its range and sophistication but also that it is genuinely crosscultural. Entirely in the same spirit of virtue-ethical inquiry as his outstanding *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, Lebow here interrogates the vital underpinnings of human interstate relations from spirit-based Greek and Roman antiquity to the anxious, threat-based strategies of modernity from Hitler to Bush and beyond."

Paul Cartledge, Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge

"Drawing on ancient Greek thought and practice, Richard Ned Lebow has produced a book of great theoretical power and historical sweep. This is the sort of study that can only be done after years of thought and research, and it will be read for many years to come."

Robert Jervis, School of International and Public Affairs, Columbia University

"In this impressive follow up to *The Tragic Vision of Politics*, Ned Lebow continues and further elaborates his ground breaking fusion of Ancient Greek thought, historical imagination and contemporary social science to offer a rich and provocative theory that places culture at the centre of the explanation of international relations. Powerfully written, theoretically sophisticated and full of important historical and contemporary insights, this promises to be a major theoretical departure in the human sciences."

Nicholas Rengger, Professor of Political Theory and International Relations, University of St Andrews

"In this long and wide-ranging book, Richard Ned Lebow delivers a valuable contribution to the study of international relations and international history...It is an excellent book, serving many purposes...This is a book worth reading, and one whose impact will endure."

Ian Hurd, Northwestern University, Perspectives on Politics

"*A Cultural Theory* is the capstone of Lebow's unceasing commitment to restoring a dynamic and historical dimension of international relations and to reinstating values and motives to their proper place at the center of enquiry. It also is a milestone in the effort to transform constructivism into a genuinely theoretical enterprise."

Richard Mansbach, Iowa State University, H-Diplo/ISSF

About the Author

Richard Ned Lebow is James O. Freedman Presidential Professor of Government at Dartmouth College. He is the author of *The Tragic Vision of Politics* (Cambridge, 2003) which was the winner of the Alexander L. George Book Award of the International Society of Political Psychology, 2005.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Donald Howard:

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