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978-0-521-87136-5 - A Cultural Theory of International Relations

Richard Ned Lebow

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## A CULTURAL THEORY OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

In this exciting new 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.

RICHARD NED LEBOW is James O. Freedman Presidential Professor of Government at Dartmouth College and Centennial Professor of International Relations at the London School of Economics and Political Science. 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.

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To Carol, Kate, Andrew, Eli and David

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

In *The Tragic Vision of Politics* I attempt to develop a new ontology for social science that assumes change as the norm, and attempts to study and track it in terms of the series of compromises that actors make with respect to key and often conflicting values. I argue that these compromises are inherently unstable and that changes in any one of them can be dampened or amplified as they interact with other accommodations and work their way through the system. In this volume I build on this ontology to develop a theory of international relations embedded in a proto-theory or political order. In a follow-on volume I hope to develop a full-blown theory of political order drawing on the findings of this study and additional research.

If orders are unstable and constantly evolving, so are theories. My theory of international relations has been and remains a work in progress, although it has progressed far enough to warrant publication. I expect that feedback will push me to think further about my theory and to introduce changes in the course of writing the follow-on volume. My theory builds on works of social science, history, philosophy and literature and has compelled me to turn to colleagues for help in understanding relevant works and controversies in these several fields. Once again I have been struck by the interest and generosity of so many colleagues in different fields. Without their initial guidance and subsequent willingness to read and comment on drafts I could not have attempted, let alone completed, this project.

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I spent the spring of 2003 as a visiting research professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of California at Irvine, where I was able to read and think and share my thoughts with welcoming colleagues. They subsequently invited me back to give a talk about the book. For these opportunities I am particularly grateful to David Easton, Cecelia Lynch, Kristin Monroe, Mark Petracca, Sean Rosemberg, Wayne Sandholz, Kamal Siddiq, Etel Solingen and Katherine Tate. My former Cornell friend, colleague and role model, the late Robin Williams, was also in residence in Irvine during this period, and supportive of my project as he had been of earlier ones.

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