

Preface

Richard Ned Lebow may be the last of that generation of European refugees who left Europe to have an illustrious American career in political science.¹ Educated in the United States, he received a BA in political science from the University of Chicago in 1963, an MA in international relations from Yale in 1964 and a Ph.D. in political science from The City University of New York in 1968. As he once told me, “I’ve been paying in to TIAA-CREF [the nation-wide faculty pension fund] for almost 50 years!” Yet this preface should not be regarded as a eulogy. Indeed, Ned has published six authored or co-authored books in the last 4 years—years when he serenely sailed past his 70th birthday. It is a number that many people would consider ‘a career’ in itself.

Ned has taught at some of America’s more renowned universities: The City College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York, Cornell, Dartmouth, Ohio State and Pittsburgh. He now works in the War Studies Department of King’s College London, arguably the best department in its field, and is a fellow at Pembroke College, University of Cambridge—where he routinely enjoys the benefit of high table.

Then again, it is hard to define Ned’s ‘field,’ given that he has taught courses on political science, international relations, political psychology, political theory, and Greek literature and philosophy. Indeed, *after* his 70th birthday, he moved to King’s and developed new courses on the philosophy of science, scope and methods, and Greek conceptions of order and justice. His 19 scholarly authored or co-authored books, 12 edited books, and his more than two hundred author or co-author articles reflect that diversity of interests.

I will return to Ned’s astonishing list of accomplishments, and his broad and deep intellectual contribution. But to only discuss that in this preface would be one-dimensional. I am fortunate enough to have known Ned as a student, a colleague *and* subsequently as a co-author and friend. Working with him in all three

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dimensions has revealed aspects of his capabilities and personality not discernable from his long list of publications and professional accomplishments.

I could provide stories from all three realms. But my main point is illustrated by our very first encounter in 1984 when I entered the graduate program of the Government Department at Cornell University and I enrolled in a graduate seminar in International Relations co-taught by Ned and Lawrence Scheinman. Our first set of readings included Kenneth Waltz's magnum opus, *Theory of International Politics*. Ned began the class with a characteristic *tour de force* in which he swiftly articulated and then dismantled the central propositions of Waltz's book. He then prepared us to move on to the second reading. With what I can only explain in hindsight as a mixture of (great) naivety and (mild) arrogance, I raised my hand to interrupt Ned's steadily paced analysis. Ned gazed at me with mild incredulity as I suggested that Waltz's book deserved a more thorough interrogation. He responded that he respectfully disagreed, at which point I volunteered to "play the role of Ken Waltz for the remainder of the semester." Ned was clearly amused by my suggestion and gleefully accepted the offer of combat. And so our (albeit a very one-sided) joust began. At the conclusion of that first class, several students warned me that my offer amounted to professional suicide. Had not I heard of Lebow's ferocious reputation? My grade, they told me, would surely suffer. He would be merciless. I cannot possibly suggest that I knew better at the time. Of course, Ned enjoyed himself for the remainder of the semester, as he swatted away my vain attempts. But, in retrospect, what I did come to understand about him was his thirst for intellectual engagement—and his generosity. Predictably, perhaps, he awarded me the highest grade in the class at the end of the semester. Heaven knows if I deserved it.

Beyond the numeric benchmarks, Ned's work is remarkable as much for its breadth as its quality. Few have published with such frequency, to such high standards, with such repeated recognition and criticism, over the course of five decades. The hallmark of his first books and articles was an effort to bridge international relations, psychology, and history. His early work, most cogently represented by the publication of *White Britain and Black Ireland: The Nature of Colonial Stereotypes*, focused on developing a dissonance-based explanation for prejudice and stereotypes. In comparative application to the struggle for civil rights by African-Americans, this most different research design demonstrated how the 'distancing' of subjugated peoples provided a context for denying them broadly accepted entitlements.

His work in the 1980s and 1990s moved Ned into the mainstream debates within international relations. His focus remained on the underlying causes of conflict, albeit it with a characteristically subversive approach in developing prescriptions for its prevention and management. *Between Peace and War: The Nature of International Crisis*, published in 1981, used evidence from 26 crises between 1898 and 1967 to develop a conceptual and empirical critique of deterrence as a theory and strategy of conflict management. Leaders inevitably filtered information in a biased manner under domestic pressures, he argued, and derived unrealistic expectations as a result. Subsequently, *Psychology and Deterrence* (1984),

co-authored with Robert Jervis and Janice Gross Stein, in addition to a series of articles in the *Journal of Social Issues* and *World Politics* (1987–90) that were also co-authored with Janice, developed this line of reasoning both analytically and empirically, and with it a set of resulting coping strategies. The significance of the application of this work was such that Ned accepted a post serving as a scholar-in-residence in the Central Intelligence Agency in the Carter administration.

By 1994, he co-authored *We All Lost the Cold War*, again with Janice Gross Stein. The book reconstructs two Cold War crises (the Cuban Missile Crisis and the 1973 Middle Eastern War) from the perspective of multiple participants through a combination of previously classified but newly available American and Soviet documents and interviews with former officials from both sides. Drawing from cognitive and motivational psychology, the authors analyzed how political leaders collected and evaluated information, as well as the lessons they derived. One of the book's principal findings is that the desire to demonstrate resolve proved far less effective in mitigating crises than do reassurance strategies. The book, notably, was selected by *Choice* as one of the ten most important books published that year.

Ned's focus on utilizing cognitive and psychological theories to advance the understanding of conflict management was therefore fruitful and widely recognized. But even those major successes pale in comparison to the significance of Ned's work on questions of the importance of culture and ethics for foreign policy that characterized the first decade of this century. His *Tragic Vision of Politics*, published in 2003, re-examined the roots of classical realism through the work of Thucydides, Clausewitz, and Hans Morgenthau. In the book, Ned argues that interest and ethics are not only reconcilable with concepts outside the purview of contemporary structural realism, such as a conception of justice, but that their linkage is, in fact, essential. In this context, ambiguity and ambivalence are inevitable and, indeed, should be embraced. This propensity contrasts with the overt polarities expressed by the dominant strands of contemporary realism. Ned's fundamentalist approach was—returning to a now-familiar theme—subversive in terms of the dominant ontology. *Tragic Vision of Politics* was awarded the Alexander L. George Award for the best book in political psychology from the International Society of Political Psychology.

A Cultural Theory of International Relations followed 5 years later. This seminal book draws upon Plato and Aristotle's understandings of human motives and identity formation in linking constructivism to its intellectual roots. Ned develops ideal-type worlds associated with three motives—appetite, spirit, reason—and one emotion—fear—and demonstrates how each generates a different logic concerning cooperation, conflict, and risk-taking. The product is the formulation of a constructivist theory of international relations. Widespread recognition soon followed: *A Cultural Theory of International Relations* won two awards: the Paul Schroeder and Robert Jervis Award from the American Political Science Association for the best book in international relations and history and the Susan Strange Award of the British International Studies Association for the best book of the year.

In the last 5 years, Ned's work has branched out in several directions. Each has proven to be remarkably successful. The first track has been his work on

counterfactuals as a method of analysis. *Forbidden Fruit: Counterfactuals and International Relations*, published in 2010, uses counterfactual case studies of the origins of World War I and the end of the Cold War to explore non-linear causation and the role of contingency in international relations. Ned conducted surveys and experiments to study how foreign policy experts, historians and international relations scholars understand historical causation and the ways in which their beliefs influence and generally limit their understanding. Ned returned to the theme of counterfactuals four years later with the publication of his first, highly successful, mass-market book, a best seller entitled *Archduke Franz Ferdinand Lives!: A World Without World War I*. He argues that World War I was highly contingent and might have been avoided if Archduke Franz Ferdinand had not been assassinated. In defense of this claim, he constructs both best-case and worst-case accounts that might have resulted in its absence and illustrates them with alternative biographies of political and military leaders and prominent artists, scientists, sports figures and entertainers. Coinciding with the centennial of the outbreak of war, this work caught the imagination on both sides of the Atlantic. It became the basis for discussion and conjecture in the popular media. Indeed, it was the subject of a three-part series on National Public Radio in the United States.

In contrast, at least methodologically, Ned clearly developed some of the formulations first addressed in *A Cultural Theory* in his other book published in 2010, *Why Nations Fight: The Past and Future of War*. It is based on a data set of all wars from 1648 to the present that involved at least one great or rising power. He coded all 94 such cases to determine the initiator, their motive for war (appetite, honor, or fear) and the outcome. In some wars there was more than one motive or initiator. Yet, 62 % of wars were motivated by honor—they were fought to establish international ‘standing’ or for reasons of revenge. This finding obviously throws down an intellectual challenge to realist assumptions that wars are fought for material gain or enhanced security. Nonrational emotions play a far more important role, he argued, as initiators failed to conduct any reasonable assessment of the likely risks and costs of war—and miscalculated as a result.

By 2012, Ned returned to psychological themes—in this case of the ambivalence of personality, and its clash with our conception of ourselves as consistent. In *The Politics and Ethics of Identity*, he contended that the defining psychological feature of modernity is the tension between our reflective and social selves. To address this problem, he argued, Westerners have developed four generic strategies of identity construction that are associated with four distinct political orientations: conservatism, totalitarianism, liberalism, and anarchism. Yet our personal search for the features that distinguish us as unique is overtly in tension with these formulations. In contrast, he argues, the premise that there is such a thing as an identity is false. A jumble of self-identifications masks the fact that we are nothing at our core but raw appetites. Multiple affiliations and roles control and channel these appetites in ways that can be beneficial, but also constraining- for example we define people as members of ‘out groups,’ from whom we are distinct. Recognition, almost inevitably, followed: for a second time one of his books was awarded the Alexander L. George Award for best book of the year from the International Society

of Political Psychology. In *National Identifications and International Relations*, Ned extended his argument about identity to states and international society. He examined the complex relationship between identities and policies. States, Ned contended, also have multiple identities based on their roles, affiliations, bodies (people and territories), and pasts. In so doing, he critiqued the dominant constructivist approach to identity in international relations.

Most recently, 2014 proved to be a remarkable year—one in which Ned published three books. In addition to his *Archduke Franz Ferdinand Lives!*, a second—*Constructing Cause in International Relations*—extended his work on causation. In it, Ned developed a constructivist understanding of the concept, one in which he concludes that no formulation is logically defensible and universal in its coverage. In practice, causal inference is always rhetorical and must be judged on grounds of practicality. Thus, he developed the idea of “inefficient causation” that builds on general understandings and idiosyncratic features of context.

The final component of this triumvirate is *Good-Bye Hegemony! Power and Influence in the Global System*, which Ned and I co-authored together. Clearly, it is this book about which I can speak with the greatest authority. *Good-bye Hegemony!* entailed a critique of the manner by which liberals and realists continue to dominate a debate about America’s supposed hegemonic role in the world. They do so largely without recognition or admission of the decline of both American social and material sources of influence. Ned’s contribution to this manuscript was incalculable. But this short list provides brief illustration of his intellectual acuity: an extended section on how Greek philosophers distinguished between notions of power and of influence; how this distinction relates to contemporary IR theory; a discussion of the application of the general concept of legitimacy in the social sciences and its application by constructivists; a section on how liberals and realists think about hegemony, power and influence in the current debates about US foreign policy; and another on the use of counterfactuals as a methodology in the field. Ned’s contribution in terms of the empirical dimensions of the manuscript is just as impressive. It includes a case study on North Korean nuclear proliferation; a counterfactual case study on Mexican–US drug policy; and a comparative assessment of US policy in Iraq and Libya. To this, I should add, he demonstrates his knowledge of cinema—by drawing analogies between our book and two famous old movies—*Goodbye Lenin* at the introduction and *Sunset Boulevard* in the conclusion.

In a discipline in which research agendas often narrow over the span of a career, Ned continues to expand his areas of enquiry, while sustaining a capacity for perceptive and influential commentary in a way that consistently, commandingly, and eloquently challenges convention. The pace of publication, the quality of the published work, and the critical reaction to his most recent work suggests that there is no sign that he is letting up at a point in his career, a juncture where most of his peers in their 70s have retired. Yet what is so striking to witness first-hand, as a co-author, is the seamless way he integrates these varied strands so easily and effectively.

Inevitably, no preface can do justice to the depth and sophistication of Ned's work—nor the accolades he has enjoyed as a result. I am precluded by time and space from discussing so much of his important and successful other work. His co-edited book with Toni Erskine *Tragedy and International Relations*, for example, won the *Choice* award for academic titles in 2013. His co-authored article with Benjamin Valentino, 'Lost in Transition: A Critique of Power Transition Theories,' that was published in the journal *International Relations* in 2009 is a powerful analytical and empirical rebuke to the central proposition of power transition theories. Long overdue, Ned received the Distinguished Scholar Award from the International Security Section of the International Studies Association in recognition of his work in 2014.

Yet, in surveying Ned's accomplishments, three observations are striking. The first is that his work has become increasingly sophisticated and nuanced over time, even as he has remained faithful to a Weberian approach that effectively undermines many the shibboleths of international relations. The second is the remarkable fact that the quantity of his work has—if possible—increased over time—without any sacrifice to quality. And yet, in what the laws of physics might conceive of as a paradox, he has managed to develop new thematic research programs on so many fronts in recent years—ones that stretch epistemologically, methodologically, and substantively. Several renowned scholars developed these three points in depth in the chapters that follow.

Yet I conclude with some personal observations. Ned remains as intellectually inquisitive and playful as when we first met in 1984. He has delighted in challenging the assumptions unquestioned by others, and in doing so has pushed forward the frontiers of several research programs. He has retained his sense of humanity and humility. None of us could ask for more.

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