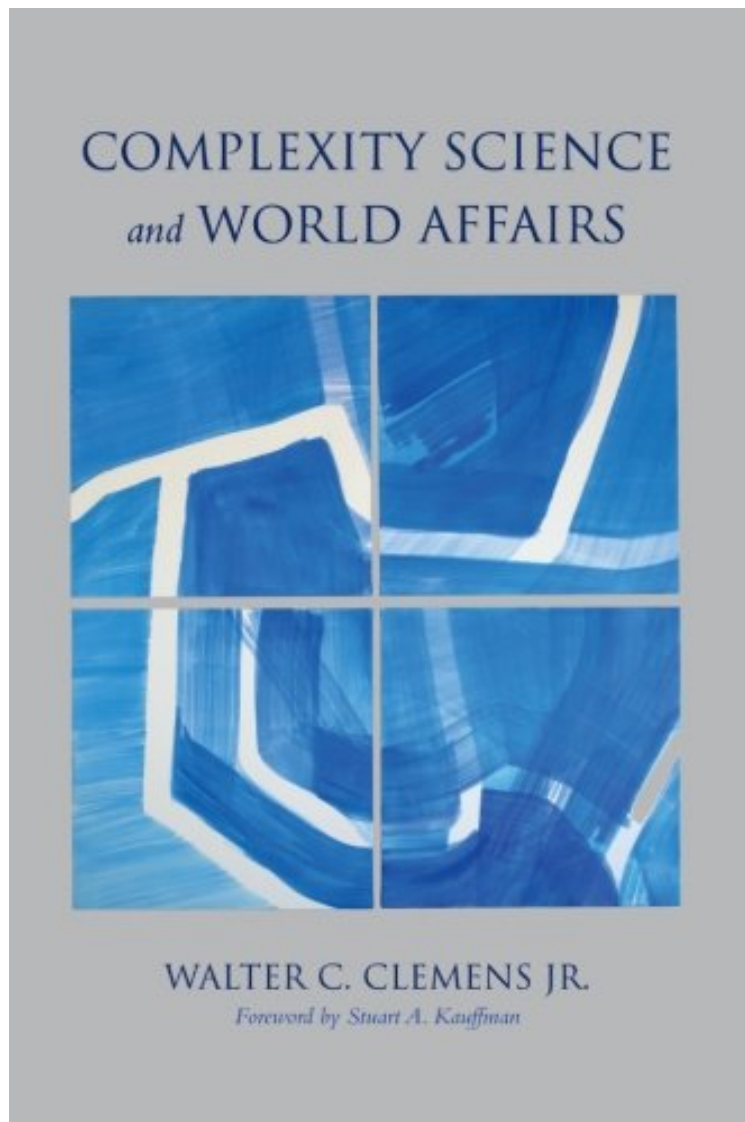


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Complexity Science and World Affairs (Sunny Series, James N. Rosenau Series in Global Politics)

Walter C. Clemens Jr.

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Walter C. Clemens Jr. : Complexity Science and World Affairs (Sunny Series, James N. Rosenau Series in Global Politics) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Complexity Science and World Affairs (Sunny Series, James N. Rosenau Series in Global Politics):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Nature's complexity and creativity leads the world.By F. Jan M.

Beijerinck Conform expectations. Stuart Kauffman's preface tells it all.

Applies complexity science to the study of international politics. Why did some countries transition peacefully from communist rule to political freedom and market economies, while others did not? Why did the United States enjoy a brief moment as the sole remaining superpower, and then lose power and influence across the board? What are the prospects for China, the main challenger to American hegemony? In *Complexity Science and World Affairs*, Walter C. Clemens Jr. demonstrates how the basic concepts of complexity science can broaden and deepen the insights gained by other approaches to the study of world affairs. He argues that societal fitness—the ability of a social system to cope with complex challenges and opportunities—hinges heavily on the values and way of life of each society, and serves to explain why some societies gain and others lose. Applying theory to several rich case studies, including political developments across post-Soviet Eurasia and the United States, Clemens shows that complexity science offers a powerful set of tools for advancing the study of international relations, comparative government, and, more broadly, the social sciences.

Clemens has written an outstanding book the culmination of a half century s experience in and analysis of world affairs [It is] bound to interest not only political and other social scientists but all thoughtful persons concerned with understanding and perhaps improving the human condition. from the Foreword by Stuart A. Kauffman Walter Clemens makes a much needed and rare discerning intervention into the study of world affairs. Political Studies an important contribution to theories of international relations with an effort to link concepts from the natural sciences to those of the social sciences. CHOICE This breakthrough book provides a new, promising general paradigm exploring and explaining the complexity of world politics. For scholars and analysts pushing the boundaries of our field, this is a must-read volume. Jacek Kugler, Claremont Graduate University Complexity can be overwhelming and complexity science can be daunting, and, yet, in Walter Clemens s skilled hands both become accessible, understandable, and useful tools for both scholars and practitioners. Once again, Clemens has shown that sophisticated academic theorizing only benefits from clarity, elegance, and wit. The book is ideal for graduate and undergraduate students as a supplementary text in international relations or comparative politics. Alexander Motyl, Rutgers University Newark Clemens offers a fresh, even startling, paradigm and process for analyzing the seemingly unpredictable relations within and among human societies. With impressive clarity he proposes that the capacity to cope with complexity has become a key determinant of success in our intricately interrelated world. Careful study of this capacity in specific contexts can lead to revealing analyses in comparative politics and international relations. A provocative and stimulating treatise! S. Frederick Starr, Johns Hopkins University Walt Clemens s provocative new book can be appreciated at several levels: as an analytical framework in international relations complexity science that offers a compelling alternative to realism and neoliberalism; as an incisive critique of the fitness of the supposedly most developed societies to deal with our complex world; and as a humanistic value-set that provides better standards for assessing governments than do GDP, trade levels, or military spending. Clemens skillfully integrates theory and practice to explore US hyperpower, the two Koreas, China, and other states from new angles, and with consistent objectivity. IR specialists should find this book exciting, while IR and international studies students will be challenged by the new paradigm it presents. Mel Gurtov, Portland State University Clemens proposes a powerful new way of looking at international relations and politics, and offers a productive method for assessing the fitness of societies in the early twenty-first century. Guntis midchens, University of Washington, Seattle You don t have to be a political scientist to wonder why some states succeed and others do not, why some societies flourish while others suffer stagnation and conflict. Employing the relatively new tool of complexity science, Walter Clemens evaluates the fitness of states and societies, i.e. their ability to cope with complex challenges and opportunities. He does so in a way that is erudite how many studies quote Walt Whitman and Karl Marx in the same chapter? yet clear and accessible. Clemens challenges both existing political science paradigms and policy perspectives. This is a stimulating, rich volume that can be read and re-read with profit and appreciation for its breadth and depth and most of all for its insistence that we see the world, and the states in it, in all their complexity. Ronald H. Linden, University of Pittsburgh""Clemens has written an outstanding book--the culmination of a half-century's experience in and analysis of world affairs ... [It is] bound to interest not only political and other social scientists but all thoughtful persons concerned with understanding and perhaps improving the human condition." -- from the Foreword by Stuart A. 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From the Author TO THE READER This book is about societal fitness--defined by complexity scientists as the ability to cope with complex challenges. The capacity to cope with complexity, this book argues, hinges heavily on culture--the values and way of life of each society. These values, in turn, arise from the heritage of a broad civilization such as Western Christianity or Islam. To be sure, many other factors shape fitness--including the role of individuals both inside and outside of government. But some cultures give rise to outstanding individuals while others suppress them. Some cultures help people to take advantage of their resources, while others waste and abort them. Can fitness be measured? The best single measure is probably the United Nations Human Development Index (HDI). The index seeks to evaluate how well each society enhances the range of choice for its members. To do so, it measures health, education, and income in each UN member state. Since the HDI omits other variables relevant to fitness, this book supplements the UN index by rankings of democratization, honesty, and knowledge-based economics by Freedom House, the Bertelsmann Foundation, Transparency International, and the Harvard-MIT Index of Economic Complexity. All these rankings try to show the absolute and the relative fitness of each actor, for example, changes in life expectancy within each country and how they compare with movements up or down in other states. A drive to excel--as individuals and as communities--is essential to fitness in the twenty-first century, but so is the ability to create shared values by cooperation. This quality is very different from the brute strength endorsed by Social Darwinists in the 19th century, the rugged individualism favored by Ayn Rand and her disciples, the egotistical "rational choice" expectations of many social scientists, and the "every man for himself" orientation of many politicians.

Two quite different views of reality have guided students of human affairs for millennia. Materialistic realists have assumed that political actors pursue power and wealth; idealists, that humans are--or should be--guided by ideals. Each approach has inspired a paradigm--a model of scientific inquiry--that filters and colors our view of human affairs. Materialistic and idealistic paradigms reveal important aspects of reality, but not the "entire elephant." When they miss parts of the whole, narrow gauge paradigms can blur or even distort our vision. This book searches for a paradigm that moves international and comparative studies beyond traditional versions of realism and idealism-moralism and their "neo" offspring such as structuralism, institutional liberalism, constructivism, and feminism. Complexity science offers a better guide to understanding and changing the world than maxims such as "get rich and grow power" or "pursue your ideals."

Complexity science sees the planet and its inhabitants as interdependent--mutually vulnerable--so closely linked that they can help as well as harm one another. To advance individual and group interests, all parties need to see life not as zero-sum struggle but as a coordination game aimed at promoting mutual gain. Relations within and among societies are complex--nonlinear and in many ways unpredictable. Neither realist nor idealist paradigms help scholars to explain the speed, timing, location and intensity of civil violence, revolutions, and failed democratic transitions. The basic concepts of complexity science outlined below in chapter one provide a useful way to analyze and perhaps change the world for the common good. Subsequent chapters apply these concepts to understand the relatively harmonious transformation of the Baltic republics compared with the Balkans; to assess post-Communist developments across Eurasia from Albania to Mongolia; and to analyze the challenges to America's fitness. A final chapter compares complexity with other paradigms for analyzing fourteen basic problems in world affairs. The theories and problems discussed here are

central to the study of comparative and global politics and, by extension, to social sciences broadly. Historians, psychologists, and philosophers may also find here facts and ideas that confirm, add to, or challenge their existing views. We shall see that complexity science helps to describe and explain our past and present, but is less useful as a way to prescribe or predict consequences. Still, a better understanding of fitness implies actions that can bolster a society's ability to cope with complexity. While absolute prediction is not feasible, we can say that if x and y --and if everything else is equal, z is more likely. This book suggests that complexity science, despite its limitations, can help explain some of the most vexing questions of political institutionalization, democratization, and development.. The concept of fitness, basic to some versions of complexity science, can measure the ability of nations to navigate the complexity and unpredictability of the modern world. .At least for now, however, complexity science offers a useful paradigm of world affairs rather than a comprehensive theory. Complexity science can extend the ability of conventional theories of world affairs and increase their power to explain and, to a lesser extent, predict or prescribe. Some critics ask, "What value does complexity science add to social inquiry?" Many of its basic concepts such as "co-evolution" and "punctuated equilibrium" are adapted from other sciences in the spirit of what E. O. Wilson calls "consilience." Like some "laws" of physics, such as gravity, some concepts of complexity science appear to be little more than common sense. Bundle them together and apply them to the peculiarities of human agency and social structures, however, and they provide a valuable way to analyze the fitness landscapes of the twenty-first century. An improved paradigm for the study of world affairs and for social science is surely "valued added." Complexity science does not yet soar. Still, its emerging potential is more like the intuitions and know-how of the Wright Brothers than those of Icarus. From the Back Cover"Clemens has written an outstanding book--the culmination of a half-century's experience in and analysis of world affairs ... [It is] bound to interest not only political and other social scientists but all thoughtful persons concerned with understanding and perhaps improving the human condition." -- from the Foreword by Stuart A. Kauffman Walter C. Clemens Jr. is an Associate at the Harvard University Davis Center for Russian and Eurasian Studies and Professor Emeritus of Political Science at Boston University. He is the author of many books, including Getting to Yes in Korea; Dynamics of International Relations: Conflict and Mutual Gain in an Era of Global Interdependence; The Baltic Transformed: Complexity Theory and European Security; America and the World, 1898-2025: Achievements, Failures, Alternative Futures; and Can Russia Change? The USSR Confronts Global Interdependence.