



Revitalizing Political Psychology: The Legacy of Harold D. Lasswell

William Ascher, Barbara Hirschfelder-Ascher

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The goal of this book is to recapture the diminished roles of affect, psychological needs, and the psychodynamic mechanisms that are crucial for understanding political behavior by explaining and extending the contributions of Harold D. Lasswell, the dominant figure in political psychology in the mid-twentieth-century. Although Lasswell was best known for applying psychodynamic theories to politics, this book also demonstrates how his framework accommodated for cognitive processes and social interactions ranging from communications to policy-making. The authors use Lasswell's contributions and the debates over his ideas as a springboard for examining current policy, political, and leadership issues.

Revitalizing Political Psychology presents and extends four aspects of Lasswell's contributions to the field: the psychodynamic mechanisms drawn from psychoanalytic theory, the use of symbol associations to understand political propaganda, the analysis of "democratic character" for both the public and the elites, and the structure of belief systems. In so doing, the authors link personality and political communication theory to democratic practice. The authors also critique leadership studies using Lasswell's concerns over the risks to democratic accountability and the current preoccupation with strengthening the roles of charismatic and transformational leaders.

Intended for researchers, practitioners, and students in the areas of political and historical psychology, political strategy, and political communication, the book's emphasis on psychodynamics also appeals to psychoanalysts and the material on leadership appeals to professionals in management and industrial/organizational psychology.

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