John Hobson claims that throughout its history most international theory has been embedded within various forms of Eurocentrism. Rather than producing value-free and universalist theories of interstate relations, international theory instead provides provincial analyses that celebrate and defend Western civilization as the subject of, and ideal normative referent in, world politics. Hobson also provides a sympathetic critique of Edward Said’s conception of Eurocentrism and Orientalism, revealing how Eurocentrism takes different forms, which can be imperialist or anti-imperialist, and how these have played out in international theory since 1760. The book thus speaks to scholars of International Relations, but also to all those interested in understanding Eurocentrism in the disciplines of political science/political theory, political economy/ international political economy, geography, cultural and literary studies, sociology and, not least, anthropology.

Hobson’s powerful indictment that international theory merely constructs a Eurocentric conception of world politics represents a significant challenge to theorists both of mainstream and critical persuasions. In light of the broad intellectual history that Hobson provides, this book will be of immense interest to a diverse audience of readers.

BRIAN C. SCHMI DT, Carleton University

‘A masterful and provocative history of Western international theory that challenges IR scholars to be sensitive to the Eurocentric biases of their intellectual heritage. This important and carefully reasoned book is a call to all of us to re-examine the moral and ethical implications of our research.’

J. ANN TICNER, University of Southern California

‘John M. Hobson’s ambitious, searching, and wide-ranging critique of a long line of thinkers – from Immanuel Kant, Adam Smith, to Henry Morgenthau – whose writings gave Western international theory its current shape, is a tour de force. Not only does Hobson point up the persistently Eurocentric organization of the field, he also succeeds in making careful and important distinctions between varieties of Orientalism and Eurocentrism that are usually missing from contemporary analyses. All students of “world politics” will benefit from this book that represents one of the finest contributions to date to postcolonial studies of international theory.’

DIPESH CHAKRABARTY, University of Chicago