
The Realist Tradition and the Limits of International Relations

Realism is commonly portrayed as theory that reduces International Relations to pure power politics. Michael Williams provides an important re-examination of the Realist tradition and its relevance for contemporary International Relations. Examining three thinkers commonly invoked as Realism's foremost proponents – Hobbes, Rousseau, and Morgenthau – the book shows that, far from advocating a crude realpolitik, Realism's most famous classical proponents actually stressed the need for a restrained exercise of power and a politics with ethics at its core. These ideas are more relevant than ever at a time when the nature of responsible responses to international problems is at the centre of contemporary political debate. This original interpretation of major thinkers will interest scholars of International Relations and the history of ideas.

MICHAEL C. WILLIAMS is Senior Lecturer in the Department of International Politics at the University of Wales, Aberystwyth. He has published widely in both International Relations theory and security studies, including articles in *International Organization* and *International Studies Quarterly*.

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