



World Politics: Progress and its Limits

By James Mayall

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At the end of the Cold War, there was much talk of a new world order in which the sovereign state would be held to democratic account, fundamental rights would be respected, and conflict would be replaced by cooperation based on the rule of law. At the start of the new millenium most of this optimism has evaporated.

This book examines why it is so difficult to improve standards of international behaviour and explores the pre-conditions for any realistic attempt to do so. It discusses three major issues that have dominated international debate over the past decade: the tension between sovereignty and national self-determination; the problems associated with the attempt to spread democracy around the world; and the desirability of external intervention in ethnic and religious conflicts.

Rejecting both the unfounded optimism of the early 1990s and the cynical pessimism of more recent years, Professor Mayall points to the strong elements of continuity in international life. He concludes that international society is unlikely to be successfully reformed if governments continue to will progressive ends whilst evading responsibility for their actions.

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Editorial Review

Review

"This is a tremendous little book. It deals with many of the profound political and normative questions confronting the study of international relations today, offering a well-argued scepticism which does not degenerate into crude realism or nihilism. It is a book which I would happily recommend to my graduate and undergraduate students alike." *Anthony McGrew, Professor of International Relations, University of Southampton*

"This is a little book that reflects long and hard thinking about difficult subjects. It will repay more than one reading and represents an important contribution to the canon of works from the English school of International Relations." *Richard Little, University of Bristol*

"This impressive essay address some of the most perplexing normative questions that have arisen in world politics since the end of the Cold War... (a) timely and probing critique of the progressive international temper of our times should be read and pondered by anyone who takes an interest in the ethics of contemporary world politics." *Candaian Journal of Political Science*

From the Back Cover

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About the Author

James Mayall is Sir Patrick Sheehy Professor of International Relations at the University of Cambridge, and Fellow of Sidney Sussex College. He has written widely on nationalism, international society, and Africa's international relations.

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