Hierarchies in World Politics

Globalising processes are gathering increased attention for complicating the nature of political boundaries, authority and sovereignty. Recent examples of global financial and political turmoil have also created a sense of unease about the durability of the modern international order and the ability of our existing theoretical frameworks to explain system dynamics. In light of the inadequacies of traditional International Relations (IR) theories in explaining the contemporary global context, a growing range of scholars have been seeking to make sense of world politics through an analytical focus on hierarchies instead. Until now, the explanatory potential of such research agendas and their implications for the discipline went unrecognised, partly due to the fragmented nature of the IR field. To address this gap, this ground-breaking book brings leading IR scholars together in a conversation on hierarchy and thus moves the discipline in a direction better equipped to deal with the challenges of the twenty-first century.

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Editor’s Preface and Acknowledgements

This book is the product of many conversations among IR scholars who have not (entirely) given up the dream of overcoming the fragmentation of the discipline. It is our hope that thinking about hierarchies in world politics opens up underexplored avenues of research and thus helps bring the discipline into the twenty-first century. Reorienting the IR conversation to the concept of hierarchy also links previously disconnected clusters of scholarship around common questions, as opposed to various ‘-isms’. What first had started out as an ISA working group around this idea led to two more workshops. I would like to thank the International Studies Association (ISA), the Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation, the Jacobs Chair of Social Sciences at the University of California San Diego (UCSD), the Cambridge Humanities Grant Scheme and the Department of Politics and International Studies at the University of Cambridge for funding and hosting these meetings.

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