

PREFACE

When I write an essay, it's like writing a chapter for a nonexistent book. Considerations of timeliness produce the essay; if there's ever going to be a book, it can wait. Essays follow upon essays, and eventually there is a Virtual Book, its parts scattered in a variety of journals. The Virtual Book may have its own cohesiveness and internal logic, but no one ever reads all of it because its chapters are widely separated in time and space.

I now have the opportunity to collect these far-flung chapters, edit them slightly to provide continuity, and assemble them into a Real Book. I hope the book brings out the interconnections that the essays always had for me.

International law and political reality is the subject of this first Volume. I have a hard-headed view of international law. It's not an end in itself, but it serves three goals: helping nations avoid frictions that could lead to war, helping people realize their natural rights in a world divided into national jurisdictions, and helping to modify human activities to safeguard the planet's ecological balance. Although much of what passes as "international law" is little more than international rhetoric (as I argue in Chapter 10), the rules of international law also have a way of staking out baselines which affect a nation's own perception of the bounds of its national interest. Or to put it another way, international law helps draw a part of the picture of international politics that national decision-makers tend to perceive as Political Reality. That's the theme that runs through this book.

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