A central claim of realist political theory is that it better tracks the realities of politics, focusing on power, coercion and conflict where much of the moralism or idealism that has dominated the discipline in the previous half century has focused on ideals, values and consensus. But in shifting the focus of analysis to the grubbier or dirtier side of politics in which disagreement and force are sovereign, the question is inevitably begged what role more normative analysis has in realist theory. Are we doomed, for example, to accept the Realpolitik position that the right to rule merely depends on the ability to do so, that 'might is right', regardless of how unjust a regime may be? Or in emphasising the role of power and conflict in politics are we nevertheless still able to make normative judgements about the legitimacy of a political orders? If so, what form do these judgements take? From where do they derive? And how does this use of normative judgements in realism differ from the moralism that it is intended to replace? This lecture will explore these issues and suggest that realism can plausibly occupy this middle ground between Realpolitik and moralism, and that the development of an account of legitimacy that inhabits this space is a crucial part of the realist research agenda.