

Laudation for Sinja Graf, winner of the 2022 Political Theory Prize

*The jury recommends for the Political Theory Prize award Dr Sinja Graf from the London School of Economic and Political Science for her book *The Humanity of Universal Crime: Inclusion, Inequality, and Intervention in International Political Thought*. This work is a fascinating book on a topic of primary political and legal interest – i.e., the formulation of the concept of universal crime and/or crimes against humanity.*

The book is written from the perspective of a historical, post-colonial turn in Political Theory, in a clear and accessible language, and it excellently combines a history of legal and political thought approach with a more critical theory perspective. The Jury perceives the book as the first full-length study of the notion of “crimes against humanity” in political theory, from the perspective of semantic empowerment (“political productivity”).

Also, the author offers a distinct political theory analysis to a subject-matter that is often reflected upon by legal theorists. The author rejects both a priori critiques of enlightenment universalism and liberal triumphalism. The object of global crime is said to be the collective of humankind (no

reduction to individual rights being violated), while the connection to individuals is made via everybody’s capability to become guilty of such crimes, and therefore subject to punishment.

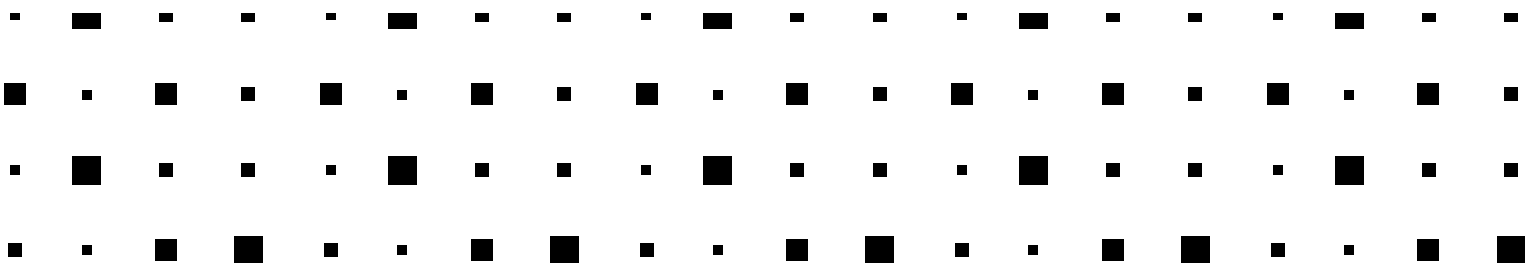
The author draws an important anti-Schmittian distinction between criminals against humanity and “enemies” of humankind. It presents a sophisticated rejection of merely “instrumentalist” accounts of international intervention. The main argument is particularly captivating and intriguing – the author argues that there is a “political productivity of crime” in the sense that the humanity of some offenders is prominently (and sometimes exclusively) secured through their subjection to criminal law (and criminal trials in particular).

This argument builds on Arendt’s work on the topic, and further refines it through close readings of various other canonical authors in the history of Western political thought (from Locke to Habermas). The Jury found this thesis of the political productivity of the concept of crimes against humanity really promising, and a distinctive contribution to the recent discussion and development in political theory.

Ladislav Cabada

**Chair, on behalf of the Political
Theory Prize Jury**

European Consortium for Political Research



Laudation for Avia Pasternak, honourable mention

The jury recommends an Honourable Mention for Dr Avia Pasternak from the University College London and her book Responsible Citizens, Irresponsible States: Should Citizens Pay for Their State’s Wrongdoings. In this case we have to recognise this clear and captivating book on a topic of general theoretical, but also practical and public interest – i.e., the normative principles for allocating responsibility (and the adjacent economic and other relevant social costs) for addressing the wrongdoings committed by states. The book elegantly builds on recent social and political philosophy scholarship on the responsibility of corporate agents and adds a new argument to this scholarship.

The argument is both theoretically sound and sensibly anchored in current public and political debates on the topic. In this sense, the

book does not only enrich the relevant political theory literature, but it also offers a fitting intervention in less specialised, public debates on the question of who is responsible (and on who should pay) for the wrongs committed by a wrongdoing state.

Furthermore, the book has the merit of being concise and clearly structured, with the different chapters forming a coherent whole, while at the same time standing on their own as discrete treatments of a particular question that falls within the purview of the larger problem. This is particularly commending, because it means that the book can be easily used as pedagogical tool for political theory courses that explore debates about historical injustice(s) and reparations.

