

Review of Avia Pasternak's *Responsible Citizens, Irresponsible States: Should Citizens Pay for Their States' Wrongdoings?* New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2021, 248 pp.

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The injustices of international and global conflict, violations of international codes of human rights and protections, and oppressive government policies are examples of moral wrongs committed by states. When moral wrongs occur, victims and bystanders are correct to seek accountability and assign remedial duties, which, ideally, are based on sound moral justifications. Moral transgressions committed by states present a problem for this standard: states are massive collective agents that have extremely complex organisational structures, bureaucracies, and decision-making procedures that often involve the parliamentary representation of its body of citizens—including its internal conflicts. In the face of such complexity, how can we justly assign and distribute accountability and remedial duties between state officials, government institutions, and citizens? In *Responsible Citizens, Irresponsible States*, Avia Pasternak dives into this moral complexity, and explores whether, how, and under which conditions responsibility to amend states' wrongdoings should be distributed to its body of citizens specifically.

Responsible Citizens, Irresponsible States creates a context-sensitive, practical model for responsibility distribution for states' wrongdoings. First, it constructs an ambitious argument for the view that, under sufficient conditions of democracy, active citizenship, and practical feasibility, a state's citizens indeed ought to adopt remedial responsibilities for their states' wrongdoings equally, regardless of (some) citizens' disapproval, resistance, or even ignorance of their states' actions. *Remedial responsibility* here refers to the responsibility to remedy, mitigate, or fix morally undesirable outcomes, regardless of whether one had *causal responsibility* in bringing about the undesirable outcome in question. Second, it reciprocally argues that these remedial responsibilities do not extend to citizens of authoritarian regimes and citizens who are oppressed by their states.

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Pasternak's argument that remedial responsibility for democratic states' wrongs should fall on its citizens can be summarised as follows. Applying the social ontology of Christian List and Philip Pettit (List and Pettit 2011), Pasternak first establishes that states ought to be understood as corporate moral agents, which involve specific kinds of distributions of culpability and responsibility to amend wrongs. Culpability and responsibility to amend moral wrongs can be distributed either in proportion to which government members caused or are blameworthy for the moral wrong, or they can be let to fall to the population at large (chapter 1). Pasternak calls these two competing models the proportional model and the non-proportional model of responsibility distribution, respectively.

Of these two, Pasternak argues for a non-proportional model of responsibility distribution: in the case of moral transgressions committed by states, responsibility for moral transgressions indeed need not fall in proportion to who committed or caused the moral transgression, and often should be let to fall on the state's body of citizens (chapter 2). An initial motivation for adopting this model comes from the complexity of the collective agent of the state: Pasternak argues that adopting the non-proportional model is prudent because it foregoes the extreme cost and practical infeasibility of tracking and mapping blame for a moral wrong through such a complex collective agent as the state (34, 46).

Cost and feasibility comprise only one factor that can suggest distributing responsibility non-proportionally. Specifically in the context of the state and state wrongdoing, Pasternak argues that the non-proportional distribution model is further strengthened by the fact that in democracies, citizens 'intentionally' belong to their states (chapter 3). *Intentional citizenship*, for Pasternak, suggests that citizens genuinely act together with and participate in the state, voluntarily, knowingly, and intentionally accepting their role in the group decision-making apparatus of the state and their role in the maintenance of the state as a cohesive group. This suggests that citizens should also adopt a non-proportional share of remedial responsibilities, regardless of whether or not they agree with or are aware of their states' actions: for Pasternak, disagreement or lack of awareness do not override the overall intentionality in the practice of participating in the state. The intentional citizenship condition is necessary for non-proportional distribution of responsibility, but empirically contingent; conversely, if the body of citizens overall does not recognise their intentional role in participating in the state, or their participation was

forced or not genuine, citizens would *not* be obligated to adopt remedial responsibilities on their state's behalf when called upon to do so. As it happens, Pasternak illustrates that surveys of citizens of liberal democratic states (specifically: *Eurobarometer*, years 2005 and 2014; *Afrobarometer*, year 2014/2015; *World Values Survey*, years 2005 to 2014; *International Social Survey Programme National Identity Survey*, years 1995 and 2003; *European Values Study*, year 2010) indicate that citizens feel a strong affective connection to their nations and strongly self-identify with their nationalities. While Pasternak states that these surveys do not directly track intentional citizenship, she claims that they approximate it (97) (chapter 4).

Finally, the third factor that must be taken into account when considering a distribution of responsibility to the population at large is the nature of the state's regime that caused the moral wrong. Pasternak suggests that in authoritarian states, non-democratic states, and states that oppress their citizens, citizens cannot be expected to adopt remedial responsibilities because they have an inappropriate relationship to the state for such a distribution to be morally justified. In authoritarian states, citizens do not enjoy intentional citizenship because they cannot be said to be inclusive authors of the state's policies by the very fact that the states are authoritarian. As an example in which moral intuitions about authoritarian regimes and non-proportional distribution of responsibility clash, Pasternak argues that the United Nations Compensation Commission was wrong to make demands of Iraqi citizens in the aftermath of the Gulf War (159–171).

Together, these three factors create Pasternak's non-proportional responsibility distribution model that can be used to assess whether a responsibility distribution to the population at large is morally justified (chapter 5). In practical terms, Pasternak predicts that this process is likely to lead to the conclusion that, by and large, in democratic states, an equal distribution of remedial responsibilities will be overall justified, while in many authoritarian states it will not be (123). The survey data described in chapter 4 indicates that intentional citizenship is highly correlated with democracy. When an equal distribution among citizens cannot be justified after an assessment of the three factors, alternative solutions should be weighed against the option of imposing the burden on the state's citizens: leaving the burden with the victims or transferring some of it to the international community (chapter 6).

Lastly, chapter 7 examines how the model applies to the case of historical wrongs and their responsibility-distributive effects. Pasternak argues that in these cases the model still applies; also, in the case of historical wrongs, present day citizens should be expected to adopt non-proportional amounts of responsibility, given the same conditions of state regime change, and in the historical case, state secession (and succession), as in her account. These restrictions have normative implications for international law, which, though it does not think regime changes alleviate responsibility, does not discriminate between regime types.

Pasternak provides a bold, unintuitive argument that is sensitive to and prescriptive for national and international political and legal practice. *Responsible Citizens, Irresponsible Citizens* is laudable for including the perspective of authoritarian states, which are under-discussed as cases in contemporary, liberal democracy-centric analytic political theory. Nonetheless, I show that her account is open to six challenges: two regarding the costliness of blame-tracking, three regarding intentional citizenship, and one regarding a potential negative participation incentive.

The first challenge takes issue with Pasternak's argument from the costliness of blame-tracking. While it is plausible that blame-tracking can be costly and practically challenging, beyond suggesting that each case should be evaluated individually, Pasternak's account does not provide principles to guide decisions about when costs are too high, what precisely constitutes practical infeasibility, and why. This challenge does not directly undermine Pasternak's account, but it suggests that the account would be significantly stronger were more specified conditions and reasons for them provided.

However, a second, more directly threatening challenge related to blame-tracking remains. Even when blame-tracking is extremely costly and practically infeasible, it is not clear how the costliness and infeasibility of blame-tracking help determine a moral shift in responsibility from states to citizens. While even a complete infeasibility (as opposed to practical difficulty) to determine responsible parties would be unfortunate, it neither absolves the responsible parties or automatically suggests moral reasons to create a remedial responsibility for causally non-responsible parties. In fact, if costliness suggests that blame-tracking should generally not be carried out, Pasternak's argument seems to create a morally vicious incentive for state leaders and actors to create conditions that make blame-tracking as difficult as possible if they recognise this as a path to a kind of moral non-accountability. While neither of these challenges

directly concern the distribution of remedial responsibility if (1) remedial responsibility can be justifiably separated from causal responsibility, (2) individual state officials alone do not have the means to repair the damages they are causally responsible for, and (3) there is a moral justification that the damages should be repaired, they do show that shifting remedial responsibility from state officials to citizens cannot be easily motivated by the costliness of blame-tracking.

If this counterargument holds, Pasternak's non-proportional model can still be motivated by intentional citizenship. However, Pasternak's argument from intentional citizenship also faces three challenges. Firstly, despite Pasternak's claim that citizens voluntarily and intentionally endorse and participate in the collective agent of the state, the survey evidence for the prevalence of intentional citizenship does not obviously suggest that the voluntariness and intentionality conditions of responsibility are fulfilled. Citizens' self-reporting to self-identify with their state and form an affective attachment to the state does not by default also indicate intentionality or voluntariness to participate in the maintenance and (especially) the decision-making of the state. It is not obvious how an affective or identity endorsement of the state "renders one the inclusive author of what the group does" (71). In social scientific terms, it is not obvious that the operationalisation of intentional citizenship is successful.

Secondly, even granting the intentionality and voluntariness conditions of responsibility, the epistemic or awareness condition of responsibility—which Pasternak discusses under "information" (121)—does not seem to be fulfilled. Pasternak argues that the survey data suggests that citizens recognise their role in executing the group's decisions, but it is not obvious that it does: once again, the data merely shows that citizens of liberal democratic states generally have a positive affective relationship to their nation and identify with their nationalities. Whether or not they understand that this role imbues them with the rights, duties, and future remedial responsibilities connected to their citizenship is a different question altogether. Again, in social scientific terms, this is a second issue with the operationalisation of intentional citizenship. Of course, this challenge does not hold if the satisfaction of the epistemic or awareness condition could be shown by other empirical evidence.

Thirdly, Pasternak's model seems to be insensitive to the fact that, like the cost and feasibility of blame-tracking, intentional citizenship is also a matter of degree. Again, even if we accept that intentional citizenship can be gauged accurately and can be morally justified to motivate a

non-proportional responsibility distribution, beyond a suggestion to evaluate each case individually, it is not clear how much intentional citizenship the account requires. And again, this challenge does not directly undermine Pasternak's account, but only suggests that it would be stronger were more precise principles and conditions regarding the required quantity of intentional citizenship articulated.

Another challenge for Pasternak's model is that the equality of remedial responsibilities for citizens indicates that citizens will lack any opportunity to decrease their future remedial responsibilities. On Pasternak's account, even citizens who might accept some level of general remedial responsibility have no possibility to decrease this remedial responsibility even by attempts to prevent the very causal sequence relevant to that responsibility. Consider, for example, an activist who self-identifies as a member of their home state and has an affective attachment to it but who also dedicates a substantial amount of their personal resources to prevent and campaign against a morally disastrous state action. According to Pasternak's equal membership-based model of responsibility distribution, this activist holds *equal* responsibility for that action to those citizens who did nothing or helped cause it. Intuitively, while the activist *can* still adopt responsibility in amending the consequences of the state (and it might be morally commendable for them to do so), they are, at least intuitively, less remedially responsible than others. In fact, the equality of citizens' remedial responsibilities seems to create a second, parallel vicious incentive for citizens to distance themselves from affairs of the state and towards non-participation. Worryingly for liberal and republican democratic theory, if a citizen chooses to participate in the affairs of the state, she may not only be unrewarded but in fact punished for her intentional citizenship in being obligated to accept responsibility (together with her compatriots) for something that she (or they) had no part in causing. While a proponent of Pasternak's account might respond that the moral intuitions discussed here are simply faulty, Pasternak's non-proportional model of responsibility distribution would be strengthened if they could be explained away, which, as the account stands, they are not.

Despite these challenges, the achievement of *Responsible Citizens, Irresponsible States* should not be unrecognised. Pasternak's original framing and bold argumentation creates new ground for political philosophy to think about how best to conceive (or even begin to investigate) the political ethics of responsibility given varying feasibility conditions of accountability.

Further work in this field could also consider for example the ethics and philosophy of responsibility in connection to political and historical guilt. For example, the collective, national guilt of the second world war in Germany plausibly affected the kinds of remedial responsibilities Germans were willing to take on. Austria, on the other hand, at least seems to have less historical guilt over the second world war because of a myth of Austria as the first victim of Hitler's regime (see for example Pollak, 2003). Canada is currently dealing with connected questions of guilt and remedial responsibility over their 're-education' of indigenous peoples. Pasternak's arguments and account could be used in discussion with questions regarding guilt and remedial responsibility: How do collective feelings of guilt connect with remedial responsibilities, intentional citizenship, and oppressive states, including, in the Canadian case, oppression by (seemingly) liberal states? Is guilt an upshot of intentional citizenship, and need it be? In which ways does guilt help or hinder remedial responsibility up-take?

Moreover, Pasternak's book can also be read as an important contribution in the more general but under-discussed questions for political philosophy about what it actually means for a state to commit a moral wrong and what the consequences for such wrongs might be. When states commit wrongs, what does the collective agent consist of? Following intentional citizenship, to whom can and should we attribute remedial responsibility, and to whom can and should we attribute the actions of the state? This ground is especially fertile and relevant in points of history that are characterised by national and global problems and their consequences in which actions taken by nation states have huge moral implications—such as today's climate crisis, pandemic, and various international violent conflicts to name only a few.

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