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REGULARIZED POLITICAL APOLOGY

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Our world has been shaped by the injustices of the past. Many of the nations responsible for these injustices still exist, and there are many cases in which one can point to culpable wrongdoing and identify victims and offenders. Such cases demand apologies as a matter of justice, respect, and due concern. In this paper, we argue that some states should institute a practice of regular political apology by (a) designating a regular day of apology on which the head of state publicly apologizes for a different past instance of serious misconduct by the state, and (b) supplementing these apologies with related actions or policies intended to make amends to the victims or their descendants.

1. INTRODUCTION

Starting in the 1870s, more than 150,000 Indigenous children in Canada were forcibly removed from their families and communities and placed in Indian residential schools with the goal of isolating them from their home cultures and assimilating them into the dominant culture. The Indian residential schools facilitated what Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission has labeled a "cultural genocide." Students were subjected to physical and sexual abuse, and at least 3,200 died while attending the schools. In 2008, Prime Minister Steven Harper, on behalf of the Canadian government, apologized to the former students of its Indian residential schools. In 2017, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau extended that apology to include the former students of Newfoundland and Labrador residential schools, which were not a part of the Canadian confederation at the time. The apologies were coupled with other redress measures, including the Indian Residential Schools Settlement Agreement (IRSSA), which established a recovery fund of over $3 billion for former students.

Many nations, like Canada, have perpetrated grave injustices against foreign peoples and internal populations. The kinds of injustices that motivate this paper

include genocide, hostile occupation, religious persecution, violence, material exploitation, discrimination, and economic and political interference. These categories are not mutually exclusive and together often serve as a means to politically, socially, and economically control a population, as in the case of slavery in the United States.

Our world has been shaped by the injustices of the past. Actions and policies that were wrong at the time have also negatively affected the lives of subsequent generations. Many of the billions who experience war, famine, poverty, and political instability do so, in part, as a result of the past wrongdoing of foreign nations or their own state. Some injustices were done purposefully, others knowingly, others recklessly, still others negligently; and many practices, like European colonization, included wrongdoing of each type. Our global social, political, and economic landscape is the legacy of centuries of wrongdoing by various states, against both foreign peoples and vulnerable internal populations. The literature on political apology examines many injustices for which apologies have been made, but there remain many more for which no apologies have been offered.

At the same time, many of the nations responsible for these injustices still exist and will continue to exist for the foreseeable future. Often, their continued existence, current political stability, and economic dominance were made possible, in part, by such wrongdoing. Because they persist with sufficiently stable political structures, these national governments are able to take responsibility for past misconduct, take significant action to repair the damage caused, and restore trust between the state and victimized groups. One way to do so is to publicly apologize for their past misconduct and begin to make amends.

There are many cases in which one can point to culpable wrongdoing and identify victims and offenders. Such cases demand apologies as a matter of justice, respect, and due concern. In this paper, we argue that some states should institute a practice of regularized political apology. More specifically, we suggest (a) that they should designate an annual day of apology on which the head of state publicly apologizes for a different past instance of serious misconduct by the state, and (b) that these apologies be supplemented with actions or policies intended to make amends to the victims or their descendants. Our reasoning is fairly straightforward. *Apology* is a familiar practice with recognized norms that we use in similar circumstances in our personal lives. *Political apology* is an increasingly popular part of a nation's domestic and international relations tool kit and can be an effective reparative measure, especially when paired with appropriate legal or policy tools—as in the case of Harper's apology described above. Finally, *regularized political apology* offers unique benefits and avoids some of the problems faced by occasional political apologies.

Our argument proceeds in four stages. Section 2 describes the practice of interpersonal apology, explains its value, and identifies alternative forms of redress. Section 3 describes the practice of political apology, explains its benefits, and considers skeptical challenges to the justification and implementation of

successful political apologies. Section 4 argues that a practice of regularized political apology has benefits over and above ad hoc, expedient, and occasional political apologies—though it does not preclude them. In particular: (i) Regularity would provide predictability, thereby facilitating both advocacy and policy decision making; (ii) it could contribute to the development of a political norm of apology for wrongdoing, which is a valuable but absent dimension of political discourse in many places; (iii) via norm development it could have a transformative power, countering the opposition of those who find apologies shameful and degrading to the national honor; and (iv) it could serve an educational role, further establishing historical injustice within the national conversation. Section 5 considers objections and practical obstacles to implementing our proposal, including an alternative proposal: political apologies should be offered as soon as the significance of the injustice becomes clear, whether that occurs immediately, when the offender is blamed, or when victims demand an apology.

We conclude that a practice of regularized political apology offers significant benefits and can reasonably be demanded of many states. It is not a panacea. It's one policy tool in a retributive and distributive justice toolbox and, like other tools, there are limitations to its use and effectiveness. However, like other policy tools—from taxes to development aid to immigration policy—it has the potential to benefit society and promote justice if pursued with care and collaboration.

2. APOLOGY

Wrongdoing is an inescapable fact of life, and our practice of holding one another responsible helps us to maintain relationships with those friends, family, coworkers, and acquaintances who wrong us and are wronged by us over the course of a lifetime. Holding responsible, including taking responsibility, is a practice of working through moral conflicts by addressing wrongdoers, accounting for wrongdoing, and (ideally) resolving those conflicts.

Apology is a form of moral accounting. An apology responds to moral address (e.g., blame) by acknowledging the wrong and the appropriateness of blame. It expresses regret and remorse about the offense and demonstrates that the offender has repudiated the act and the ill will behind it. An apology presents the offender as separate from the offense by showing that she has reassessed her conduct and committed to not behaving this way in the future. Finally, by explicitly recognizing the blame directed at her by the victim and aligning her attitude with theirs, the offender adds her voice to the victim's.[1]

Apologies are valuable. Acknowledging wrongdoing, taking responsibility, and expressing remorse show concern and respect for those one has harmed. It demonstrates that the offender recognizes the importance of their relationship with the victim, even if that relationship is just as fellow citizens or human beings. And it reaffirms one's commitment to similar moral values and norms, especially

when accompanied by some sort of redress. Apologies also make reconciliation more likely, thereby allowing valuable relationships to continue and maintaining the benefits that such relationships provide to both parties—for example, trust, intimacy, and emotional support.[2]

That said, apologies are not a panacea, and they can be problematic. Even sincere apologies can put a victim on the spot and prompt insincere expressions of forgiveness.[3] Nor is apology the only response to blame that can help to promote reconciliation. Other gestures, including the individual components of an apology—for example, repentance, atonement, redress, repudiation of the offense, and expressions of regret or remorse (without an apology)—can achieve similar ends. There is overlap between what these different acts can accomplish, and an apology is not always necessary or desired.[4]

Nonetheless, an apology will often add something to these gestures. Often the best response to having wronged another is not (just) restitution, but apology.[5] For example, an apology may help one forgive a partner's infidelity more than flowers and extra kindnesses. Likewise, repudiating an insulting belief or attitude may demonstrate commitment to shared values but not adequately convey regret about the hurt caused by the insult. We will see that the same is true of political apology; sometimes other options are appropriate and adequate, but apology can play as important a role in political relations as in personal relations.[6] While apologies can fail, and other practices can perform a similar function, few would deny the importance of apology in our interpersonal lives, and we often perform this practice successfully. To see this, one need only think back to the last apology one had to make.

3. POLITICAL APOLOGY

Institutions, including states, can apologize.[7] Whatever one thinks about the possibility and value of political apologies, they—or something by that name—are an increasingly common occurrence. Political apologies are desired and requested;[8] and they are given and sometimes well-received.[9] The best explanation of this phenomenon is that political apologies are valuable, both to apologizers and to recipients. In this section, we briefly explain what they do, why they're valuable, and how to ensure that they achieve their aims.

Political apologies, like interpersonal apologies, are a way of accounting for misconduct. They acknowledge wrongdoing, validate blame, take responsibility, express regret and remorse, repudiate objectionable values manifested by the misdeed, and (re)commit to shared values and proper conduct.[10] If a state can act unjustly and rightly be blamed for doing so, which it can, then a political apology can be both fitting and morally required. Where it is the fitting form of redress, we take political apology to be a moral requirement and a demand of justice. It is required for backward- and forward-looking reasons, both as a reparative

measure and response to legitimate blame, but also as a means of promoting trust, participation, and democratic values. Of course, political apologies can differ from interpersonal apologies, but none of their potential differences necessarily undermine the force or value of a political apology.

Political apologies are increasingly common, but so is skepticism—and even cynicism—about them. Addressing these skeptical challenges is important because doing so illuminates the practical realities of political apology and because similar concerns are raised about regularized political apology. There are three basic skeptical challenges to the idea and practice of political apology. They concern its nature, justification, and implementation. Those concerned with the nature of apology worry that political apologies are either impossible or deficient because they cannot meet necessary conditions on apology. A strong version of this view might claim that a state cannot feel remorse or be psychologically continuous with itself.[11] A weaker version might argue that it is a mistake to treat political apologies simply as scaled-up interpersonal apologies.[12] However, proponents of the weaker challenge have also rightly pointed out that whether or not political apologies, as practiced, conform to the "regulative ideal" of an apology, they are an important part of our political domain and discourse.[13] We take this to be an adequate response to the skeptical challenge and to warrant investigating whether and how we should pursue a practice of regularized political apology.

Skeptics also worry that political apologies are unjustified, whether because they ascribe blame or because they impose burdens on individuals or groups in morally impermissible ways. One problem arises primarily for apologies made by the government on behalf of (some portion of) its citizens. If those citizens are not responsible for the injustice in question (or its sequelae), then it seems wrong to take responsibility on their behalf, especially if doing so requires allocating state resources for reparative efforts in a way that imposes a burden on otherwise blameless citizens.[14] Another problem, faced by all political apologies, concerns the authority of the state to apologize given opposition among the citizens and likelihood that an apology will create new conflicts or even exacerbate those the apology is meant to help resolve.[15] However, while political apologies *can* be unjustified for these reasons, not all will be. In some cases, citizens will be responsible for the injustice in question, whether by commissioning the offense, being complicit in it, or by benefitting from it (either directly or indirectly by inherited privilege). In other cases, it may be that citizens should *take responsibility* even if they fail to meet the conditions on being responsible.[16] And in still other cases, a state is within its rights to speak for and impose burdens on citizens regardless of whether they're responsible, as when it welcomes newly naturalized citizens or allocates tax revenue to support the victims of secret government projects.

Finally, skeptics worry that political apologies are unworkable, that they cannot be implemented in a way that adequately achieves their aims. This general worry is grounded in a number of particular concerns: apologies will not be taken

seriously by the population, some victims may not want an apology, another form of redress would be preferable (e.g., commemoration, reparations, or granting sovereignty), victims will not be consulted about "top-down" state apologies, different victim groups might advocate for different things, states might use apologies to "lower the price tag" on other forms of reparation or compensation, apologizers and recipients may be unable to agree on the terms of an apology, and apologies without concrete action to improve the lives of victims will exacerbate their alienation and distrust.[17] These are legitimate worries, and they constitute real obstacles to effective political apology, but none is insurmountable. As with any policy tool, political apology will not always be a workable option, but there will be many cases in which it is. The lesson to be taken from the identification of these obstacles is that designing a political apology requires care, study, and collaboration. But this should not be a surprise. It's a lesson that's been learned in many policy areas, from international development to city management. There is even a growing literature on reparations devoted to addressing worries about implementation, and many of the lessons that are identified are applicable to the design of political apologies.[18] One central insight is that redress should proceed via democratic deliberation by victim advocacy groups collaborating to design the policy (i.e., the apology, reparations, or memorial).[19] Indeed, West Germany and Israel recognized this need and negotiated the content of Germany's apology and the accompanying reparations policy.[20] The upshot is that concerns about workability do not speak against political apology *tout court*, but rather speak in favor of well-planned and well-designed apologies.

Thus, while not unfounded, none of the skeptic's worries show that political apology cannot be justified and successfully implemented. Advocates of a political apology must show that it is justified and design and implement the apology and any supplementary policy measure in order to give it the best chance of success. Case studies and theoretical analysis of past apologies yield mixed messages about justification and implementation but provide useful lessons about how to avoid common obstacles and design more effective political apologies. An apology may nonetheless fail to achieve its aims, but this is not a reason to reject apology as a political tool or mode of political discourse—at least, no more than it is to abandon regulation, taxes, humanitarian intervention, or military assistance, all of which are difficult and fallible. Political apology is a valuable part of a state's domestic and international relations tool kit. While some obstacles to political apology are particularly challenging, we will argue that *regularized* political apology can help to avoid or overcome them.

4. REGULARIZED POLITICAL APOLOGY

In this section, we make the case for regularized political apology (RPA). We clarify the substance and scope of our proposal and argue that regularity enhances

the value of political apologies. We conclude that some governments should institute a practice of RPA for their past injustices. This could take a variety of forms, but, for the sake of simplicity, we suggest an annual day of apology on which the head of state officially apologizes for at least one different past misdeed by the state.[21] The date could be chosen to coincide with other occasions of national significance, like a national day, an annual speech, or a significant anniversary. For example, the UK prime minister might make an official apology at each State Opening of Parliament. We then argue that regularity would provide additional benefits over and above those of individual and occasional political apologies.

4.1. PROPOSAL

Before we make the case for such a practice, a few clarifications are needed. First, the head of state should apologize *on behalf of* the nation *and* its people[22] *to* the victimized group (and, if relevant, their descendants) *for* a particular culpable wrongdoing or unjust policy. A political apology must make each of these three points clearly and directly because an apology can fail if it does not pick out the correct victimized group or describes its wrongdoing too widely or too narrowly.[23]

Second, an apology should explain the moral motivation behind it. This requires acknowledging wrongdoing and responsibility generally (e.g., state-sanctioned discrimination), the specific moral dimensions of the offense (e.g., its contribution to concrete harms, unfairness, and oppression), and especially the moral reasons for apologizing (e.g., disavowal, making amends, and restoring trust).

Third, a political apology must manage its susceptibility to misinterpretation and misrepresentation. The context of an apology can influence its social meaning. For example, US Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs Kevin Gover's apology to Native Americans was arguably undermined by the fact that he was himself Native American. This is not to suggest that being a member of a victimized group precludes an officeholder from apologizing to that group on behalf of the state. Nor do we suggest that the audience of a political apology cannot distinguish between the office and its occupant. Rather, we are suggesting that being a member of the recipient group is likely to undermine the effectiveness of an apology because it is likely to alter the social meaning of the apology.[24]

Fourth, our proposal is directed only at states that

(i) have a history of relatively frequent and serious wrongdoing,

(ii) are stable and well-governed enough that they can make good on their apologies, and

(iii) demonstrate commitment to the moral and legal principles that motivate their apologies and make them meaningful.

Condition (i) notes that a regular practice of apology is only required of serial offenders. Both new states and states without histories of misconduct may be

exempt. Condition (ii) recognizes that a political apology will typically require supplementary state action, which requires that the government be able to implement the planned apology and is stable enough that its benefits can accrue to members of the target group.[25]

Condition (iii) recognizes that a meaningful apology requires evidence of general commitments to justice.[26] A nation can only apologize effectively for its violation of a group's equal rights if it has a commitment to equal rights in the first place. Just as a corporation cannot meaningfully apologize for exploiting workers if its business model depends on doing so, so a nation cannot meaningfully apologize for wartime behavior that reflects its explicit foreign policy. A state need not be fully just in order to apologize for past misdeeds, but it must be sufficiently committed to the principles that ground its apologies. This may sometimes be difficult to assess. For example, can the US government apologize for "redlining" (racial housing discrimination) even as it implements racist voter identification laws and engages in gerrymandering of legislative districts? Are its commitments to equal protection, non-discrimination, and political participation sufficient to allow for an apology? We think so but recognize that there will be cases at the margins of condition (iii) where the possibility and/or workability of apology is uncertain.[27]

Fifth, governments should institute a policy of *regularized* political apology. How often such apologies should take place will depend on a number of contingent practical considerations. We imagine an annual practice, but particular circumstances may favor different schedules. The remainder of this section makes the case for regularity.

4.2. REGULARIZED APOLOGY

Given the moral presumption in favor of fitting apologies and the potential value of political apologies, a strong case can be made for a practice of RPA. Such a practice would not only secure the benefits of individual political apologies, but additional benefits would accrue in virtue of the regularity of the practice. In particular, we contend that a practice of RPA can avoid justification and implementation challenges faced by occasional political apologies.

Our proposal might seem odd or even inappropriate, but regularized or scheduled forms of interpersonal apology are actually a familiar part of human sociality. Many Jews observe Yom Kippur, a day of atonement, which is characterized by ritualized apology and forgiveness. Indeed, Yom Kippur is itself plausibly understood as a collective apology by all Jews for breaking the covenant with God that constitutes them as Israel, the Jewish people.[28] The Sacrament of Confession, the regular admission of sin and request for forgiveness, is practiced by many Christians, including many Protestant denominations as well as Catholics. In the Eastern Orthodox Church, many observe Quinquagesima or Shrove Sunday as a day of asking and granting forgiveness. Finally, Australians have been observing

"National Sorry Day," a commemoration and day of apology for the treatment of the Indigenous "Stolen Generations," for the last 20 years.

Similarly, many secular practices, including practices unrelated to redress, successfully use regularity to achieve their aims. Commemoration and remembrance of persons, groups, or events, for example, can serve as a means of redress and, in many cases, gain additional force by being celebrated annually. Jeffrey Blustein has argued that the "disciplined emotionality" characteristic of repetitive commemorative ceremonies or rituals, whether formal or informal, can promote cultural memory by providing an opportunity for individuals and groups to remember and reflect on the event—for example, Easter, Remembrance Day, or (in the United States) Martin Luther King, Jr.'s, birthday.[29]

A practice of regularized political apology could compound the benefits of political apologies. More fitting apologies mean more acknowledgment of wrongdoing and the appropriateness of blame; more recognition and understanding of the history of violence, exploitation, and oppression; more voice given to the voiceless; and more action taken to improve the lives of the mistreated. However, regularity itself has benefits and adds value to apologies. How might this be so? *Predictability*. Regularity creates an annual policy opportunity and a deadline for implementing it. In order to demonstrate their bona fides, states must often coordinate their political apologies with concrete demonstrations of their goodwill.[30] Regularized political apology could overcome this challenge by incorporating the practice of apology into the normal routine of government. For example, a US president might launch a program, a year or more in the making, that would work to increase black voter registration in conjunction with an apology for legal disenfranchisement of black citizens during the Jim Crow era.

The fact that interest groups benefit from predictable opportunities to access their government is well attested. In the United States, the president is required to submit a budget proposal to Congress at the beginning of each fiscal year. Congress then considers the president's budget proposal, makes changes, and sends it back to the president for approval or veto. This annual budget schedule gives Americans affected by the budget—for example, veterans, farmers, postal workers, conservationists, state and local governments—a predictable opportunity to express their interests to the president and Congress. Similarly, a practice of RPA would give victim groups a predictable opportunity to organize themselves and advocate for an apology. This could have a number of downstream benefits. On the one hand, by encouraging a collaborative and organized process, RPA could help victim group advocates to avoid excluding rightful recipients from the language of the apology and the benefits of the policy.[31] On the other hand, when activist groups can expect collaboration with government, they can organize themselves so as not to be taken advantage of by a government seeking the most concessive advocates of the cause. For example, if the time line for lobbying, consultation, and planning is known, an activist group can better monitor

whether the government is approaching and bargaining with more concessive advocates.[32] Thus, while some might worry that our proposal would encourage a top-down system of political apology managed by politicians, regular apology could actually facilitate grassroots organizing and advocacy by, or on behalf of, victims themselves. Moreover, while it cannot guarantee good faith engagement by the state, predictability allows advocacy groups to have more knowledge and control over their activities.

Norm Development. Regular apology can influence the political norms of a society and its citizens, and political relationships can come to be governed by norms of apology just as interpersonal relationships are[33]—and just as both are governed by norms of promising. Regularity can help to develop and maintain apology as a norm of public discourse and a recognized way for a society and its members to express its political will—that is, by calling for and making apologies. Most nations do not have norms of political apology, but, just as these other norms arose, we could come to expect apologies for unjust state action. A regular practice would normalize the constituent parts of an apology, especially admitting failure and acknowledging fault; and, by doing so, the practice could combat the defensiveness in response to moral criticism that we sometimes see in political leaders and opposition groups.[34]

Regularity would provide a *procedural norm*, whereby apology becomes a regular and predictable part of a nation's repertoire of political speech acts, which in turn can support the development of a *moral-political norm*. The latter is a normative expectation that a nation acknowledge its culpable wrongdoing; it is a sense that apology is sometimes called for. The idea of using a procedural norm to scaffold the development and persistence of a moral-political norm is also familiar. We develop a habit of apology in children by encouraging them to apologize whenever they do wrong. Moreover, we do so before the child can fully understand the moral significance of their offenses or their apologies, in the hopes that the mostly procedural habit will become a meaningful moral gesture.[35] Scaffolding of moral-political norms on procedural norms can also be facilitated by developing and making use of existing apology rituals, of which there are many.[36]

One might worry that norms of political discourse, including apology, could be instrumentalized—that is, co-opted and used in bad faith to further contrary aims. Moreover, one might worry that regularity and misuse together would diminish the power of political apologies, as it does for other discourse norms. For example, frustrated gun control advocates in the United States might argue that politicians use public expressions of condolence for victims of mass shootings as a way of avoiding meaningful action. Likewise, aid organizations have noted that governments often promise more humanitarian aid after natural disasters than is actually delivered. In both cases, the political norm appears susceptible to misuse and, eventually, to ineffectiveness.

We don't deny that a norm of political apology could be abused, even to the point of losing its force entirely. Indeed, we have already acknowledged that political apology is susceptible to misuse and carelessness—as is any norm of discourse, from promising humanitarian aid to expressing moral beliefs.[37] Because a norm of apology is a public good that is open to misuse, it is possible for it to lose its value entirely. However, we have also noted the many lessons drawn from studies of effective and ineffective attempts at redress: supplementing expressive acts with concrete actions and policies,[38] promoting democratic participation,[39] and encouraging feedback, evaluation, and reform of problematic procedures.[40] For example, supplementing a political apology with a policy makes it harder to offer an empty apology, and the fact that a supplementary policy has been developed in preparation for the apology and is ready to be implemented can help to avoid the equivalent of promising what cannot be delivered.[41] The supplementary policy helps to demonstrate sincerity and credibility and reflects the government's commitment to reconciliation in a more concrete way than a promise.

Transformative Power. A practice of RPA could make it easier for political apologies to perform the transformative role that some have identified,[42] and which is plausibly linked to norm development. One challenge to successful political apologies is the fact that a large proportion of the population is likely to object to apologizing for any particular offense. A political apology may require or prompt citizens to reassess their history in a way that is likely to damage their present view of themselves or conflict with their self-conception as citizens. Mihai calls this the "self-image objection."[43] Defenders of political apology counter this challenge by suggesting that, if done well, an apology can avoid these barriers to uptake—that is, disagreement and defensiveness prompted by shame—and can (be perceived to) demonstrate courage and express pride in the liberal democratic values that motivate the apology. Moreover, the transformative effect of well-crafted political apologies is not limited to individuals; the attitude of an entire polity can be transformed.

How can political apologies transform public identity and political discourse significantly enough to avoid the self-image objection? First, political apologies can convince the unconvinced and the defensive. A well-crafted apology will provide its own justification, and some opponents will recognize it as justified. Some shame may linger, but it will be evidence of, rather than an obstacle to, an effective apology. Reactions to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial illustrate this phenomenon. Many who opposed Maya Lin's design did so because they felt it minimized the heroism of those it memorialized—a kind of indirect shaming. Upon seeing it, though, many veterans changed their minds, acknowledging that it captured the magnitude of the loss (by listing all of the dead and missing), the equality of participants (by representing them all in the same way), their individuality (by naming each person), and even the painful legacy of the war for veterans and for the nation (by its scar-like shape).

Second, political apologies can be designed and implemented in ways that mitigate defensiveness, independently of their content. For example, apologies are often experienced as humiliating when they appear involuntary.[44] However, RPA will be adopted voluntarily, and each apology can emphasize this fact, whether by dispelling any sense of coercion or by explaining its collaborative procedure. Even the fact that RPA is scheduled and thus constraining can be countered by noting that the state has opted in to the practice and has tacitly agreed to collaborate on future apologies. In fact, regularized apologies may be preferable in this respect to immediate apologies where the circumstances surrounding the offense may seem to compel an apology.

Third, political apologies can try to promote pride among those on whose behalf the apology is made. This is the most directly transformative approach to addressing the self-image objection. An apology can appeal to values like justice, equality, and democracy that people are rightly proud of. This is precisely what US Representative Steve Cohen tried to encourage in proposing a resolution that Congress apologize for slavery and Jim Crow.[45] Because such political apologies are motivated by concerns of justice and equality, they can emphasize the nation's history of commitment to these principles. An apology can also argue that real pride requires facing up to shame and can expose the dishonesty of national pride that fails to acknowledge the shameful parts of one's national history. Moreover, apologizing regularly makes room for pride in the nation's ability to face a shameful past. Susan Neiman views this as the lesson of Germany's practice of working-off-the-past (*Vergangenheit-saufarbeitung*), which, while difficult and incomplete, proves that change of this sort is possible at the level of culture.[46] Finally, injustice is rarely unopposed, and apologies can recognize those who resisted. Doing so can provide grounds for pride that are compatible with shame and with unequivocal condemnation of the offense itself. Neiman describes a memorial in Berlin to a "the women of Rosenstrasse," a group of non-Jewish women who demonstrated against Nazi officials' attempts to deport their Jewish husbands.[47] If protesting racial violence and discrimination expresses faith in a state's commitment to equal protection, then recognition of that resistance can express pride in those same values.[48] Political apology, like memorials and other forms of remembrance, leaves room for national pride even as it recognizes grounds for national shame.[49]

A practice of RPA facilitates these transformations in a few ways. First, as we argued above, RPA supports the development of a moral-political norm. Expected forms of political speech are less prone to reactionary resistance than unexpected or singular events. Next, while some forms of political speech are most appropriate as immediate responses to an event (e.g., expressions of solidarity after an attack), political apologies are often not. Some apologies are immediate responses (e.g., US President George W. Bush's apology to the families of the Japanese passengers for the accidental sinking of the *Ehime Maru* by the US Navy), but apologies for serious offenses usually are not. Instead, they are occasional. They are offered in response

to petitions (e.g., Japanese Americans' demand for recognition of their mistreatment during World War II) or when other political forces conspire to make them appropriate or expedient (e.g., Bill Clinton's trip to Africa and his apologies for the role of the United States in the slave trade). Regularity simultaneously allows a government the latitude to plan a successful apology and commits it to making one. By doing so, it allows governments to engage in a credible practice that can demonstrate a clear commitment to principles of justice and equality, and thereby make room for pride in that commitment. Finally, by creating a regular and expected practice, RPA would begin to make clear what the government is not ready to apologize for, as opposed to what it simply hasn't gotten around to apologizing for.

Education. An apology reflects a (re)assessment of some behavior. An effective political apology requires critical reflection on a nation's history by the advocates, politicians, and policy makers who plan the apology and design the supplementary policy. The architects of an apology must educate themselves, engage in ethical assessment, and consider whether an apology is appropriate. Moreover, while as a form of moral address, a political apology is directed to members of the victimized group, it also communicates its architects' understanding of its subject matter—for example, the intended and unintended consequences of a nation's colonial economic policies[50]—to the general public on whose behalf the apology is made and who constitute the bulk of its audience. Apologies also model moral accountability and make an argument for when and how to apologize.

But if individual apologies are history lessons and moral arguments, then a practice of regularized apology is an ongoing course in these subjects. The result, if done well, is to give citizens a deeper and more sophisticated understanding of their history and a model for how to avoid and repair the continuing effects of past injustices. We have already mentioned the value of predictability for organizers and of modeling for developing norms of political discourse, but the educational dimension of regularized apology is also valuable. Regularized apology can help to replace false or simplistic historical narratives and unsound historiographic theories, undermine misguided nationalism, and oppose exceptionalism and the uncritical valorization of national heroes and founding documents. It can help to correct misconceptions and fill gaps in a nation's popular history, contextualize key historical events, and provide additional and alternative explanations of the nation's behavior and policies. For example, apologies by the Swedish government might inform citizens further about the state's mistreatment of the Sámi people or complicate the narrative about Sweden's neutrality during World War II.

The mechanism of this change is education. The reasons we have for updating and reforming public school textbooks or curricula also support RPA. However, because a political apology is also a public event, an opportunity for commemoration, and the launch of a public policy, it can become part of a polity's everyday political conversation in a way that school history lessons often cannot.

All of the benefits of RPA that we have identified turn on the power of a regular practice to generate and support descriptive and normative expectations. Celermajer and Mihai both suggest that the value of political apologies would increase if this type of practice could become more entrenched in our shared civic life.[51] We have argued that a practice of RPA could have that kind of influence. We think the case we have made is strong enough to warrant assessing the concrete measures that would have to be taken to implement something like our proposal.

5. OBJECTIONS AND REPLIES

Objections to our proposal come in three main forms, which echo skeptical challenges to political apology generally. One could argue that a practice of regularized political apology would be counterproductive, ineffective, or suboptimal.[52] In this final section, we address some of the more compelling formulations of these objections.

Counterproductive. One worry is that a policy of RPA would frustrate its own aims, exacerbate other problems, or create new problems. If individual apologies are effective, but only because they're irregular (e.g., immediately responsive to blame), then we shouldn't regularize the practice.

One version of this worry is that regularized apologies will trivialize some offenses by implicitly presenting them as comparable to other less serious ones. This is especially likely if, as we propose, the subject of the apology is a political choice. For example, one can imagine a progressive US president apologizing to the descendants of enslaved Africans and a subsequent conservative president apologizing to the descendants of mistreated German immigrants. We agree that this is a legitimate concern, but are not convinced that it is as likely or as worrisome as opponents might imagine. First, it will be difficult to get support from policy makers and advocacy groups for truly trivial misdeeds, especially if the public and regular nature of the practice increases competition among advocacy groups. Second, moderately serious injustices do warrant apology. Scapegoating of Germans and racism against other European immigrant groups was deeply unjust, if not nearly as cruel and degrading as slavery. Third, while the public nature of RPA invites comparison between recent apologies, these comparisons will ultimately be made by citizens themselves. Some will make invidious comparisons between the subjects of different apologies, while others will recognize these comparisons as evidence of ignorance or prejudice. Among other things, political apologies are arguments made to the public for a claim—that an apology and all it entails is justified—and the public must assess them. If anything, we might expect public reactions to follow a similar pattern to reactions to news coverage. Some take reporting about trivial issues to support its importance relative to serious news, while others view such reporting as evidence of a lack of care on the part of content editors.

Alternatively, one might worry that many citizens would come to see regular apologies as a sufficient response to past injustices and, as a result, object to further reparative measures. We have acknowledged this concern and responded to it by proposing that apologies be accompanied by a reparative policy, but this supplement might be inadequate if the effect of the practice is to undermine support for continuing efforts at redress. However, while this is a legitimate concern, it is less serious than it might seem, and its worst effects can be avoided. First, it's not at all clear that apologies have this effect. Second, while high-profile apologies may galvanize opposition to future reparative measures, there is no reason to think that RPA will be more susceptible to this effect than other interventions. Nor is there reason to think that such effects could not be largely avoided by careful planning, in particular by emphasizing that apologies, even if accepted, should not be understood as the definitive or final word on the subject of the injustice.[53]

Ineffective. Regularized apology could fail to achieve its aims for one of two reasons. On the one hand, it might be impossible to get started. It may be that no state would be willing or able to implement such a practice. On the other hand, it may be that political apologies would cease to be effective if performed regularly.

An argument of the first sort might point out that it is contrary to the interest of a state to have regularized political apology because (and to the extent that) apologizing makes the state legally or fiscally responsible to victims. A state might not want to admit fault if the consequence of such an admission is enormous. Given that apologies implicitly or explicitly take responsibility for injustice, a state might introduce legal grounds for groups to seek compensation, reparation, or other material and political redress.[54] However, this is not so much an objection as a description of the proposal. It is precisely the aim of an apology to accept responsibility for an offense and accept an obligation to make amends. The apology or its supplementary policy does not necessarily close the book on the injustice. Making amends is likely to be a longer process than the apology. Moreover, what a political apology entails for the future activism on the subject can be made explicit in the apology, though attempts to do so must take care not to undermine the sincerity or credibility of the apology. Finally, the degree to which opening the state to legal action is even possible will depend on the strength of the state's sovereign immunity.[55]

One could also argue that good political apologies require significant political capital and thus could not be done regularly. However, there is no reason to think that apologies require more political capital than other policy goals. Moreover, the aim of RPA is precisely to tie political apologies to the normal policy-making schedule and thus to "budget" for them. Nations constantly make policies aimed at protecting vulnerable groups, so apologies can be coordinated with policies aimed at repairing past damage or overcoming its harmful legacy.

Another worry is that regular insincere or unsupported apology would undermine citizens' faith in the state's apologies. For example, state apologies might

be undermined if citizens come to believe that an apology is being given merely because it is scheduled. Such a cynical interpretation may indeed be more plausible for RPA than for other options; and this risk, like other downsides of regularity, seems unavoidable. Thus, the question becomes whether the risk of misinterpretation can be counteracted or mitigated. We think it can. Most importantly, an apology will speak for itself. The more obvious and serious the wrongdoing, the less plausible it will be to believe that it is being made solely because it's scheduled. The policy designed to complement the apology will also speak for itself; a policy with a clearly important aim will be harder to dismiss.

Of course, if regularized political apologies do not speak for themselves, then it will become increasingly plausible to insist that the state's motive for apologizing is merely its commitment to regularity. However, the source of this failure is not regularity but poor apologies that undermine the public's faith in the practice. And this is a phenomenon familiar from many other political practices. Any perceived violation of a public commitment can undermine public faith in a representative, a policy, or the government as a whole. Indeed, this is exactly as it should be! Citizens should be responsive to their government's failures. If the practice fails despite careful, collaborative planning, then it seems appropriate for citizens to recognize that their political culture cannot support such a practice—just as it might be appropriate for citizens to learn that their political system cannot support a robust third party.

Suboptimal. One might suspect that other practices could produce the same or better results more efficiently. A state might create a memorial; commemorate a person, group, or event; pay reparations; or even grant sovereignty and devolve political power to a group. However, the literature on redress of historical injustices makes very clear that each of these methods faces its own (often similar) obstacles, and each requires an ethics.[56] Moreover, even if we imagine that a well-designed reparations policy can demonstrate repentance and make amends, an explicit apology adds a non-trivial value to such a policy.[57] So long as it is not viewed as a way of lowering the price tag, an apology can add weight to other reparative measures by explicitly acknowledging fault and repudiating one's actions and attitudes. Moreover, it tells the recipient not that they are being pitied, but that they are receiving what they are owed.[58]

Perhaps the strongest objection to RPA is that it would be better to apologize for injustices immediately—or immediately upon recognizing the injustice (e.g., in response to being blamed or to demands for an apology). Call this Immediate Political Apology (IPA). The negative version of this objection claims that none of the arguments in favor of RPA give reason to prefer it over IPA. The positive version claims that there are reasons to prefer IPA over RPA. We'll consider each in turn.

It is true that some of the reasons in favor of RPA would also support IPA. Assuming that apologies would still be frequent—especially if the proponent of

IPA accepts that states should apologize for historical injustices in response to legitimate requests by victims or advocacy groups—IPA could plausibly have a similar transformative effect on political culture, norms, and discourse on RPA.

However, some of the reasons that seem to favor IPA over RPA dissolve on closer inspection. Foremost among these is the desirability of immediate, spontaneous, or responsive political apology. One might think that IPA avoids a problem facing RPA, namely, that regularity creates and immediately politicizes the order in which injustices will receive apologies—call this the Queueing Question. This is true. The proposed practice requires making decisions about order, and these decisions will inevitably be partly political. However, given that states are making political apologies and that this is often done in a politicized and instrumental way, fairness demands that the Queueing Question be answered whether we implement RPA or continue with occasional political apologies.

However, notice first that RPA does not preclude such apologies; our proposal is consistent with a state also issuing spontaneous apologies. More importantly, though, it is not clear that spontaneous apologies are desirable, all things considered.[59] A state cannot meaningfully apologize for its unjust behavior until it has demonstrated a commitment to the moral and legal principles it has violated, so immediate apology may not always be appropriate. Moreover, spontaneous apologies are problematic in the political realm because political apologies often need to be planned. Most—albeit not all—successful political apologies require significant planning: consulting advocacy groups, meeting with policy makers, information gathering, education campaigns, bargaining over content and supplementary policies, and so forth. A successful political apology must therefore be scheduled—unless it is an immediate response to an unjust act *and* requires little or no supplementary action (e.g., Bush's apology for the accidental sinking of the *Ehime Maru*). If proponents of IPA support apologies for historical injustices—as they should—then they must support scheduled apologies. This is true even for relatively recent injustices, like the US military's treatment of prisoners at Abu Ghraib. In short, if the "Queueing Question" arises for RPA, it also arises for IPA.

Of course, if both proposals require scheduling political apologies, then both allow policy makers and advocacy groups to benefit from the predictability that comes with scheduling. However, our suggestion of a designated day of apology still has the benefit of providing both a target and a deadline. Thus, upon reflection, RPA and IPA seem much more similar than they first appeared.

6. CONCLUSION

We have argued that many states should implement a practice of regularized political apology (RPA) for their unjust actions and policies. This practice would compound the benefits of individual political apologies and has the potential to enhance those benefits by being more responsive to the demands of victim

advocacy groups and a more powerful force for developing salutary social and political norms than occasional or expedient political apologies.

That said, RPA is not a panacea. It is one tool among others by which a state can address its past injustices. Nor do we take the present argument to be a complete defense of RPA. Rather, we have offered an initial proposal and proof of concept. More could be said on a number of points, but we take our argument to make a strong case for the idea, value, and workability of a practice of regularized political apology.

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NOTES

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1. This is a sketch of what interpersonal apology is and how it works. For more developed accounts, see Gill ("Moral Functions"); Smith (*I Was Wrong*); Bennett (*Apology Ritual*). For our purposes, it is sufficient to understand how apologies help us resolve moral conflicts.

2. See Scher and Darley ("How Effective"). For empirical studies of when and why apologies are effective, see Struthers et al. ("Effects of Attributions"); Fehr and Gelfand ("When Apologies Work"); and Schumann ("Does Love Mean"; "An Affirmed Self"). Apologies may also indirectly yield group-level effects, such as promoting group cohesiveness and cooperation; see Irwin et al. ("Group-Level Effects").

3. Apologies may even wrong victims by pressuring them to (say they) forgive. Gendered norms of self-sacrifice are prevalent in many societies and may exert an objectionable pressure on women to care for the well-being of others, including those who wrong them, even at the expense of their own well-being. This pressure may come from exhortations to forgive (MacLachlan, "Practicing Imperfect Forgiveness," 186) or from questions that implicitly assume that one should or will forgive (Cherry, "What Does It Mean"). Insofar as their social meaning is informed by gendered norms of this sort, apologies could exert a similar kind of pressure, even if sincere and well-intentioned. (We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this point.) See Struthers et al. ("Role of Victim") for a discussion of other pressures.

4. We will sometimes refer to the "effectiveness" of an apology, especially when discussing challenges to designing and implementing political apologies (section 3). By this, we mean the ability of an apology to achieve the aims listed in the previous two paragraphs.

5. White, "Say You're Sorry"; Mihai, "When the State Says."

6. Mihai, "When the State Says," 220.

7. Melissa Nobles identifies seventy-two official apologies between 1965–2005, of which fifty-two were made by heads of state or government officials (*Politics of Official Apologies*, 155). A more recent estimate, by the European Research Council project Political Apologies across Cultures, is closer to 280. However, while we advocate apologies by heads of state, other institutions can make political apologies: the Catholic Church, corporations like Exxon or Amazon, multinational organizations like the United Nations or International Monetary Fund, or universities like Oxford or Georgetown. Parts of the state apparatus can also apologize independently of the state itself—for example, the Chicago Police Department, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, or the FBI.

8. Minder and Malkin, "Mexican Call."

9. Blatz, Schumann, and Ross, "Government Apologies."

10. Gill, "Moral Functions," 14; Weiner, *Sins of the Parents*, 145; Battistella, *Sorry about That*, 118.

11. See Trouillot ("Abortive Rituals"); Smith (*I Was Wrong*). However, see Collins ("'Government Should Be Ashamed'") for an argument that organizations can, and sometimes should, have moral emotions like shame about their behavior.

12. Celermajer, "From *Mea Culpa*"; MacLachlan, "Beyond the Ideal."

13. MacLachlan, "Beyond the Ideal," 17.

14. Lawford-Smith, *Not in Their Name*.

15. Cunningham, "Apology in Democracies."

16. Mason, *Ways to Be Blameworthy*.

17. For discussions of some of these obstacles see, among others, Lind (*Sorry States*); Smith (*I Was Wrong*); Mihai ("When the State Says"); Nobles ("Revisiting"); and Nuti and Page ("Ethics of Reparations").

18. Amighetti and Nuti, "Towards a Shared Redress"; Nuti and Page, "Ethics of Reparations."

19. This conclusion echoes similar claims made in various related fields, including education and organizing (Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*), management (Ansell and Gash, "Collaborative Governance"), migration (Clemens et al., "Migration"), and international development (Khera, "Cash vs. In-Kind Transfers").

20. Kampf and Löwenheim, "Rituals of Apology," 53.

21. This regular practice differs from the "Sorry Day" model, where Australians apologize for the same injustice every year, and from the Yom Kippur model, where one apologizes for one's misdeeds over the past year. Both are potentially useful ways to take advantage of regularity, but both are inadequate to the task of apologizing for centuries of past misconduct.

22. The question of on whose behalf an apology should be offered is more complicated than we suggest above. On the one hand, some would argue that an apology should not be made on behalf of the entire population when the victimized group is part of that

population. For example, the Canadian government's apology to the survivors of the Indian residential schools should not be made on behalf of those survivors, but rather on the behalf of the rest of the non-Indigenous Canadian population. On the other hand, members of victimized groups have sometimes been complicit in their group's victimization. In such cases, perhaps apologies should be made on behalf of these offenders, too, even if they are also victims. Both of these considerations should bear on the content of a political apology, but neither is decisive on its own. Sometimes the apology should be made on behalf of the entire population. Other situations may demand that the victimized group be excluded from those on whose behalf the apology is made, or that the complicity of some members of the victimized group be addressed. (We thank an anonymous reviewer for raising this issue.)

23. Nuti and Page, "Ethics of Reparations."

24. Of course, this is an empirical hypothesis that can only be evaluated by examining past and future political apologies, including the reception of Gover's apology on behalf of the Bureau of Indian Affairs for that agency's historic mistreatment of Native Americans (for a report from the time, see Kelley, "Indian Affairs"; for a critical perspective, see Celermajer, *Sins of the Nation*, 32). Moreover, our hypothesis is compatible with the possibility that such apologies might sometimes be as (or even more) effective because they are delivered by a member of the recipient group. Nonetheless, in order to highlight the risk of misinterpretation, we ask the reader to imagine how an audience might respond to Nelson Mandela apologizing for Apartheid or a Jewish chancellor of Germany apologizing for the Holocaust—or, more concretely, to consider how the social meaning of Willy Brandt's *Kniefall* is bound up with his identity. There is nothing about political apology that precludes such acts, but they are lacking in many respects, are likely to be less powerful as a result, and constitute a strong reason to find a better alternative. Danielle Celermajer suggests that F. W. de Klerk may have been the only leader able to apologize effectively for apartheid (Celermajer, *Sins of the Nation*, 38). Previous South African governments rejected principles of equality on which such an apology must be grounded and post-apartheid governments have been led by victims of apartheid.

25. We have not included a responsibility condition—that is, an explanation of how the state must be connected to its unjust act/policy in order for it to be responsible in a way that makes an apology fitting. One reason for this is that responsibility is, if anything, a condition on the fittingness of political apologies, and we are primarily interested in justification and workability. Another is that responsibility is relevant to political apologies generally and not specifically to RPA. Finally, reasonable disagreement among experts about when a state is responsible makes formulating an uncontroversial condition very difficult, and the debate can obscure the fact that existing states are responsible for enough of their past injustices that we have strong reason to consider the case for RPA. Nonetheless, we recognize the significance of responsibility for fitting, justified, and workable political apologies. And, like conditions (i–iii), the strength of one's preferred responsibility condition will determine which historical injustices states should apologize for.

26. Some would argue that only liberal democracies, in which state apologies can claim to represent the will of the people, can or should apologize (Mihai, "When the State Says"). We disagree. States, like individuals, may endorse some norms and not others. Just as a self-avowed racist can apologize for wrongdoing to which his racism is irrelevant (e.g., reckless driving), so an illiberal state can apologize for failing to meet its recognized

commitments (e.g., protecting intellectual property rights). Nonetheless, we agree that illiberal states often cannot meaningfully apologize for their wrongdoing because they are not committed to the relevant principles (e.g., protecting human rights). See, for example, Schneider's critique of the Brazilian state's apology, in 1995, for many of the injustices perpetrated by the earlier military regime ("What Makes a State Apology"). That said, our argument does not depend on which states one believes can meaningfully apologize, so long as one accepts that *at least* liberal democracies are fitting apologizers.

27. Condition (iii) admittedly does not provide criteria for determining whether a state has demonstrated the relevant commitment. A bright line cannot be drawn between sufficient and insufficient commitment to the value underlying an apology. On the one hand, a state is not restricted to apologizing only for policies that it has specifically and explicitly repudiated. For example, it is reasonable to infer from Germany's repudiation of the Holocaust that it repudiates all genocidal activities. On the other hand, a state is not committed to every implication of its apparently universal values. For example, the United States was not always demonstrably committed to social and political equality, despite its founding mantra that "all men are created equal." The problem is that states may be inconsistent in the enforcement of their commitments, and it is difficult to distinguish when a state is failing to act on a commitment and when it lacks the commitment. While it would be nice to have a simple test of whether a state is sufficiently committed to a value, deciding whether a particular political apology is possible and workable will, inevitably, require considering sociopolitical details of the case and its historical and present context.

28. Celermajer, *Sins of the Nation*, 80–82.

29. Blustein, *Forgiveness and Remembrance*, 210–13.

30. Carranza, Correa, and Naughton, *More Than Words*, 8–9.

31. Amighetti and Nuti, "Towards a Shared Redress." Nuti and Page ("Ethics of Reparations") discuss both of these problems as they arise, for planning and implementing reparations policies. Indeed, the publicity of RPA could plausibly help advocates for other means of redress—for example, memorialization or reparations—to avoid obstacles to advocacy and implementation in their own campaigns.

32. Nuti and Page discuss a case of such bad faith bargaining between the Canadian government and two different groups advocating for redress for the Chinese Canadians head tax ("Ethics of Reparations," 340).

33. Gill, "Moral Functions," 17; White, "Say You're Sorry," 1281–85; MacLachlan, "Beyond the Ideal," 25–26.

34. A striking example of this is George H. W. Bush's statement that he would *never* apologize for American policy. See Battistella (*Sorry about That*, 146).

35. Neiman argues that German *Vergangenheitsaufarbeitung* shows that social change begins with lip service (*Learning from the Germans*, 302). Laurel Fulkerson (*No Regrets*) suggests that our moral norm of apology—or, more specifically, the norm of expressing remorse and a change of heart—has itself developed significantly since antiquity. If that's true, then we have further evidence that such norms can develop, and we can hypothesize a similar mechanism for their development.

36. Kampf and Löwenheim, "Rituals of Apology."

37. See Hudson ("Promises Kept") on humanitarian aid. See Tosi and Warmke ("Moral Grandstanding") but also Levy ("Virtue Signalling Is Virtuous") on expressing moral beliefs.

38. Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*, 297; MacLachlan, "Trust Me," 444; MacLachlan, "Beyond the Ideal," 26; Carranza, Correa, and Naughton, *More Than Words*, 8–9. See also indigenous Australians' comments in Wahlquist ("Rudd's Apology").

39. Amighetti and Nuti, "Towards a Shared Redress."

40. Nuti and Page, "Ethics of Reparations."

41. Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*, 303.

42. Mihai, "When the State Says," 203. See also Celermajer (*Sins of the Nation*, 239) and MacLachlan ("Beyond the Ideal," 24–25).

43. Lind, *Sorry States*; Mihai, "When the State Says"; Cunningham, "Apology in Democracies." This problem is different from the worry that shame feels bad, but the latter worry also deserves attention. A political apology may be justified even if some people will feel shame in response. Other factors must be considered, most notably the value of receiving a deserved apology. Moreover, both shame and pride can take desirable and undesirable forms. For example, national pride based on civic nationalism, which encourages openness to pluralism, seems preferable to pride based on ethnic nationalism, which encourages xenophobia (Reeskens and Wright, "Subjective Well-Being," 1460). Shame in response to acknowledged failures can promote both humility and resilience. Humility can help individuals develop self-awareness about their own motivations, biases, and limits and charity in assessing others' motivations, thereby promoting interpersonal trust. Resilience comes when a person bears the shame of apology, weathers it, and recognizes that apologizing is tolerable. These effects are not limited to individuals; polities can also use shame to develop humility and resilience.

44. Kampf and Löwenheim, "Rituals of Apology," 50.

45. National Public Radio, "Senate Apology for Slavery."

46. Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*, 21–22, 265.

47. Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*, 267.

48. See Barack Obama's speech quoted in Neiman (*Learning from the Germans*, 318).

49. The discussion above address the shame and pride of those who would oppose a justified political apology. However, we must not neglect the shame and pride of its recipients. Apologies, like other reparative acts, communicate to their recipients that they are receiving redress, not pity (Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*, 330). Acknowledging that they are getting what they're owed can combat the shame felt by members of victimized groups and can be grounds for pride.

50. Ypi, "What's Wrong with Colonialism"; Celermajer, "From *Mea Culpa*," 58–59.

51. Celermajer, *Sins of the Nation*; Mihai, "When the State Says." Blustein (*Forgiveness and Remembrance*) makes a similar claim about commemoration.

52. This is different from the claim that *individual* political apologies can be counterproductive, ineffective, or suboptimal. As we noted in section 3, obstacles to implementation are contingent, and a proposed apology that seems likely to fail can be reassessed and, if

necessary, revised, delayed, or abandoned. For example, those political apologies that have made things worse for the recipient group by generating backlash against victim groups or supporters of apology (see Lind, *Sorry States*; Cunningham, "Apology in Democracies") seem to have correctable flaws.

53. MacLachlan, "Beyond the Ideal," 28.

54. Suppose it is very unlikely that the United States would ever implement our proposal. This fact, while unfortunate, would not undermine the case for RPA generally. Unwillingness to acknowledge wrongdoing because doing opens one to sanctions is not a defensible moral position. However, insofar as its unwillingness to implement the practice alters the incentive structures for other states, especially other serial wrongdoers, it may render the proposal unworkable. Accepting binding commitments to climate action may be a relevant analogy and basis for assessing the workability of our proposal.

55. See "Sovereign Immunity" for a brief introduction to states' immunity from lawsuits. See Cohen ("Legislating Apology") for a discussion of whether apologies should be admissible as evidence of fault.

56. That is, each requires an account of when and how to pursue these modes of redress. See Blustein (*Forgiveness and Remembrance*) for an ethics of commemoration, and Nuti and Page ("Ethics of Reparations") for an ethics of reparations.

57. Mihai, "When the State Says," 220.

58. Neiman, *Learning from the Germans*, 330.

59. See Frantz and Bennigson ("Better Late than Early") for a discussion of the effects of apologies on individuals.

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