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MEMORANDUM

TO: Executive Council, American Society of International Law
FROM: Victoria Sahani, Chair
2024 – 2025 ASIL Book Awards Committee
DATE: December 12, 2024
RE: Report of the 2024 – 2025 ASIL Book Awards Committee

It was my honor and delight to chair this year's ASIL Book Awards Committee, working with Anna Spain Bradley, Kabir Duggal, Ben Love, Blanca Montejo, and Jarrod Wong.

The Book Awards Committee members carefully reviewed over forty books nominated by their authors or publishers and unanimously recommended the following authors and books for the following four ASIL book awards.

1. CERTIFICATE OF MERIT FOR A PREEMINENT CONTRIBUTION TO CREATIVE SCHOLARSHIP

The Committee selected Godwin Eli Kwadzo Dzah, *Sustainable Development, International Law, and a Turn to African Legal Cosmologies* (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

This monograph introduces a novel framework for examining the intersection of sustainable development, international law, and African legal traditions. Dzah critiques the “paradox” of legal universalism and skillfully bridges multiple fields, including international law, environmental law, African studies, legal pluralism, and Indigenous rights, contributing significantly to each. He challenges Western-centric models of sustainable development, which often overlook local, Indigenous, and customary legal systems, thereby exacerbating inequality and environmental degradation. Dzah advocates for adopting African legal cosmologies, which emphasize communal ownership, interconnectedness with nature, and collective well-being, offering a more holistic and context-sensitive approach to development. He argues that African legal systems, rooted in eco-legal philosophies, can enhance global development frameworks by incorporating “ecocosmologies”—African eco-legal principles that promote sustainable environmental practices grounded in Indigenous knowledge. Through African case studies, he demonstrates how these legal traditions can address contemporary challenges in environmental protection, resource management, and social justice. The book proposes a “turn” to African legal ontologies as a foundational principle for reimagining sustainable development in international law, suggesting that this shift could revitalize global sustainability discussions by incorporating diverse, non-Western perspectives. Dzah's interdisciplinary and innovative approach provides a nuanced understanding of how African legal traditions intersect with global legal frameworks. In an era where sustainability is a central global concern, his call for a more inclusive, context-sensitive approach to development is timely. His work underscores the importance of integrating diverse legal systems into the global sustainability discourse, offering creative and alternative solutions to complex global challenges.

2. CERTIFICATE OF MERIT FOR HIGH TECHNICAL CRAFTSMANSHIP AND UTILITY TO PRACTICING LAWYERS AND SCHOLARS

The Committee selected Matiangai V. S. Sirleaf (ed.), *Race and National Security* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

This edited volume introduces a novel and long-overdue contribution to the existing scholarly study of national security. Through six sections, consisting of twelve chapters, the book takes on the scant treatment of race and racism in national security. In what Sirleaf describes as “hidden in plain sight” in her introduction, the book aims to center the treatment of race and racism at the core of the study and practice of national security. Indeed, the volume achieves this aim. Alongside Sirleaf, twelve experts of international law in their own right have authored insightful and impactful chapters that take the reader on a journey across domestic, transnational, comparative, and international law perspectives on national security into an intertwined, sophisticated conversation. The result is a framework that reconceptualizes any thinking about national security as one that must also grapple with the field’s role in perpetuating racism. In doing so, *Race and National Security* has established itself as required reading for future scholars and students of national security. It calls upon us to critically engage with the racialization of words like “threat” and “terrorist” to account for how white supremacy is a threat to national security and to see the irony of how racism intertwines with international justice to hold certain groups of people to account while overlooking crimes long committed by colonial powers and powerful nations today. The editorial efforts led by Sirleaf and the compelling contributions of the chapter authors have created an original contribution to national security and international law that will prove generative to the study and practice of this field for many years to come.

3. CERTIFICATE OF MERIT IN A SPECIALIZED AREA OF INTERNATIONAL LAW

The Committee selected Natalie Jones, *Self-Determination as Voice* (Cambridge University Press, 2024).

The book offers a crucial examination of Indigenous peoples’ participation in international governance, emphasizing both the progress made and the persistent barriers to further progress. It adroitly traces the expansion of institutional mechanisms over the past four decades that allow Indigenous voices to be heard in global decision-making processes, particularly within the UN and other international bodies. While these mechanisms reflect a growing acceptance of Indigenous self-determination that prefigures its emergent status as customary international law, the author argues that the ideal of full and effective participation remains elusive. The book shows how Indigenous involvement is often limited by systemic, institutional, and material challenges, which reveal an “illusion of inclusion” that may serve to legitimize Eurocentric international frameworks while perpetuating colonial dynamics. The book further explores how states and international organizations often instrumentalize Indigenous participation, framing it as beneficial to their broader goals rather than as a means to fulfill Indigenous peoples’ self-determination. This insightful critique underscores the tension between the rhetoric of inclusion and the reality of limited power within global governance structures, highlighting the ongoing struggle for meaningful self-determination.

4. ROBERT E. DALTON AWARD FOR OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION IN THE FIELD OF FOREIGN RELATIONS LAW

The Committee selected Sean D. Murphy and Edward T. Swaine, *The Law of U.S. Foreign Relations* (Oxford University Press, 2023).

This authoritative treatise is a groundbreaking work that provides a detailed and insightful examination of U.S. foreign relations law, spanning ten chapters that thoroughly analyze the constitutional, statutory, and historical foundations of executive, legislative, and judicial authority in foreign affairs. Murphy and Swaine explore complex and contemporary legal issues, such as the treatment of detainees at Guantanamo Bay and the controversial relocation of the U.S. embassy in Israel, offering a balanced and thought-provoking discussion on these topics. The book also navigates the interplay between treaties, customary international law, and domestic legal frameworks, offering readers a holistic understanding of foreign relations law. Notably, the treatise provides a rich historical perspective while addressing pressing modern challenges, making it an invaluable resource for scholars, practitioners, and policymakers. The Robert E. Dalton Award honors exceptional contributions to the field of foreign relations law, and this book exemplifies the intellectual rigor and depth the award seeks to recognize. With its comprehensive scope and erudite analysis, *The Law of U.S. Foreign Relations* sets a new benchmark in the study and practice of foreign relations law, contributing significantly to developing this crucial legal field.

Respectfully submitted,

2024 – 2025 ASIL Book Awards Committee

Victoria Sahani, Chair
Anna Spain Bradley
Kabir Duggal
Ben Love
Blanca Montejo
Jarrod Wong

cc: Mélida Hodgson, President
Michael D. Cooper, Executive Director
Michael Termini, Chief of Staff