

Capitalism as civilisation: a history of international law

Tzouvala, Ntina, author

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Abstrak

Methodologically and theoretically innovative, this monograph draws from Marxism and deconstruction bringing together the textual and the material in our understanding of international law. Approaching 'civilisation' as an argumentative pattern related to the distribution of rights and duties amongst different communities, Ntina Tzouvala illustrates both its contradictory nature and its pro-capitalist bias. 'Civilisation' is shown to oscillate between two poles. On the one hand, a pervasive 'logic of improvement' anchors legal equality to demands that non-Western polities undertake extensive domestic reforms and embrace capitalist modernity. On the other, an insistent 'logic of biology' constantly postpones such a prospect based on ideas of immutable difference. By detailing the tension and synergies between these two logics, Tzouvala argues that international law incorporates and attempts to mediate the contradictions of capitalism as a global system of production and exchange that both homogenises and stratifies societies, populations and space.