IEPS – International Economic and Political Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences, Charles University

Title of the thesis:	Liberal Democracy and the Limits of State Coercion: The Detrimental Nature of Racial Policing in the United States
Author of the thesis:	Erin Garrett
Referee *(incl. titles)*:	Janusz Salamon

Comments of the referee on the thesis highlights and shortcomings (following the 5 numbered aspects of your assessment indicated below).

1) Theoretical background: The Author mostly succeeded in finding the right balance between the need to cast her theoretical net widely to establish the basic principles of the limitation of state coercion in liberal democracy on one hand, and the need to focus narrowly and in some depth on the case of transgression of such limits of state coercion in the case of racial policing in USA. The Author made a convincing selection of key thinkers (from J.S. Mill to J. Feinberg) whose contribution to the debate about the limits of state coercion is fundamental. She explains convincingly her decisions to narrow the scope of her exploration, when it comes to the discussion of the possible definitions of liberal democracy, by focusing from the start on the paradigmatic case of the American democracy (as introducing a comparative element into her work would make her necessarily short study unmanageable).

2) Contribution: The Author came up with interesting topic that is typically overlooked in the scholarly literature on state coercion, state violence and on deficiencies of liberal democracy in general, on malfunctioning of particular liberal democracies across the world or on the problems of the American democracy today. While she explores a narrowly defined case of racial policing in USA, she comes up with a sustained and largely convincing argument that violation of the equality of liberty that occurs in the context of racial policing has much broader ramification than just harm to individuals who fall victims to what the Author considers an excessive enforcement of law by police in USA in the black majority neighborhoods. Thus she presents an interesting argument that the style of exercising state power by police should be treated as a litmus test of the health of liberal democracy in general. In this way the conclusions of the thesis go beyond the discussion about the problematic nature of the racial policing in USA.

3) Methods: The methods seem to me suitable to the largely theoretical/philosophical nature of the work. (One might perhaps criticize the Author for not bringing to the picture more empirical data that would allow the reader to grasp the scale and importance of the particular case of racial policing in USA in the broader context of policing in USA in general, but that might take the Author to far afield from her largely theoretical argument.

4) Literature: The literature seems quite satisfactory, given rather limited nature of the debate of the subject matter – that is of the policing as an expression of the state coercion - in political philosophy.

5) Manuscript form: The style of the work is quite impressive, characterized by lucidity, clarity and analytic rigor.

> ***Box for the thesis supervisor only.*** *Please characterize the progress in the working out of thesis (e.g. steady and gradual versus discontinuous and abrupt) and the level (intensity) of communication/cooperation with the author*
> The work of the Author on the thesis was continuous, with ever growing intensity of involvement and sufficient communication with the supervisor.

Sugested questions for the defence are:

1. How would the Author respond to potential arguments of the more Conservative members of the American political audience who are likely to put the security considerations before the considerations of fairness or equality of liberty. They may argue that since the level of violent crime in America is very high in comparison with some other countries and is significantly higher in some neighbourhoods in American than in other, therefore every possible policy recommendation discussed in this thesis will is likely to undermine already limited ability of American police to defend innocent victims of violent crime.

2. Would the main argument of the thesis hold in liberal democracy with no history of racism (perhaps due to the racially homogenious nature of the society)? In other words: is the main argument of the thesis mostly about the apparent limited ability of liberal democracy to uproot racism or is it primarily a more general argument about the need of „policing the police" in the context of all liberal democracies (whether they have a significant history of racism or not)?

I recommend the thesis for final defence. I recommend the following grade: A

SUMMARY OF POINTS AWARDED (for details, see below):

CATEGORY	POINTS
Theoretical background (max. 20 points)	18
Contribution (max. 20 points)	18
Methods (max. 20 points)	18
Literature (max. 20 points)	19
Manuscript form (max. 20 points)	19
TOTAL POINTS *(max. 100 points)*	**92**
The proposed grade (A-B-C-D-E-F)	

DATE OF EVALUATION: 11.6.2019

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Referee Signature

Overall grading scheme at FSV UK:

TOTAL POINTS	GRADE	Quality standard
91 – 100	**A**	= outstanding (high honour)
81 – 90	**B**	= superior (honour)
71 – 80	**C**	= good
61 – 70	**D**	= satisfactory
51 – 60	**E**	= low pass at a margin of failure
0 – 50	**F**	= failing is recommended

The referee should give comments to the following requirements:

*1) THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: Can you recognize that the thesis was guided by some **theoretical fundamentals** relevant for this thesis topic? Were some important theoretical concepts **omitted**? Was the theory used in the thesis consistently **incorporated with the topic** and hypotheses tested? Has the author demonstrated a genuine **understanding** of the theories addressed?*

Strong	*Average*	*Weak*	
20	*12*	*< 8*	*points*

*2) CONTRIBUTION: Evaluate if the author presents **original ideas** on the topic and aims at demonstrating **critical thinking** and ability to draw **conclusions** based on the knowledge of relevant theory and relevant empirical material. Is there a distinct **value added** of the thesis (relative to knowledge of a university-educated person interested in given topic)? Did the author explain **why** the observed phenomena occurred? Were the **policy implications** well founded?*

Strong	*Average*	*Weak*	
20	*12*	*< 8*	*points*

*3) METHODS: Are the **hypotheses** for this study clearly stated, allowing their further **verification and testing**? Are the theoretical explanations, empirical material and **analytical tools** used in the thesis relevant to the research question being investigated, and adequate to the aspiration level of the study? Is the thesis **topic comprehensively analyzed** and does the thesis not make trivial or **irrelevant detours** off the main body stated in the thesis proposal? More than 12 points signal an exceptional work, **which requires your explanation "why" it is so**).*

Strong	*Average*	*Weak*	
20	*12*	*< 8*	*points*

*4) LITERATURE REVIEW: The thesis demonstrates author's full understanding and **command of recent literature**. The author **quotes** relevant literature in a **proper way** and disposes with a **representative bibliography**. (Remarks: references to Wikipedia, websites and newspaper articles are a sign of **poor research**. If they dominate you cannot give more than 8 points. References to books published by prestigious publishers and articles in renowned journals give much better impression. Any sort of **plagiarism** disqualifies the thesis from admission to defence.)*

Strong	*Average*	*Weak*	
20	*12*	*< 8*	*points*

*5) MANUSCRIPT FORM: The thesis is **clear and well structured**. The author uses appropriate **language and style**, including the academic **format for quotations**, graphs and tables. The text effectively refers to graphs and tables, is easily readable and **stimulates thinking.** The text is free from typos and easy to comprehend.*

Strong	*Average*	*Weak*	
20	*12*	*< 8*	*points*