



The Humanities and Social Sciences at Center Stage

Speech of the President of the Max Planck Society

Professor Dr. Patrick Cramer

On the awarding of the Max Planck-Humboldt Research Award

December 2, 2025

AXICA, Berlin

– Check against delivery –

Good evening everyone, and a very warm welcome here at the Brandenburg Gate!

It is a great pleasure to welcome you all to the Max Planck-Humboldt Research Award ceremony. Tonight, we come together to celebrate three extraordinary scientists whose work expands our understanding of the world and helps shape our future.

A very special welcome goes to our awardees. Surabhi Ranganathan, Prerna Singh, and Jamie Kreiner – your achievements and your courage to ask difficult questions inspire us all. We are honored that you are here with us in Berlin, and we look forward to the ideas and collaborations that your time in Germany will spark.

I am also delighted to see so many familiar faces and friends in the audience – among them our former federal minister Edelgard Buhmann! Thank you all for being here and for your continued support. Lieber Herr Zanner, thank you for covering for our colleague Robert Schlögl who had to cancel due to illness.

Dear State Secretary, lieber Herr Jungk,

Thank you for joining us tonight and thank you for the support of the federal ministry! Congratulations to the ministry for launching a major new initiative, the Hightech Agenda. It focuses on future technologies such as fusion energy, batteries, or quantum computing. These are essential for future value creation.

But on their own they are insufficient to foster true societal progress. For that, we also need the humanities, the social sciences, and, of course, law. These fields must be highlighted, they must receive reliable funding, and their voices must be heard, also in evidence-based decision-making.

These disciplines are a gift – and a great strength of our academic landscape. They give us orientation in the present and help us imagine and shape possible futures. Yet, they are often less visible. This is maybe because they rarely



produce results that can be measured in sales or bibliometric figures. But we should remember: Not everything that counts can be measured!

Also, on a global scale, social sciences and humanities often get in conflict with politics, as currently seen in the United States. In this respect, let me emphasize that here in Germany and in Europe, we are proud to offer the academic freedom these fields need to flourish, and we welcome talent from all over the world.

This year, the Max Planck-Humboldt Research Award shines a spotlight exactly on these areas. It is a privilege to honor three exceptional, internationally renowned researchers whose work spans international law, comparative politics, and history. This award also gives the German host institutions a unique opportunity: to build on this outstanding research and to develop new ideas together with you.

Dear guests, let us place the humanities and social sciences at center stage – not only tonight, but every day. Let us celebrate the courage to think deeply, to question, and to connect perspectives across disciplines and borders.

Thank you very much, and please enjoy this special evening.