

## SANCTIONING LIBERAL DEMOCRACIES\*

**Avia Pasternak**

Nuffield College and the Department of Politics and IR, University of Oxford

Much work has been done in recent political and international theory on the question of the appropriate scope of international involvement in the internal affairs of states. Two dominant debates come to mind in this respect: the ‘humanitarian intervention debate’, which explores the legitimacy of military intervention in cases such as extreme violations of human rights, collapse of states, and humanitarian disasters; and the ‘global justice debate’, which examines the appropriate scope of economic aid from rich to poor nations. In neither of these discussions has much attention been given to the particular question of the legitimacy and necessity of involvement in *democracies*, let alone Western liberal democracies. This omission may be due to the fact that liberal democracies rarely find themselves in situations that provoke the outrage or concern of the international community. Even so, liberal democracies do perpetrate, from time to time, serious injustices. Should the international community get involved in such cases? Is its involvement a moral duty? And if so, what is it that should be done? While these questions are rarely addressed in the current literature, they are the concern of ordinary citizens and policy makers who need to decide whether and how to react when democracies behave in an unjust manner.

The answers to the questions posed above may seem straightforward to the cosmopolitan liberal, who regards states as the mere instruments for implementing global justice and equality.<sup>1</sup> On the cosmopolitan liberal account when a state behaves unjustly, towards its own citizens or towards foreigners, it violates its very own *raison d'être* and hence the international community has both the right and the obligation to intervene.<sup>2</sup> However, for the social liberal (a view also known as ‘ethical particularism’, ‘nationalism’, or ‘the morality of states view’) things are not that

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<sup>1</sup> The terms ‘social liberals’ and ‘cosmopolitan liberals’ are borrowed from Charles Beitz, "Social and Cosmopolitan Liberalism," *International Affairs* 75, no. 3 (1999).

<sup>2</sup> See for example: Allen Buchanan, "Secession and Nationalism," in *A Companion to Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ed. Robert E. Goodin and Phillip Pettit (London: Blackwell, 1993), 591.

simple. The grounding premises of social liberalism are that political communities, nations or peoples (I will not discuss the differences between these definitions) have an ethical and moral value in and of themselves, and that members of these communities have special obligations to each other, which are stronger than the obligations they have to persons outside their community. These premises cast doubt on both the right and the obligation of political communities to get involved in each other's internal affairs. In what follows I will argue that in fact social liberals have good reasons to support interference in the affairs of democracies, by other democracies. The argument will be developed as follows: in part 1 I explore the social liberal approach to external involvement in the internal affairs of states, and explain why it could be interpreted as objecting to interference in democracies. In part 2 I develop the notion of the 'community of liberal democracies', which serves to explain why social liberals have reasons to support interference in democracies by democracies. It will be beyond the scope of this paper to provide a general defence of the social liberal view, but I should point out that this view has the greater appeal for most people in the world today.<sup>3</sup> Therefore defending interference in democracies from this perspective has the practical advantage of being relevant to contemporary political debates and concerns.

Before embarking upon the debate, I should clarify the meaning of the terms used throughout this paper: the term 'involvement' refers to the range of means that political communities use in order to bring about a change of leadership or of policy in a particular political community; 'intervention' refers particularly to the use of military force in order to bring about that change; and 'interference' refers to the range of means short of military force used in order to achieve that goal. There is a wide range of such means that sender states can use. One important distinction is between *positive* and *negative* means: the former includes offering incentives to the target state so that it changes its policy,<sup>4</sup> as well as providing financial and other kinds of support to the internal opposition in the target state. The latter refers to such means as condemnations, boycotts and sanctions. Here we distinguish between several types of

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<sup>3</sup> Thomas Nagel, "The Problem of Global Justice," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 33, no. 2 (2005): 126.

<sup>4</sup> David A. Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985) 182-183.; David Cortright and George A. Lopez, *The Sanctions Decade: Assessing Un Strategies in the 1990s* (Boulder, Colo.; London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000) 29-31.; Johan Galtung, "On the Effects of International Economic Sanctions: With Examples from the Case of Rhodesia," *World Politics* 19, no. 3 (1967): 415.

sanctions: diplomatic sanctions (e.g. rupture of diplomatic relations); cultural sanctions (e.g. sports and academic boycotts); military sanctions (e.g. restrictions on supply of arms); sanctions on communication (e.g. transportation and post); and finally - economic sanctions (e.g. restrictions on trade).<sup>5</sup> All of these types of sanctions can be aimed at the population of the target state as a whole, or aimed at certain individuals within the target state (also known as 'smart' or 'targeted' sanctions);<sup>6</sup> and they can be unilateral (one sender state), multilateral, or universal.<sup>7</sup>

## 1. The Problem of Getting Involved

Contemporary debates pay scant attention to the specific case of involvement in liberal democracies. A sceptic might say that such discussion is superfluous, as liberal democracies are founded upon principles of justice, and involvement in their internal affairs is never necessary. When a government perpetrates a serious injustice it can no longer be called a liberal democracy, even if it rests on such institutional arrangements as popular vote, the rule of law and the protection of civil rights. But this claim seems too remote from political reality: if we define liberal democracies in ideal terms, then indeed the likelihood that they commit serious injustices would greatly diminish (though not disappear)<sup>8</sup>. But if real-world liberal democracies are our concern, then the fact of the matter is that they do commit serious injustices. This observation raises the question of what makes a democracy a democracy, and when a democracy should no longer be called a democracy. For the purposes of the current discussion, I set these questions aside. I assume that real-world liberal democracies are political communities that live up to certain values and practices: that the body of citizens has the control and authority over political power; that the government is accountable to its citizens; that the government is chosen by free and fair system of voting to which all citizens have equal access; and that all citizens enjoy a certain set of civil, political and economic rights, which enables them to participate in the

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<sup>5</sup> For a full typology of non-violent sanctions see Margaret P. Doxey, *International Sanctions in Contemporary Perspective*, 2nd ed ed. ([Basingstoke]: Macmillan, 1996) 14-15. For a more general typology of forms of interference see Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* 12-14.; Galtung, "International Economic Sanction," 381..

<sup>6</sup> On smart sanctions see: Adam Winkler, "Just Sanctions," *Human Rights Quarterly* 21, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>7</sup> Galtung, "International Economic Sanction," 381. See also Makio Miyagawa, *Do Economic Sanctions Work?* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992).

<sup>8</sup> John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, Rev. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1999) 313-318.

political system effectively.<sup>9</sup> While real-world democracies profess allegiance to these values and practices they also, from time to time, deviate from them, without being disqualified as democracies. The wrongdoings of liberal democracies can be characterized as either self-regarding or other-regarding: self-regarding injustices are directed towards members of the political community, e.g. institutional, political and economic discrimination against minority groups. Other-regarding injustices are directed towards persons who are not members of the political community, e.g. occupation, torture of prisoners of war and economic exploitation of other political communities.<sup>10</sup>

We now need to examine whether social liberals would approve of external involvement in cases where democracies behave in such a faulty manner. Social liberals say very little about the particular problem of involvement in unjust liberal democracies, but they do refer to other cases in which they think involvement is legitimate and necessary. By examining these cases we can reach some conclusions as to what position social liberals would take with relation to involvement in the affairs of unjust democracies.

There are two types of involvement that are much discussed in the social liberal literature – military intervention, and economic aid on a large-scale from rich to poor nations. Both forms of involvement are justified in the social liberal account only in scenarios where the target state is in serious crisis. Thus military intervention is legitimate on the social liberal account, as stated by Michael Walzer, in self-defence against an act of aggression; in support of a political community in its justified struggle for independence; as counter-intervention, namely intervening in a civil war in order to counter balance another external intervention; and as humanitarian intervention, namely in response to massive violations of human rights by dominant

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<sup>9</sup> For the democratic basic premises see: Anthony Harold Birch, *The Concepts and Theories of Modern Democracy* (London: Routledge, 1993); Robert Alan Dahl, *Democracy and Its Critics* (New Haven ; London: Yale University Press, 1989).; David Held, *Models of Democracy*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge: Polity, 1996).; Philip Pettit, *Republicanism : A Theory of Freedom and Government, Oxford Political Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).; John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993).; Jeremy Waldron, "The Constitutional Conception of Democracy," in *Democracy*, ed. David M. Estlund (Malden, Mass. ; Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Additional cases which do not fit neatly to either category are violations of rights of persons who are not citizens of the state but have some degree of membership in it (e.g. demeaning treatment of foreign workers and women trafficking).

forces within a state.<sup>11</sup> The justification for intervention in each of these cases is grounded in the social liberal premises, which extol the autonomy and self-determination of nations, but also uphold a universally shared minimal understanding of morality.<sup>12</sup> In all the aforementioned scenarios it is either that the autonomy and self-determination of the target political community is under serious threat, or that the target political community commits such violations of universal standards of morality, to the extent that it loses its right for self-determination.<sup>13</sup>

Concerning the second type of involvement - the obligation of rich nations to provide economic aid to poor nations - social liberals on the whole take the view that this duty of assistance is limited to the duty of bringing extremely poor nations up to a cut-off point where their population can achieve a minimally adequate standard of living.<sup>14</sup> As with the case of military intervention, the motivation for economic interference is justified both by a shared universal concern for the minimal welfare of all human beings, and by the value of national autonomy and self-determination, which exercise is dependant on a certain level of economic welfare. And again, as with the case of intervention, such interference is justified only when the target political community is in serious crisis.

None of the scenarios discussed above fits the profile of involvement in unjust liberal democracies, which, as mentioned before, does not concern *extreme* deprivation of basic needs or *massive* violations of human rights. Is external involvement ever

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<sup>11</sup> Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 2nd ed ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1992) 101; Michael Walzer, "The Moral Standing of States: A Response to Four Critics," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9, no. 3 (1980): 214. Other social liberal accounts follow roughly the same lines; for example Rawls justifies intervention only in cases of grave violations of the right to liberty, property and formal equality, in a minimal interpretation (John Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* (Cambridge, Mass. ; London: Harvard University Press, 1999) 79-81, 93.); cf. David Miller, "Reasonable Partiality Towards Compatriots," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 8 (2005): 76.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Walzer, *Thick and Thin: Moral Argument at Home and Abroad* (Notre Dame, Ind.; London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994) 16.

<sup>13</sup> Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* 101. Interestingly enough, Rawls argues that intervention in cases of gross violations of human rights is grounded in the principles of self-determination and self-preservation, rather than concern for universal standards of morality. He argues that 'outlaw states' (states that violate human rights) tend to be on the whole more aggressive and dangerous, and that 'all peoples are safer and more secure if such states change, or are forced to change, their ways' (Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* 81.). To what extent these claims are empirically valid is a disputed question, as argued in Charles R. Beitz, "Rawls's Law of the Peoples," *Ethics* 110 (2000): 685.

<sup>14</sup> David Miller, "Justice and Global Inequality," in *Inequality, Globalization, and World Politics*, ed. Andrew Hurrell and Ngaire Woods (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 198.; Nagel, "The Problem of Global Justice," 131.; Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* 105-119.

justified in democracies as well? At first glance, there are reasons to believe that social liberals would give a negative answer to this question. After all, social liberals state clearly that they would object to intervention and to large-scale economic aid in non-critical cases, and the arguments they use in order to justify these restrictions could lead to the conclusion that they would have a similar response with regard to forms of involvement less direct than intervention or large-scale economic aid.

There are three justifications in the social-liberal account for limiting intervention and large-scale economic aid to cases of severe crisis. The first argument is consequential, namely that intervention is likely to bring bad results; the other two arguments are deontological: that states do not have the right to intervene in each other's affairs, and that they do not have the obligation to do so. In what follows I will explain how each of these arguments can be applied also to the case of milder forms of interference in the affairs of democracies.

The consequential case against intervention is connected to the idea of national autonomy. Accordingly, a viable change in a political community can only be achieved from within, by the people who are most familiar with the dynamics of their own political community. Walzer refers to this idea as 'the doctrine of self-help', and warns that foreign policy makers are very likely to misread the internal politics of the target state; risk using inadequate means to rectify it; and may generate unintended and disruptive consequences.<sup>15</sup> Similar cautionary arguments can be used against the provision of large-scale economic aid to countries that are not under the minimal threshold: excessive aid hinders the forces of the market and can undermine the development of political and cultural institutions that are necessary to achieve economic independence and stability. Similar consequential concerns are raised with relation to milder forms of international interference, most pertinently with relation to economic sanctions, which efficacy is subject to much controversy in current debates.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* 87.

<sup>16</sup> The question of whether economic sanctions work has received vast attention in the literature, and is no where close to conclusion. For critiques on the use of sanctions see Doxey, *International Sanctions*; Galtung, "International Economic Sanction."; Joy Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly Remedy: The Ethics of Economic Sanctions," *Ethics and International Affairs* 13 (1999).; Joy Gordon, *Cool War: Economic Sanctions as a Weapon of Mass Destruction* (2002 [cited]; available from <http://harpers.org/CoolWar.html>.; Joy Gordon, "When Intent Makes All the Difference in the World:

The second objection raised by social liberals to intervention is that states do not have the *right* to intervene in each other's affairs (nor perhaps to provide large-scale economic aid), in light of the moral status and autonomy of political communities: nations have the right to shape their own fate, and even if their actions seem unjust or unwise to us, we have a duty to tolerate their choices and refrain from intervention. In other words, Social liberals adopt something similar to the harm principle at the international level: as long as political communities do not cause significant harm to others, we do not have a right to force upon them our own notions of morality. This argument is sometimes used by social liberals also in reference to less direct forms of interference. Thus for example John Rawls argues in *The Law of Peoples* against the use of political sanctions and material incentives in order to change the policies of societies that do not adhere to the liberal principles of justice.<sup>17</sup> Similarly, David Miller warns us that measures such as public condemnation and threats to sever trade links or withdraw military co-operation in order to force a political community to comply with the demands of justice are problematic in the social liberal view, because they are 'widely regarded as compromising the self-determination of the nation in question, and for that reason as unacceptable'.<sup>18</sup> Note that social liberals do not argue that all modes of international condemnation violate the autonomy of the target state. States, like persons, have the right to express their contempt when another state behave in disagreeable ways.<sup>19</sup> However, social liberals would object to sanctions and condemnations when they are aimed at *forcing upon* the target political community standards of justice and morality that it does not share. After all, non-military pressure can have, under some circumstances, an enormous impact on the target community,<sup>20</sup> and in this respect it may be incompatible with the duty to respect traditions and practices that are different from ours.

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Economic Sanctions on Iraq and the Accusation of Genocide," *Yale Humans Rights & Development Journal* 5 (2002).; Robert Pape, "Why Economic Sanctions Do Not Work," *International Security* 22, no. 2 (1997).; Harry R. Strack, *Sanctions : The Case of Rhodesia* (Syracuse, N.Y: Syracuse University Press, 1978). For positive evaluations of sanctions, and the conditions under which they can work see Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft*.; Cortright and Lopez, *The Sanctions Decade*.; Gary Clyde Hufbauer, Jeffrey J. Schott, and Kimberly Ann Elliott, *Economic Sanctions Reconsidered*, 2nd ed ed. (Washington, DC: Institute for International Economics, 1990).; John Hovi, Robert Huseby, and Sprinz Detlef, "When Do (Imposed) Economic Sanctions Work?," *World Politics* 57 (2005).

<sup>17</sup>Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* 59,84-85.

<sup>18</sup> David Miller, *On Nationality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995) 49.

<sup>19</sup> Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* 84.

<sup>20</sup> Cortright and Lopez, *The Sanctions Decade* ch. 2.; Doxey, *International Sanctions* ch. 6.

The third and most forceful objection that social liberals raise against intervention and large-scale economic aid is that such involvement would be an unreasonable demand to make of other political communities in the world. This argument is derived from the social liberal premise that individuals have special and particular obligations to members of their own community, and that these special obligations cannot be overridden by the needs and distresses of people outside the political community. Take for example Thomas Nagel's recent defence of the social liberal view, where he argues that obligations of distributive justice exist only between the members of a political community, and therefore the duty of assistance to other political communities arises only in cases of acute distress that triggers humanitarian concerns.<sup>21</sup> Admittedly, some social liberals argue that we have a more complex system of duties than what Nagel portrays, with *some* duties to foreigners but stronger duties to co-nationals. Miller, for example, identifies several types of duties we have both to co-nationals and to foreigners; these often compete with each other and it may be the case that our duties to foreigners will have the upper hand, in light of considerations of urgency and severity of need. However, on this account too it is only with relation to a rather limited range of basic rights that the needs of compatriots and foreigners compete. Moreover, even with relation to these basic rights there is an upper limit to the extent of sacrifice that a political community can be demanded to make in order to help foreigners. This upper limit is significantly lower with regard to deprivation of rights which the sender political community itself bears no direct responsibility for.<sup>22</sup>

This third argument against intervention and large-scale economic aid seems applicable to milder forms of interference as well, at least in some cases. After all, it is often the case that such interferences demand heavy costs. Perhaps it is less so in the case of verbal condemnations, but the offering of political or material incentives to

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<sup>21</sup> Nagel, "The Problem of Global Justice," 130.; cf. Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* 60-62. A similar idea is presented with relation to humanitarian intervention in Allen Buchanan's critique of social liberalism, where he argues that the social liberal idea of special obligations to compatriots cannot allow for intervention even in cases of humanitarian crisis: humanitarian intervention in another country is not in the interests of the sender state's citizens, them being required to pay its cost with their resources and sometimes with their lives. See Allen Buchanan, "The Internal Legitimacy of Humanitarian Intervention," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 7, no. 1 (1999): 74-75.

<sup>22</sup> Miller, "Reasonable Partiality Towards Compatriots," 75-77.

a political community in order to persuade it to change its ways, or the imposition of political, cultural and economic sanctions can be rather costly to the sender states, in terms of the restrictions on trade, commerce and so on.<sup>23</sup> If social liberals argue that a political community cannot be expected to pay high costs to solve the internal problems of other political communities, then it seems plausible that they would find the requirement to sanction other political communities over-demanding.

## 2. The case for interference

The previous section concluded that social liberals would interpret a wide range of forms of involvement in the affairs of other states as counter-productive; as a violation of their right to self-determination, and as over-demanding. I should note some social liberals do condone the use of international pressure in some cases. For example, in his later work Walzer makes the claim that brutal and oppressive regimes should be dealt with by diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions from the international community.<sup>24</sup> However, while this concession justifies interference in nastier authoritarian regimes, it does not provide special justification for interferences in democracies. In what follows I want to assert that specifically in the case of unjust *democracies*, social liberals have good reasons to support interference from other *democracies*, and that these reasons are grounded in the very premises of the social liberal view. My argument here addresses only the deontological objections to interference in democracies, and does not look into the question of the efficacy of interference in general and of sanctioning democracies in particular. There are good reasons to believe that the impact of sanctions may in fact be positive when they are targeted at democracies, but I will not discuss these reasons here.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> On the cost of sanctions to the sender state see Doxey, *International Sanctions* 67-81.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Walzer, "The Argument About Humanitarian Intervention," *Dissent* 49, no. 1 (2002): 30.

<sup>25</sup> Briefly, the impact of sanctions on the public sphere of the target community, and in particular on the political capabilities and power of domestic opposition groups within the targeted nation is significantly under-explored (Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* ch. 8.; Cortright and Lopez, *The Sanctions Decade* 20.) What does seem to come out of studies on this issue is that 'sanctions are more likely to be effective in societies where there is some degree of democratic freedom than in a rigidly totalitarian state'. (Ibid 22) This is especially so in cases where there is internal opposition to government policies, and where the opposition supports the sanctions. Such internal opposition indeed exists in liberal democracies. Moreover, in democracies, the reasons for the sanctions put forward by the sender states, and their impact on the economy and public mood of target state are open for public debate. Unfortunately, the lack of case studies of sanctions on liberal democracies make it hard to examine their potential effect on public opinion and on internal opposition, but it seems plausible to conclude in light of existing findings, that sanctions on democracies could be effective.

A starting point for the defence on interference in democracies is a statement made by the British Labour government in 1999, in support of the humanitarian intervention in Kosovo. It stated that such intervention 'could be made compatible with national interest if the notion of nation was widened to include the principles that Britain stood for.'<sup>26</sup> This statement invokes Britain's own national interests, and in this respect it is compatible with the social liberal approach. However it proclaims that these interests include obligations to entities other than Britain itself, as part of its own identity as a 'civilized nation'.<sup>27</sup> In other words, the statement implies that it could very well be in the interest of a political community to act in the name of moral progress and intervene in the affairs of another political community, despite the costs of such intervention. The statement justifies humanitarian intervention which purpose was to put an end to the atrocity of ethnic cleansing. But we can draw from it some interesting conclusions also with regard to the legitimacy of interference in democracies. In what follows I would argue, along similar lines, that it could be in the national interest of liberal democracies, and indeed their right, to interfere in the affairs of other liberal democracies.

The notion of 'civilized nation' rests on an understanding that political communities are not *isolated* ethical communities. Each political community functions in, and is affected by, a matrix of relations with other political communities. Moreover, political communities often develop special relations with other political communities with which they have much in common. What I have in mind is the transnational affinities that are often created by such factors as geographical proximity, shared history, shared religion, and shared systems of values and practices. These factors, in the social liberal account, create political communities and provide the grounds for special obligations amongst compatriots. But as the political reality tells us, they can create forms of communities *between* political communities as well, what one may call 'communities of nations'. Examples for such communities of nations are ample in

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<sup>26</sup> Quoted in Jennifer M. Welsh, "Taking Consequences Seriously: Objections to Humanitarian Intervention," in *Humanitarian Intervention and International Relations*, ed. Jennifer M. Welsh (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 59-60.

<sup>27</sup> Note that I do not argue that the originators of this argument were sincere; I merely point to the fact that they attempted to convince to British public that intervention in Kosovo is the right move by arguing that 'it is in our own national interest', rather 'it is in the interest of hundreds of thousands of people whose lives we can save'.

world politics, e.g. regional transnational communities such as the EU or the political network of democracies in South America. The ties between the members of these communities are considerably weaker than those within the political community; nevertheless, communities of nations have distinct influence over their members, in light of their cultural, commercial, military and political ties. There are many explanations for the origins of such international communities, but one reason for their importance is the fact that such communities are a source of inspiration and legitimisation for their member states' values and beliefs. In order to see this, compare such communities of nations to another voluntary social group whose members share and practice a certain set of ideals, for example a group of environmental activists. Belonging to this group is important for each member, as the values of the group are perceived by each member to be good and true. The fact that the association is thriving is also important for the members, as it enhances their belief in their shared values. Perhaps the members can live an environmentally conscious life on their own, but the knowledge that others share their principles and beliefs is an important source of encouragement, inspiration, and pride, and it enhances the legitimacy of the members' own position, in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. Communities of nations of the kind I described above function in the same way: they are communities of peers that inspire and reinforce the shared values of their member states, and in this respect are important for the thriving of these political communities. As a result, the political communities who are members of these transnational communities have certain rights and obligations with regard to each other, even though – in light of weaker nature of communities of nations – these rights and obligations are not as comprehensive as those that exist between members of a political community.

I will not say more about the formation of communities of nations in the scope of this paper. Instead, in what follows I want to suggest that such a community of peers is formed between Western liberal democratic nations. This claim rests on the observation that Western liberal democracies share much in common: they have similar and closely knit histories; they share a common set of values, of practices and of moral beliefs; and they face similar and often shared challenges and threats to their democratic way of life. As such, liberal democratic nations inspire and influence each other. I will not provide here empirical evidence for this claim; instead, I argue that *if*

indeed a community of liberal democracies exists, then certain rights and obligations are created amongst its members. And, that one of these rights and obligations is to interfere when a member of the community of democracies deviates from the community's shared set of values.

In order to see this consider again the group of environmental activists. Imagine that the members of this group discover that one of them has been violating one of the group's norms. For example they find out that Anne no longer recycles, or stopped using energy saving light bulbs. Despite these particular violations Anne still sees herself as a member of the group, and takes pride in it. In this situation, it seems that other members of the group have the right to act in certain ways towards Anne, in order to convince her to change her ways: they do not have the right to break into her house and change the light bulbs themselves, but they may certainly chastise Anne for her behaviour, and express their anger and resentment. If all this does not work, they may restrict Anne's access to the group. By proclaiming to be a member of the group, but behaving in a way that violates its norms, Anne is sending the message, to the group and in general, that not using energy saving light bulbs is a legitimate practice. Condemning Anne would preserve the integrity of the group and its loyalty to its values, and hopefully convince Anne that her behaviour as an environmentalist activist is wrong. As long as Anne sees herself as the member of the group she exposes herself to sanctions in cases where she violates the group norms.

Going back to the case of the community of liberal democracies, we can argue that similarly, when the citizens and the government of a democratic political community behave in a way that seriously violates democratic values and practices, citizens and policy makers in other liberal democracies have the right not to tolerate this behaviour. The purpose of expressing discontent is both to strengthen the sender states' faith in their values;<sup>28</sup> and to convince the citizens and government of the target community to change their unjust ways, by pointing out the discrepancy between their behaviour and the democratic values.

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<sup>28</sup> On this symbolic goal of sanctions see Baldwin, *Economic Statecraft* ch. 6 ; Doxey, *International Sanctions* 57-58.; Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly," 137-138.; Robin Renwick, *Economic Sanctions, Harvard Studies in International Affairs ; No. 45* (Cambridge, Mass: Center for International affairs Harvard University, 1981) 85.

An example that buttresses this claim is the foreign policy of the fledgling democratic nations of the Southern Cone in South America in the 1980's: these nations realised that the consolidation of a democratic alliance between them would eliminate the risk that they themselves would again be taken by authoritarian regimes. This realization led to the consolidation of the democratic community of the South Cone, with strong economic relations and political involvement between Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Bolivia.<sup>29</sup> The democratic community in the Southern Cone was at the time a community of fledgling democracies, but their concerns with regard to the way in which their peers might affect them is relevant for established democracies as well. Even in consolidated democracies, the democratic ethos and culture is not fixed over time, but constantly develops and changes. As social liberals tell us, our values develop in response to and in light of those of other members in our community;<sup>30</sup> therefore it seems plausible that the nature of democratic culture in one liberal democracy would be at least partly affected by what happens in other liberal democracies with which it shares the democratic ethos and ideals. Thus if a liberal democracy A adopts a certain malpractice that violates some core liberal democratic principle (e.g. it tortures prisoners of war), then other liberal democracies should be concerned for the sake of their own democratic ethos. For as long as democracy A proclaims itself to be a liberal democracy, its behaviour sends the message that violating this certain principle is compatible with being a member of the community of liberal democracies, and this may lead to the deterioration of this democratic principle in other liberal democracies as well. In order to prevent this, democracy A should be condemned and sanctioned by the other liberal democracies of the world.

To put this argument somewhat differently, since liberal democracies are committed to treat their citizens with equal concern and respect, they have the obligation, *to their own citizens*, to maintain a thriving democratic culture. This obligation may include the requirement to interfere in the affairs of other liberal democracies. A final reply to the social liberal objections to interference in democracies is that liberal democracies may also be an additional source for the obligation to interfere when one of them behaves unjustly, namely the unique capacity democracies have to influence one

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<sup>29</sup> Dominique Fournier, "The Alfonsian Administration and the Promotion of Democratic Values in the Southern Cone and the Andes," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 31, no. 1 (1999).

<sup>30</sup> Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition," in *Multiculturalism : Examining the Politics of Recognition*, ed. Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994).

another, in light of their peer group relations. I take the lead here from Bernard Williams' work on the notion of shame; he explains that shame, and the ensuing willingness to change faulty behaviour, results from a perception, or feeling, that our actions would be condemned by social agents whom we respect, and whose values we share.<sup>31</sup> Similar observations are made by Larry May, who in his work on collective responsibility and group behaviour explains how the behaviour of individuals in a group is influenced to a large extent by the behaviour of other members in the group.<sup>32</sup> May draws normative conclusions from these observations, namely that group members have the special responsibility to ensure that other members observe the group values and practices.<sup>33</sup> Note that May's argument is based upon the assumption that merely having a capacity (exclusively or more so than others) can encumber an agent with an obligation, even if the capacity was not acquired voluntarily. Naturally, the cost of such involuntary obligation for the agent should be reasonable, and subject to considerations of fairness.<sup>34</sup>

Obligations that are derived from capacity arise in the case of liberal democracies as well: if we accept the claim that democracies have esteemed peer group relations with each other, then we can conclude that condemnation of unjust behaviour by fellow democracies has promising potential. Since democracies share an ethos, values, and practices, their power of influence over each other may be quite significant. As a result, liberal democracies may have an obligation to police each other's behaviour and to respond by means of condemnation and sanctions when one of them commits a serious injustice. The purpose of this condemnation would be to shame the citizens and government of the target community, by demonstrating to them how far they have strayed from their own democratic ethos. This obligation would be conditioned upon the cost of interference being fair and reasonable (I will not discuss here what that

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<sup>31</sup> I am following here Calhoun's analysis of Williams in Cheshire Calhoun, "An Apology for Moral Shame," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 12, no. 2 (2004): 132-135. Cf. Gabriele Taylor, *Pride, Shame and Guilt: Emotions of Self-Assessment* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985) 53-57.

<sup>32</sup> Larry May, *Sharing Responsibility* (Chicago ; London: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 79-83.

<sup>33</sup> May mentions as example the development of inappropriate 'desensitized feelings' among the staff of an emergency room. According to May 'it is no excuse from guilt merely to say that one does not hold the attitudes that are prevalent in one's community. The desensitized attitudes that are prevalent in medical institutions are properly subject of guilt based on neglect by all members of these communities...' Ibid. 85.

<sup>34</sup> On non-voluntary obligations that are derived from capacity see Tony Honoré, "Are Omissions Less Culpable?," in *Responsibility and Fault* (Oxford: Hart, 1999).

would imply), and – on the social liberal account – would be weighted against the stronger obligations to compatriots.

To conclude, if a community of nations is formed between liberal democracies, then social liberalism should not reject interference by democracies in the affairs of other democracies. Such interference would be in the interest of peer democratic polities, in their right, and could also be their obligation. Note that this argument is compatible with the social liberal view, which sees the political community as having primary importance and priority over other forms of community. As we already know social liberals recognize other communities as having value both in themselves and for the thriving of the political community. One well-known example for this is Rawls's treatment of the family, which he sees as crucial for the development of the sense of justice amongst individuals and therefore as necessary for the preservation of the just state.<sup>35</sup> Similarly, the community of liberal democracies is an association that is necessary for the thriving of a democratic political community itself, and it is in order to support their own values that liberal democracies should mind the affairs of other liberal democracies.

It is worth mentioning another set of deontological concerns that has been raised particularly with regard to the use of economic sanctions on political communities, namely the problem of collateral damage. Critics of sanctions on this front argue that economic sanctions target innocent populations who have nothing to do with the deviant policies of their leaders.<sup>36</sup> This critique is forceful with regard to sanctions against non-democratic communities; there indeed the level of responsibility that citizens have over their government's actions is limited, and often the harm inflicted upon them is of no great concern to their own leaders.<sup>37</sup> For this reason, much of the recent work on sanctions has been focused on more sophisticated forms of economic sanctions, such as targeted, or smart, sanctions.<sup>38</sup> Examples of such targeted sanctions in the case of democracies are the boycotts on Israeli products that are manufactured in the occupied territories. The harm that these boycotts bring is directed mainly at

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<sup>35</sup> Rawls, *A Theory of Justice* 405-409.

<sup>36</sup> Gordon, "A Peaceful, Silent, Deadly.": Gordon, *Cool War: Economic Sanctions as a Weapon of Mass Destruction* ([cited]).

<sup>37</sup> George A. Lopez, "More Ethical Than Not: Sanctions as Surgical Tools," *Ethics and International Affairs* (1999): 146.

<sup>38</sup> For contemporary projects of targeted sanctions see <http://tinyurl.com/n2y1m>

Israeli (and international) factories that are located in the occupied territories, but the message they send is aimed at Israeli society as a whole.<sup>39</sup>

Targeted sanctions are one solution for the problem of collateral damage. In addition to that, it should be noted that collateral damage poses less of a problem in the case of sanctions on democracies. As mentioned before, one of the goals of sanctions on democracies is to shame the citizens of the target state. The background assumption of this goal is that in democracies, the ultimate responsibility for government's actions lies with the citizens who authorize its policy. However, it is also true that there must be limits on the level of harm that may be imposed on democratic citizens. It is impossible to set exact criteria that would apply in all cases, but some general considerations should be taken into account. One main consideration, in the social liberal view, is that sanctions should not damage the democratic nature and processes of the target state. So for example, the effect of economic sanctions on the political stability of the target state community must be taken into account. Furthermore, considerations of fairness should be taken into account, as the harm caused by the sanctions should be proportional to the injustice. Finally, sanctions ought to take into consideration the citizens' actual ability and efforts in affecting their government's policies. If the citizens of the target state are already engaged in protest against their government, to a reasonable extent, sanctioning them would be both illegitimate and counterproductive.

In conclusion I would like to point to some practical aspects of sanctioning liberal democracies, namely the ways in which such sanctioning is to be carried out by the sender states. There are three possibilities in this respect: first, *individual citizens and civil organizations* in democratic societies can initiate sanctions against democratic polities which behave unjustly; or they can act to influence their own government to sanction fellow democracies; second, *individual governments* can initiate unilateral

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<sup>39</sup> A Recent example for such targeted boycotts are the decision of the Anglican Church to withdraw its investments from companies which make profit from the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank, among them Caterpillar, which provides the bulldozers used to build the separation wall in the West Bank and Jerusalem. See <http://tinyurl.com/dqci9> (in Hebrew). The British group Architects and Planners for Justice in Palestine (APJP) also calls for a boycott on construction companies involved in building the separation wall. See <http://www.haaretz.co.il/hasen/spages/682239.html>. There are calls for similar boycotts by Israeli left wing groups, and many Israelis impose them themselves. See <http://tinyurl.com/cdevd>

sanctions, or they can act to persuade other democracies to participate in multilateral sanctions; finally, *international representative bodies* (for example, a commission of the relevant liberal democracies) can be entrusted with the role of deciding upon multilateral sanctions.

Certainly there are advantages to the procedure of initiating sanctions through an international authoritative body: the fact that the decision to sanction is agreed upon by representatives of several democracies (to wit, the members of the community of liberal democracies) reduces the chances of misjudgements and biases. It also strengthens the message delivered by the sanctions, and thus renders them more effective. Sanctions initiated by individual states and by non-state organizations are more problematic in this respect; when individuals, and perhaps even individual states, decide for themselves when a fellow democracy ought to be sanctioned they may be prone to unjust misjudgements and biases. Effective sanctions require a careful consideration of the political scene within the target state, sensitivity to the effects of the sanctions on the political community and flexibility in readjusting them accordingly. It is doubtful that individual citizens and civil society organizations, and perhaps even individual democratic governments, can create and sustain the complex mechanisms necessary to comply with the criteria for the legitimacy of sanctions. That is not to say that individual citizens ought to perceive injustices committed by other democratic governments as none of their concern; on the contrary, as was argued throughout, democratic citizens should be wary of violations of democratic principles that occur elsewhere, for the sake of their own democracy. But, since their ability to design a careful enough response is, in most cases, limited, they should channel their protest to affecting their own representative government to take action in more institutionalised channels.

#### **4. Conclusions**

I did not provide in this paper empirical evidence for the actual existence of transnational community ties between liberal democracies in the world today. In my view, we have strong reasons to believe that such ties indeed exist, at least between some liberal democracies, which see themselves as sharing a way of life and aspirations. But this claim certainly calls for further research on the relations between

democratic political communities in the world. Putting these empirical concerns aside, there are some normative conclusions we can draw from the discussion, with regard to the social liberal vision of the world order. The most salient account on this front is Rawls's *The Law of Peoples*. There Rawls suggests that the international order be governed by eight principles of international law. The liberal peoples of the world decide upon these principles, but they are designed so that they can be accepted upon non-liberal decent peoples as well.<sup>40</sup> This restriction provides an explanation for the principles' rather parsimonious nature. However, according to the account provided here, liberal democracies have good reasons to impose upon themselves and upon their fellow democracies an additional and more restrictive set of liberal rules, and to give each other the right and the obligation to interfere when a member of that community of nations violates its rules. This additional set of rules would provide the background for the creation and the consolidation of a community between liberal democracies. Liberal democracies should aspire to create such a community, because it has the potential of securing them from future deterioration of the democratic values in their own territory. Were they to subject themselves to such mutual supervision, liberal democracies could pre-empt the risk of perpetrating serious injustices, a risk from which no democracy in the world today is immune.

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<sup>40</sup> Rawls, *The Law of Peoples* 32-37, 58.

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