

# From Domestic to Global Solidarity: The Dialectic of the Particular and Universal in the Building of Social Solidarity

Joseph M. Schwartz

## I. Introduction: The Dialectic between Particular and Universal in Constructing Global Solidarity

Contemporary moral and political philosophers who analyze the concept of solidarity tend to be divided between (philosophical) pragmatic communitarians and neo-Kantian universalists. The pragmatic communitarians contend that the bonds of mutual care that characterize a solidaristic community are constituted within particular societies where members share a strong common identity.<sup>1</sup> To construct a “we,” these theorists argue, particular groups define themselves against an “other.” In contrast, those writing in the Rawlsian or neo-Kantian tradition claim that human cooperative endeavors can only be sustained over time if carried out under just conditions of mutual respect. Thus, Charles Beitz and Thomas Pogge contend that today’s interdependent global society morally necessitates us to extend Rawls’s “difference principle” across borders.<sup>2</sup>

The communitarian position emphasizes the exclusionary side of democratic sovereignty. The *demos* is self-defined, and, in the absence of a global state, must exclude others. But an overly pragmatic defense of particularism denies the universal impulse of democracy’s commitment to the equal moral worth of persons. A conception of community membership as static and given negates the historical reality that social movements of the excluded resort to universalist arguments when demanding to be included in the democratic polity. The egalitarian logic of democratic solidarity involves the equitable sharing of the risks, burdens, and opportunities of an interdependent society across lines of race, gender, and class. Thus, particular movements for democratic inclusion inevitably press their potential fellow citizens toward a more capacious and universal conception of equality.

But, thus far, the sharing of social risk has only been achieved at the level of the state (with some social and human rights being institutionalized on a regional level within the European Union [EU]). Transnational movements for environmental, labor, and human rights have had modest successes and, upon occasion, the international community responds generously to natural disasters (but more unevenly to massive violations of human rights, as in Rwanda, the former Zaire, or Darfur). The neo-Kantian position underestimates the difficulty of transforming a transnational “ought” into a regional, let alone international “is” of *effective* human, labor, and environmental rights. The road to greater international solidar-

ity cannot transcend the politics of the state, but, rather, must run through it. For only states that have achieved an advanced degree of economic security and solidarity are likely to help construct institutions of international governance that “level-up” global human rights and living standards.

Achieving a modicum of social solidarity has been difficult enough to achieve at the level of the state. The neo-liberal pressures of late global capitalism have trimmed, if not seriously weakened, many of the social rights achieved by the labor movement and the left in advanced industrial democracies.<sup>3</sup> This has been particularly the case in the United States. Thus, social theorists interested in reviving a politics of social solidarity must first comprehend why there has been such a weak domestic political response to the United States’ emergence as the most inegalitarian of advanced industrial democracies. Only by doing so can we develop the moral and political means by which to revive democratic egalitarian politics at home.

Aspirations for greater international solidarity must be grounded in transnational movements that have sufficient presence in particular states to compel these polities to adopt foreign economic and diplomatic policies that enhance global labor, environmental, and human rights conditions. Just as the moral horizons of democratic polities have expanded only through the struggles of formerly excluded social groups, so will the transition from national to regional to international solidarity occur more through political contestation than by means of abstract philosophical argument. First World citizens are more likely to support policies that will enhance global justice when motivated by enlightened self-interest than by altruism. Philosophical arguments can inform the ideology of movements for social justice, but it will be the particular politics of democratic polities that determine whether a more equitable world emerges.

## **II. The Anemic State of Solidarity in the Contemporary United States**

The concept of solidarity is as alien to the American polity as at any time in our history. From the Reagan administration onward, neo-liberal political hegemony has nearly obliterated from the public mind the ideals of social rights and social insurance. Conservative policies of tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy, combined with massive budget deficits, have blunted the tools of solidaristic social policy in the United States—progressive taxation funding high-quality, universal public provision and generous universal social insurance schemes.<sup>4</sup>

Let us take as a working definition of solidarity the readiness of individuals to aid other members of a common enterprise—an enterprise in which each feels a duty to promote a minimal level of well-being for all other members. Political theorists have long debated whether such an impulse derives from a universal human inclination to aid those less fortunate than ourselves<sup>5</sup> or from human engagement in particular activities that construct bonds of mutuality among their members (the classic example being the trade union motto “an injury to one is an

injury to all”). In the process of constructing shared obligations of care, we inevitably define a “we” versus a “non-we” or “others.” Yet the historical expansion of shared risk and aid from the family to the tribe to the fellow citizens of an advanced welfare state demonstrates that there are no inherent membership limits to a solidaristic community. On the other hand, the bureaucratic nature of the welfare state provides a weaker emotive connection among its members than the bonds of direct aid of the religious congregation or the shared risks of the military platoon.

What does solidarity (or in the masculinist term of the French Revolution, *fraternité*) have to do with engendering democratic citizenship? First, democratic citizens must have sufficient empathy and respect for other citizens that they take umbrage when their “fellows” are excluded from the ability to participate in public life—whether through overt discrimination or through radical inequities in social resources and political power. The declension of the value of equal citizenship in the United States is best epitomized by how our polity funds political campaigns. Ever since the *Buckley v. Vallejo* decision of the Supreme Court in 1976, the highest law of the land treats money as a form of personal speech. Thus, those who have the most economic resources have the most voice. And voice—speech—is what influences votes in a democracy. The quality of a democracy depends not just on the secret ballot, but on the manner of deliberation and public discussion which precedes the vote.

In part, this impoverished democracy arises because the primary American public role is that of a passive consumer—the agora of the mall has replaced the agora of the polis. Marketplace freedom is the ideology of our eviscerated democracy, as consumer choice involves neither deliberation nor production. Transnational corporations create desires for their goods and we “choose” how to consume in the privacy of the shopping aisles or in front of on-line catalogues. Despite the efforts of the living wage and global justice movements, few Americans are conscious of the horrendous working conditions under which the products we consume (cheaply) are produced. Consumers need not care for the moral quality of those who consume next to them. But in a democracy in which all share responsibility for the common good, citizens must be concerned for the moral well-being of their fellow deliberators.

Historically, the willingness to redistribute goods and opportunities depends upon seeing others as moral equivalents—there but for fortune go you or I. And such mutual identification historically has depended primarily upon exclusionary definitions of community membership transmitted via ideologies of nationalism, racism, and masculinity. The brotherhood of republican virtue depended heavily upon a pride of self-sufficiency—the self-sufficient owner of arms. Recognizing this historical reality, feminist theorists such as Carol Gould, Nancy Fraser, and Anne Phillips argue that radical democrats must reconstruct public policy so as to transcend its naturalizing the unit of social protection and consumption as that of a nuclear family with a male bread-winner and a stay-at-home mother/provider.<sup>6</sup>

But even masculine forms of brotherhood have declined within civic life. We not only increasingly “bowl alone,” but much of middle-class social activity is instrumental to advancing the competitive interests of one’s children or one’s career. We can debate the causes of the decline of associational life. Can it just be due to TV and longer commuting times, but not also to extended family working hours? But few can deny that voluntary participation in political life has withered. The upper middle class not only increasingly isolates itself in suburban and exurban gated communities that preclude the opportunity for encounters across race and class lines. Their children no longer even run the risk of having to serve their country in battle. For a large segment of American society, the experience of the second Gulf War approximates that of Jean Baudrillard’s “simulacrum.” Those not economically “drafted” into the military make no sacrifice for the war effort. The detachment of most Americans from the risk of mutual defense is epitomized by Bush’s urging of patriotic Americans to “shop,” so as to avoid a post-9/11 recession!

### **III. Communitarian versus Kantian Philosophical Conceptions of Solidarity**

The tension between the parochial limits of mutual identity and the universalist impulses of democratic social movements is mirrored in philosophical debates about the nature and limits of fellow feeling. Richard Rorty has argued that solidarity does not arise from any natural, universal human tendency to identify with the needs of others, but rather from a learned identity of “we-ness” that distinguishes “us” from “others.”<sup>7</sup> Norman Geras, who defends universal conceptions of moral reasoning, says the historical record refutes Rorty’s reading of Holocaust rescuers as being motivated by particular attachments to Jews as neighbors, friends, and co-workers. Rather Geras claims that studies of the rescuers demonstrate that a deontological sense of human decency, rather than particularist attachment, motivated most rescuers. They hid Jews—at great risk to their own well-being—because “it was the right thing to do.”<sup>8</sup>

The ideology and values of democratic social movements consciously cultivate broader notions of solidarity. Why else the labor movement’s slogan “an injury to one is an injury to all” or Martin Luther King’s clarion call that “injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere?” This sense of solidarity across differences may explain the disproportionate role that people of both the religious and secular left played in the resistance to Nazism and in the rescuing of its victims. As Amy Gutmann argues in *Identity and Democracy*, contemporary philosophical emphasis on ascribed or cultural identity as the basis for political community ignores the reality that fellow feeling often arises from moral and political values.<sup>9</sup> Recent philosophical work on the rise of “cosmopolitan” identity may somewhat overestimate how much of the world’s population lives within “hybrid” cultures. But Anthony Appiah, Amartya Sen, and other “cosmopolitans” correctly argue not only that greater global cultural interpenetration has spread

notions of toleration and human rights; such concepts have indigenous roots in cultures well beyond modern Europe.<sup>10</sup>

The moral belief in social justice has served as a powerful motivating force for people to participate in democratic political movements. The commitment to democratic equality sustained civil rights activists across race, geographical, cultural, and class lines. Neither the trade union movement nor the civil rights movement could have “solved” the collective action problem of why anyone would assume the extraordinary risks of speaking out for the rights of the vulnerable absent the heroic roles played by ideologically motivated people of faith, radicals, socialists, and communists.

Michael Walzer’s writings on democratic community and social welfare illuminate further the tension between particular bonds and universal sentiments within both the theory and practice of democratic solidarity. Walzer holds that the extent of social provision (and the decommodification of basic needs) reflects the extent of a community’s bonds of fellow feeling. Walzer’s essays eloquently defend the welfare state and advocate the democratization and decentralization of its provision while reiterating the classic social democratic position that for each individual to have the equal opportunity to fulfill their human potential they must be assured the basic goods of care.<sup>11</sup>

Walzer’s commitment to pluralism renders him particularly sensitive to the homogenizing, universalist aspects of classic socialist thought. Thus, he ostensibly rejects Kantian-inspired universal theories of justice in favor of particularist and rooted conceptions of justice. Walzer explores the policies that a “religious state” (be it Muslim, Christian, or Jewish) would have to adopt in order to preserve political and civil liberties (but non-privileged religious status) for minorities.<sup>12</sup> Of course, theorists and activists who fall more on the “universal” side of the democratic-pluralist dilemma might question whether a state can remain fully democratic if it privileges a particular religious, ethnic, or national identity.

The tension between Walzer’s commitment to the particular, rooted nature of just practices and his commitment to universal socialist values is also evident in his defense of universal health care. Walzer argues that the American willingness to provide guaranteed health insurance for the poor and elderly indicates a latent commitment to a universal right to health care.<sup>13</sup> But what if dominant American values hold that non-impooverished adults and their families should depend upon the private market (and employment) for health provision? What if this is a relatively stable political norm? Would not Walzer (and fellow social democrats) have to appeal to a conception of justice external to dominant American understandings in order to critique this American norm? Is majority opinion always just? (And what if that opinion has been, in part, constructed by corporate power and dominant liberal, individualist ideology?)

That is, in conflicted democratic (or non-democratic) societies, how would a Rortyan or Walzerian conventionalist choose between conflicting views of justice? Would they eschew all appeals to an innate or quasi-foundational belief in

the equal moral worth of persons? Even Rorty's "pragmatic" belief in the "solidarity" of minimizing human suffering and humiliation depends upon quasi-universal emotive sentiments.<sup>14</sup> In short, the bonds of *democratic* social solidarity are neither innately particularist nor inherently universal. Rather, bonds of solidarity can evolve through democratic contestation toward broader horizons of fellow feeling. This does not happen inexorably or teleologically—the fellow feeling of national solidarity can degenerate into brutal hatred of others. Efforts to expand particular bonds of fellow feeling involves the "democratic iterations" that Seyla Benhabib analyzes in her detailed description of the struggle to integrate citizens of Islamic faith—without denying their right to practice their religion—into the countries of the EU.<sup>15</sup>

This tension between particularist bonds of attachment and more universalist impulses toward social justice also informs much of the philosophical debate about the nature of solidarity. Charles Taylor and Michael Sandel emphasize the importance of particular communal attachments for sustaining the fellow feeling of a just community. Taylor is the more provocative for our purposes, as while he explicitly supports social democratic policies, he insightfully argues that a "patriotic nationalism" or "civic republican" sense of common fate has informed most energetic periods of democratic reform.<sup>16</sup> Taylor's intuition that a sense of shared fate undergirds periods of solidaristic redistribution is evidenced by the role war has played in the expansion of the welfare state.

Taylor recognizes Rawls's principles of justice as the most rigorous intellectual heuristic in defense of a moderately redistributive welfare state (whether Rawls adequately emphasizes issues of power and democracy is a point that the late Iris Marion Young tellingly made)<sup>17</sup>. But Taylor implies that Rawls's heuristic fails to consider the ethos of the social movements that create the political will to sustain the welfare state. James Morone historicizes Taylor's concern in his study of an American public policy. Morone argues that American public policy cycles between relatively long periods of minimalist government that uphold the dominant American ideology of individual freedom from an intrusive state, and intense, brief periods of activist state of regulatory and social welfare policies. These occur in rare times of national crisis when social movements demand state action on behalf of the economic security of the many (e.g., depressions and World Wars).<sup>18</sup>

In Sandel's case, while he occasionally hints at a politics of democratic community that would necessitate both workplace participation and income redistribution, his conscious effort to break out of a "left-right paradigm" in favor of a "communitarian" versus "liberal" discourse leads him to be rather dismissive of welfare state redistributive politics as "consumerist" and "passive."<sup>19</sup> He counterposes to welfare state redistribution a producer-oriented politics of revitalized small business and local democracy.

Sandel mounted an important epistemological and sociological critique of Rawls, as the reliance of Kantian-inspired formal theory on abstract conceptions of the self can, at times, render it both apolitical and asocial (as can certain forms

of Habermas-inspired discourse theory). But Rawls readily admitted that his theoretical efforts were only trying to adumbrate, in a rigorous manner, the philosophical principles underlying liberal democracy's political and policy commitments. In Rawls's view, believers in the concept of liberal democracy and liberal justice are able to perform the thought experiment of "walking in another citizens' shoes." Sandel never adequately refuted the counterargument of Rawls's supporters that any advocate of political and social democracy (communitarian or not) would likely embrace a concept of rights similar to that enunciated by Rawls.<sup>20</sup>

This "communitarian-liberal" debate subsided in the 1990s as the dominant epistemological concern of social theory shifted to post-structuralism's critique of the very notion of a coherent self (whether that of the Kantian impartial observer or the socially constituted communal being). The post-structural turn in political theory advocated for an "agonal" politics of democratic conflict that eschewed any commitment to a fixed conception of rights. Theorists such as Wendy Brown, William Connolly, and Judith Butler argued that any conception of a stable self (even a self-reflexive one) involves the imposition of self-disciplinary norms.<sup>21</sup> Thus, our concept of the self must be labile, fluid, and unstable, and if we adhere to fixed conceptions of "rights" (or equality) we "close off" democratic possibilities. Yet the latent post-Marxist commitments of Connolly, Brown, and Butler led them to an operative politics that is not far removed from their radical democratic roots. Connolly's chapter on political economy in *The Ethos of Pluralism* remains one of the most articulate defenses of the need for social and economic equality as a prerequisite for a democratic pluralist society.<sup>22</sup> And Butler's *Precarious Life* utilizes post-structuralist canonical figures, such as Emmanuel Levinas, to argue that our awareness of our own vulnerability should make us empathetic to the fragility of others' lives. Its chapter calling for Jewish solidarity with the worth of Palestinian life perhaps proves that epistemological differences over the nature of the self may not map directly onto political positions—for as incoherent and as fluid as Jewish and Palestinian identity may or may not be, Butler advocates for a we-ness of fellow feeling that the most foundationalist believer in the equal moral worth of persons could readily embrace.<sup>23</sup>

#### IV. American Exceptionalism: The Relative Weakness of Social Solidarity at Home

Thus, the extent of social solidarity is determined politically and not primarily by means of abstract philosophical argument. Political sociologists have long analyzed why social solidarity and the welfare state have been weaker in the United States than in continental Europe. There are myriad factors involved: in contrast to monarchical Europe, democratization preceded professional bureaucratization in the United States. Thus, early, patronage-based social provision in the United States (such as Civil War pensions) associated state provision with

corruption in the minds of middle-class reformers.<sup>24</sup> The repression of the Knights of Labor in the 1880s meant that an industrial trade union movement developed much later here (the 1930s) than in Europe.<sup>25</sup>

Furthermore, the absence of proportional representation and of parliamentary government made third parties—be they labor or socialist—difficult to build. Ethnic-based political machines organized new immigrants into politics on the basis of ethnicity and not based on class and ideology.<sup>26</sup> Only broad, multiclass parties could contest for crucial executive offices; thus, the labor movement by the New Deal pragmatically cast its lot with a non-social democratic Democratic Party. In addition, the white Democratic control of the Southern Congressional delegation, combined with the power of Congressional seniority, watered down the New Deal welfare state. Southern Democrats insisted on state-level autonomy for the administration of unemployment and disability benefits, as national standards for vigorous unemployment and social insurance programs would have cushioned the risks of labor militancy and unemployment for all workers, including black workers in the South.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the New Deal excluded both domestic workers and farm workers (the bulk of African American and Latino workers) from both Social Security and the national labor relations system.

But beyond these crucial institutional-structural factors, the absence of a feudal legacy in the United States contributed to the dominance of liberal individualist ideology that helped weaken social solidarity in the United States.<sup>28</sup> Early modern moral values of shared risk and fate derived from the bonds of fealty and loyalty among the status groups, guilds, and estates of medieval Europe. *Solidis* originally refers to the concept in Roman and feudal law of members of an estate being mutually liable for the payment of any debt taken on by a group member. As William Sewell has demonstrated, feudal concepts of shared obligation contributed to the ethos of “fraternity” (of shared brotherhood) of early labor and artisanal guilds in revolutionary France.<sup>29</sup> This gendered conception of “fraternity” (of the mutual bonds of “free men”) expanded in a more egalitarian direction the concept of familial and status obligations. We do not choose such obligations; rather we are born into them. Obviously, the family, community, or tribe can be the site for patriarchy, exploitation, and oppression. But it can also prefigure the bonds of care that non-filial “mutual benefit societies” and other fraternal and sororal organizations work to engender in their members.<sup>30</sup>

The pervasive American ideology of laissez-faire “individual freedom” gives credence to Louis Hartz’s argument that European, post-feudal conceptions of group solidarity conflict with the American ideology of radical individualism. Thus, even our social insurance programs are couched as individually earned benefits with no redistributive elements. This despite the reality that Social Security is financed out of current revenues and is a redistribution of income from the presently employed to those who no longer can labor. The Social Security “privatization” debate focused almost exclusively on whether the Social Security part of retirement income would be more securely paid through investing one’s tax

payments individually in the stock market or receiving a payment from current tax revenue. Almost no politician mentioned that only the most affluent younger workers could afford to purchase privately the disability and life insurance policies that Social Security provides workers of all ages.

Through universal social insurance—in which both the young and old, healthy and infirm—we band together to protect each other against the vicissitudes of the economy and of the lifecycle. Given the inability of mainstream politicians to articulate the rationale behind the liberal welfare state, no wonder the term “liberal” has become as much a public anathema as is “socialist” or “social democrat.” This should not come as a surprise, as the United States remains the only advanced industrial democracy without a system of universal health care. In reality, our private health insurance schemes are not really insurance programs at all, as insurers are allowed to “cherry-pick” healthy customers by excluding from coverage those with “preexisting conditions.”

But even in the United States, when social movements have fought to expand social rights, they have appealed to conceptions of shared citizenship that moved beyond the parochial ties of ethnicity and neighborhood. Whenever a particular group has succeeded in expanding citizenship rights, it has played the surrogate role of Marx’s universal class by demonstrating that its particular exclusion threatened the rights of all citizens. The civil rights movement eventually convinced a majority of Americans that the denial of rights to citizens of color violated the universal norms of citizenship. But the movement ran aground when it moved to a social democratic agenda of meaningful job training and housing and school integration.

In the 1930s, the trade union movement in the United States rendered rights in the workplace and social insurance the programmatic glue of the New Deal coalition. The unions ideologically succeeded in associating dignity in the workplace with the basic rights of citizenship. Rights in the workplace have been severely eroded under neo-liberal deregulatory policies in the United States from Reagan onward, as workers no longer even have a legal guarantee to their jobs if they go on strike. With the National Labor Relations Board controlled by anti-labor zealots, anti-union corporations and union-busting law-firms effectively render American workers the only citizens of a democratic state that lack an effective right to strike and to form unions at previously unorganized work sites.

An under-recognized element of American exceptionalism is the relative absence, except for the Civil War and World War II, of wars that mobilized the entire nation. The revolutionary republican tradition is identified in continental Europe with patriotism and the defeat of fascism. Only in the United States is the left viewed as unpatriotic. This is in part a result of exceptional circumstances—along with the Australian Labor and Italian Socialist parties, the Debsian Socialist Party courageously opposed World War I. The Communist Party’s hegemony on the American left from 1935 to 1956 meant that the American left was popularly identified with the Soviet Union. Furthermore, the anti-Vietnam war movement’s

opposition to the draft (in order to stop an endless stream of conscripts) engendered a legacy of left opposition to universal service. Except for the United Kingdom and Canada, the global left supports universal service. This opposition in the United States has produced an Iraq war characterized by a total absence of shared national sacrifice and a de facto “economic” draft.

But it is precisely the sense of common sacrifice in war that has provided the moral underpinning for the expansion of the welfare state. Ira Katznelson’s recent work demonstrates how the GI Bill and federally subsidized home mortgage system after World War II would have been unimaginable absent the sense of entitlement and desire for equal citizenship on the part of returning GIs.<sup>31</sup> As Theda Skocpol notes, the American Legion provided the lobbying backbone for the GI Bill—a massive federal welfare program guaranteeing fully subsidized university education to the majority of men in their twenties and thirties.<sup>32</sup> The small number of places in historically black institutions, combined with the paucity of integrated universities and colleges, meant the GI Bill did not cover most African-American men. And just as African Americans began to secure good unionized industrial jobs in the high-wage, high-productivity industrial economy, this “Fordist”<sup>33</sup> model went into crisis. The industries in which African Americans (mostly men) had gained good jobs after the Great Migration from the South would massively shed labor from 1980 onward (e.g., steel, auto, chemicals, and rubber).<sup>34</sup>

Successful movements for the extension of democratic rights only achieve hegemonic political status through the successful implementation of a “governing program” of economic redistribution and development.<sup>35</sup> “Fordist” industrial growth and Keynesian welfare state policies provided such a “governing model” for the American liberal and European social democratic left from 1947 to 1973. But since 1973 the uneven growth of an information- and finance-driven global capitalism has placed downward pressure on the living standards of those who do not have the “symbolic-manipulative” skills of the professional-managerial class and skilled technological workers (or the university credentialization of the middle class of civil servants, teachers, and retail service managers).

The mild redistribution of life opportunities via the welfare state and GI Bill depended on a certain degree of middle-class taxpayers’ solidarity with the working class and poor. In the Great Depression, the vast majority of income earners experienced economic vulnerability; thus, the polity proved open to an expansion of state provision. In the mass prosperity of the 1960s, sufficient numbers of a confident white middle class supported the development of social programs aimed at incorporating the poor. But in the past thirty-five years of uneven growth and stagnant real personal incomes, the working class and middle strata feel that economic insecurity is only a pink slip away. The right has succeeded in convincing many white insecure workers (particularly men) that their insecurity is largely due to competition from overseas labor, new immigrants, and (via affirmative action) workers of color.<sup>36</sup> The right’s narrative identifies the

causes of economic stagnation with overly generous public expenditure on the poor and excessive state economic regulation (even though the vast majority of social welfare spending goes to popular universal social insurance programs). If there is to be a new era of solidaristic public policy, it may result from the baby-boom generation experiencing the financial burdens of simultaneously paying for their children's college, their own family health care, and the elder care for their parents. But these human needs are likely to be unequally met through ad hoc, private arrangements, with the needs of the bottom-half of our society being ill met. This will be the likely policy outcome unless the left can convince a majority that progressive taxation, prudent defense cuts, and investment in infrastructure and job training can sustain sufficient economic growth to finance the public expenditure needed to decommodify the provision of care.

Most social scientists concur that universal social insurance programs in regard to old age pensions, health care, unemployment, disability, and child support have been "trimmed"—but not gutted—in most advanced industrial polities (with the notable exception being the more vulnerable means-tested programs in regard to child support in the United States and United Kingdom).<sup>37</sup> The difficulty French and German policy elites (of both the right and center-left) have had in expanding working hours, pushing back the retirement age, deregulating youth employment, and increasing university fees (to take but a few examples) demonstrates that the depth of Western Europe's commitment to a "social market" economy is considerable. Yet given growing competition in the industrial sector from Eastern Europe, any further expansion of the welfare state in Western Europe may be off the political agenda.

The United States and United Kingdom are the nations in which the Protestant work ethic and laissez-faire doctrine outweighed more solidaristic social Christian and social democratic conceptions of citizenship. Means-tested provision of child support (aka "welfare") and health care (aka Medicaid) has been vulnerable to hostility from working-class adults whose income places them just above the income eligibility lines for such programs. The resulting rise of "workfare" in both countries (and cuts in eligibility for Food Stamps and Medicaid) has rendered the lives of the working poor and their children more precarious. Even if women leave workfare and find full employment, they rarely make up in increased income the childcare and medical benefits they usually lose when entering the paid labor force.<sup>38</sup> Our society's inability to comprehend the emotional and financial stress that poor families confront in raising children (whether there is a parent full-time in the workforce or not) indicates how weak the bonds of solidarity are in the United States. We talk of "leaving no child behind;" yet our society tolerates a system of federalism that insures that the most disadvantaged children attend the least-well funded schools with the poorest-paid and least experienced teachers. As feminist theorists from Joan Tronto onward have taught us, unless societies make a universal commitment to the particular needs of "care" of those who are dependent upon others, a democratic society will not be characterized by the equal respect of social solidarity.<sup>39</sup>

## V. The Internationalist Logic (and Limits) of Movements for Social Solidarity

In a nation where there is little political pressure to bridge the gap between rich and poor, it is not surprising that policy makers have done nothing to stop the genocide in Darfur. Most readers of the U.S. press barely know that four million people have died in the decades-long conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. (*The New York Times* recently reported that 1,250 children die every week in the Congo from diseases that are controlled in equally destitute countries not experiencing civil war.)<sup>40</sup> As Lula Inacio da Silva stated in his recent UN General Assembly address, the UN Millennium anti-global poverty goals contend that \$50 billion a year of expenditure could eliminate global hunger.<sup>41</sup> These funds could readily be raised if the United States reached the Millennium goal of devoting 0.7 percent (versus the current 0.2 percent) of its GDP to global anti-poverty and development expenditure. These sad realities speak to the present limits of global solidarity.

These “realist” constraints do not deny our humanitarian obligations to those outside our polity. But it does behoove us to move beyond a philosophical justification of such obligations toward a viable political strategy for expanding the horizons of solidarity. The road to greater domestic solidarity may well be the road to greater international solidarity. Scandinavia has the best record on humanitarian assistance and effective economic aid to the developing world. The generous private non-profit response to some international disasters demonstrates that the moral responsibility to aid those in dire need already has some purchase among residents of the United States. But even fulfilling this minimal bond of solidarity—to act to alleviate the extreme duress of mass starvation or genocide—would necessitate a transformation of American political culture and policy.

The existing U.S. foreign and economic policy is far more damaging to global humanitarian interests than is the weakness of humanitarian impulses among the rank-and-file citizenry. Given the hegemonic role of the United States in global economic and military affairs, the greatest blow for global justice that American citizens can strike would be to transform (even modestly) U.S. government policies. The U.S. government signing and implementing the Kyoto accords on greenhouse gases and supporting and enforcing labor and human rights provisions within international trade agreements would radically transform the prospects for greater global equity. In addition, the U.S. government’s willingness to subject its armed forces to true international control would greatly enhance the possibilities for multilateral humanitarian intervention and peacekeeping in Darfur, southern Lebanon, or on a future Israeli-Palestinian border. Current global mistrust of U.S. military unilateralism renders the United States—the one nation with a military that has global logistical capacities—impotent in regard to coordinating international humanitarian intervention. And the United States’ (and EU’s) unconscionable protectionism of agribusiness has destroyed the lives of small farmers across the globe, as has our refusal to write off the debt burden that necessitates devel-

oping nations to produce for export rather than to meet domestic needs. A major reason for the fourfold increase in annual undocumented immigration from Mexico since 1994 has been the destruction of Mexican small farmers by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).

Radical democrats in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries must fight for trade, human rights, and environmental policies that would raise global living standards—rather than perpetuate the race-to-the-bottom mode of global capitalist development. But prudential arguments about the harm such policies bring to the living standards of our fellow citizens are more likely to influence the United States' global development policies than are abstract arguments about global distributive justice. The emerging “global civil society” of transnational social movements helps raise the visibility of transnational issues. But absent social movements and political parties that can transform the domestic politics of major economic and strategic actors, the gap between the normative aims of transnational society and global political realities will remain chasm-like. Too often those arguing for the transformation of institutions of global governance forget that international regulatory institutions (be they the International Court of Justice, the International Monetary Fund [IMF], the World Bank, or the Kyoto Accords) are heavily influenced by the policies of the most powerful states.

The struggle for a more internationalist and egalitarian polity in the United States will partly turn on the rebirth of a dynamic, internationalist American trade union movement. Unions remain one of the only social institutions in the United States that bring people together along lines of race and national origin. The struggle to expand the right of citizenship to all working people in the United States and EU will be a make-or-break issue for the future of international solidarity. In the nation with the allegedly strongest “work ethic,” only on the margins of the American left does one hear the argument that if one contributes to the labor of society one must have full voice in the decisions that govern such labor. The only truly democratic position in the current immigration debate is that all those who labor in our economy should have full citizenship rights for themselves and their immediate families. If capital can roam the globe for the greatest return, then labor should have the same right. If a nation wishes to limit immigration, it is incumbent upon that polity to promote foreign economic, labor, and human rights policies that limit “the push” factor of immigration from developing nations. And if domestic labor—both immigrant and non-immigrant—has a true right to organize (and if anti-discrimination ordinances are enforced in regard to discrimination by employers against young black males), then the cost of service labor will be driven up sufficiently that such jobs will be more attractive to native-born citizens and corporations will have to increase the efficiency of such labor. Doing so would limit the “pull” factor of the current insatiable demand for cheap, sweated labor (in the allegedly richest nation in the world!).

Whether the right to work anywhere within the EU will remain a core principle of an expanded EU remains to be seen. Seven years from now, immi-

gration restrictions among the current twenty-seven EU members are to be eliminated. But thus far only three EU members have eliminated all internal-EU immigration controls. An even larger issue is how European society will deal with growing immigration from North Africa. If the EU opts for more restrictive immigration policies, will it enact foreign economic policies that facilitate equitable economic development in Africa? And how to balance the tension in liberal democratic culture between “difference” and “equality” remains in regards to building “multicultural” democracies. Only those who fall heavily on the particularist side of this dilemma would uphold clitorectomy and other clearly patriarchal practices (such as bridal dowries) as consonant with the rights of democratic citizens.<sup>42</sup>

Earlier I argued that posing a stark antinomy between particularist, communitarian solidarity and democratic universalism is historically inaccurate, when judged against the behavior of democratic social movements for incorporation. Likewise, there exist measures by which the particular-universalist tension in international obligations may be bridged—somewhat. First, even a hard-bitten “realist” might recognize that failed polities—those that cannot sustain a bare minimum of physical and economic security for their citizens—are breeding grounds for terrorism and regional conflict. This is not to justify (disastrous and ineffectual) imperial efforts at “nation-building.” Rather, First World nations should curtail the international arms trade and corrupt corporate practices that make the creation of stable states in the developing world more difficult. Second, liberal, Keynesian-informed economists (and capitalists) such as Felix Rohatyn, Joe Stiglitz, and George Soros advocate global regulation of financial speculation and the creation of global regulatory institutions that establish a universal floor under labor, environmental, and living standards.<sup>43</sup> These “enlightened capitalists” comprehend the inherent stagnationist logic to the neo-liberal “Washington Consensus” of the IMF. Much of the impetus for the post-World War II expansion of the welfare state came from elite recognition that the erosion of working-class purchasing power contributed to the Great Depression. Perhaps a similar dynamic will facilitate a coalition between global trade union and human rights activists and progressive elements of global corporate elites.

Yet powerful domestic interests abet the development of such practices, particularly in regard to more equitable trade policy. Both agribusiness and small farmers have been the major interests preventing the EU and United States from abandoning agricultural subsidies and opening their markets further to Third World agricultural products. Furthermore, the growing export of the insurance, banking, information, and entertainment industries in advanced industrial countries militates against a world trade and investment regime that would protect infant industries in these sectors in the developing world. Yet only Cold War fears of North Korean and mainland Chinese communism motivated the U.S. policy makers to allow South Korea and Taiwan to pursue land reform, protectionist, and state-capitalist development strategies (strategies we subverted at great human cost in Mossadegh’s Iran, Arbenz’s Guatemala, and Allende’s Chile). Such poli-

cies enabled these nations to emerge from their protectionist cocoons to compete effectively against global transnational capital.

International human and labor rights theorists sometimes romanticize the extent of political and economic integration within the EU. But it is true that the EU's judicial, economic, and social regulatory institutions have somewhat eroded national sovereignty and pushed member states' social policies (e.g., gays and lesbians serving in the armed forces) in relatively enlightened directions. The EU's "social compact's" commitment to redistributive aid to its least developed regions in the 1970s and 80s helped raise the living standards of the newest and least affluent members. Such policies undoubtedly improved life opportunities for Irish, Greek, Spanish, Portuguese, and southern Italian citizens. Of course, whether transnational union cooperation will force the EU to raise living and labor standards among its newest members in Eastern Europe (as well as limit the deindustrialization of Western Europe) remains an open question. But the German and Scandinavian labor movements certainly understand that their future economic well-being depends on the raising of labor, environmental, and living standards in newer member states. The EU experience demonstrates the potential of democratic regional integration for raising living, labor, and human rights standards in Latin and Central America, Asia, and Africa.

If the core argument of this essay is correct, then the future of global social solidarity rests considerably upon the future of social solidarity in the United States. The United States remains not only the global military hegemon, but its foreign policy will be a key valence factor in the future development of international regulatory regimes governing labor, investment, trade, human rights, and the environment. Thus, reconstructing a democratic politics of social solidarity in the United States is the greatest contribution U.S. citizens can make to the struggle for a more democratic and equitable world.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> See Michael Sandel, *Liberalism and the Limits of Justice* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982); and Richard Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), particularly chap. 9, "Solidarity," 189–98.

<sup>2</sup> See Charles Beitz, *Political Theory and International Relations* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999); and Thomas Pogge, *Realizing Rawls* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989).

<sup>3</sup> For a recent, balanced evaluation of cutbacks in various European welfare states, see Jonas Pontusson, *Inequality and Prosperity: Social Europe versus Liberal America* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005).

<sup>4</sup> Two useful analyses of the rise of global neo-liberalism are Jeff Faux, *The Global Class War* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 2006); and Robert Kuttner, *Everything for Sale: The Virtues and Limits of Markets* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997).

<sup>5</sup> See Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (New York: New York University Press, 1972).

<sup>6</sup> See Carol Gould, "Conceptualizing Women's Human Rights," *Globalizing Democracy and Human Rights* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), chap. 6; Nancy Fraser, "Women, Welfare and the Politics of Need Interpretation," *Unruly Practices* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota

- Press, 1989), chap. 7; and Anne Phillips, "Fraternity," *Democracy and Difference* (University Park, PA: The Penn State University Press, 1993), chap. 1.
- <sup>7</sup>Richard Rorty, "The Contingency of a Liberal Community," in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, chap. 3.
- <sup>8</sup>Norman Geras, "Richard Rorty and the Righteous Among the Nations," in *Solidarity in the Conversation of Humankind: The Ungroundable Liberalism of Richard Rorty* (London: New Left Books, 1995), chap. 1.
- <sup>9</sup>Amy Gutmann, *Identity in Democracy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2003), 35–37. Timothy Brennan makes a similar point by means of a dense post-Marxist critique of the limits of post-structuralist political theory. He holds that a shared political value can constitute a form of identity and community. See Timothy Brennan, *Wars of Position: The Cultural Politics of Left and Right* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006).
- <sup>10</sup>See Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006); and Amartya Sen, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), esp. chap. 8, "Multiculturalism and Freedom."
- <sup>11</sup>Michael Walzer, "Security and Welfare," *Spheres of Justice: A Defense of Pluralism and Equality* (New York: Basic Books, 1983), chap. 3; and Michael Walzer, "Politics in the Welfare State," in *Essential Works of Socialism*, ed. Irving Howe (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1986), 454–79.
- <sup>12</sup>See Michael Walzer, *On Toleration* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 37–51, 66–71.
- <sup>13</sup>Walzer, *Spheres of Justice*, 84–90.
- <sup>14</sup>Rorty rests his "contingent" ethics on a seeming universal human aversion to suffering and humiliation. See Rorty, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, 189–98.
- <sup>15</sup>See Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
- <sup>16</sup>Charles Taylor, "Cross-Purposes: The Liberal-Communitarian Debate," in *Liberalism and the Moral Life*, ed. Nancy L. Rosenblum (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), 159–82.
- <sup>17</sup>Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), esp. chap. 1, "Displacing the Distributive Paradigm."
- <sup>18</sup>James Morone, *The Democratic Wish: Popular Participation and the Limits of American Government* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998).
- <sup>19</sup>See Michael Sandel, *Democracy's Discontent: America in Search of a Public Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996), esp. chap. 8, "Liberalism and the Keynesian Revolution," 250–73.
- <sup>20</sup>For this critique of Sandel, see Amy Gutmann, "Communitarian Critics of Liberalism," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 14, no. 3 (1985): 308–22.
- <sup>21</sup>For paradigmatic works, see Wendy Brown, *States of Injury* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995); Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and William E. Connolly, *The Ethos of Pluralization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995).
- <sup>22</sup>William E. Connolly, "Democracy, Equality, Normality," *The Ethos of Pluralization*, chap. 3, 75–104.
- <sup>23</sup>Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (London: Verso, 2004), esp. chap. 2, "Violence, Mourning, Politics," 19–49 and chap. 5, "Precarious Life," 128–51.
- <sup>24</sup>See Anna Shola Orloff, "The Political Origins of America's Belated Welfare State," in *The Politics of Social Policy in the United States*, eds. Anna Shola Orloff, Theda Skocpol, and Margaret Weir (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 37–80.
- <sup>25</sup>See Kim Voss, *The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1993).
- <sup>26</sup>See Ira Katznelson, *City Trenches: Urban Politics and the Patterning of Class in the United States* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981).

- <sup>27</sup> See Jill Quadagno, *The Color of Welfare: How Racism Undermined the War on Poverty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994).
- <sup>28</sup> For the classic statement of this view, see Louis Hartz, *The Liberal Tradition in America* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1955). For the most thorough empirical and historical exploration of the factors behind “American exceptionalism,” see Seymour Martin Lipset and Gary Marks, *It Did Not Happen Here: Why Socialism Failed in the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co, 2000). The major problem with this work is its failure to examine the role racism played in preventing a coherent social democratic and labor politics from developing in the United States.
- <sup>29</sup> See William H. Sewell, Jr., *Work and Revolution in France: The Language of Labor From Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
- <sup>30</sup> E. P. Thompson’s classic *The Making of the English Working Class* explores the role artisanal senses of fraternity and communal self-sufficiency played in the origins of working class solidarity.
- <sup>31</sup> See Ira Katznelson, *When Affirmative Action Was White* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 2005).
- <sup>32</sup> Theda Skocpol, *Diminished Democracy: From Membership to Management in American Civic Life* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2003).
- <sup>33</sup> Political sociologists often use the term “Fordist” to indicate the type of political economy characteristic of the industrial welfare state. Henry Ford believed that his autoworkers should be paid sufficiently high wages so that they could afford to purchase the cars they produced. Thus, the floor under consumption created by the “social compact” of relatively high wages and social insurance of the 1947–1973 post-World War II era in advanced industrial states is often referred to as the “Fordist” mode of production and accumulation.
- <sup>34</sup> See William Julius Wilson, *When Work Disappears* (New York: Knopf, 1996).
- <sup>35</sup> I develop the argument that follows in the next two paragraphs in Joseph M. Schwartz, *The Future of Democratic Equality: Rebuilding Social Solidarity in a Fragmented United States* (New York: Routledge, forthcoming, Fall 2007).
- <sup>36</sup> Nearly twenty years ago, Thomas and Mary Byrne Edsall analyzed how Ronald Reagan used white working-class resentment toward affirmative action and means-tested social welfare programs to hive off sufficient “Reagan Democrats” (white workers who traditionally voted Democratic) to construct a new Republican presidential majority. See Thomas and Mary Byrne Edsall, *Chain Reaction: The Impact of Race, Rights, and Taxes on American Politics* (New York: Norton, 1991).
- <sup>37</sup> Pontusson, in *Inequality and Prosperity*, provides the most up-to-date and balanced evaluation of the evidence. In particular, see chap. 8, “Welfare States in Retrenchment,” 182–203.
- <sup>38</sup> For clear ethnographic evidence that the lives of low-wage single-parent working mothers with children are not qualitatively better (for them or their children) than single mothers not in the formal labor market (who almost invariably must subsidize inadequate Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) with work-off-the-books), see Kathryn Edin, *Making Ends Meet: How Single Mothers Survive Welfare and Low-Wage Work* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1997).
- <sup>39</sup> Joan Tronto, *Moral Boundaries: A Political Argument for an Ethic of Care* (New York: Routledge, 1993).
- <sup>40</sup> Lydia Polgreen, “War’s Chaos Steals Congo’s Young by the Millions,” *The New York Times*, July 30, 2006.
- <sup>41</sup> Luis Inacio da Silva, “Speech at the Plenary Meeting of the 61st Un General Assembly,” New York, September 19, 2006, <http://www.brazil.org.uk/newsandmedia/sp20060919.html>.
- <sup>42</sup> For a rigorous outline of a democratic politics of multiculturalism, see Gould, *Globalizing Democracy*, esp. chap. 5, “Cultural Identity, Group Rights, and Social Ontology,” and chap. 6, “Conceptualizing Women’s Human Rights.”
- <sup>43</sup> See Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and Its Discontents* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2002); George Soros, *The Crisis of Global Capitalism: Open Society Endangered* (New York: Public Affairs, 1998); and Felix Rohatyn’s numerous recent essays over the past decade in *The New York Review of Books*.