

Democratic Solidarity: Why Do Democracies Owe Support to Democracy Movements?*

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ABSTRACT

This article starts by pointing out the internal tensions in the idea of a human right to democracy, which makes it difficult to use such a right as a normative reference for decisions on interfering in domestic conflicts in other states. Despite this, the second part of this article shows that it is still admissible for outsiders to interfere in domestic affairs when democracy is seriously curtailed or democratic revolutions are occurring. The article ends by showing why democracies owe support to democracy movements abroad. Democracies should show solidarity with these movements in the pursuit of their aim to democratize the political order of the state in question — a support that is not unconditional, but tied to a specific cause.

KEY WORDS

Human Rights, Democracy, Regime Change, Philosophy of International Affairs.

Solidaridad democrática. ¿Por qué deben las democracias apoyar movimientos democráticos?

RESUMEN

Este artículo comienza señalando las tensiones internas que existen en el concepto de un derecho humano a la democracia, lo que hace difícil usar tal derecho como referencia normativa para tomar decisiones respecto a si interferir o no en conflictos domésticos de otros estados. A pesar de esto, la segunda parte de este artículo muestra que todavía es permisible que agentes extranjeros interfieran con asuntos domésticos cuando la democracia es seriamente coartada o cuando están ocurriendo revoluciones democráticas. El artículo concluye mostrando por qué las democracias deben apoyar movimientos democráticos en el exterior. Las democracias deben solidarizarse con estos movimientos que buscan democratizar el orden político del estado en cuestión. Este apoyo no es incondicional, sino que está atado a una causa específica.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Derechos humanos, democracia, cambio de régimen, filosofía de los asuntos internacionales.

Solidariedade democrática, por que as democracias devem apoiar movimentos democráticos?

RESUMO

Este artigo começa apontando as tensões internas que existem no conceito de um direito humano à democracia, o que torna difícil usar tal direito como referência normativa para tomar decisões sobre se deve ou não interferir em conflitos domésticos de outros estados. Apesar disto, a segunda parte deste artigo mostra que ainda é permissível que agentes estrangeiros interfiram com assuntos domésticos quando a democracia é seriamente limitada ou quando está acontecendo revoluções democráticas. O artigo conclui mostrando por que as democracias devem apoiar movimentos democráticos no exterior. As democracias devem solidarizar-se com estes movimentos que procuram democratizar a ordem política do estado em questão. Este apoio não é incondicional, mas, sim, está atado a uma causa específica.

PALAVRAS CHAVE

Direitos humanos, democracia, mudança de regime, filosofia dos assuntos internacionais.

* This article is part of the author's research on human rights and the philosophical foundations of a global constitutionalism.

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After September 11, 2001 it seemed that the brief phase during which the world was moving toward ever more democracy and common human rights protection was over. Many saw international terrorism as the new major threat — and as a consequence human rights were curtailed in order to not stand in the way of the war on terror (Blum and Heyman 2010; Heyman 2001-2002; Holmes 2007; Margulies 2006). Regime change (often labeled as democratization) appeared to be a viable way of punishing states for harboring or supporting terrorists. For others, this gave the impression that both human rights and especially the project to democratize states were nothing but attempts to cover Western hegemonic projects or its ruthless pursuit of its own interests (Bellamy 2004; Williams and Bellamy 2005). The defense of the right to non-interference, the maintenance of domestic basic rights within Western states and generally the critique of war as a means of politics became key issues for these critical positions.

However, several “democratic” revolutions have occurred since September 11, 2001 in which protesters, activists and regular citizens fought for more democratic, rights-abiding and accountable forms of government, open and free elections and general access to social, cultural and economic goods. These protesters often asked for international support and their protests were partly successful because of international reactions and aid. During both the 2003 Rose Revolution in Georgia and the 2004 Orange Revolution in the Ukraine, NGOs, Western State Departments and international human rights activists played important roles by financing activist groups, rendering the developments globally public and exercising pressure on Western and local governments and the EU. During the 2009 Green Revolution in Iran and the 2011 Arab Spring, the direct involvement was less obvious (with the exception of Libya, where the focus on democracy was not as strong as it was in Algeria or Egypt), but it was certainly requested from many protesters (Inbar 2013). The same is true for the ongoing and continuously growing civil war in Syria.

The support the protesters requested was not just asked as a favor. The protesters appealed to the common global aim of creating conditions in which everybody can control and participate in the exercise of government. They tried (and in the case of Syria, at least some, still try) to convey the idea that they were (or are) fighting for their human right to democracy — and since this is a human right, the rest of the world, and especially the rest of the democratic world, could not just stand by.

Instead, it is obliged to intervene or at least openly support the protests against autocrats, dictators and more generally oppressive regimes.

During the Iran protests, the Arab Spring and especially in Syria many Western states reacted with reservations (Huber 2012): They expressed some support for the general aims of the protests, but they were reluctant to get involved more actively (with the notable exception of Libya). Some human rights activists in Western societies even pointed out that there was no human right to democracy and that support for parties in domestic political conflicts could further weaken the already weak international human rights regime by creating an obvious link between human rights and a specific, democratic form of government (Merkel 2011). Such a link, these activists feared, would significantly reduce the willingness of more autocratic governments to cooperate with human rights organizations, which would ultimately have negative consequences for those subject to “real” human rights violations (this means most of all ethnic cleansing, religious persecution or starvation).

There were many good and politically realistic reasons for these reservations. Nevertheless, they also had the effect of reinforcing the disappointment with (Western) democracies and their presumably primarily economic or hegemonic interests in other regions of the world. Democracies seemed to care more for stability or even economic prosperity than for political and individual freedom. In light of these disappointments, this article will look more carefully at the claim to international support for democracy movements.¹ It will start by briefly analyzing a possible human right to democracy and point out an internal tension in such a right, which makes it a rather problematic point of reference. Given this, the article will continue by asking if it is admissible at all for states and international actors to promote democracy and to interfere with domestic conflicts about the nature of government. After arguing that this is admissible, the article will conclude by showing why democracies owe support to democracy movements abroad. Democracies should show solidarity with these movements, which means that they owe them support in the pursuit of their aim to democratize the political order of the state in question — a support that is not unconditional, but tied to a specific cause.

¹ The present article will not look into general duties to support or not to harm other democracies — and it will also not say anything on the possible obligation to provide members of failed states with capabilities of building and operating state institutions. Concerning these subjects see Niederberger (2009a).

A Human Right to Democracy?

One of the hotly contested issues in the philosophical debate on human rights is the question of whether there is something like a human right to democracy. Such a human right to democracy is defended by theories that assume that private autonomy ultimately depends on public autonomy or that the two are at least co-original.² According to these views, rights require a public political and legal order and such an order can only be legitimate and non-dominating if it is a democratic order.³ Thus, democracy is prior to or necessary for the guarantee of any other (human) right. Therefore, if there are any human rights at all, a human right to democracy must be established first or in conjunction with any other right.

Many see flaws in this argumentation. One group of critics rejects the idea that democracy is more or equally fundamental than peace or justice. For these critics, democracy might be basic in some sense, but it either relies on peaceful living conditions or its importance depends on its instrumental necessity for the requirements of justice. In light of these criticisms, a human right to democracy is not an unconditional right. It can at most be derived from other basic claims or rights, but it is not an original human right that would entitle one to act against peace or just conditions (Geis, Brock and Müller 2006; Maus 1998, 1999). A second group of critics (to which, for instance, John Rawls belongs) thinks that democracy is only *one* ideal of government, namely an ideal based on equality, and that there could be other types of decent — and this means less egalitarian, but still human rights protecting — forms of government that one would have to accept as expressions of other preferences for political (self-)organization (Bernstein 2006; Cohen 2010; Rawls 1999, 59-70; Reidy 2006). According to this perspective, there are different cultural and religious understandings of the scope and role of public order and on the grounds of these understandings, different peoples might end up choosing types of less egalitarian and liberal forms of government.

In my view, these criticisms are not convincing (or at least not fully convincing). The first criticism that democracy is not desirable per se does not sufficiently capture the

character of human rights as *rights* and their dependence on a public order in which persons do not have to rely on the moral motivations of other private or public actors.⁴ The second criticism that democracy is only *one* ideal of government is correct in some sense. It rightly points to the non-universality of specific democratic institutions or procedures and also to the non-universality of interpretations of the content and scope of basic rights and rights to participation. A human right to democracy could, thus, not be a right to a public order with a specific ordering of powers, a specific election mode and specific basic rights expressing a specific idea of equality. However, what the criticism misses is that another type of government — which means a government without these features of typical liberal democracies — can only claim legitimacy (or at least international legitimacy) if it can show that it can be traced back to the will of the people living under it. In this sense, the second criticism of a human right to democracy presupposes a more fundamental right to self-determination, which will only create obligations (of respect or non-interference, for instance) in others if this right is not only exercised by some members of a political unit in order to dominate other members of the same unit. Thus, there must be at least some equality present in the presumable collective will formation.

The second criticism is mistaken if it generally argues against a human right to democracy. However, it highlights important difficulties and maybe even tensions in such a human right: Democracy means that all those living in a certain political and social order are ultimately those controlling and deciding on the form of co-existence and its regulation.⁵ Given this, such a right can never be simply implemented by a third party, since it always already requires the inclusion and participation of those who will be affected by a given order. Imposing the right to self-determination is contradictory if the imposition is not at the same time its revocation and putting it at the disposal of those who can and will determine themselves.⁶

Nevertheless, this conceptual tension between rights and their structural withdrawal of certain political and legal options, on the one hand, and the exercise of self-

2 Jürgen Habermas (1996, 84-104) first developed the argument for the co-originality of private and public autonomy. Different argumentations for a human right to democracy can be found, among others, in Bohman (2007, 101-134), Christiano (2011), Gould (2004) and, most recently, Peter (2013).

3 On this argument that a democratic order is necessary for the legitimate guarantee of rights, see also Benhabib (2009).

4 Concerning the necessary link between rights and public order see Kant (1996, 84-86) (Doctrine of Right, §§ 41-42). For a more extended discussion of this link, see Maus (1992). Joel Feinberg (1970) provides a different kind of argument for the dependency of rights on a public (and not only moral) order.

5 On the connections among democracy, law and control, see Niederberger (2011a).

6 For a more detailed version of this argument see Beetham (2009) and Niederberger (2009b).

determination, in which nothing but the political collective can authorize any regulation and withdrawal, on the other hand, is not the only and maybe not even the major problem for a human right to democracy.⁷ This tension becomes much less problematic if one considers the dynamic and reflexive aspects of many modern institutional and legal structures and the general perspective of a reflexive or deliberative democratic order (cf., among others, Bohman and Rehg 1997; Parkinson and Mansbridge 2012; Schmalz-Bruns 1995). The bigger problem is that a human right to democracy is too underdetermined to serve as a normative or even legal-political orientation. A human right to democracy would mean that persons have the right not to be subject to dominating institutions and structures. However, even in a negative perspective, it is not fully clear if and when institutions and structures are dominating — such that even the obligation to help persons against dominating institutions needs further clarification. Moreover, clarification is all the more necessary with regard to “positive” obligations, which means with regard to obligations concerning the institutions and structures that must be put into place for an order to realize the right in its positive and enabling dimensions. Democracy does not just consist of the absence of dominating institutions; rather, it primarily consists of institutions and procedures that enable self-legislation and self-government.

Given all this, the talk of a “human right to democracy” indicates a very general and right normative claim.⁸ Nonetheless, it is hard to see how this talk could be transformed into the specific obligations, structures and procedures that are required.⁹ Any such transformation

is subject to criticism in light of the right itself. This is because some people who are subject to the duties and/or institutions might not agree that their particular shape expresses their understanding of their purposes, which would already require a democratic procedure to take a legitimate decision.¹⁰

One good example of these difficulties is the controversy about the right to free speech and its role in democracy. While some, most importantly the US Supreme Court (for instance in its 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* decision), think that free speech is only guaranteed if there is *no* public regulation, others, for instance the German Constitutional Court (in its several decisions on the public broadcasting system in Germany) argue that free speech is only guaranteed if the public realm is politically and legally *organized* such that all have (equal) access to public deliberations.¹¹ This controversy confronts two possible interpretations of a human right to democracy or its implications and it cannot be decided by reference to such a human right alone.

Can the promotion of democracy in other states ever be admissible?

Claiming a *human right* to democracy can have a lot of rhetorical and motivational force. However, such a right is not suitable for institutional and legal implementation and not even for clear moral or political obligations. In extreme cases of totalitarian political systems (presumably mostly negative) obligations might be evident, but in most situations attempts to realize a human right to democracy are easily themselves violations of it. This raises the question of whether it can ever be admissible to promote democracy somewhere else — or would one have to say that ultimately accepting the base-line (this

7 On the general difficulties this tension poses, see Holmes (1988).

8 The following argumentation is, thus, not rejecting the normative idea behind a human right to democracy; rather, it criticizes the proposal to think of the normative claims inherent in this idea in terms of a right or more particularly a human right. This criticism, in turn, is based on an understanding of rights, according to which rights are not just *prima facie* goods or entitlements that must be balanced or distributed with regard to certain criteria. Rights themselves distribute duties and options and as one of their major features they give the rights holder the privilege to decide on their actualization (and not the duty holder). Concerning this understanding of rights and human rights, see Niederberger (2013).

9 One of the important strands of contemporary human rights theory conceives of human rights in a “practical” (Beitz, 2009) or “political” (Raz, 2010) theory. The idea of these theories, which often refer to the understanding of human rights in Rawls’ *The Law of Peoples*, is to reconstruct human rights as an essential component of the (at least partially) institutionalized international (legal) order. According to these theories, violations of human rights are the only admissible reasons for interventions into other states, while it is acknowledged that states are almost always required for the securing of human rights. The international order or intervening states

can, thus, usually not supplement the state. See among others Beitz (2009, 102-106); Cohen (2008); Nickel (2007, 9-21); Raz (2010). Some of these approaches present theories of human rights with an intimate link between human rights, their institutionalization and democracy, such that human rights (ultimately) depend on democracy and vice versa. These thoughts are related to the argument in this section, but it is important to note that in these theories and in the present article democracy and human rights relate to each other, but are not identical. In this sense, a “human right to democracy” is a misleading attempt to cover the necessary difference between the two — without such a difference human rights could not presuppose democracy or vice versa.

10 On this question see Seyla Benhabib’s argument that democracy essentially consists of iterating laws and decisions (Benhabib 2004, 171-172).

11 Concerning this controversy, see also Sunstein (2000).

means the general normative idea behind it) of a human right to democracy implies respecting the necessity that different contexts achieve their own democracies or forms of self-determination?

Such a conclusion would be much too easy: We live in a world in which people, societies and states are interconnected in many different ways and where there are no simply distinct political contexts. Does it sufficiently respect the right of others to their own democracy or self-determination if one exports weapons or luxury goods to the other contexts or if one invests in or divests from another state? Why should the desire of some to (be able to) import certain goods be compatible with the claim to self-determination, while the desire of others to (be able to) receive political aid be incompatible with such a claim? Economic, social, cultural and scientific cooperation clearly influences the stability of political orders in many ways. Therefore, aspects and institutions of another state that are important for its maintenance or flourishing might depend on this cooperation and not, or at least not directly, on the proper choices of (all) the people living in this state. It would be strange if all these economic or technological kinds of cooperation with their potential political implications were allowed, but the promotion of democracy — for instance with publications or even the support of certain political groups — was not. In a globalized, interdependent world, mutual interference with possible consequences for the maintenance or change of political orders takes place all the time and if we do not want to significantly reduce this interdependence, the promotion of democracy in other places must be admissible in some sense.

Given the argumentation in the preceding section of this article, it is clearly inadmissible to simply impose one more or less comprehensive democratic system on another context.¹² Such an inadmissible imposition includes the creation of robust institutions and procedures, which later on have their own perseverance and raise costs, if people want to change them.¹³ Support for democracy movements can only take on forms whereby

people living in the coming democracy will be able to eventually revise it. Moreover, if there is no indication of any democracy movement, it would also not be very plausible to interfere with an existing society — at least if we cannot attribute this absence to notable severe and systematic violations of basic rights and/or other mechanisms of silencing possible democracy or participatory movements. Before any promotion of democracy occurs, addressees or receivers of this promotion should be rather obvious — and this means obvious in a way that is not related to possible funds for a democracy movement or even directly the result of external interference or creation (which is, for instance, one of the major difficulties of support for opposition groups in exile).¹⁴

Any support for democracy movements runs the risk of being parochial. This risk can only be countered if those promoting democracy (this means the supporters, not those within the democracy movement who are supported — even though it might also apply to them) underline the basic openness of any democratic society for learning. This implies, first of all, that those promoting democracy should themselves be open to learn from the contexts in which they are promoting democracy. Some authors have rightly pointed out that the best argument for election monitors is to accept election monitors oneself — thereby showing that democratic procedures can fail everywhere and that everybody must have an interest in others observing the correctness of procedures, institutions and access to them (Lister 2012, 275).¹⁵ Democracies are (or should be) structurally suspicious of (always possible) abuses of powers and institutions and not be too self-confident about their democratic nature.

Nevertheless, the admissibility of democracy promotion does not only depend on general rules or principles. There are different and differently intrusive forms of support for democracy and democracy movements abroad. The strongest forms are direct, possibly even coercive interventions with the aim to secure elections, the formation of parties, the building of institutions or the rule of law. As mentioned previously, such direct interventions are dangerous because by their very mode of operation they threaten democracy and the non-coercive character of democratic procedures, majority

12 The following arguments are part of non-ideal theory; this means that I do not assume that we can start with the more or less direct construction of a global multilevel transnational democracy. If we started with such an ideal global order, the protection and promotion of democracy on the different levels could take on forms other than the ones discussed in what follows.

13 Against the argument in the text, one could also say that such perseverance and costs are necessary to secure the future of democracy in a given context — but I will not consider this possibility here.

14 In this respect, see the extensive research literature on the successes and failures of democracy promotion and political conditionality in the external relations of the EU.

15 See also the reports on official threats against election monitors of the US presidential election in 2012 in different media, for example McGreal (2012).

and will formation. For instance, some people argue that the more or less direct Western support of certain groups and persons in many of the post-USSR states, which often turned out to be corrupt, created cynical and skeptical attitudes toward democracy in Russia. In this sense, one could say that direct interventions are only admissible if their costs for the future of democracy in a given political system are lower than their gains — which are obviously both often difficult to assess, but an assessment needs to be made.

The weakest form of democracy promotion is rhetorical pressure by publicly exposing and denouncing certain practices and developments or by calling for an election and other boycotts. This form is weak because it is not sure that this pressure will affect the situation at all — especially if a government controls the public sphere and can thereby block the potential reception and impact of this exposure. Such a form of democracy promotion is almost always admissible. However, one might question the general and possibly changing role of the media in political communities; this means the fact that the media themselves are important political powers and that access to them and to public deliberation is distributed very differently. Moreover, the media can also contribute to the fragmentation of public discourse with the effect of major difficulties for procedures of common will formation (Sunstein 2007).

Often a middle form of democracy promotion is practiced by international and regional organizations, like the EU, but also by single states in the negotiation of trade agreements, etc. Here, the prospect of membership and the accompanying advantages or economic support is tied to the development and maintenance of democratic institutions and procedures. These forms of democracy promotion by political conditionality were often quite successful because they are not openly intrusive, but appeal to the egoistic interests of the states, rulers and societies in question.¹⁶ Nevertheless, they cannot exclude that democratization is perceived to be imposed or that states take a strategic stance toward the requirements.

One can conclude generally that most forms of democracy promotion, even intrusive forms, *can* be admissible. Given the interconnectedness of the world, states interact all the time — and they interact in ways that have

consequences for their political orders. If forms of democracy promotion are inadmissible, this depends on further aspects and considerations that are not necessarily tied to this promotion.

Can the promotion of democracy in other states ever be desirable or even required?

So far I have argued that it is difficult to conceive of a meaningful human right to democracy, but that duties to respect the forms of government and political order in other societies or states depend on their ability to demonstrate that they are not dominating and express the will of those living in them. There is no general duty to refrain from promoting democracy (where democracy is not a specific political order, but the existence of a non-dominating system expressing the will of those living in it), even though its admissibility depends on further considerations of specific cases — particularly considerations of the future of a sustainable democratic order in the given case.¹⁷ However, if there is no human right to democracy (this means no strict duty to realize such an entitlement or claim), why should persons, states or more particularly democracies care about the promotion of democracy abroad? Even if it might be admissible to promote democracy, this could still mean that one should or need not do so — especially if there are good reasons why the (democratic) success of such interferences into other political systems will always depend on factors beyond the reach of those interfering and which might sometimes be very difficult to understand, recognize or predict. It will often be hard to answer the question of whether some group is really fighting for democracy and not rather for some particular political or religious project or just to gain power — and many experiences with democratic revolutions (for instance the recent developments in Egypt or Tunisia) show that groups might ultimately be more likely to fight for their own power than for the democratization of the state or society.

The preceding argumentation problematized the idea of a human right to democracy not in order to question the validity and obligatory character of its normative core,

¹⁶ See, for instance, the role the so-called Copenhagen criteria played in the democratization in Eastern Europe after the end of the Cold War.

¹⁷ It is important to note that already at this point the conditions for the admissibility of democracy promotion abroad that I refer to here are structural and institutional considerations with regard to a future democratic order. Later in this article, I will discuss the question of whether considerations of the “democratic” cast of mind of movements in democratic revolutions should count — and I will argue that these considerations should not count.

but rather because of the tension between the *right*-character of this right and democracy as a mode of self-government. To problematize the idea of a human right to democracy in this way¹⁸ underlines the core of the claim not to be dominated by institutions and powerful actors and to only live under conditions that are the expression of one's own will. This claim depends on the existence of an international structure that guarantees that other states and political actors cannot arbitrarily deprive a first state or society of the possibility to develop and achieve its own will. Ultimately, the claim can only be fully realized by oneself, which means that third parties might contribute to liberating the first state or society from dominating institutions and structures, but they cannot ensure that the first (will) live under conditions that express their own will. Such a will must be a collective will, which entails many complicated issues, like the social, cultural, legal, procedural and institutional conditions for a common and inclusive will formation. Furthermore, many of these conditions can only be achieved over time and also depend on other economic, cultural and social factors and resources rather than just the desire to create a democracy.

The claim not to be dominated and to live under conditions that express one's own will cannot be simply translated into rights and obligations — especially not into rights and obligations between members of a state and other states or members of other states. Nonetheless, this difficulty of translating it into rights and obligations does *not imply that we can have a normatively neutral attitude toward the realization or non-realization of this claim*. As (one of) the most fundamental claim(s), we all have (or should have) an interest in its realization, even though there is no clear obligation and accompanying entitlement to realize the claim ourselves, which means to enforce a specific democratic institutional structure and corresponding elections and/or deliberation and decision procedures on a given territory (Niederberger 2011b). *Persons fighting for a more democratic order (again in the broad sense, not only those fighting for a liberal democracy) deserve the support of*

other (democratic) states (or members of these states) because they are trying to realize their basic claim, which all human beings assumedly strive for. Freedom can only be achieved in common structures with others; therefore, we are all bound to establish democracy wherever it can be established.

Thus, democratic movements are *entitled to solidarity*. They should be supported in their fight for democratic institutions and structures — and “supported” means that the democratic movements and their members should be the ones creating and establishing the institutions and structures and not those supporting them. Solidarity is the correct term for this kind of support because it underlines that members of the first state/society are the actors and the support expresses the acknowledgment of the normative desirability of their movement without making it a common cause in the strict sense. Thus, solidarity means symbolic, ideal or material support and aid of another in her situation, projects and aims without necessarily presupposing that the situation, projects or aims are also beneficial or of interest for the supporting party. Only such a solidaristic relationship will exclude parochialism, while still being an obligation on the side of those being solidaristic.

On the other hand, such a relationship of solidarity is not unconditional and it is not support for the persons or groups as such. In the case of democratic movements, solidarity is required by the normative value of the aim a given movement pursues and it is directed at this aim. It does not entail support for specific political positions and actors. Therefore, solidarity can be critical of aspects of political or democratic movements that (seem to) run counter to the aim of democratizing a political and social order. This is a major difference to other obligations arising from human rights or duties of justice (if there are any). In the case of a duty of solidarity with a democracy movement, the obligation is not an obligation to the specific persons, but one related to the (possible) contribution of given democracy movements or other actors to the transformation of the political system in question. Individual persons will, thus, only benefit in a mediated way from these obligations, namely that they might end up living in a democracy.

Democracy implies liberating the potentials of critique — and these potentials also relate to given democracy movements and their support from more or less established democratic states and societies. This critical relationship will also alleviate the question of how to decide if a movement or group really pursues democracy or increased democracy as its aim. The openness and maybe

18 To state it once more, the important point of my argumentation is to understand the *kind of obligation* that democratic states and/or citizens of democracies have with regard to democracy movements or states in transition to a democratic order. Ultimately, it is not essential if we call the corresponding benefit or interest of such an obligation a “human right to democracy” or not. As previously mentioned, I suggest that we should not call such mere benefits or interests, which do not entail clear remedies and the necessary legal and political institutions to trigger beneficial actions, “human rights”. However, there are obviously many “interest” theories of human rights that would also call these interests or benefits corresponding with the obligations developed in the text “human rights”.

even responsiveness to criticism, which is the ability and willingness of groups to justify their protests and perspectives by giving reasons for them, are certainly good criteria for possible candidates of support.¹⁹

It is very important that democratic solidarity is not tied to specific political positions or projects because only if it is solidarity with the aim of creating (more) democratic institutions and structures can it convey its basis in a universal moral obligation. Given this, I would argue that despite presumable political wisdom, democratic solidarity cannot depend on specific actors and their circumstances in different contexts. One could always interpret such a reference to specific actors as being content-bound, which means reacting to specific positions that parties take or interests that might be affected. Democratic solidarity should be as rule-bound (and not content-bound) as possible in order to prevent any impression of partiality accompanying it.

This article argues in favor of democratic solidarity from a cosmopolitan perspective. It assumes that, normatively seen, the realization of freedom cannot depend on contingent decisions and mere historical chance. People everywhere have the same claim to participate in the decisions about the rules, institutions and persons who shape their social actions. Democratic (or republican) conditions are ultimately necessary everywhere to realize freedom. Under non-ideal conditions, this means that democratic states and citizens of democratic states owe democracy movements solidarity in their fight for a more democratic future. ♠

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¹⁹ This obviously relates to a deliberative conception of democracy whereby democracy is not just the aggregation of preferences, but rather a "republic of reasons" (Sunstein 1993).

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