Citizen Responsibility for War in Imperfect Democracies

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ABSTRACT: Are individual citizens of imperfect democracies morally responsible for unjust wars waged by their state? Moral responsibility for unjust wars involves both retrospective and social responsibility. Citizens of imperfect democracies are retrospectively responsible when they choose to vote for a leader they know will wage an unjust war. This situation may occur very rarely. For example, US citizens did not have this political option at the outset of the Vietnam and Iraq Wars. However, even when citizens are not retrospectively responsible they have the social responsibility to engage in collective action to address the harms unjust war causes.

RÉSUMÉ: Les citoyens des démocraties imparfaites sont ils moralement responsables des guerres injustes menées par leurs états? La responsabilité morale pour les guerres injustes implique à la fois une responsabilité rétrospective et une responsabilité sociale. Les citoyens des démocraties imparfaites sont rétrospectivement responsables quand ils choisissent de voter pour un dirigeant dont ils savent qu'il ménera une guerre injuste. Les citoyens américains, par exemple, n'avaient pas cette option politique au début de la guerre du Vietnam ou de la guerre en Irak. Cependant, même quand les citoyens ne sont pas rétrospectivement responsables, ils ont la responsabilité sociale de s'engager dans une action collective pour faire face aux dommages causés par une guerre injuste.

Are citizens responsible for unjust wars that are waged by their state? Even if a state meets a *jus ad bellum* standard, war wreaks untold harm and devastation on all parties, just and unjust alike. A state that initiates a war unjustly may not be the cause of all the unnecessary death, pain, and destruction that ensues. States that are aggressed upon may also engage in *jus in bello* violations that

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can be morally criticized. However, because those who violate the *jus ad bellum* standard cause the war to occur, they bear most of the responsibility for the subsequent damage. We can therefore assume that whoever is responsible for beginning such a process is primarily responsible for the harms that follow.

This paper will argue that we can hold individual citizens responsible for unjust wars but that their responsibility will depend on the conditions that precede such wars and the political opportunities available to citizens. In order to fully understand the responsibility of citizens in representative democracies where leaders are frequently unresponsive to citizens' views, we require both an account of retrospective responsibility and an account of social responsibility. Citizens will often fail to be retrospectively responsible. Even so, certain of the moral criticisms made of citizens who do not oppose unjust wars are justified because they fail to meet their social responsibilities.

It is not difficult to argue that political leaders who make the choice to go to war are responsible. However, there is also an understandable desire to blame citizens of the aggressing state for the war. Democratic states are thought to represent the will of their citizens and act on their behalf, so why should these citizens not be held responsible for the unjust acts of their state? The desire to blame is increased when the people of the defending state suffer grave harms from an unjust war (as in Vietnam, Chechnya, or Iraq) and most citizens of the attacking state are unharmed and relatively unaffected by the war. Many citizens in democratic countries that wage unjust wars do not make valiant attempts to prevent the injustices, so it is reasonable to consider whether this failure on their part allows the war to occur.

I will argue that only rarely can we attribute moral responsibility of the standard backwards-looking kind against individual citizens of large representative democracies that engage in unjust war. For many of the unjust wars such societies wage, the conditions for what I will call *retrospective moral responsibility* are absent. Ordinary citizens of large, representative democracies where citizen participation and influence over the political process are minimal (which I, following Michael Walzer, call imperfect democracies) do not play a part in starting an unjust war. They do not make the choice to go to war. In many cases they lack sufficient political influence, both individually and collectively, to prevent unjust wars from occurring. Acts of war by imperfect democracies do not necessarily carry out or express the will of citizens, although those in power may successfully use certain strategies (e.g., exacerbating fears about security or casting the war in a humanitarian light) to influence the will of some citizens after the fact.

I am concerned here with the responsibility of individual citizens, rather than with the collective or corporate responsibility of the society as a whole. Although questions about collective responsibility also arise in the case of unjust war, establishing collective responsibility does not resolve the question of individual responsibility.[1] The judgment of collective responsibility therefore leaves an important issue unresolved: The desire to hold citizens morally responsible retrospectively is partly a desire to hold *individual citizens* responsible.

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Answering the question about individual responsibility is also a necessary starting point for considering what individuals should do when their state wages war unjustly.

The literature on moral responsibility is vast and it is impossible to canvass many of the issues within that literature here. Some of these issues (for example, about freedom of the will) are always relevant to questions about retrospective moral responsibility. Here I bracket this larger question and assume that people can act freely in the relevant sense and can be held morally responsible. My argument does not rely primarily on claims that citizens act involuntarily, or upon excusing or mitigating conditions caused, e.g., by political corruption or government propaganda. Instead my view is that a very basic condition for retrospective moral responsibility is infrequently met for citizens of states that wage unjust wars. Because this condition is so basic, it is rarely discussed in the literature on moral responsibility: judgments of retrospective responsibility require a sufficiently close relationship between what the person did or did not do and the event we want to hold her responsible for.

A sufficiently close relationship obtains between a person and an event when the event either would not have occurred or would have been noticeably different had the person acted otherwise than she did.[2] (This includes the failure to act.) In other words, for a person to be retrospectively responsible for an event E, her action or inaction must be enough of a contributing cause of E that her own action or inaction influences whether E did or did not occur or has some noticeable effect on the kind of event E turns out to be. In many cases, a citizen's action or inaction does not have this sort of influence.

Walzer's view is that ordinary citizens of imperfect democracies often have so little influence over events leading to unjust wars that we cannot hold them retrospectively responsible for unjust wars. I defend this view for cases where citizens of imperfect democracies do not have advance notification that their political leaders intend to go to war and thus the simple act of voting could not stop the war. In such cases, citizen failure to act is not a cause of the war. In many cases, citizens cannot prevent war.

Nevertheless, Walzer's account neglects a significant case where ordinary citizens can be retrospectively responsible. Sometimes citizens have advance notice from candidates with the power to initiate wars that a war will occur; these citizens do have political alternatives, and by voting for that candidate, they vote to bring the war about. Such cases are likely to apply to the continuation of unjust war, rather than its initiation. In ongoing wars, casting a vote which she knows will bring about an unjust war gives an individual citizen a measure of retrospective responsibility.

However, such conditions are often not present. There are frequently circumstances where citizens have almost no influence over political events leading to unjust war. This leads us into a dilemma. How can we accept that individual citizens of states that engage in unjust war are frequently absolved of responsibility? Even if we grant that citizens in large representative democracies

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lack significant political power over state action, it nevertheless seems morally relevant that they are members of the state that initiates an unjust war. Citizens of states that wage unjust wars seem to have special moral relationships to those wars. The way out of this dilemma, I argue, is to expand the idea of moral responsibility to include certain kinds of participatory relationships that individuals have to harms like unjust war. The relationship most individuals have to an unjust war is neither that of a cause of the harm nor, in many cases, that of a voluntary participant in it. Nevertheless, citizens participate in the institutions and systems that enable an unjust war to occur and such participation creates a morally relevant relationship between citizens and those the war harms.

To fully account for citizen responsibility for unjust wars, we must also look to social responsibilities that arise from involuntary participation in complex structures that enable unjust wars. Political leaders may be blameworthy for the event in the usual retrospective sense. However, in order to carry out their ends, leaders depend on the participation of many others within society. This participatory relationship in unjust war makes ordinary citizens socially responsible. This responsibility is primarily forward-looking rather than retrospective and results from a relationship to an event that one may not have intended, did not cause, and could not prevent.

In what follows, I first defend Walzer's concept of an imperfect democracy and the relative powerlessness that ordinary citizens have within it. I apply Walzer's conclusion that this powerlessness leads to little or no responsibility for ordinary citizens to the case of the U.S.-Iraq War and argue that U.S. citizens did not have retrospective responsibility in the early years of the war.

I next consider two critiques of Walzer that are primarily based on the idea that a democracy is a popular sovereignty and that the state acts as an agent of the people, who are therefore individually responsible for all that the state does. I argue that imperfect democracies fail to realize the conditions necessary for popular sovereignty.

However, I show that, even when Walzer is correct about the powerlessness of citizens to control certain political events, he misconstrues the relationship between retrospective responsibility and prospective moral obligation. Citizens of imperfect democracies have forward-looking responsibilities to do what they can to address the political causes that enable unjust war. Such action is a long-term political project and will usually be insufficient to prevent unjust wars in a particular instance.

Finally, I consider some of the more specific obligations that arise out of these social responsibilities and the relationship between social and retrospective responsibility.

Walzer's Causal Efficacy View of Responsibility

In Walzer's view, the level of responsibility that exists for events caused by the state depends on the personal causal efficacy members of that state have on political outcomes. He bases his view on what he calls *Gray's Principle:*

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"The greater the possibility of free action in the communal sphere, the greater the degree of guilt for evil deeds done in the name of everyone."[3] Walzer therefore takes up a fairly standard notion of responsibility that depends on freedom to act and the capacity to have some causal influence on events, either by one's action or by one's inaction. Because Walzer assumes that a necessary condition for responsibility is that a person be capable of influencing events leading to war, his view can be described as a causal efficacy view.

How then do we determine who is responsible and who is not? For Walzer, responsibility is a matter of degree, and in his view the yardstick by which we measure responsibility for unjust wars primarily depends on an individual's social and political power and hence, her ability to influence political events leading to war. The political regime citizens live within is therefore extremely significant to resolving questions about the responsibility of ordinary citizens. In non-democratic states, such as Nazi Germany during World War II, ordinary citizens (non-elites without special status or political influence) had almost no responsibility for the state's aggression. Those who did have greater influence, such as German government officials during WWII, should have been at least dimly aware of an "imperative" to resign when the war was begun but also cannot be blamed. Although resigning might have had little effect, it might also have been "morally heartening" to others aware of the injustice of Germany's aggression.[4]

Walzer assigns the most political power, and therefore the greatest responsibility, to citizens of "perfect democracies." Citizens within perfect democracies have a substantial impact on outcomes and, because such citizens have the power to vote for or against the war, responsibility is widely shared.

A perfect democracy requires a small community, one where everyone participates and is able to hold office and where direct democratic voting determines most of the social policies and political decisions, including whether or not to go to war. When such a community decides to wage an unjust war, "all those men and women who cooperated in planning, initiating and waging it" are blameworthy for the war itself.[5] However, people can also be blamed for inaction when action would prevent the war. Those who vote against the war can be blamed if they fail to protest so long as their actions might have had an effect:

> Imagine that the minority of citizens that was defeated could have won (and prevented the war) if instead of merely voting, they had held meetings outside the assembly, marched and demonstrated, organized for a second vote. …[6]

Also blameworthy are those who opposed the war but did not bother to vote. Walzer exempts all those who did not desire the war from guilt for the war itself, which suggests he assumes a fairly close fit between intention and outcome in order to hold a person fully responsible. Further, it is clear that he does not expect people to take action unless they think their actions have a chance of being successful. We are required to act only if we have a strong reason to believe that our action will affect events. Our obligation to act, therefore, is also dependent

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on whether our action will affect events. In "democracies there are opportunities for a positive response, and we need to ask to what extent these opportunities fix our obligations. …"[7]

In imperfect or marginal democracies, however, Walzer exempts ordinary citizens from blame for unjust wars because they have few, if any, opportunities for positive response. In large representative democracies, ordinary citizens are relatively powerless. On Walzer's view, members of these are not citizens in the full sense. Most of us belong to some state by accident of birth or because we lack other options. Such belonging creates neither citizenship nor obligation:

> One does not acquire any real obligations … simply by being born or by submitting to socialization within a particular group. These come only when to the fact of membership there is added the fact of willful membership.[8]

In imperfect democracies, participation and willed membership are absent and so their members do not have real obligations to the state.[9]

A cursory reading of Walzer would suggest that the most salient features that make U.S. democracy imperfect would be (1) the fact it is a representative, rather than a direct democracy and (2) the absence of participation and willful membership. It is a contentious issue whether the absence of direct democracy is a flaw.[10] With respect to the war in Vietnam (and, I will argue, the war in Iraq), some additional aspects of the political structure can be gleaned from Walzer's account that are relevant to evaluating citizens' political opportunities for effective action: (3) the government deliberately deceives the populace; (4) the ability of citizens to know the facts about the war is constrained because much of the mainstream media compliantly frames these facts in ways amenable to the government's account; (5) there is a significant level of inequality in education, influence, and power such that ordinary citizens may have significantly less capacity to assess government information and wield political influence than do political elites; and (6) the government is unresponsive to dissent against the war.[11]

What of the impassioned feelings that members of imperfect democracies like the United States have toward their government such that some enthusiastically support a given war? Walzer regards such emotions as "a desperate identification, a reflex of distance, stimulated … by a false account of what is going on."[12] In his view, members of such states are unaware of much that occurs politically and whatever beliefs they have about their deep tie to the state are false. Their emotions are presumably based on ideology and the illusory desire to belong. They do not freely choose what occurs politically. Nor are they capable of preventing political decisions they do not agree with. Thus, when a country goes to war, Walzer's view implies that consent is largely manufactured by government propaganda, rather than given voluntarily.

Walzer's primary illustration of the choice to go to war in this kind of democracy is the U.S.-Vietnam war. He says that during the Vietnam war, the

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United States was huge, governed by "powerful and often arrogant officials" who did not advertise their plans before elections, and its people were at the mercy of a media that distorted events.[13] Citizens were not negligent in believing their leaders knew best since they had few reliable sources of information. Even those who questioned the war were unable to have much effect. And of those who approved of the war, he says it was not "their war."[14]

Walzer does not exempt everyone who does not hold political office, however. He holds elites responsible. In particular, he holds responsible

> … the national and local leaders of its political parties, its religious establishment, its corporate hierarchies, and perhaps above all its intellectual teachers and spokesmen.[15]

Why hold elites responsible but exempt ordinary citizens? Walzer sees two main reasons. First, the ignorance of elites was more culpable, as they were in a better position to ascertain the facts. Second, elites had greater power to influence public opinion and to shape a movement against the war. This second reason—their potential for efficacy—is the more significant. Interestingly, however, Walzer notes that even those who were part of the anti-war movement were not as effective as they might have been. Some were distracted by their resentment of others who supported the war; also, because so many elites acquiesced to the war, the small number of people who resisted had a greater burden.

The Case of Iraq

The striking parallels between Walzer's account of the United States during the Vietnam War and the United States during the build-up to the war against Iraq suggest that not only is his account accurate in the larger details, but also that the general problem he describes will recur. The powerlessness of the general public, combined with the ineffectiveness of resistance and the inability even of significant numbers of politically aware and active citizens to successfully oppose an unjust war, may be a persistent problem for citizens of the United States if it continues to pursue the role of global hegemon. This will also be a (perhaps more surmountable) problem for citizens residing in countries that intend to be close military allies of the United States when those countries are drawn into wars the U.S. initiates.

As with Vietnam, the government that waged war against Iraq was made up of "powerful and often arrogant officials." And, as Walzer claims for Vietnam, the plan to go to war was not advertised before the election. Although there is reason to believe that George Bush hoped for a war with Iraq before the terrorist attack that served as a (spurious) pretext for the war, during the election it was impossible for ordinary citizens (and for the elites that Walzer assumes would be better informed) to know that this was the case.[16] The build-up to the Iraq war involved such a high level of misinformation that it is reasonable to assume that political leaders engaged in a substantial amount of deception.[17]

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History also repeated itself: to a significant degree, U.S. citizens were at the mercy of a media that distorted facts and facilitated the rush to war. Elites, particularly media elites, had a significant influence over the political framing of the war and some seemingly well-informed elites believed the Bush administration's claim that war against Iraq was justified.[18] There was a level of irrationality within the political discourse that we might ascribe to what Walzer calls "war fever," although many elites and citizens did not catch this fever. Counter-arguments to the proposed invasion of Iraq could be found in many mainstream media sources, and sources disputing the intelligence put forward by the Bush administration as a pretext to war were also readily available through the Internet. What was doubtless more influential than war fever in the Iraq case was the climate of fear that the Bush administration created around the threat of terrorism.[19]

An additional form of public deception about Vietnam that Walzer does not mention also occurred in the build-up of war against Iraq: the use of a humanitarian pretext. During the Vietnam War, officials reassured U.S. citizens that they were saving the Vietnamese from the horrors of communism. In the lead-up to the invasion of Iraq, citizens were urged to believe that the Iraqi people would benefit from the overthrow of Saddam Hussein and the establishment of democracy in Iraq. This also may have blunted the effectiveness of the opposition to the war. Citizens were encouraged to believe that the extreme injustice of the Hussein regime provided an additional just pretext for a war to create a democratic Iraq.

Although there was a fair amount of dissent during the build-up to the Iraq War, it is unlikely that even wider protest by citizens would have been decisive in preventing it. The level of misinformation may also have deterred mass mobilization. Thus, in the U.S.-Iraq War we can point to two important features that are also present in Walzer's account of Vietnam. First, most citizens were not in the usual position of voluntary choice, given the amount of deception present. Second, if they had known more, it is unlikely that even much wider citizen opposition would have prevented the war from going forward.[20] Most important for my account is that the events that led to the war were not ones over which an ordinary dissenting citizen had a meaningful influence or effect, either to cause or to prevent. The war was not initiated by citizens and was opposed by a substantial number of citizens, sometimes very vehemently. Many elites also opposed the war and some government officials resigned their posts, with public letters of protest.[21] To no avail. The intense desire of the political leadership to go to war was not something individual citizens could have overcome and collective action in the form of public protest had no impact whatsoever.[22]

What is required for individual responsibility in such cases? In many cases, the ordinary citizen does not, by his actions, bring about the war. Wars are very rarely the result of a popular call for war. For retrospective responsibility, the war does not directly result from what a citizen does; the focus must be on what he has failed to do. Underlying this concern, with respect to unjust wars,

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it appears that many, or even most, citizens stand by passively and do not act in the face of the injustice.

So what is it that individuals can do? Under the social responsibility model I will argue for, a person can be responsible to act even in cases where she does not have an immediate effect on events when her action has the potential for long-term effects. The inability to have an effect on an event does matter for retrospective responsibility. We cannot be held retrospectively responsible for events that we did not cause and cannot prevent. We can see that, in many cases, an ordinary citizen cannot prevent an unjust war from occurring by her own action; this is simply because it is almost impossible to imagine what sort of action a single person could perform that would have this result.

Retrospective responsibility of individuals for actions that require the participation of others raises difficult questions. First, we can consider whether a person can be held retrospectively responsible for failing to try something that, even if it succeeded in creating collective action, would not succeed in preventing the event. Will she thereby be responsible for the event? Or is she only responsible for her failure to try? It is implausible to hold the person responsible for the event if, as in the cases of the Vietnam and Iraq Wars, the attempt would not have brought about the desired result in ending the war.

However, under certain conditions, a citizen of an imperfect democracy *can* be blamed for an unjust war. The conditions are these: (1) It is public knowledge that certain political leaders intend to wage war; (2) The citizen is aware of the intention of these leaders or could become aware of these with minimal effort; (3) There is publicly available and persuasive evidence that strongly indicates the intended war will be unjust; (4) The citizens has the option of voting for a leader who would not go to war or, without heroic effort, he could enable such a political alternative; (5) The citizen votes for the leader or leaders who intend to wage war because he, like the leader, desires that his state wage an unjust war; (6) The citizen's reasons for voting for an unjust war can be ascribed to attitudes and beliefs for which he is morally responsible; for example, ethnic hatred, moral indifference to the suffering of those in other states, attraction to the power of war, a desire that his state should dominate others, and so on. It is worth noting that those who wage and support unjust wars will usually claim that such wars are just or will engage in other forms of rationalization. Such rationalizations do not amount to excusing conditions. The standard of responsibility here should be the standard applied to other moral wrongs. If self-excusing narratives or the belief that one is justified in harming others eliminated responsibility, people would rarely be responsible for any wrong they commit.

Failure to vote can be culpable in these cases because the person is also rejecting an opportunity to prevent the war, but an intentional action that enables unjust war is the clearest case where a person can be blamed for that war. Not all cases of unjust war waged by imperfect democracies are alike. Many cases of unjust war are sprung upon citizens and cannot be prevented even by widespread anti-war agitation. However, some unjust wars may be widely supported by the

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citizenry, citizen voting patterns indicate this support and their votes enabled the war to occur.

A person can therefore have retrospective responsibility for a particular event when there is an existing collective situation and one's action within that situation will have a noticeable effect on that event. Voting for a candidate who opposes a proposed unjust war is an action within a collective situation that citizens have a good reason to believe will produce the effect of an unjust war. In such cases, an individual citizen who actively supports the war by voting for the pro-war candidate is retrospectively responsible for it as he knowingly participated in an action that had the effect of bringing about an unjust war.

There may be mitigating circumstances that reduce retrospective responsibility here. Often, leaders will rely on misinformation to gain public support. For example, they will argue that there is a grave threat to citizen security if the country fails to go to war. However, Walzer's view that citizens can be entirely deceived is not plausible if we also want to hold leaders accountable for unjust wars. Leaders also have false beliefs that bring them to conclude the wars they wage are morally justified. In many cases, such misapprehensions can be regarded as willful. Citizens may not have access to a full set of facts but, even within imperfect democracies with a compliant media, they rarely lack access to information that contradicts the government's account.

While it is true that not all citizens are knowledgeable and reflective, they do have the freedom to choose between competing accounts. Certain citizens nonculpably lack the capacity to evaluate competing accounts or do not have access to such accounts.[23] The due diligence and serious moral reflection of certain people may still result in false beliefs about the war because of an onslaught of deception and misinformation. This may reduce their responsibility if they vote for the war. The crucial question for moral responsibility here is whether an individual citizen takes seriously the potential for extreme harm and grave injustice to other human beings that any war poses. This must be regarded as a moral minimum for any person; such a basic moral consideration cannot be only the province of elites within any society. The moral minimum clearly comes with an obligation to consider alternative accounts.[24] It must be granted that certain people are deceived and they are not fully responsible for being deceived. Misinformation during the Iraq War was disseminated by many ordinarily reliable sources and seemingly trustworthy government figures. By the same token, it must also be granted that some people were willingly deceived or simply desired war and utterly failed to take seriously the basic moral responsibility to be concerned about the devastating harm the war would pose to others.[25] While it is true that mitigating circumstances may hold for some people, what does not seem plausible is what Walzer assumes: That they hold for almost everyone. To exempt all ordinary citizens from responsibility for their choices here because the government attempts to mislead them overlooks the fact that many ordinary citizens regard government accounts with some skepticism. Many citizens also see themselves as making a considered choice

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about whether or not to support the war. Some are misled but others choose to support the war in bad faith. Further, we cannot entirely exempt people from responsibility because they make choices under uncertainty. Given that our knowledge is so rarely complete, this would place severe limits on the ability to hold people morally responsible more generally.

If we do not want to place leaders and elites in an entirely different moral class with respect to retrospective moral responsibility, we can, barring exceptional circumstances, hold citizens responsible for their false beliefs when alternative information is available to them and they fail to attend to such information because they are morally indifferent to the plight of others, are attracted to the power of war, harbour misplaced desires for vengeance, or are influenced by other morally unacceptable motives. In such cases, a false belief can be both culpable and willful.

The conditions necessary for retrospective responsibility were not initially present in the case of the United States war against Iraq. The fact that the United States is ostensibly a democracy does not render its citizens retrospectively responsible for the initiation of the U.S.-Iraq War. Even if we set aside Walzer's concern that true citizenship requires a genuine sense of membership and involvement in a community, the elements necessary to hold American citizens responsible for the initiation of a war against Iraq are absent. While a non-majority of voters did cast votes that led to the Presidency of George Bush, they did not know that casting those votes would lead to war against Iraq.[26] The invasion of Iraq resulted not from a general call to arms led by the people but from the plans of a small group of neo-conservatives.

As the build-up to war progressed, some citizens did approve of the war. So, one might say, they intended that it occur. Nevertheless, because this intention did not affect the event, what they can be blamed for here is their gross indifference to the horrible effects of the war, rather than the war itself. There may be moral attitudes underlying this intention that they can also be blamed for, such as xenophobia or misplaced desires for vengeance for the terrorist attack against the World Trade Center. These are surely blameworthy but are not adequate as a source for retrospective moral responsibility since desiring an injustice is not the same as causing an injustice. However, it is arguable that citizens who voted for George Bush in 2004 were expressing support for the war in Iraq. If so, they can be blamed for the continuation of the war, given that the opposing candidate, John Kerry, claimed he would end the war.

Democracies as Popular Sovereignties

One view of citizen responsibility regards citizen non-involvement in events leading to war as irrelevant to responsibility. On this view, democracies are popular sovereignties. In a democracy, it is the people who rule and therefore the people are responsible for the actions of the state. Even in imperfect democracies, to argue that political leaders are primarily responsible for unjust wars is to suggest that democracy is meaningless.

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According to Michael Green, the French Revolution caused a historical transformation of society whereby political authority was vested in the people themselves. The people are the "source of the legitimate activities of their government."[27] They are sovereign. The actions of a democratic government became the actions of the nation and those who make up the nation. Green envisions the role of the people as "explicitly, knowingly and willingly" formulating policies and "delegating" and "directing" others to carry them out.[28]

The view that citizens can be exempt from responsibility for the actions of their state fails to account for this paradigm shift in the form of the state that occurred after the French Revolution. At that point

> … war was fundamentally different because political authority and thus responsibility were conceptualized in a fundamentally different manner. In the new paradigm, war became a conflict among nations and peoples involving the total mobilization of those nations.[29]

Wars, in the modern sense, are communal efforts. In a democracy, virtually all citizens can legitimately be called upon to promote the war effort, either through conscription or by providing economic or other support. Thus, all citizens become responsible for any war as individuals as well as collectively.

An important feature of Green's view is that the state and the people have a vertical contract and the state carries out the will of the people. According to Green, even dissent does not exempt a person from responsibility, since, on Locke's view, remaining within a country and utilizing its resources implies consent to the will of the majority. Their membership itself gives consent; each person is required to support the decisions of the majority, although she is free to exercise persuasion toward the majority.[30] In the modern period, Green argues, the absence of democracy is not an excusing condition. According to Locke, a free people must overthrow and resist tyranny. Failure to do so implies consent to the actions of political leaders.[31] Implied consent is sufficient for responsibility.

Because war in the modern period is conceived of as a conflict between nations and their peoples, Green suggests that all citizens of nations that wage war unjustly are also apt targets for attack. The responsibility that follows from popular sovereignty brings with it moral guilt when a person is part of a nation that unjustly wages war on others. This moral guilt eliminates civilian immunity. Many have argued that the basis of civilian immunity is not moral guilt but the potential threat one poses. On this view, only those who pose an imminent threat can legitimately be attacked during wars.[32] Green argues that even this self-defence view does not exempt civilians:

> The threat is the whole complexly organized system that generates the assassins and sends them forth. If the government and the military are the expressions of the general will or common consensus of the nation, then the threat is between one nation and another nation.[33]

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A view that a nation itself is a threat and its members should be conceived of as assassins is also a view about other human beings. Even if others are members of a state that has aggressed against one's own, such a view is contrary to even a fairly weak moral concern for other people as human beings. Green's view seems to permit total war and suggests that the aim of war can legitimately be conceived of as destruction of a nation. Thus, a citizen of Great Britain during WWII could legitimately disregard the moral value of the lives of civilians in Japan and Germany entirely. At the very least, such an attitude would be regarded as appropriate. It is true that armed conflicts do prompt some individuals to have such attitudes towards the peoples of other nations but the fact that these reactions do not appear morally justified in retrospect indicates that they were not justified during the war. During war, a military will often not take great care to protect the civilians of an aggressing nation and will sometimes directly attack those civilians. However, the fact that unjustly attacked nations do not do everything possible to wholly destroy the aggressing nation shows that defensive wars are frequently waged against particular regimes, rather than against nations themselves.

Igor Primoratz agrees with Green that Walzer's account of citizen responsibility is indefensible. Primoratz also agrees with Green that citizens are responsible but he holds citizens responsible only for what they do or do not do. Their membership in the state does not make them fully morally responsible for everything the state does. Because citizens can be guilty of unjust war, a military attack on citizens of an aggressive nation is legitimate. However, offering "a moderate view" of whether citizens are liable to attack, he holds citizens responsible only for what they did to support the war or failed to do to prevent it. Further, only those who supported a war are retrospectively responsible and apt targets for attack.

Primoratz agrees with Green that for any sort of democracy, even an imperfect one, the actions of the government and the military are the result of the people's decisions and of their will. Nevertheless, he does not take up Green's view that the individual's will is necessarily expressed by the general will. If the individual's will is opposed to the actions of her state, then they do not express her will. The kinds of actions that make a person responsible for an unjust war are supporting the government and the war, voting for the ruling party, giving allegiance to the government pursuing the war, expressing support for the war, or passively supporting the war.[34] Popular sovereignty brings with it responsibility for an unjust war only if the war expresses one's actual will.

According to Primoratz, the self-defence view of innocence does not apply to citizens who support the war because such citizens are, at least in theory, attackers themselves. If, for example, we imagine that A intends to kill B but either hires or hypnotizes C to do it, then the person it is most legitimate to kill is A, rather than C (particularly in the case of hypnosis). One can protect oneself by killing A even though A does not pose the direct threat in such a case. The self-defence view of civilian immunity seems to imply that it makes no moral

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difference whether one kills A or C. In other words, if it is the citizens whose will the war expresses, and if the nation being aggressed upon can protect itself by killing the citizens, then the citizens are more legitimate targets than those they authorize (or in the case of conscription, coerce) to do their killing. [35]

Further, Primoratz argues that Walzer's excusing conditions do not nullify citizen guilt for unjust war. He admits that citizen action sometimes has little effect in an imperfect democracy but argues that she must still act on her duty to protest the war. She must perform some action to indicate that "the killing, maiming and destruction aren't being done in her name too."[36]

Primoratz's moderate view would make most attacks on civilians illegitimate in spite of their moral guilt. Since Primoratz argues that citizens who oppose the war are not guilty, and it is not possible for attackers to distinguish between citizens who do and do not support the war, attacks on civilians will usually be unjustified. However, in rare cases it may be "possible to deliberately attack those, and only those civilians who are actively supporting their democratic government in its pursuit of an unjust war." "When such an attack is the thing to do from the military point of view," he does not see "how they can claim immunity in good faith."[37]

What is attractive about popular sovereignty is that it expresses an ideal whereby the citizen is not a subject of the state but rules himself through his participation in the state. In modern imperfect democracies, however, the relationship between the citizens and the state does not satisfy the conditions for popular sovereignty. Actual imperfect democratic governments express the will of the people very indirectly, if at all. Within large representative democracies, like that of the United States, many significant social policies are shaped and decided by experts, with some minor consultation with other elites such as lobbyists and advocacy groups. Foreign policy, especially, lies outside the purview of ordinary citizens. Citizens do not directly guide policy-makers or politicians in their choices and thus they do not directly delegate or direct their leaders' choices. Through voting, citizens have a direct influence over who their leaders are. However, political candidates only give very general information about what they will do in future situations, and often fail to satisfy the expectations they set during campaigns. Further, citizens influence what their leaders choose to do only if those leaders choose to be constrained later by concerns about citizen opinion. Once they have cast their votes, citizens may have negligible influence until the next election.

One way to make sense of the idea that a citizen's failure to stop an unjust war in the actual conditions described makes them morally liable for an unjust war is to suppose that being a member of a state is a kind of moral risk. It is true that those who voted in the United States elections of 2000 did not know that they would be voting for a candidate who would execute an unjust war. But, we might object, voting is itself a moral risk. Voters are certainly in the position to realize that the United States has the largest and best-funded military in the world and, with little effort, they will also become aware of the nation's

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record on foreign policy. It is easily accessible public information that the United States has historically engaged in quite a few large and small unjust conflicts, and has funded many other unjust armed conflicts in which it has not engaged directly. Being a citizen of the United States means being part of such an entity, an entity that has the capability and historical willingness to engage in unjust wars.

Further, the United States is nothing more than the citizens within it. The citizens and the country are, in a politically relevant sense, the same entity. So when a citizen votes (or engages in other forms of participation), she is voting for someone who will carry out her will. Whatever leaders do carries out the will of citizens because the act of voting is an act that licenses another to act on one's behalf. Leaders' actions therefore carry out the will of citizens in the sense that they have authorized those actions through political participation. The act of will such leaders are capable of carrying out involves unjust wars. It is therefore disingenuous to object that one did not intend an unjust war to occur.

The problem with this identification of the citizen's will with the state is that it collectivizes a person's moral agency and utterly fails to leave room for the moral distinctness of persons. On the view that the government carries out the will of each citizen, citizens who dissent or disagree with their government either do so illegitimately or are in opposition with their own will. Opposition to one's government would be irrational opposition to an entity that one has willingly given complete authority to act on one's behalf. Thus, it would make little sense for an individual to resist the actions of her own state. In fact, it is clear that members of imperfect democracies regard their governments not as carrying out their will but as acting independently, often in opposition to their will. Thus, they regard themselves as free to reject many of the state's actions.[38] On Green's view, they are bound to leaders' decisions and their only alternative is to overthrow the state. Yet, many who live in imperfect democracies explicitly reject the foreign policies or other political goals of their state. They do not regard voting or other forms of participation as consent to all that their leaders do. We have been given no good reason why they must regard their state's actions as concurrent with their own will.

Another consequence of such a view is that a person who is oppressed within and by the political system wills her own oppression, in a sense. If an African American in 1921 voted in a Northern state and later moved to a Southern state (where voting was impossible for her), would she in fact be accepting the separate but equal standard of the Jim Crow South because it was ratified by the Supreme Court in *Plessey v. Ferguson*? The Supreme Court expresses the will of the state as much as anything does. Surely it matters that actual democracies are fractious, and that many people who are ostensibly members of them are detached, powerless, and even oppressed by them.

Moreover, there is little on the popular sovereignty account that corresponds to a recognizable view of moral responsibility. Political membership is usually entirely involuntary. Giving up citizenship is extremely burdensome and may

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be impossible. (You would have to find another state that would welcome you that was not similarly unethical.) The absence of alternatives to membership in one's state makes it implausible to suppose that membership alone brings retrospective responsibility for all that the state does. Further, it is undeniable that the wills of many are deeply and persistently opposed to what their government does. We would have to suppose that such citizens have two wills in opposition to each other or that somehow the will of the state is to be privileged over their individual will. However, it is problematic to suppose that the individual will should be subsumed to the will of the state, because that leaves the overthrow of one's government and the establishment of a new social order as the only alternative for rejecting the will of the state.

Consider Green's claim that, if a state fails to be a democracy in the appropriate sense, the citizen has an obligation to overthrow that state. If ought implies can, then it is hard to see how citizens of imperfect democracies have such an obligation, let alone those who suffer under tyrannical regimes. People cannot have a duty to do what they are unable to do. For example, the only reasonable conclusion about the Burmese people is that they do not consent to the SLORC. Various attempts to overthrow the regime resulted in death and imprisonment for many people. Failure to continue in this attempt does not imply that they consent to it but only that they prefer to remain alive.

Primoratz's view is that citizens who dissent are not morally responsible for unjust wars. Nevertheless, he regards those who support unjust wars as analogous to a person who has authorized or hypnotized another person to commit murder on his behalf. Thus, such citizens are legitimate targets in armed conflict. This raises a legitimate worry about the particular case mentioned previously: a popular ongoing war in which the citizenry's approval results in a continuous pro-war leadership. Thus, in some cases, the majority of citizens reject political alternatives that would bring an end to an unjust war. As argued above, this is one case where citizens who "vote for war" would be retrospectively responsible. However, unjust wars waged by imperfect democracies often do not occur under these conditions because wars often come as a surprise to the citizenry.

There is a significant element of truth in the worry Green raises: that citizens of large representative democracies, however detached from their states, are among the enabling conditions for such states to wreak horrible injustices upon others. Further, both Green and Primoratz make vivid the deep intuition many of us have: that it is morally wrong for members of states that engage in unjust wars to remain mere passive bystanders. In the next section of this paper, I will try to capture these intuitions through the notion of social responsibility. I have argued that, with respect to the injustices of the wars in Vietnam and Iraq and perhaps in similar situations in the future, ordinary citizens of large representative democracies like the United States may not have retrospective moral responsibility.

Some will object to this conclusion because of the widespread sense, particularly in states that suffer unjust attacks, that members of the attacking state must be held responsible for the devastating harm unjust wars cause. It is

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demoralizing to exempt citizens from responsibility for such unthinkable harm when those harms could not have occurred had it not been for those very citizens. While I have argued that ordinary citizens can be relatively powerless, citizens are not things; they are agents and are subject to moral address. When taking stock of the unjust war against Iraq, failure to regard U.S. citizens as independently reflective moral agents in the way that Walzer's account does overlooks fundamental moral responses that can be expected of citizens as moral agents, even when they lack individual political influence.

While it may be true that citizens cannot stop an unjust war at a given time, this does not mean that their moral reflections on events have no effect over time. While a significant portion of the U.S. public that objected to the war in Iraq did not successfully resist the invasion, further political action may make the U.S. less willing to go to war in the future. Moral regret that injustice has occurred even if one is not its cause is an appropriate moral response. Widespread moral regret has some potential to change the political culture of militarism in the United States and to raise doubts about the country's imperial ambitions.[39] Yet, if citizens are not held responsible, there seems to be no basis for regret. These are powerful concerns that social responsibility can address.

An additional troubling consequence of the conclusion that there is either no retrospective responsibility or extremely limited responsibility for an unjust war lies in what this means for citizens of the state that wages the war. First, the conclusion suggests that, if we are members of such a state, our moral agency is exceedingly limited with respect to state action. In some respects, members of imperfect democracies are more like subjects than sovereigns. The promise of robust popular sovereignty remains unfulfilled. Nevertheless, it is disturbing to abandon the idea that our moral agency extends to the public sphere and to injustices caused by the state to which we belong. To give up the idea that citizens can be responsible for unjust wars is to suggest that our moral responsibility is essentially private and stops at the point the state's power begins. In the case of imperfect democracies, ordinary citizens are responsible for very few political decisions and have limited political influence. But this does not entail that they cannot *take* responsibility for the conduct of their state. Indeed, given the continuing resistance in the U.S. to the war in Iraq, the people organizing such resistance can be said to be in the process of taking responsibility.

Many citizens of imperfect democracies regard themselves as having an obligation to respond to the injustices their state perpetrates. This is true even though politically engaged citizens of such democracies probably do not regard themselves as powerful or even efficacious in opposing the state's action. This sense of powerlessness grows when citizens know that their political leaders have very recalcitrant political views and/or when those who protest injustice know themselves to be in the minority. (Both were the case during the U.S. wars in both Vietnam and Iraq.) However, even with the knowledge that their actions may have no effect, some citizens regard themselves as required to act in response to political injustice.[40]

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What could be the basis for this belief? If people do not have a good reason to regard themselves as morally responsible in the ordinary sense and are doubtful of their efficacy, why do they still believe they must respond morally to their own state's action in ways that they do not respond to the actions of other states? And why do some continue to engage in protest and criticize others who do not join them?

What Walzer's view misconstrues is the relationship between obligation and responsibility when it comes to unjust wars. Retrospective responsibility does not perfectly track standing obligation. We are often obligated to perform actions that arise because of the situation we find ourselves in, even if that situation is not a direct result of our own action. If, for example, I am male and I benefit from my employer's sexism, I have an obligation to do what I can to ameliorate that sexism by being helpful to my female co-workers on the job or speaking out on behalf of female employees in the workplace. I am not responsible for my unjust advantage but it is also ethically irresponsible for me to exploit it for my benefit. When we fail to act on these obligations to respond to injustices that involve or benefit us but which we did not cause, we can be held responsible for the failure to respond.

Thus, non-causal relationships to unjust events can create moral obligations. First, our relationship as unwilling beneficiary or participant in an injustice may give us a special opportunity to ameliorate or address the injustice. Second, our relationship to some injustices may be such that our protest carries greater weight, may help prevent future injustice, or may be a sign of respect that acknowledges the suffering of victims. Third, and most relevant here, our relationship may be one of participation through complex structures that enable unjust events and we may have moral responsibilities to address these structures.

The responses that many people believe are required of them when their state acts unjustly can be explained by a modified version of the social responsibility view that is applicable to the case of unjust wars. The social responsibility model makes sense of the morally relevant features of national identity and the belief of politically engaged citizens that their membership and national identity can make moral claims on them when their state inflicts injustice upon others, even if they are not direct causes of those injustices.

Social Responsibility

Iris Young uses the concept of social responsibility to argue that people have responsibilities in relation to "global social processes" such as those that result in exploitative sweatshop labour. The primary underlying feature of this view is the idea of social connection. Young argues that "all agents who contribute by their actions to the structural processes that produce injustices have responsibilities to remedy these injustices."[41]

Young's view of social responsibility raises a question related to that asked here: how is it possible to hold people responsible for complex events that they may not directly cause and where, in fact, their own contribution can be

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vanishingly small? In describing those who protest at Disney stores because the clothes there are made in sweatshops, Young refers to their belief that such protests are judgments of injustice, not merely misfortune. When we make this type of judgment of injustice, we often hold someone else retrospectively responsible. However, we also accept some responsibility to address both the cause of that injustice and its harmful effects. Demands to rectify this injustice are addressed to individuals even when they do not shape or control the processes that lead to them but are only minor participants in that process.

This example shows that, although such judgments are addressed to a corporation, they are also part of a complex process of political organizing that aims at altering systematic effects. Political organizing is addressed partly to large institutions or corporate bodies and to those individuals with greater control over them, but it is also addressed to everyone else, because those larger entities are dependent upon the aggregate actions of everyone else. Such actions are intended to create awareness among consumers, for example, of their own participation in the economic processes that rely on sweatshops. It is by reflecting on this participation that people can come to be aware that they have a responsibility for the exploitation that occurs in sweatshops.

To explain how participation in structural injustices can generate social responsibility, Young therefore proposes an alternative model of responsibility that does not rely upon liability and is not primarily retrospective. One primary source of the responsibility in the case of economic injustice such as sweatshops is the global interconnections that result in these injustices. However, this responsibility is primarily forward-looking and may not include retrospective or backward-looking judgments that accompany blame for past harm. Rather, the requirement on individuals is to perform actions, such as collective organizing, to change unjust systems that will result in future harm.

A feature of Young's account of responsibility for structural injustice is not entirely analogous with the responsibility of citizens for unjust wars. In the case of global injustice, Young suggests that everyone is part of an overall global co-operative scheme; because our own plans and actions depend upon the operation of this scheme, we can be held responsible for harmful effects on others within the scheme. It could be argued that the relationship between citizens in states waging unjust wars and those who suffer from those wars is not sufficiently similar, as those citizens do not always participate in a co-operative scheme with citizens who are victims of unjust war.

It is of course possible to give an account of the connection between war and global economic processes. The wealth that some states have as a result of their roles in the global economy plays a significant role in the power they have to wage war. Further, if we accept Young's claim that we are all part of an overall global co-operative scheme, it can be argued that we would have responsibilities to those persons our country wages war upon; we have those responsibilities because their participation in the global economic system affects and benefits those who live in imperfect democracies. Further, citizens of imperfect democracies

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may benefit economically from unjust wars. Although the moral relationship between those in an aggressive state and those suffering aggression that arises in a war is not primarily an economic relationship, we may have standing responsibilities simply to prevent even non-economic harms to those with whom we share global economic conditions.

However, it is not necessary to draw a perfect parallel between unjust war and global injustice because the critical feature for social responsibility is that one participates in a structure that is the cause of injustice. The injustice would occur without one's individual participation but the fact of participation is morally relevant. Even bystanders may have certain moral obligations to address injustices when possible. The social responsibility view is that participants have weightier obligations than do bystanders in virtue of their connection to the harm. Further, participants also have greater opportunities in virtue of their social role as participants. A protest against the United States for waging war in Iraq is of greater moral significance when made by a citizen of the United States than when made by a member of another country, since the citizen of the United States does not simply criticize an injustice but criticizes her own government. At least symbolically, her action denies that the war is justified to protect her as a citizen, even if her government ignores that denial.

A benefit of the view that moral relationships create social responsibilities through participation, even when individuals themselves are not a cause of the harm, is that it explains the moral attitudes people have when they come to recognize such harms. These attitudes of regret and accepting responsibility to address past or future harms may arise for participants in a variety of collective groups or institutions. For example, many individual Catholics are concerned to take responsibility for historical instances of anti-Semitism on the part of the Catholic Church. Their concern to support reform within an institution that has perpetuated an injustice suggests they feel a special responsibility for that injustice by virtue of their participation. They may also be concerned that their participation (in some ways very indirectly) could license future injustices. Although benefiting from harm brings with it a particular obligation to speak out against and, where one can, rectify those harms, non-beneficial membership and participation in structures or institutions that cause harm is also sufficient to create an obligation to address those harms.

In addition, the social responsibility view has the advantage of grounding many of the critiques made of citizens whose countries engage in military aggression. Arguably, one source of the desire to hold individual citizens retrospectively responsible is the intuition that they should have done *something* to respond to their country's aggression. Moral critiques of citizens in militarily aggressive imperfect democracies often take the form of claiming that such citizens are insufficiently aware of and concerned about the social structure they participate in and its impact on others. The social responsibility view grounds such criticisms but does not require the implausible view that citizens themselves caused the war.

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The social responsibility that Young envisions arising out of a person's participation within these structures bears a close similarity to obligation. In fact, these responsibilities generate certain kinds of obligations. The difference Young envisions is that responsibilities are more open-ended than are obligations. How one carries them out "is a matter of judgment according to what the responsibilities are for, the capabilities of agents, and the content of actions."[42] Further, they are "outcome oriented" and are not discharged by an action or set of actions but remain in play so long as the desired outcome has not been achieved.

Because the systems that cause both war and global economic injustice are vast and complex and each person's contribution is negligible, it is possible to be skeptical that social responsibility arises out of participation within them. Thus, Samuel Scheffler argues that we appear to lack

> … a set of clear, action-guiding and psychologically feasible principles which would enable individuals to orient themselves in relation to larger processes, and general conformity to which would serve to regulate these processes in a morally satisfactory way.[43]

Young argues that the liability model does not apply to effects that are the result of large and collaborative processes over which no one has control. Thus she responds to this worry in an important way, by showing what is necessary: not principles that individuals can act upon to "regulate the processes," as Scheffler puts it, but instead efforts to organize collectively to address the deeper structures that enable such processes to occur. This forward-looking responsibility does not require each person to alter her individual behaviour according to principles in order to avoid personal wrong-doing but to engage in a form of collective action that addresses the political structures that allow or cause such harms. Although there is no guarantee that such actions will succeed, whether they address global structural injustices or the injustices caused by war, one fact in favour of the attempt is that collective actions to address large-scale injustices have had some success in altering large-scale patterns of injustice (e.g., some forms of gender and racial discrimination), even within imperfect democracies.

When we focus on leaders as Walzer does, we fail to see how deeply war-makers depend on their own societies to achieve their goals. One argument raised to motivate Americans to resist the Iraq war was "your tax dollars pay for the war." This claim contains an important insight about war, in that wars depend upon the individuals and resources within the societies that wage them. One important way that war-making is analogous to the cases of global economic injustice that concern Young is that citizens, to varying degrees, are enabling conditions for wars to occur. They are, in Young's sense, participants in the system that makes the war possible. They provide the means to war through their tax dollars and their labour. They also—willingly or not—provide the ideological pretext for war. The war is waged in their name. It is for their security

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and their defence and thus they are its (sometimes unwilling) beneficiaries. Even if their involvement is unwilling, it is morally relevant.

What particular social responsibilities do citizens have when their country wages an unjust war? One of the most basic social responsibilities of citizens is simply to make public their dissent against the war. Such dissent, in the context of social responsibility, is not mere opting out of retrospective responsibility but rather a meaningful moral act itself in that it gives witness to the wrongness of the war. It is particularly meaningful for citizens to deny the political legitimacy that leaders claim for the war. A citizen is in a special position to reject the claim that the war is justified for her own security.

A second particular responsibility arises out of the general social responsibility to oppose an unjust war: we must work to create or to participate in the necessary collective situation that, even if it cannot prevent the initiation of a particular war, has the potential to shorten the war and perhaps make similar wars less likely. Among the long-term collective goals that citizens could pursue would be to seek political alternatives to militarist goals and to support political candidates who embrace those alternatives.

Further, citizens can demand that their country attempt to rectify the injustice of the war after the fact, even if their nation is victorious. Thus, they can demand that their country provide reparations for the families of innocent civilians killed in the war or that their country rebuild the infrastructure of the aggressed-upon country. Citizens sometimes privately donate funds to benefit refugees and others harmed by a war not only as an act of beneficence but out of their sense of responsibility as members of the aggressing nation.

An additional responsibility that has a high cost to citizens, and therefore may be supererogatory, would be to forego actions that contribute—even in an indirect way—to the war effort. For example, one could divest from corporations that manufacture weapons, or pressure the institutions or collective bodies that one is involved with (such as universities or mutual funds) to divest. Other options open to citizens to act on these responsibilities would be to withhold some portion of their taxes (when this is part of an effective collective protest), to reject military service, or to protest or boycott organizations or institutions that support the war, either materially or ideologically. Such efforts may not be effective in halting a war but they do limit one's individual contribution to the war and are forms of public protest that can embolden others to join one's efforts.

On the face of it, such requirements seem fairly demanding. As in other collective situations of injustice where there are many non-participant bystanders, those who do get involved will have greater burdens placed upon them than otherwise. However, what is envisioned here is a somewhat minimal demand that a person register her objection to the war in a manner that is likely to be politically effective and that she continue to engage politically in a way that makes similar wars less likely; it is not an obligation that citizens perform every conceivable action to end the current war or prevent similar wars in the

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future. (It may not be possible to end the war quickly if leaders are recalcitrant, and it is notoriously difficult to prevent wars by collective action.)

The most politically effective methods are likely to be organized, collective actions that take into account the limitations facing citizens within imperfect democracies. Among these limitations are the difficulty of influencing political leaders, the power of special interests such as defence corporations and others who support the war for economic reasons, an existing ideology that makes anti-war work appear unpatriotic, and the tendency of the media to be compliant in the face of these interests and ideologies. These limitations pose considerable hurdles for those who intend to prevent the initiation of every unjust war. It would be unreasonable to expect citizens to overcome all these hurdles. What is more likely is that the existence of well-organized political opposition to unchecked militarism serves as a deterrent to leaders inclined to go to war. Citizens may be unable to prevent all future unjust wars but, by making it more difficult for leaders to engage in war, they may make some instances of unjust aggression less likely. Social responsibilities can also involve contributing money and time to creating an anti-war movement that will make it less burdensome for others to act on their social responsibilities.

It is noteworthy that social responsibilities are both more extensive and more demanding than the responsibility simply to register one's disagreement, as described by Primoratz. Registering one's disagreement to others is of limited effectiveness in the absence of collective action. As argued previously, when an effective collective situation exists, for example when political alternatives to unjust war are present in the form of anti-war candidates, citizens who fail to act to support just outcomes (e.g., by failing to vote for the anti-war candidate) can have retrospective responsibility for the unjust war. Thus, in cases where some have successfully created partially effective political alternatives that other citizens could make fully effective by their support, and those citizens are able to act but choose not to, they will have retrospective responsibilities for their failure to make these alternatives fully effective.

Citizens who fail to act on their social responsibilities to oppose the war can be blamed for this failure, even if they cannot be blamed for the war. In addition, citizens who reject actions that would make the collective effort effective in ending the war will have retrospective responsibilities for the war's continuation. However, whether a movement would have been effective with more widespread participation is not an easy matter to resolve. Thus, social responsibility can be a clearer basis of criticism than retrospective responsibility, as it is more readily apparent when citizens have attended to their social responsibilities.

Conclusion

There is a strong intuition that citizens of democracies are responsible for unjust wars waged by their states. Yet, for individual citizens of imperfect democracies, this intuition, if intended as a judgment about retrospective responsibility, is sometimes not well-grounded because citizens of imperfect democracies do

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not individually have the power to halt the war and lack an effective collective situation where their individual actions might make a difference to the political outcome. Nevertheless, many of the moral criticisms made of citizens who stand by and do nothing seem justified. I have argued that this criticism can be justified if we expand the relevant notion of responsibility for unjust war to include social responsibility. Such social responsibility arises because citizens participate in a system that enables the war to occur. Acting on these responsibilities involves engaging with others in collective action to address structural elements within the society that allow and perpetuate unjust war, as well as public acts of witness to and rectification of, the harmful effects of the war.

One unfortunate result of the obstacles citizens of imperfect democracies face when they attempt to influence their governments is a sense of hopelessness and apathy. My argument here concedes that when citizens conclude that their role in the state's action is insignificant, that can be an accurate assessment of their situation, rather than merely an attempt to evade retrospective responsibility. At the same time, they would do well to look to other citizens who, in spite of these obstacles, take their government's action as morally relevant to their own lives and take on the social responsibility of opposing their government when it wages war on others unjustly. Citizens could be more aware that, even if they cannot prevent the war, they could engage in other actions that address aspects of the war's injustice. This may make them less motivated to adopt an indifference that ameliorates their sense of powerlessness.

Young notes one benefit of emphasis on social, rather than retrospective, responsibility: social responsibility requires action against structural features that cause injustice without also implying guilt for those injustices. Following this line of thought, it is worth noting that, although guilt sometimes motivates people to act effectively, the discomfort that guilt causes can be paralyzing and creates an incentive to avoid painful truths about the sufferings caused by one's own military. If attempts to prevent the war fail, and ending the war quickly also appears impossible in current political circumstances, some citizens of imperfect democracies are motivated to politically disengage and turn their attention away from the sufferings their state is inflicting on others. If an instrumental value of holding people responsible is its role in making us more morally accountable in the future, social responsibility may be more effective here than retrospective responsibility. Embracing a sense of social responsibility that is independent of personal guilt for enormously complex social effects like unjust war encourages citizens to direct their attention to future opportunities to prevent and alleviate injustice.

Notes

1 Cf. David Copp, "The Collective Moral Autonomy Thesis," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38 (2007): 369–88; Pekka Makela, "Collective Agents and Moral Responsibility," *Journal of Social Philosophy* 38 (2007): 456–68. Although I do not address collective responsibility, it is probably not the case that citizens of imperfect

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democracies are responsible for every unjust war, for example the war in Iraq. The notion of joint responsibility which may implicate individual agents in joint actions may cause citizens to be individually responsible. Cf. Seamus Miller, "Collective Responsibility," *Public Affairs Quarterly,* 15 (2001): 65–82.

2 Note that this is not the claim that a person must be able to do otherwise to be free. (Cf. Harry Frankfurt, "Alternate Possibilities and Moral Responsibility," *The Journal of Philosophy* 66 (1969): 828–39.) Rather, it is the claim that what the person did or did not do had some noticeable effect on the event. The counterfactual condition is merely intended to point out that a person has a noticeable effect on an event only if the event would not have occurred or would have been noticeably different had she acted otherwise. I will argue that people often are responsible for their attitudes about events but this is insufficient for retrospective responsibility.

3 Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 298.

4 Ibid., 294.

5 Ibid., 301.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 298.

8 Michael Walzer, *Obligations: Essays on Disobedience, War and Citizenship* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 7.

9 Michael Green argues that Walzer's scepticism about willed membership here may create a problem for his view elsewhere that the presence of a political community or "the common life" gives states the right to resist aggression. Michael Green, "War Innocence and Theories of Sovereignty," *Social Theory and Practice*, 18 (2002): 49. For the view that the common life justifies a state's response to aggression, see Walzer, *Wars*, 54–7. David Luban also contends that Walzer is incorrect that a horizontal contract among members gives states the right to resist aggression. Cf. David Luban, "Just War and Human Rights," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 9 (1980): 160–81.

10 For a defence of representation in democracy see Amy Gutmann and Dennis Thompson, *Democracy and Disagreement* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), 131–50.

11 The idea that ordinary citizens have a minimal participatory role echoes some views of Joseph Schumpeter. See David Held, *Models of Democracy* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 1987), 165–8.

12 Walzer, *Wars*, 302.

13 Ibid., 301.

14 Ibid., 302.

15 Ibid.

16 The Project for the New American Century advocated war against Saddam Hussein's regime in Iraq. In a 1998 letter to Bill Clinton, this group argued that removing Saddam Hussein from power "now needs to become the aim of American foreign policy." Central figures in the Bush administration—Cheney, Rumsfeld, Jeb Bush and Paul Wolfowitz—were members of this group. By itself, the letter was insufficient to alert voters to what was to come and, aside from Cheney, those in the project joined his administration after he came to office. (Prior to Cheney, vice presidents

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wielded very little power so voters had no reason to suspect that the views of this vice president would determine foreign policy.) During the 2000 election, George Bush claimed that he was skeptical of humanitarian intervention and was not interested in empire building. For example, he claimed that, in contrast to Gore, "I would be very careful about using our troops as nation builders. I believe in the role of the military to fight and win war and therefore prevent war from happening in the first place." Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 24.

17 The evidence is still out on whether the administration genuinely believed Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction. The claim that Iraqi weapons of mass destruction posed an imminent threat to the United States had no basis, since there was no evidence whatsoever that Iraq possessed the capability to attack the United States with those weapons. Instead, the claim was that these weapons would be made available to terrorists, who might bring them to the United States.

18 A surprising number of people found the case for war to be convincing. Two cases are particularly notable. Judith Miller of the *New York Times* was particularly vilified because her coverage of the war was influential and gave credence to misinformation disseminated by the Bush administration. The *Times* later apologized for disseminating this false information. See Editorial, "The Times and Iraq," *The New York Times,* May 26, 2004. Political theorist Michael Ignatieff also argued in favour of the war; this suggests that lack of intellectual sophistication was not the reason that some supported the war. See Les Whittington, "Ignatieff Admits Error on Iraq War," *The Toronto Star,* August 3, 2007.

19 The supposed threat of Iraqi-sponsored terrorism against the United States was a distant threat. Thus, one very implausible claim was that the U.S. could not wait for weapons inspectors to finish their inspections of Iraq for weapons of mass destruction before launching attacks. Cf. "Blix Urges U.S. and U.K. to Hand Over Iraq Evidence, *The Guardian*, December 20, 2002, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/dec/20/Iraq.foreign policy; "Blix: Lack of 'Critical Judgment' Led to Iraq War: Former Top UN Weapons Inspector Blames U.S., U.K. Leaders," www.npr.org/templates/story.story.php?storyId=1767468.

20 This is not to say that extreme violent opposition—mass strikes, riots in the street, etc.—by many citizens acting together would have no effect whatsoever. But the fact is that the many well-attended protests throughout the U.S. and internationally, and the objection of many political, religious, and media elites, had no effect. Thus it seems reasonable to assume that the Bush administration's desire to invade Iraq far outweighed its concern for public opinion. One element was somewhat different between the Vietnam and Iraq Wars: the Vietnam involvement was the result of a gradual build-up, while Iraq occurred much more quickly and involved a full-scale invasion. Further, the somewhat recent terrorist attack on the United States was undoubtedly responsible for at least part of the acquiescence by the media and citizens. Both of these factors may have prevented a more efficient and effective anti-war movement but it also seems plausible that the Bush administration was unlikely to be influenced by peaceful political protest, no matter how widespread.

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21 Among the most prominent, three officials of the State Department resigned their posts in protest: Mary Wright, Deputy Chief of Mission in the U.S. Embassy, Mongolia; John H. Brown, Cultural Attaché at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow; and John Brady Kiesling, Political Counsellor of the U.S. Embassy in Athens. Claire Short, the British Secretary for International Development, also resigned in protest over British involvement in the war.

22 Before the invasion, many protests took place both abroad and in nearly every U.S. city. Two factors may account for the absence of very socially disruptive protests like those during the latter part of the Vietnam War: the lack of conscription and the fact that the government did not seem readily influenced by protest. It is difficult to quantify what constitutes substantial opposition. Although a majority of Americans did support the Iraq War at its onset, it was very unpopular in some quarters right from the start and it quickly became much more unpopular as it progressed. Opposition to the war did not significantly affect the Bush Administration's policies. However, it is also noteworthy that Bush won a second term in office after the war had begun.

23 For a view on whether citizens are sufficiently knowledgeable to assess political events, see Michael X. Delli Carpini and Scott Keeter, *What Americans Know About Politics and Why It Matters* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1997). Carpini and Keeter argue that although knowledge of current events, politics, and geography is fairly low among many citizens, it is reasonably high among a sizable minority. They claim the citizenry as a whole possesses a kind of aggregate knowledge that is sufficient for informed political deliberation.

24 In both Vietnam and Iraq it was widely assumed that a person will be for or against the war and that they should have reasons for this position. This suggests people see some obligation to consider alternative positions.

25 Russell Hardin argues that absence of causal efficacy on political outcomes may be a reason for citizens to avoid acquiring the relevant knowledge. There is no "social reason" to acquire knowledge if the citizen's role "is entirely inefficacious." Cf. Russell Hardin, *Liberalism, Constitutionalism and Democracy.* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 166. There are social reasons however, when citizens are concerned and wish to communicate about events that may directly affect them. War is often such a situation.

26 There is still some debate about whether the first term of the Bush presidency resulted from a legitimate electoral process. Legal processes did result in his presidency but some claim that such processes were corrupt.

27 Green, 46.

28 Ibid.

29 Ibid., 43.

30 Ibid., 51.

31 Ibid., 52.

32 Cf. Thomas Nagel, "War and Massacre," *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 5 (1972): 123–44; Robert Holmes, *On War and Morality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989). This is also Walzer's view.

33 Green, 55.

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34 Igor Primoratz, "Michael Walzer's Just War Theory: Some Issues of Responsibility," *Ethical Theory and Moral Practice* 5 (2002): 236.

35 Primoratz, 236–7.

36 Ibid., 238.

37 Ibid., 240. Primoratz does not explain how direct attacks on civilians could be militarily useful. One way they are politically useful is that they may terrify the populace or undermine the national will to continue fighting. This seems to be not a military purpose but a political one. Primoratz believes that civilians who support the war do not have immunity and that there is a justification for attacking them on the grounds of self-defence. Given this view, it may not matter whether the goal is military or political. However, it is not clear that the political goal will be achieved by attacks on civilians. Such attacks frequently increase support for a war and make it more difficult to reach a settlement.

38 There are various strategies within liberal theory to show that citizens who personally disagree with a political outcome are nevertheless required to accept it. There are two reasons why, e.g., Rawls' arguments in political liberalism are inapplicable to unjust war: His claims apply only to decisions that shape the basic structure of society and he is concerned with a nearly just society. In *Political Liberalism* the types of decisions that Rawls is concerned about citizens accepting are those concerning fundamental matters such as constitutional essentials and the assignments of basic rights and duties. John Rawls, *Political Liberalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 214. Among other things, the economic inequality of the U.S. prevents it from being nearly just in Rawls's sense.

39 The U.S.-Vietnam War may have made citizens reluctant to engage in military adventures. It also created an anti-war movement that was responsible for much of the (unfortunately) unsuccessful protest against a war in Iraq. Although the Vietnam era is often cited as a period of resistance, the possibility of war against Iraq prompted immediate protest within many sectors of society at the point when preventing the war was more likely. This did not occur at the outset of the Vietnam War.

40 Protesters do hope to have an effect. And, I argue, the possibility they may have an effect is morally relevant. But the chances of their preventing the war at the outset are vanishingly small and it is reasonable to assume many of them are aware of this.

41 Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Justice: A Social Connection Model," *Social Philosophy and Policy* (2006): 102–30. See also Iris Young, "From Guilt to Solidarity: Sweatshops and Political Responsibility," *Dissent,* Spring 2003: 39–45 and Iris Marion Young, "Responsibility and Global Labor Justice," *Journal of Political Philosophy* 12 (2006): 365–88.

42 Young, "Responsibility and Global Labor Justice," 379.

43 Samuel Scheffler, "Individual Responsibility in a Global Age," in *Boundaries and Allegiances*: *Problems of Responsibility and Justice in Liberal Thought,* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 39. Quoted in Young, "Responsibility and Global Labor Justice," 374.

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