

Climate Activism Across Borders

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Political theorists have written a great deal about the ethics of “intervention,” defined as states using coercion or force to interfere in foreign societies’ politics (e.g., Caney 2005, 227; Doyle 2015, 2-5; Fabre 2012; Tesón and van der Vossen 2017; Walzer 2015; Weiss 2016, 7; Welsh 2004, 3). But this narrowly-focused work leaves much of global politics un-analyzed—both because non-state actors play an increasingly significant role in it (Falk 2016) and because its practitioners use many tactics besides force and coercion. These alternative tactics seem especially important in the arena of environmental activism—where more traditional foreign policy measures such as the Kyoto Protocol and the Paris Accords have been dubiously effective at best, and where those likely to suffer most from environmental degradation are often (*de facto* or *de jure*) prevented from accessing more traditional levers of geopolitical power. We need an ethics of foreign influence that can help us navigate this global political arena—alive with myriad state and non-state actors trading influence in every way imaginable—in all its complexity.

Recently, some have recognized this need and begun to address it. Though admirable, their work is narrowly-focused in its own ways. Some transcends the literature’s usual focus on coercion to discuss the ethics of non-coercive foreign influence, but remains narrowly-focused on state activity (e.g., Fabre 2018, Pattison 2018). Some discusses non-state actors, but focuses only on foreign influence meant to alleviate extraordinarily grave injustices (e.g., Bellamy 2018; Fabre 2018(a); Pattison 2018(a)).

This article, in contrast, begins to develop a unified theory of the ethics of *deliberate attempts to promote justice by exercising political influence over foreign societies*—no matter who (a state or non-state actor) makes these attempts, and no matter the gravity of the injustices they seek to remedy. (I’ll often simply say *foreign influence*, but this will always be short for *foreign influence aimed at*

promoting justice.¹) Discussing foreign influence exercised by both state and non-state actors, and aimed at redressing all kinds of injustice, allows me to address a class of cases neglected by others in the literature. Though I'll discuss some coercive and forceful interventions as contrast cases, I'll mainly focus on justice-promoting foreign influence that uses non-coercive and non-forceful means—since this phenomenon is both common in global politics and under-treated in the literature. Similarly, though I'll reference some efforts to avert atrocities, my main focus will be foreign influence meant to address “ordinary” injustice²—another phenomenon existing literature neglects.

The next section will engage with several real-world cases of foreign influence (including several cases of environmental activism) to identify two morally significant but under-appreciated dimensions along which instances of foreign influence can differ: (1) the degree of control foreign influencers exercise over recipients, and (2) to what extent they interfere with the operation of recipients' political institutions. How a case of foreign influence fares on these dimensions will affect the conditions under which it's permissible or not. Indeed, once we appreciate these differences, we'll see that not all foreign influence is vulnerable to the powerful objections often leveled against intervention.

Intervention is often thought to treat members of recipient societies intolerantly (Rawls 1999; Walzer 1994; Walzer 1997; see also Godfrey-Smith and Kerr 2019, who essentially define toleration as non-interference), to fail to properly recognize their legitimate political institutions (Walzer 1980; 2007; see also Altman and Wellman 2009; Buchanan 2003; Luban 1980), and/or to perpetuate

¹ I will treat actions publicly presented as attempts to promote justice by influencing foreign societies as examples of *foreign influence*, regardless of their architects' true motives.

² Here, I follow Walzer's (1980) lead, who distinguishes between “extreme” and “ordinary” oppression.

colonial hierarchies (Anghie 2006; Mutua 2000; see also Koskeniemi 2001). But here, I'll argue that some types of foreign influence are, at least *pro tanto*, morally permissible because they're immune to these standard objections. Though the standard objections may be easily overridden when foreign influence is needed to redress very grave injustices, I'll argue that some foreign influence escapes these objections even when their moral force is strongest—when foreigners only aim to remedy “ordinary” injustices. I'll then argue that our findings about what types of foreign influence are permissible suggest we should adopt two presumptions—one in favor of influence that exerts comparatively little control over its recipients, and one in favor of influence exerted by those currently or historically disempowered in global politics.

Finally, I'll draw another, overarching conclusion: the promotion of justice worldwide is an acceptable goal of global political engagement. This isn't only true in exceptional cases, such as when atrocities are immanent. It's true as a matter of course, in the quotidian circumstances of global politics. Just as there are, generally, permissible ways to engage in political contestation in our own societies in order to achieve justice, so there are, generally, permissible ways to do the same by influencing other societies. Note, I'm only able to make this argument because I address the ethics of foreign influence in non-exceptional cases (i.e., when it seeks to remedy “ordinary” injustice). This suggests we should adopt a more global perspective on political contestation. We should begin to see the world, not only our domestic societies, as an arena in which we may practice politics in the pursuit of justice.

Expanding our Focus: Different Types of Foreign Influence

To develop a more nuanced, complete ethics of foreign influence, we must appreciate the full range of forms it can take and the normatively important ways in which cases of foreign influence can differ. In this section, I identify two such ways. First, foreign influence can differ in the degree to which it deprives recipients of the ability to freely adopt policies of their own choosing, as a result of their own freely-formed judgments. Call this the degree of *control* foreign influencers exercise. Here,

I won't develop a full account of what it means to choose or judge "freely." This would be a project unto itself. Instead, I'll simply assume a person is unfree when she is induced to act—partially or fully—on something other than her own will, or when the content of her will is determined by others instead of by her own independent judgments. Someone is made unfree when others limit her options (inducing her to act on *their* will) or manipulate her (deceiving or indoctrinating her to determine the content of her will themselves, rather than leaving it up to the unimpeded operation of her own rational faculties).

Control and freedom so understood occur in degrees. Correspondingly, foreign influencers can subject recipients to more or less control; influencers can leave recipients more free to make their own judgments and decisions about how to act, or can make them less so. On one end of the proverbial spectrum are cases of what I'll call *totally-controlling* influence. In such cases, foreign influence makes it virtually impossible for recipients to act against interveners' wishes, or to act on their own freely-formed judgments. Foreign influencers force recipients to acquiesce to their demands, and recipients have no choice but to go along.

The clearest examples of totally-controlling foreign influence involve military force—like that NATO deployed in Libya in 2011. However, foreign influencers need not use force to exercise total control. Extreme manipulation, perhaps taking the form of totalizing indoctrination or misinformation campaigns, can also be totally controlling. Take Walzer's hypothetical in which Sweden is able to release a chemical into Algeria's water supply to transform Algerians—who support a repressive military theocracy—into social democrats (Walzer 1980, 225-6). Releasing the chemical would prevent Algerians from acting on their freely-formed judgments because it would prevent them from forming judgments freely. Thus, the Swedes' intervention would be totally-controlling, though not forceful.

Foreign influence that makes recipients' acting a certain way possible only at the expense of their vital interests, or that impairs (without totally eviscerating) recipients' abilities to form

judgments freely, I will call *highly-controlling*. I understand “vital interests” to include interests whose fulfillment is necessary for living a minimally decent human life, a phrase I borrow from David Miller (2007). I use the phrase as Miller does, to describe a life free of very serious and virtually universally-recognized physical and psycho-social harms (D. Miller 2007, 178-85). Vital interests include, for example, interests in physical security, subsistence, basic education, and an *adequate* (though not a *maximal*, or even necessarily a *fair*) range of choices of occupation, cultural and religious practice, and family life (D. Miller 2007, 178-85, 207-8).

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank’s imposition of “structural adjustment” programs on developing countries in the 1980s constituted highly-controlling influence. At the insistence of US representatives, the IMF allowed political conditions to be attached to its loans even when they were desperately needed by a country undergoing economic crisis (R. Miller 2010, 137). The IMF and World Bank then exercised this prerogative, making badly-needed loans available to the developing world only on the condition that local governments adopt “free market” reforms (R. Miller 2010, 136-41). Insofar as people in recipient countries needed credit to alleviate economic crises that threatened their vital interests, they had no reasonable choice but to accept the IMF and World Bank’s terms. Their adopting the required policies primarily reflected the wills of IMF and World Bank members, rather than their own.

Note, analyzing foreign influence through the lens of control allows us to capture a morally important feature of aid conditionality that Fabre’s (2018) recent treatment largely neglects. Namely, Fabre’s analysis of whether the IMF and World Bank were justified in conditioning aid to economically vulnerable countries (e.g., Bolivia and Tanzania) on the privatization of their public water systems hinges largely on whether this choice produced “egregiously unjust outcomes” (2018, 126). However, as I’ll argue below, the degree of control foreign influencers exercise has a significant impact on whether their influence is morally permissible, regardless of

its expected or actual effects. In other words, my analysis explains why *the mere fact* that aid (or loan) recipients were so vulnerable so as to have no reasonable choice but to accept the IMF and World Bank's terms made the imposition of conditions morally suspect regardless of how likely it was to produce good or bad consequences. Thus, my approach gives us the resources to criticize exploitative uses of geopolitical power *as such*, without needing to evaluate the utility of their consequences.

Foreign influencers may also exercise *slightly-controlling* influence—which makes recipients' acting a certain way possible only at the expense of their *non-vital* interests. Take the preferential trade agreement the US signed with Oman in 2006, containing protections for workers' rights. The US certainly leveraged its disproportionate political and economic power to get Oman to agree to these provisions, and to adopt labor reforms during the negotiations leading up to the agreement's signing (Hafner-Burton 2009, 147-9). Indeed, Oman had strong reason to want a trade deal with the US: Oman's economy was heavily dependent on its oil reserves, which were projected to run out in the coming decades; thus, the country wanted to diversify its economy, and a trade deal with the US would help it do so (Hafner-Burton 2009, 147).

So, Oman was put in the position of having to choose between adopting the US's desired labor reforms or absorbing a significant cost (losing the trade deal and the prospect of a diversified economy along with it). But the trade deal wasn't so central to the achievement of Omanis' vital interests that they essentially had no choice but to agree to whatever terms the US proposed. It wasn't as if they were facing imminent, widespread starvation and the only way to escape it was to start a trading relationship with the US, for example. (Oman's position wasn't like that of the societies subjected to structural adjustment programs.)

Finally, some foreign influencers exercise what I call *persuasive* influence, trying to convince recipients to act a certain way without exercising any control over them. Take, for example, the

Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), which describes itself as “a public interest research and advocacy organization based in New Delhi” (CSE 2019). CSE and its director, Sunita Narain, advocate for environmental causes, including what we might call climate justice—arrangements that address climate change in ways that empower, rather than further marginalize, citizens of developing countries. Narain argues that global political actors shouldn’t simply adopt a general commitment to lowering emissions; rather, it’s important where emissions come from: poor people who use emissions-rich technologies for subsistence or rich people who use them to attain luxury (Rossi 2017). Since rich countries have already benefitted greatly from consuming natural resources and producing emissions, it is they in particular who should be called upon to curtail their emissions so developing countries can continue to grow their economies without devastating impacts for the earth’s climate (Rossi 2017). In this vein, Narain and the organization’s founder, Anil Agarwal, authored a CSE report in 1991 in which they argued that a then-recent call for developing countries like India to reduce their emissions in order to fight global warming was “an excellent example of *environmental colonialism*” (CSE 1991, 1, emphasis original; Rossi 2017). And CSE pursues its aims through what it calls “knowledge-based activism,” using films, briefs, other publications, and environmental education programs to spread awareness and bring about policy changes in line with CSE’s “core values” (CSE 2019). On its website, CSE writes that it “networks extensively with grassroots organisations, industry leaders, experts, government agencies and mass media in India and abroad in lobbying for change” (CSE 2009). In other words, though it advocates for policy changes, CSE doesn’t force or coerce recipients of its influence into adopting its desired reforms—instead it tries to persuade them largely by disseminating information.

As we’ll see later, whether a case of foreign influence is *totally-controlling*, *highly-controlling*, *slightly-controlling*, or *persuasive* can affect which moral objections it’s vulnerable to, and therefore under what conditions it’s justifiable. For now, let us examine one more important way in which cases of foreign influence can differ.

Foreign influencers may employ means that interfere more or less extensively with the operation of recipient societies' formal political institutions, and this too can have normative consequences. Some foreign influencers, like NATO in Libya, seek to achieve their ends by overthrowing recipients' institutions entirely. However, not all foreign influence is *regime-changing influence*. Foreign influencers may instead pursue their ends by working in opposition to *some* elements of recipients' institutions (e.g., by preventing the enforcement of a particular law or interfering with the normal operation of some government agency) without attempting to bring about their total collapse. I'll call this *oppositional influence*.

Alternatively, foreign influencers might pursue their ends without directly interacting with recipients' institutions at all: they may engage in what I'll call *extra-institutional influence*. Extra-institutional influencers may still seek to make changes in recipient societies' institutions—by advocating for a new law, for example. Their distinguishing feature is that they don't try to effect these changes by directly interacting with recipients' formal political institutions. Boycott and divestment campaigns exemplify this kind of intervention. Take for example, international efforts to oppose the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL): the German bank BayernLB, the Dutch banking and financial services company ING, and several Norwegian companies divested money they had contributed to funding DAPL or its parent companies (Two Bulls and Remle 2017; Wong 2017). In doing so, these companies effectively sought to obstruct DAPL's construction, but without interfering with the operation of any American political institutions.

Finally, foreigners may exert *intra-systemic influence*, trying to achieve their ends by working *through* recipients' existing institutions—as did the plaintiffs in the recent Supreme Court case *Jam v. International Finance Corporation (IFC)*. Alleging that an IFC-backed power plant polluted their water supply, killing the fish they relied on for their livelihoods, a group of Indian citizens sued the organization (a branch of the World Bank Group based in the US) (McDonnell 2019). The case made its way to the Supreme Court, which eventually reversed the once-prominent

view that US-based international organizations like the IFC were immune from suit in US courts (McDonnell 2019). Though the merits of the case are still to be decided by lower courts, the Indian plaintiffs (and the US-based organization representing them) effectively brought about a change in the American legal system (the IFC and organizations like it can now be sued in US courts), made possible the redress of the wrongs they suffered themselves (if the case is decided in their favor, they may receive compensation for the harm the IFC caused them), and opened the way for others around the world to sue in the US for damages caused by international organizations like the IFC (McDonnell 2019). Strikingly, all this transformation was brought about via established US political institutions—by acting through the American court system, rather than trying to subvert or circumvent it.

Again, whether foreigners exert *regime-changing, oppositional, extra-institutional, or intra-systemic* influence can affect whether their actions are vulnerable to certain moral objections and therefore ultimately (im)permissible. The following sections will further explore the normative implications of foreign influence falling into one or another of these categories.

Overcoming Common Objections to Intervention

This section will outline the main moral objections usually leveled against intervention, and, drawing on the categories developed above, argue that certain kinds of foreign influence are immune to these objections. My aim in doing this won't always be to show that the standard objections to intervention are mistaken *per se*. After all, they are at least sometimes meant to apply to a range of actions (“intervention,” involving states using coercion or force) narrower in scope than my topic here (“foreign influence,” including any deliberate attempt to promote justice in another society). Rather, I aim to show that the standard objections don't tell the whole story. Even if they are sound objections against some “interventions,” they aren't always sound objections against the other kinds of foreign influence that comprise global politics.

The Toleration Objection

One common objection to intervention—especially when its aim is justice promotion—is that it treats its recipients with intolerance. Walzer gives us one prominent version of this objection. He describes toleration among sovereign states as a defining feature of international society (Walzer 1997, 19) and characterizes even justifiable attempts to limit foreign states’ sovereignty (whether with troops or with less invasive means such as sanctions, public condemnation, cultural boycotts, or propaganda campaigns) as “intolerance”—albeit sometimes “humanitarian intolerance” (Walzer 1997, 21-2).

Elsewhere, Walzer holds that international toleration requires a multiplicity of different “tribes,” each allowed to govern itself “within its own modest bounds” (1994, 79). His understanding of these “bounds” rests on his distinction between *thick* and *thin* morality. Thin moral principles are so general and abstract that even people who don’t share broader cultural commitments can all identify with and support them. A general commitment to “truth and justice,” or an opposition to brutal oppression, for example, would be a thin commitment. Such thin ideas are always contained and situated within thick ones—for example, full theories of what truth, justice, and freedom from oppression consist in—but it is only thin morality that Walzer makes the focus of international ethics. He argues that, in times of crisis, thin commitments become salient, and people in different societies can identify with and support each other’s struggles for upholding the minimalist standards they express (for a summary of this position, see Walzer 1994, 1-6). These standards, define the “bounds” within which the world’s different “tribes” must operate in order to deserve toleration (Walzer 1994, 67-9, 79-81).

On this view, as long as a society doesn’t run afoul of widely-held thin moral principles, it should be treated with toleration, meaning outsiders should leave it alone to organize its own internal affairs. Attempts to make change in a foreign society based not merely on one’s *thin* moral commitments, but on a *thick* view about whether that society is sufficiently just would constitute intolerance.

Here, I'll argue that some kinds of foreign influence escape this objection (of which I take Walzer's view as representative), because not all foreign influence treats recipients with intolerance. Granted, others (e.g., Blake 2007 and 2013, Tan 2000) have defended similar views. But they've argued that foreign influence aimed at achieving certain *ends* is compatible with toleration—largely neglecting the question of what *means* foreign influencers should adopt. Here, I'll show how the means foreign influencers use help determine whether they treat recipients with toleration.

I'll start with a working conception of toleration that's intuitively plausible and that captures the basic ideas at work in Walzer's thinking. I'll assume that to treat someone with tolerance means to treat her as if she's presumptively entitled to live according to her own values and choices (by her own lights). This assumption reflects widely-held intuitions about intolerance, such that I treat someone intolerantly when I force her to live according to values she doesn't accept as her own (as in the classic case of religious intolerance). And something like this working conception is at the base of Walzer's view of toleration. Though, on his view, international toleration should be directed primarily toward ensuring each distinct political *community* gets to pursue politics in its own way, he ultimately justifies this with an appeal to individuals' interests in living within a political community about whose common life they have a say (that is, individuals' interests in being constrained only by institutions that reflect their own choices and values) (Walzer 2015, 53-4, 86-91; 1997, 19; 1994, 67-9, 79). Our question, then, is: what kinds of foreign influence treat recipients as if they're presumptively entitled to live by their own lights? What kinds of foreign influence treat recipients with toleration?

I'll argue that those who exert *persuasive* foreign influence, and who try to persuade recipient populations (either directly or through sufficiently representative governments authorized to act on their behalf) to adopt some justice-enhancing reform, treat recipients with toleration. (This position is subject to one important proviso, which I'll elaborate later.) After all, persuasive influence only produces change conditional upon the influencers' proposals being voluntarily taken up by the

recipient population (or their duly appointed representatives). As noted earlier, CSE's work is a striking example of persuasive influence.

Though CSE clearly has an agenda, its representatives don't simply impose it on recipient communities. Instead, preserving recipients' ability to live according to their own choices and values, CSE seeks to convince them to adopt certain environmental reforms (and conceptual frameworks for thinking about sustainable development) on their own. This demonstrates a commitment to engaging with participants as autonomous agents entitled to make their own choices about what to do and believe, rather than as passive recipients of knowledge.

Foreigners who exert *slightly-controlling influence* (either directly over a recipient population, or over a sufficiently representative government authorized to act on their behalf) also treat recipients with toleration. (Again, this position is subject to a proviso I'll elaborate below.) Recall that slightly-controlling influence involves imposing some cost—but not a devastating cost—on recipients if they don't adopt the influencers' preferred behavior. It leaves recipients able to act contrary to foreign influencers' preferences, but only at the expense of an interest of theirs—albeit a non-vital interest.

Consider the US-Oman trade negotiations described above. Let's assume, *arguendo*, that Oman's government at the time of the negotiations was sufficiently representative such that Omani negotiators qualified as duly authorized representatives of the Omani people. Given this, we can say the US exerted slightly-controlling influence over a sufficiently representative government authorized to act on behalf of Omani citizens. Oman was made to choose between adopting the US's desired labor reforms or losing the prospect of a trade deal with the US (sacrificing an important but non-vital interest of theirs) (Hafner-Burton 2009, 146-9). However, there is no meaningful sense in which Omanis were forced to adopt these labor reforms regardless of their own preferences (the paradigm case of intolerance). Instead, they were forced to rank their preferences—to decide which they valued more, maintaining lax workers' rights protections, or a beneficial trade agreement with

the US. Oman could have accepted either option without putting its citizens' vital interests or basic rights at additional risk, compared to the pre-foreign-influence status quo.

In general, making it such that someone must absorb a reasonable cost in order to act as she pleases doesn't constitute intolerance. (It doesn't constitute forcing her to live a certain way regardless of her own choices and values.) After all, toleration doesn't require making it *costless* for others to live however they like. Indeed, it would be difficult to understand what it meant to say someone valued a certain way of life if she were unwilling to accept *any* costs to continue it. Thus, slightly-controlling influences like the US's influence over Oman don't treat recipients with intolerance.

The types of foreign influence highlighted above don't merely "impose" on recipients practices and values they can't accept as their own. Persuasive influence in particular constitutes an attempt to *convince* people to act a certain way. It is precisely an attempt to persuade them to adopt certain practices and values on the condition that they *can* accept them as their own. We can apply similar logic to slightly-controlling foreign influence. In such cases, influencers *encourage* recipients to adopt certain policy changes, but don't force the issue. Recipients will only actually adopt the relevant changes if they freely judge that's the thing to do.

Here, I've argued that when foreigners exert persuasive or slightly-controlling influence over recipient populations (either directly or through sufficiently representative governments authorized to act on their behalf), they treat recipients with toleration. In reality, this proposition is subject to a proviso: it only holds true if the actions foreign influencers advocate wouldn't, if taken, subject recipients to more intolerance in their own society, compared to the pre-foreign-influence status quo. We could imagine, for example, foreigners trying to persuade a recipient population to discriminate against citizens belonging to religious minorities. Such influence, though persuasive, could rightly be criticized as intolerant (toward the religious minorities residing in the recipient society). But, as long

as foreign influencers avoid encouraging intolerance in the societies they influence (as did CSE and the plaintiffs in *Jam v. IFC* in the cases described above), the proposition argued for here holds.

The Legitimacy Objection

Another common objection to intervention says it denies proper recognition to recipients' legitimate political institutions. Walzer (1980, 217-8; 2007, 257-8) argues that, except under very extreme circumstances—such as massacre, mass enslavement, mass expulsion, or mass starvation—outsiders should treat foreign states³ as if they are legitimate. These states have “presumptive legitimacy” (Walzer 1980, 214-8). Intervention, the argument continues, is impermissible against legitimate (including presumptively legitimate) institutions (Walzer 1980, 214-8). But if states are only rendered illegitimate under the extreme (and rare) circumstances enumerated above, intervention must be generally impermissible.

Others (e.g., Altman and Wellman 2009, Buchanan 2003, Luban 1980) hold that states are rendered illegitimate when they commit wrongs less grievous than those Walzer identifies. But virtually no one holds that only fully just states can be legitimate. Thus, one might think intervention aimed at promoting justice in general, rather than at alleviating only the gravest injustices, was especially likely to treat actually (or at least presumptively) legitimate states as illegitimate—and therefore especially likely to be impermissible.

Here, I'll argue that the legitimacy objection doesn't apply to all types of foreign influence (even when the injustices they seek to remedy aren't especially grave), because not all foreign influence involves denying recipient states' legitimacy. In particular, I'll argue that *intra-systemic*

³ Both states and non-state actors can exercise foreign influence, but this sub-section will often identify the recipients of foreign influence as “states,” because I assume legitimacy is something possessed (or not) by states.

influence and some cases of *extra-institutional* influence are justifiable even when recipient states are legitimate.⁴ I'll assume (along the lines of the legitimacy objection) that there are limits on how outsiders can permissibly behave toward legitimate institutions. Theorists disagree about what precisely these limits are, but all plausible theories of legitimacy share some basic features: they hold that legitimate states are justified in making and enforcing policy within their jurisdictions, and that they deserve a certain, elevated international status. Thus, without adjudicating among competing theories of legitimacy, I'll assume that outsiders to a legitimate state ought to (1) grant it authority to decide and implement domestic policy (policy-making authority), and (2) grant (or at least not deny) it "good standing" in the international community. I'll further assume that a state is denied "good standing" in the international community when other states deny it the privileges standardly granted to legitimate states, including the privilege to conduct a (non-aggressive) foreign policy of its own choosing. In Allen Buchanan's words, recognizing states as legitimate means recognizing them "as possessors of the full bundle of powers, liberties, rights, and immunities that constitute sovereignty" (2003, 145). I'll then argue that foreigners exerting intra-systemic influence, and some kinds of extra-institutional influence, can fulfill both conditions (1) and (2), thereby treating recipient states as if they're legitimate.

Let's start with intra-systemic influence. Those who use intra-systemic influence engage in political contestation *through* recipients' established institutions, and only in ways *allowed by the rules of those institutions*. For instance, the plaintiffs in *Jam v. IFC* tried to change the behavior of a US-based international organization (the IFC) and ultimately pushed to change the dominant

⁴ I say "justifiable" rather than "justified," because though these kinds of influence won't be objectionable *because* they disregard recipient institutions' legitimacy, they could still be objectionable for other reasons.

interpretation of US law that said such organizations were immune from suit in US courts. But their attempts didn't in any way discredit US political institutions. Far from denying their legitimacy, if anything, the act of bringing suit and allowing their case to be reviewed and ultimately decided by US courts signaled the plaintiffs' acknowledgement that US institutions *were* legitimate. When opponents to the political status quo channel their opposition through the official channels of the powers they oppose, they implicitly signal that these institutions have legitimate authority over their political arena.⁵ Surely, one could justify intra-systemic influence like this while maintaining the recipient state had a claim to policy-making authority, and intra-systemic influence does nothing to deny recipient states good standing in the international community. So, intra-systemic foreign influence is justifiable even when recipient states are legitimate.

We can say the same about some exercises of extra-institutional foreign influence—whereby foreigners encourage political change in a recipient society, but without directly interacting with its formal political institutions. The rest of this sub-section will argue that exertions of extra-institutional influence over legitimate states are justifiable as long as (a) they don't involve force, and they match *one* of the following descriptions: (b) they're undertaken by non-state actors; (c) they're either slightly-controlling or persuasive, and they're undertaken by state actors who are not more geopolitically powerful than their recipients; or (d) they're either slightly-controlling or persuasive, and they're undertaken by state actors who are more geopolitically powerful than recipients, but who leverage their superior power to undermine the power structures that advantaged them in the first place. In order for my argument to succeed, I'll have to show that foreigners exerting extra-

⁵ For one account of the relationship between “intra-systemic” opposition to a state's laws and that state's legitimacy—albeit one specifically meant to apply to the domestic context—see Pettit 2012, 137-8.

institutional influence meeting criterion (a) and one of criteria (b)-(d) treat recipients as outsiders ought to treat legitimate foreign states. In other words, I'll have to show (as I did in the case of intra-systemic influence) that these foreign influencers meet conditions (1) and (2) from above.

Condition (1) says that outsiders must grant legitimate foreign states policy-making authority, and, I hold, those who exert extra-institutional influence do precisely this—as long as they don't use force against recipients. When influencers use force, they attempt to directly implement their own preferred policies in recipient societies. They therefore deny recipient states an exclusive claim to policy-making authority within their jurisdictions. They fail to meet condition (1), at least to a degree. (This aligns with the intuition that forceful action is typically forbidden against legitimate institutions.)

As long as they refrain from using force, though, foreigners exerting extra-institutional influence do meet condition (1). After all, though extra-institutional influence may aim to influence the behavior of recipient states' officials, it only does so by means that are themselves compatible with recipient institutions' continued existence and normal operation. Note, the requirement that an exercise of influence not interfere with recipient institutions' normal operation is important. One could imagine, for example, a boycott movement that so devastated the recipient state's economy that its established political institutions were unable to function adequately. Intuitively, it would be impermissible for outsiders to exert this kind of disruptive influence on a legitimate state. This is true enough, but such influence—precisely because it would be disruptive—would count as *oppositional*, rather than *extra-institutional*.

Thus, foreigners exerting extra-institutional influence don't challenge recipient states' policy-making authority (they meet condition (1)), as long as they don't use force (as long as they meet criterion (a)). We haven't yet shown, though, that exerting extra-institutional influence over legitimate states is justifiable. In order to do this, we must show that foreigners exerting extra-institutional influence meet not only condition (1), but also condition (2) (that they grant, or at least

don't deny, recipient states "good standing" in the international community). Below, I'll argue that foreigners exerting extra-institutional influence *can* grant (or at least not deny) recipient states good standing in the international community, as long as their exertions of influence meet one of criteria (b)-(d) above. Since we've already argued that foreign influencers must refrain from using force against recipient states in order to treat them as legitimate states, I'll confine the rest of this subsection's discussion to *non-forceful* extra-institutional influence.

When non-state actors exert extra-institutional influence (when foreign influence meets criterion (b)), they don't deny recipient states good standing in the international community. This is because, in the international community as it's usually conceived, only states are capable of granting or denying members (or would-be members) good standing. This reflects not a deep, immutable moral truth, but a contingent fact about the way the concept of good standing (as a part of the concept of legitimacy) has developed in global politics as-practiced (and, often, as-theorized). The traditional picture of the international community is one of a society-of-states. Since states are the members of this community, it is states that enjoy good standing or don't, and states that grant others good standing or deny it. There may of course be other kinds of community on the global stage, in which non-state actors could perhaps grant or deny states good standing. However, if there were such a community—say, a "global civil society" collective, containing both states and international NGOs—membership (and therefore good standing) in it would not obviously be connected to political legitimacy in the way membership in the international community conceptualized as a society-of-states is. After all, this hypothetical global community would contain many members-in-good-standing (NGOs) not even claiming (let alone recognized as having) political legitimacy. Membership-in-good-standing in this global community would not be premised on legitimacy, so it's unclear whether revoking a member's good standing could be interpreted as a denial of its legitimacy. Hence the specific formulation of condition (2): in order to treat a state as legitimate,

outsiders must grant, or at least not deny, it good standing in the *international* community—and good standing in the international community is something that can be denied only by other states.

We can thus conclude that extra-institutional influence exerted by non-state actors (i.e., that which meets criterion (b)) is justifiable even when recipient states are legitimate. Foreigners exerting this kind of influence grant recipient states policy-making authority and don't deny them good standing in the international community; so, they treat recipient states as they ought to treat legitimate states. This means, interestingly, that foreign companies' divestment from DAPL may have been justified even on the assumption that the US had exclusive legitimate authority to decide whether the pipeline was built. I don't mean to suggest by saying this that Native American communities shouldn't have shared in this authority—I believe they should have. But it's an interesting finding that even someone who denied this couldn't oppose foreign divestment from DAPL on the grounds that foreign companies failed to recognize the US government as the sole legitimate authority on the matter. Since these companies treated the US government as legitimate, their actions were justifiable even assuming the US government had an exclusive claim to policy-making authority at Standing Rock.

Importantly, this mode of foreign influence, which escapes the legitimacy objection, also escapes the notice of others writing about the ethics of foreign-influence-via-economic-leverage—such as Fabre (2018), who excludes non-state actors from her analysis, and Pattison (2018(a)), whose otherwise wide-ranging treatment of non-military foreign influence makes no mention of consumer (or corporate) boycotts or divestment. Thus, again, the existing literature's artificially narrow focus obscures a type of foreign influence that may surmount the usual objections to intervention—giving the impression that these objections are stronger than they really are.

This leaves us with the question of when *states* exerting extra-institutional influence on other states do or don't deny the latter good standing in the international community. *Highly-* and *totally-controlling* influence straightforwardly deny recipient states good standing. These kinds of influence

leave recipients no (reasonable) option but to acquiesce to foreign influencers' demands. Influencers' sheer military or geopolitical power virtually guarantees recipients will do their bidding, and recipients are made into mere puppets of their foreign influencers. Whatever enjoying good standing in the international community requires, it must at least require not being the mere instrument of other members' wills.

Some may argue that less controlling types of foreign influence can also turn recipient states into mere puppets—namely, when they reinforce existing geopolitical hierarchies that consistently establish recipient states as inferiors to other members of the international community. Though these recipient states are not literally forced to do foreign influencers' bidding, the consistent reinforcement of their inferior position amounts to a denial of equal status that may *effectively* prevent them from enjoying the standard privileges of fully sovereign states—and so may prevent them from enjoying good standing in the international community.

This is a serious worry, but it can be avoided in two ways: either foreign influencers must not be more geopolitically powerful than recipients, or, if they are more geopolitically powerful than recipients, they must leverage their power to undermine the power structures that advantaged them in the first place (that is, either criterion (c) or (d) must be met). In the first case, where influencers are not more powerful than recipients, there's clearly no danger of their influence reinforcing their already disproportionate power. With regards to the second case, we would be mistaken to say that any time a geopolitically powerful state utilized its power to influence less powerful states, it denied them good standing in the international community. After all, even powerful states find themselves embedded in geopolitical power structures that aren't easy to dismantle. Whenever they act, they act within these power structures, and it may therefore be virtually impossible for them to act without leveraging their unequal power. There must, though, be some way for states to grant each other good international standing even as they are embedded in social and political structures that give them unequal power (lest the concept of good international standing become normatively inert and wholly

inapplicable to the real world). Powerful states meet this challenge when, though they leverage their unequal power, they do so in ways that amplify the voices of less powerful states, effectively raising the latter's political stature, and undercutting the established hierarchies that subjugate them. In the context of foreign influence, this could involve foreign influencers (for example) opening themselves up to the same kinds of outside influence they exert on others or subjecting their influence to approval or oversight by less powerful states.

Thus, if either criterion (c) or (d) is met, even a *state-led* exertion of extra-institutional influence (as long as it's non-forceful) will not deny its recipient state good international standing. We've already shown this kind of influence doesn't deny recipient states policy-making authority, so we can conclude those exerting it treat recipient states as they ought to treat legitimate states. State-led (non-forceful) extra-institutional influence is therefore justifiable even when recipient states are legitimate, as long as it meets either criterion (c) or (d).

We have, then, shown what we set out to: exertions of extra-institutional influence over legitimate states are justifiable as long as (a) they don't involve force, and they match *one* of the following descriptions: (b) they're undertaken by non-state actors; (c) they're either slightly-controlling or persuasive, and they're undertaken by state actors who are not more geopolitically powerful than their recipients; or (d) they're either slightly-controlling or persuasive, and they're undertaken by state actors who are more geopolitically powerful than recipients, but who leverage their superior power to undermine the power structures that advantaged them in the first place.

The Neo-Colonialism Objection

The final objection to intervention I'll consider here says it's objectionable because it perpetuates the historically-established racialized hierarchies associated with colonialism (see Anghie 2006; Mutua 2000). As in earlier sub-sections, I'll argue here that some foreign influence escapes this objection. First of all, foreign influencers won't always belong to groups historically privileged by colonial hierarchies, and recipients won't always belong to groups historically disadvantaged by them.

Foreign influencers can't perpetuate colonial subordination by exerting influence over societies that colonial hierarchies identify as their equals or their superiors.

For example, the plaintiffs in *Jam v. IFC* didn't subject the US to neo-colonial subordination. In fact, their actions challenged the colonial hierarchies that have historically established white residents of the Global North as colonizers ("civilizers," interveners) and people of color in the Global South (including India) as colonized (recipients of foreign influence). We can say something similar about CSE's work. Being based in India, any influence CSE exerts over developed countries in the Global North also works to subvert these colonial hierarchies—and this is all the more true to the extent that it explicitly advocates for the interests of those colonialism historically subordinated (e.g., residents of so-called "developing countries") in the context of a global politics dominated by the interests of those colonialism historically benefitted (see CSE 1991; Rossi 2017).

Of course, in some cases, foreign influencers *do* belong to groups historically privileged by colonial hierarchies. But, even when they do, there are ways they can exert influence without objectionably perpetuating those hierarchies. Imagine that foreign influencers treat recipients with toleration, that they treat recipient institutions as legitimate, and that there's no general pattern of foreign influence establishing those historically marginalized by colonialism as recipients and those historically empowered by it as influencers (or, if there is such a pattern, foreign influencers work to undermine it). When foreign influencers meet these conditions, they don't perpetuate colonial hierarchies. Their influence lacks the distinguishing features of colonialism. Note, I aim to identify the standards foreign influence must meet in order to avoid perpetuating or reproducing the hierarchies associated with colonialism *as it was actually practiced*. As such, I primarily engage with thinkers—Anghie, Mutua, and Koskenniemi—who take the analysis of colonialism *as a historical phenomenon* to be their main task. I won't engage at length with work that tries to determine what features a hypothetical political relationship would need to have in order to qualify as colonialism or that tries to determine whether there are conceptually necessary wrong-making features of

colonialism (see, e.g. Stilz 2011, 2015, and 2016; Valentini 2015; Ypi 2013). This focus will allow us to determine when foreign influence poses a particularly salient danger—when it perpetuates objectionable ways of treating certain people, which manners of treatment have made up a significant portion of global politics and international law as their associated practices *have in fact unfolded*—without getting distracted by the question of whether an act of foreign influence aligns with some ideal-typical account of colonialism. Indeed, Valentini (2015) herself suggests that the real wrongs of colonialism are to be found in the evils of its historical manifestations.

One distinguishing feature of (historical) colonialism was its denial that colonial subjects were fully-developed persons. As Anghie (2006) emphasizes, colonizers routinely characterized colonial subjects as “uncivilized,” and recognized them as persons only to the extent necessary to sanction them for their alleged deficiencies as compared with Western standards of genuinely “human” behavior. Similarly, Koskenniemi recounts the rise of the “Comparative Method” in 19th-century international law, which “viewed primitive peoples as earlier stages of human development in an overall law-like frame of progressive history” (Koskenniemi 2001, 101). He describes how international lawyers invoked different (perceived) levels of “civilization” to justify differential grants of political and legal recognition to non-Europeans, sometimes explicitly comparing them to children (Koskenniemi 2001, 127-32). But foreign influencers can avoid denying recipients are fully-developed persons by treating them with toleration (by treating recipients as presumptively entitled to live by their own lights). As argued earlier, when influencers treat recipients with toleration, they recognize recipients as sources of weighty claims about how their lives should go and what rules should govern them—the same kinds of claims that any people interacting as political equals would recognize each other as having.

A second central element of colonialism was that colonizers unjustifiably deprived colonial subjects of the ability to exercise their own political authority (which denial was premised on the view that they weren’t fully-developed persons). Koskenniemi explains how colonizers didn’t go so

far as to deny the colonized had *any* valid claims of their own, but *did* deny colonized persons' standing to bring *certain kinds* of claims—claims to full political and legal recognition and inclusion in the international community on terms of equality with Europeans (Koskenniemi 2001). Ypi (2013:168-9) similarly notes that apologists for “civilizing-mission” colonialism often invoked the failure or incapacity of colonized people to establish legitimate political institutions of their own (and therefore their supposed lack of a valid claim to exercise their own political authority) in its defense. However, if foreigners exert only the kinds of influence that are compatible with recipients’ institutions being legitimate, then they don’t deny recipients the ability to exercise their own political authority. They interact with recipient institutions as they would be justified interacting with any legitimate political authority, not as colonial powers who rule over recipients precisely because the latter’s independent institutions are (allegedly) illegitimate.

Colonialism’s third central feature was that it wasn’t a series of isolated oppressive acts, each individually unjustified (though, certainly, colonizers committed many discrete injustices). Colonialism was a practice that rationalized and instituted *patterns* of behavior establishing some groups (e.g., Europeans, white people, residents of the Global North and West) as superiors and others (e.g., people of color, residents of the Global South) as inferiors. Thus, even if individual cases of foreign influence meet the criteria above, such that no one on its own counts as a perpetuation of colonial hierarchies, it’s possible that a *practice* or a *pattern* of foreign influence, in which those historically empowered by colonialism exerted influence over those historically marginalized by it, could perpetuate colonial hierarchies nonetheless. To avoid this, we need not eliminate *all* instances of historically-empowered foreigners exerting influence on historically-marginalized recipients. But we should avoid creating neo-colonial behavioral patterns and should work to undermine them when they exist. One way to do this is to grant a kind of political priority to supporting historically marginalized people’s exertions of influence over historically empowered people. I don’t mean we should support *all* foreign influence exerted by the historically marginalized, regardless of the

specific form it takes. It should still meet the ethical standards we've developed here and should actually promote justice in recipient societies. But assuming there will be multiple cases of foreign influence that meet these requirements, we, as participants in global politics, should prioritize supporting those in that set exerted by historically marginalized people. Given two comparable cases of justified foreign influence—one led by historically marginalized people and one not—and faced with the choice of how to allocate scarce political resources, we should allocate them to support the former. Another way for foreign influencers to combat neo-colonial behavioral patterns is to actively work to undermine them. Thus, if an act of foreign influence *does* contribute to an existing neo-colonial behavioral pattern, influencers should take steps to subvert that pattern.

Prioritizing support for historically marginalized people's influence and working to subvert neo-colonial behavioral patterns when they emerge will help ensure that, even if, in *some* cases, foreign influencers occupy a higher position in colonial hierarchies than recipients, the practice of foreign influence won't merely be a vehicle for perpetuating those hierarchies. Moreover, prioritizing support for historically marginalized people's influence will constitute another, distinct challenge (in addition to the influence itself) to any hierarchies and ideologies that are vestiges of colonialism. Clearly, the same goes for actions meant specifically to undermine neo-colonial behavioral patterns. Finally, prioritizing support for historically marginalized people's influence and actively working to subvert neo-colonial behavioral patterns will arguably help build faith in the promise of foreign influence among historically marginalized people, who have often, understandably, been its harshest critics. These actions will lend credibility to the claim that foreign influence can serve the interests and protect the rights of all people, including—and perhaps especially—those who have been marginalized by the workings of global-politics-as-usual. This may, in turn, encourage historically marginalized people to participate in the practice of foreign influence, thereby helping give them a more substantial voice in global politics.

Taking Stock

We've argued that some types of foreign influence escape the main moral objections against intervention, and this suggests there are morally responsible ways to promote justice abroad. Recognizing the problems that have often accompanied intervention, then, doesn't necessitate abandoning justice-promotion-on-a-global-scale as a political goal. Foreign influencers *can*, if they follow the standards set out here, treat recipients with toleration, properly acknowledge the legitimacy of their existing institutions, and avoid perpetuating colonial hierarchies.

Arguably, all the cases of cross-border environmental activism discussed here achieve all three of these goals, and are therefore *pro tanto* morally permissible. The nature of CSE's persuasive influence suggests it treats recipients with toleration. It operates either outside or through recipients' established political institutions. (It is either extra-institutional or intra-systemic.) Since CSE is a non-state organization, this means it treats recipient institutions as legitimate. And CSE's work represents a challenge to (neo-)colonial hierarchies. Similarly, the plaintiffs in *Jam v. IFC* exercise persuasive influence through recipients' established institutions and against the grain of (neo-)colonial hierarchies. Finally, the European companies that divested from DAPL's construction arguably only exercised slight control, meaning they, too, treated recipients of their influence with toleration. These companies operated outside recipients' established political institutions (i.e., formal political institutions in the US), and, since they're non-state actors, this means they treated recipient institutions as legitimate. The companies didn't perpetuate colonial hierarchies, because they don't occupy a higher position in those hierarchies than the recipients of their influence (US companies and the US government). In fact, insofar as divesting from DAPL challenged the asymmetrical power relationship between the US government and the Native American communities it has colonized and displaced, we might even consider divestment a *challenge* to (neo-)colonialism.

Of course, global political actors should evaluate each (proposed) exercise of foreign influence individually. In the absence of in-depth case-specific analysis, though, the ethical standards

developed here argue in favor of two presumptions that both would-be foreign influencers and those deciding whether to support or oppose a given exercise of foreign influence should adopt.

Namely, we should adopt a presumption in favor of less-controlling forms of foreign influence, and one in favor of what I'll call *counter-hegemonic* influence—which happens when influencers are currently and historically less geopolitically powerful than recipients. As we've seen, less controlling influence is less likely than its more-controlling counterparts to involve intolerance or the denial of recipient institutions' legitimacy. Since treating recipients with toleration and treating their institutions as legitimate reduces the likelihood that foreign influencers will perpetuate colonial hierarchies, adopting a presumption in favor of less controlling influence would also help safeguard against this danger. Similarly, we've seen that foreign influencers who weren't historically and aren't currently more geopolitically powerful than recipients are comparatively unlikely to deny recipient institutions' legitimacy or perpetuate colonial hierarchies. Exertions of foreign influence where influencers are actually *less* geopolitically powerful, or historically *under-privileged* with respect to recipients have an additional benefit: not only do they *not perpetuate* problematic geopolitical and colonial hierarchies; they directly challenge them.

Thus, we should adopt presumptions in favor of less controlling and counter-hegemonic foreign influence. When deciding which of several comparable exertions of foreign influence to engage in or support, we should prioritize the less controlling and counter-hegemonic ones. Adopting these presumptions is a task of immediate practical import. Global political actors need not wait, for example, for the establishment of strong and stable global political institutions or a cohesive global political identity; we can (and should) begin to act on the presumptions I've recommended here and now.

Conclusions

This article has begun to develop an ethics of foreign influence well-suited to a global politics in which state and non-state actors routinely trade influence using many different means.

We've shown there are *pro tanto* permissible ways to pursue justice via foreign influence without falling prey to the standard objections against intervention. And we've reached this conclusion without abandoning the values underlying the standard objections (toleration, legitimacy, and anti-colonialism). Some might defend foreign influence by arguing these values are unimportant compared to the justice foreign influence could bring about. But we've shown some types of foreign influence are *pro tanto* permissible *even granting* these values' paramount importance—and even in cases where the objections they ground have the most moral force (when foreign influence isn't needed to avert especially grave injustices, but instead tries to redress “ordinary” injustice). This is because not all exertions of foreign influence treat recipients with intolerance, deny their institutions' legitimacy, or perpetuate colonial hierarchies

And in a world as interconnected as ours, with as many opportunities for foreign influence, it's reasonable to expect that any given political actor will frequently find itself capable of exerting *some* permissible kind of foreign influence. Even as individuals, we can donate to international NGOs, participate in transnational social movements, or join international boycotts. Thus, there are generally permissible ways to engage in political contestation aimed at achieving justice abroad. This is not only true in exceptional circumstances. It is true as a matter of course, in everyday global politics. This, in turn, suggests we should think of global political contestation as we do of its domestic counterpart—a generally permissible avenue for promoting justice. On this view, pursuing justice is not something only fellow citizens should do together; it is humanity's collective project.

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