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ARTICLE

Is Mill a Liberal Nationalist?

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Abstract
Within nationality studies, the 19th-century philosopher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) is typically presented as the founding father of liberal-nationalism because of his warning that liberal democratic institutions need to be embedded within the framework of a mononational state. However, the leading Mill scholar in the field, Georgios Varouxakis, has long challenged this designation. Indeed, in the absence of any attempt by other scholars to refute his claim that Mill should be interpreted as a cosmopolitan patriot instead, he has raised the question of whether the conventional view is little more than a disciplinary dogma. This article defends the conventional view through two key moves. First, to counter Varouxakis' principal objections, we show that Mill's account of the emergence of nationalities, as a historically progressive phenomenon grounded in an expansion of human sympathies, implies that his concerns about nationalistic indifference or hostility to foreigners do not translate into objections to nationality as such. Second, to counter Varouxakis' presentation of the cosmopolitan patriot interpretation as a viable alternative to the liberal-nationalist one, we argue that Mill's ethical and political cosmopolitanism is insufficient to support a liberal-postnationalist interpretation and is instead best understood as an integral component of his liberal nationalism.

Keywords: John Stuart Mill; liberal nationalism; nationality; cosmopolitanism; cosmopolitan patriotism

> "To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ as it were) of public affections. It is the first link in the series by which we proceed towards a love to our country and to mankind."
> Edmund Burke ([1790] 1987, 41)

> "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing."
> Genesis 12:2 (King James Bible)

Introduction

Analyzing the nationality studies literature debating whether "liberal democracy presuppose[s] the nation," Paolo Dardanelli and Nenad Stojanović distil three contending theses:

> (a) the liberal-nationalist thesis, which agrees that this is so; (b) the liberal-multinationalist thesis, which holds that while people do indeed need a national identity, democracy itself does

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> not require a single nation hence multiple national identities can be accommodated successfully within a single state; and (c) the liberal-postnationalist thesis, which claims that no national identity is needed in order for there to be a stable democracy in a culturally diverse country. (2011, 357–8)

Moreover, they note that conventional disciplinary historiography traces the dispute between the first two positions back to the 1860s, with John Stuart Mill (1806–1873) "commonly cited as the founding father of the liberal-nationalist thesis," and John Dalberg-Acton (1834–1902) "considered Mill's liberal-multinationalist counterpart" (ibid., 358–9; Beaumont 2023, 1196–7).

Having echoed this point about how Mill is "commonly interpreted," Lior Erez observes that, "like most interpretations of historical thinkers, this one is disputed" (2020, 253, 265 n.3). However, there are at least two respects in which the dispute is anomalous. First, Erez is one of the few nationality studies scholars to even acknowledge its existence (see also Lopez 2014, 112–16). Second, the disputant is not a peripheral scholar of Mill on nationality but the leading figure in the field, Georgios Varouxakis. Indeed, the monograph in which Varouxakis first challenged the conventional view (2002) remains the only one devoted entirely to Mill on nationality.

Varouxakis acknowledges that his interpretation of Mill is likely to strike a discordant note in the ears of the nationality studies community, even though Mill did not himself employ the liberal-*nationalist* label:

> I need to face the preconceived notions of many people who have read in the literature that Mill was favourable to "nationality", or was a "nationalist" or a "liberal nationalist" and the like (2008, §4).

This literature includes sympathetic Mill specialists (Gray 1995, 99–100; Skorupski 2006, 90; 2021, 425), defenders of liberal nationalism as such (Gustavsson 2019, 698; Miller 1995, 97–8; 2020, 23; Tamir 1993, 164; 2019, 145), and conservative critics of anti-nationalist liberalism (Hazony 2018, 136), who regard Mill's purported embrace of nationalism as a sign of his liberalism's comparative maturity, realism, or sophistication. However, it also includes multiculturalist (Kymlicka 1995, 52–3; cf. Beaumont 2022) and postcolonialist (Parekh 2000, 45–6) critics of Mill, who see his (mono)nationalism as a sign of his liberalism's shallowness, chauvinism, or injustice (Varouxakis 2002, 8–20).

One of Varouxakis' key methodological concerns is that this consensus results from scholars attending to an incomplete array of evidence. By grounding the conventional view on a few passages from Chapter 16 of Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* (*CRG*), entitled "Of Nationality, as Connected with Representative Government" (XIX [1861], 371–578, 546–52),[1] Varouxakis argues that its adherents tend not only to misinterpret that chapter but also to ignore contradictory evidence elsewhere in Mill's corpus (2002, 4–5; 2008, §4; see also Lopez 2014, 113–14). More specifically, Varouxakis argues that a holistic and contextualist reading of Mill's works undermines the conventional view by showing that: (1) Mill and Acton do not adopt "two completely opposing attitudes towards nationality […] they were much closer […] than existing scholarship would have us believe" (2002, 7); and (2) Mill is better categorized as a "cosmopolitan patriot" *instead* (2013, 9–16; 2008, §3, §15–38; 2002, 111–27). As we will see, whereas the first claim reflects passages in Mill's corpus that could support the liberal-multinationalist thesis, the second reflects passages that could support its liberal-postnationalist competitor.

Given that Varouxakis first challenged the conventional view almost 25 years ago, and that no attempt has been made to refute his interpretation directly, the conventional view is in danger of hardening into a disciplinary dogma. It is thus high time to show that the conventional view remains defensible. As we attempt to do so in this article, we highlight textual evidence congenial to a liberal-

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multinationalist interpretation. However, since Varouxakis emphasizes Mill's opposition to nationalist ideals as such, our primary focus is on whether the evidence he adduces warrants interpreting Mill as anticipating liberal post-nationalism instead. Although Varouxakis does not address that question himself, we argue that doing so reveals why his cosmopolitan patriot interpretation does not ultimately subvert the conventional view.

In what follows, we begin by using Mill's definition of "nationality" to explain his "*prima facie*" liberal case for mononational states (XIX, 547) while clarifying why he considers the emergence of nations to constitute civilizational progress (Section 1). Then we present Mill's more familiar "vital consideration" in favor of mononational states (XIX, 547): the liberal-nationalist *thesis* (Section 2). Next, we examine several potential reasons, which Varouxakis either affirms or highlights, for denying that Mill's liberal-nationalist *thesis* commits him to liberal-nationalism as such, on the grounds that he also regards national partialities as *intrinsically* problematic. Building upon Mill's conception of nationality in terms of sympathy toward an in-group, we show that Mill neither considers national partialities to be a vestige of barbarism (Section 3) nor regards them as entailing a vulgar hostility toward foreigners (Section 4). This paves the way to address a kindred objection: that Mill is not a liberal-*nationalist* because he only takes nationality to have *instrumental* value (Section 5). To refute this, we show how his hedonistic axiology attributes value to the sympathy on which nationality is based, and demonstrate that the objection could only succeed by entailing the falsehood that Mill is not a *liberal* either. Finally, we show that the evidence that Mill is a cosmopolitan is not evidence that he is a liberal-postnationalist. To that end, we argue that a *Millian* liberal-postnationalism would require the transcendence of nationality, which his considerations on *ethical* cosmopolitanism do not imply is either likely or morally necessary (Section 6), and that his *political* cosmopolitanism is consistent with liberal-nationalism (Section 7). However, we also stress the extent to which this interpretation is consistent with, and builds upon, the bulk of Varouxakis' pioneering analysis.

1. Mill's *prima facie* case for nation-states

Mill begins Chapter 16 of *CRG* by offering the following definition of "nationality":

> A portion of mankind may be said to constitute a Nationality, if they are united among themselves by common sympathies, which do not exist between them and any others—which make them co-operate with each other more willingly than with other people, desire to be under the same government, and desire that it should be government by themselves or a portion of themselves, exclusively (XIX, 546).

Beaumont (2023, 1198–9; 2022, 1005–6) analyzes this as defining a nationality as *a people* united by *common sympathies* (Partiality Condition) that tend to *cause* individual members thereof to exhibit three traits and behaviors: to be more inclined to cooperate with members than non-members (Cooperation Condition); to want members to be ruled together by the same government (Communality Condition); and to want this government to consist of members alone (Self-Determination Condition) (compare Tyndal 2013, 98). Furthermore, Beaumont implicitly embraces what we will refer to as the Sovereigntist Interpretation of Mill's Self-Determination Condition, by taking Mill's use of "exclusively" to imply that "government" means the central government of a sovereign state in the international domain (XIX, 546).

Given the Sovereigntist Interpretation, a people's desire for self-determination through anything short of this — such as control of a federated state (like California) within a broader federal state (like the USA) — will not qualify.[2] Duncan Bell may implicitly reject this and implicitly endorse the liberal-multinationalist interpretation by arguing that Mill favors "a future federal order" in India because, "[l]ike the United States," it was "far too large and far too diverse for the establishment of a nation-state" (2024, 778). After all, this seems to suggest that Mill envisages a federal Indian state

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overseeing a range of self-determining federated states of distinct nationalities. However, Bell neither defends an alternative analysis of Mill's definition of "nationality" nor argues explicitly that the scope of Mill's liberal-nationalist thesis is limited to nonfederal states or federated states. Consequently, we set that concern aside here and use Beaumont's analysis as the basis for the argument that follows.

As thus construed, Mill's definition of "nationality" lays the groundwork for his claim that wherever "the sentiment of nationality exists in any force," there is a "*prima facie* case for uniting all the members of the nationality under the same government [Communality Condition], and a government to themselves apart [Self-Determination Condition]," namely:

> that the question of government ought to be decided by the governed. One hardly knows what any division of the human race should be free to do, if not to determine, with which of the various collective bodies of human beings they choose to associate themselves (XIX, 547).

Mill often writes about nationality in a binary manner, implying that any given people can be classed as either nationalities or non-nationalities. However, the wording "exists in *any* force" here (ibid., emphasis added) acknowledges that a people can exhibit the sympathies posited by his definition, along with its corresponding inclinations and behaviors, to different degrees. In this regard, his conception of nationality resembles his conception of civilization, as he also draws a sharp distinction between the civilized and uncivilized for some purposes, while acknowledging that civilizational attainment is a scalar phenomenon for others. Indeed, Mill's measures of civilization and nationality are sufficiently interwoven that it is worth attending to his conception of the relationship between the two in some detail.

In "Civilization" ([1836] XVIII, 117–48), Mill notes that the term "civilization" has a "broad" (ethical) sense, designating a country civilized to the extent that it has established the "best characteristics of Man and Society; farther advanced in the road to perfection; happier, nobler, wiser." However, he also distinguishes this from a "narrow" (socioeconomic) sense of the term, designating a country civilized insofar as the "characteristics" of its people and society are the converse of those found in "savage life." Although Mill sets out a range of characteristics of savage life, the combination of the converse of which constitutes his conception of a paradigmatically narrowly civilized society, one of these characteristics is particularly important for our purposes: the tendency for people to have weak "social" feelings or sympathies for others (XVIII, 119–20; Beaumont and Li 2022, 242–3, 245–8; see also Claeys 2013, 94–6).

This indicates that if a "savage people" could satisfy Mill's Partiality Condition, it would only be through a very low degree of mutual sympathy. Moreover, by implying that this leaves them with little inclination to cooperate and commune with each other, Mill also indicates that they could barely satisfy his Cooperation and Communality Conditions either. To illustrate, Mill describes the paradigmatically savage "community" as a "tribe," "wandering or thinly scattered over a vast tract of country," "seldom" engaging in any "joint operations" apart from war, and finding little "pleasure in each other's society." Conversely, this leads him to characterize a paradigmatically narrowly civilized society as having a "dense population," "dwelling in fixed habitations […] largely collected together in towns and villages," acting "together for common purposes in large bodies," and enjoying "the pleasures of social intercourse" (XVIII, 120).

Crucially, when Mill combines the preceding feature of narrow civilization with the others that he posits, each reverse-engineered from other characteristics of the savage condition in the manner described above, he indicates that they rest on highly advanced forms of sympathy-induced cooperation. Moreover, in doing so, he characterizes the paradigmatically narrowly civilized society, born of this combination, as a "wealthy and powerful *nation*" (XVIII, 119, emphasis added). Although there is some controversy about how to interpret the following passage (Section 4), Mill makes a similar point in "Coleridge":

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> in modern times the countries which have had that feeling [of "nationality" or "cohesion"] in the strongest degree have been the most powerful countries; England, France, and in proportion to their territory and resources, Holland and Switzerland ([1840/59] X: 117–64, 135–6).

However, here the additional scalar inflection suggests that, within the ranks of modern civilized societies, higher levels of narrow civilizational attainment are correlated with higher levels of nationality.

In Chapter 16 of *CRG*, Mill offers some reasons why his initial case for allowing people who form a nationality to act on their desire to establish a "government to themselves apart" is only *prima facie* (XIX, 547). However, these are best understood in the light of a deeper politico-theoretical principle, on which the *prima facie* case relies, and which illuminates the role Mill's conception of nationality plays in his account of civilizational progress. In *On Liberty* ([1859] XVIII, 213–310), speaking of narrow civilization in a binary manner, Mill argues that the use of force and coercion against adults of sound mind should be governed by a so-called Harm Principle:

> That the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant (XVIII, 223).

The principle's key normative implication is that if an individual, group, or government is justified in engaging in coercive or forceful interference in the lives of others — whether the interferer is part of the same nation as the interferee or not — the purpose of the interference must be either: self-defense against harm (the defense clause); to protect a third party from the same (the protection clause); or to paternalistically force or coerce members of a narrowly uncivilized society for their own good (the civilization clause) (Beaumont 2022, 1004–5).

As thus construed, the Harm Principle generates a *prima facie* case for granting self-determination to any group that wills it, by placing the burden on opponents of this course to show that preventive interference would satisfy at least one of the clauses.[3] Moreover, since satisfying one of the clauses is necessary rather than sufficient for the interference to be just, it also creates a burden to show that any harm generated by the act of interference itself would be proportionate and legitimate. However, the case is only *prima facie*, as no guarantee is offered that this burden can never be met. For example, in *CRG*, one reason Mill says his initial case is only *prima facie* is that "geographical hindrances" may render "different nationalities […] so locally intermingled, that it is not practicable for them to be under separate governments." In doing so, he implicitly acknowledges that the defense and protection clauses can limit a nation's right to act on its desire for a "government to themselves apart" (XIX, 547). After all, since Mill knows that such geographical hindrances are not necessarily insurmountable *in practice*, his point is that the necessary measures will seldom be morally justifiable. For example, if the hindrances are only superable through (say) genocide or ethnic cleansing, the defense and protection clauses will almost invariably allow a stronger moral case to be made against the nation having a right to achieve its end via those means than for it having a right to proceed unmolested.

Of course, if Mill only took narrowly civilized people to exhibit nationality, the *prima facie* case would still be strengthened to the extent that the Harm Principle would then rule out ever using force or coercion to prevent a nation from achieving self-determination *on paternalistic grounds.* However, even if Mill is best interpreted as denying that people exhibit enough sympathy in the savage condition to exhibit nationality,[4] his position does not rule out the possibility of narrowly uncivilized nations. The reason for this is that, although Mill occasionally uses "savage" and "barbarian" as synonyms, there are also clear instances in which he takes the latter to designate an uncivilized intermediary condition between savagery and civilization. Since Mill describes at least some of the people in this condition as displaying non-trivial levels of sympathetic solidarity,

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along with correspondingly non-trivial inclinations to cooperate, commune, and collectively self-determine together, it is easy to see why he might think they satisfy his definition in a non-trivial manner.

One passage from Mill's "A Few Words on Non-Intervention" ("Non-Intervention") ([1859] XXI, 109–124) supporting this interpretation is embedded in an argument purporting to show that the norms of international morality that should govern relations between narrowly civilized peoples differ from those that should govern their relations with barbarians. Mill offers two reasons to support the thesis, the second of which presupposes the existence of "nations which are still barbarous": "[that] have not got beyond the period during which it is likely to be for their benefit that they should be conquered and held in subjection by foreigners" (XXI, 118). However, he also heavily qualifies the presupposition by denying that "any conduct whatever towards a barbarous people" can count "as a violation of the law of nations": "A violation of great principles of morality it may easily be; but barbarians have no rights as a *nation*, except a right to such treatment as may, at the earliest possible period, fit them for becoming one" (XXI, 119). This suggests that barbarism is incompatible with *fully-fledged* nationality. After all, why else would the law of *nations* not apply to them, on the one hand, and in what sense do they still need to *become* nations, on the other?

Mill's view of the relationship between nationality and civilization is also illuminated by the first reason he offers for denying that the law of nations applies to "barbarians": that "they will not reciprocate. They cannot be depended upon for following any rules" (XXI, 118). Scholars who overlook this first reason may view his second, quoted above, as a standalone paternalistic warrant for aggressively conquering barbarian peoples for their own good (for example, Kymlicka 1995, 166; cf. Beaumont 2022, 1009–13; Beaumont and Li 2022, 248–60). However, all of Mill's examples of narrowly civilized powers waging just wars against barbarian ones are presented as defensive or protective responses to the barbarian power either engaging in aggression or subjecting its own population to severe abuses (XXI, 119–20). Moreover, although Mill thinks that narrowly civilized states are far less prone to such behavior, the fact that he grants that they can be guilty of it, and thus liable to kindred responses, means that the principal ethical significance of excluding barbarian societies from the laws of nations only emerges once Mill turns to the topic of *jus post bellum*.

When a civilized country has been guilty of aggression, or some other severe abuse of what we would now call human rights (XXI, 119), Mill indicates that responsibility will usually be attributable to specific individuals exploiting the opportunities that unfree institutions grant them to exercise unchecked power. Consequently, where such a country is subjected to a punitive military defeat in response, Mill's go-to remedy is not to deny its people national self-determination but rather to insist upon regime change and the adoption of freer institutions. For example, Mill approves of how the Seventh Coalition imposed a constitutional monarchy on France after the Napoleonic Wars before bringing it back into the fold of the Concert of Europe (XXII, 307; XXI, 120–1). By contrast, believing barbarous peoples incapable of sustaining free institutions, on the one hand, and tracing the causes of their aggression to deeper socioeconomic and cultural factors that will seldom be altered by a change of native leadership, on the other, Mill thinks that the appropriate remedy for barbarian aggression or abuses tends to be for a civilized power to subject them to paternalistic civilization through colonial rule instead (XXI, 119–20).

Thus, whereas Mill's first reason for excluding barbarians from the rule of nations explains why it will often be necessary to conquer them for defensive or protective purposes, his second explains why maintaining rule over them thereafter can be justified on paternalistic grounds alone. As he puts it in a revealing passage:

> Independence and nationality, so essential to the due growth and development of a people further advanced in improvement, are generally impediments to theirs. The sacred duties which civilized nations owe to the independence and nationality of each other are not binding towards those to whom nationality and independence are either a certain evil, or at best a questionable good (XXI, 119).

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The key caveats for such an arrangement to remain just are that (i) the civilized power must do a better job of developing the subject society than would be likely under a native ruler; and (ii) the society must be granted independence once its people are fit for free institutions (XIX, 567–8; XVIII, 224).

To conclude this section, we highlight a letter Mill wrote in 1866 that ties several features of the preceding interpretation together in a discussion of a single case: the East India Company's annexation of dependent princely states, whose rulers had failed to produce a natural heir, under what was known as the doctrine of lapse (XVI, 1202–3). As an employee of the Company between 1823 and 1858,[5] who spent much of his career drafting correspondence concerning policy towards the princely states (from its London headquarters), Mill developed a carefully considered position (Varouxakis 2013, 116–125). Writing in retrospect, Mill explains that, although he didn't consider any of the states in question to have crossed the threshold of binary narrow civilization, he had still deemed it appropriate to distinguish between two kinds of cases: (1) the "really native states, with a nationality, & historical traditions & feelings"; and (2) those that had been "created by conquest" relatively recently (for example, by "Mahomedan[s]"), of which "the military chiefs & office holders who carry on the government & form the ruling class are almost as much foreigners to the mass of the people as we ourselves are." In the case of (1), Mill echoes the *prima facie* case for national self-determination by indicating that he opposed an aggressive takeover by the Company in the name of paternalism. However, in the case of (2), Mill says that his policy preference was to "make the continuance of the dynasty by adoption [of a replacement heir] not a right nor a general rule, but a reward to be earned by good government" (XVI, 1202).

What made cases of type (2) ethically distinct, in Mill's eyes, was that the foreign dynasties were already engaged in foreign intervention; the question was thus no longer whether there should be any foreign intervention at all but rather whether there should be further foreign *counter*-intervention against the foreign dynasty on the population's behalf (see also XXI, 123). Moreover, Mill considers the bar for just counter-intervention to be lower in case (2) because the bar for foreign rulers to count as legitimate is correspondingly higher. To preserve their legitimacy, Mill reasons, it was not enough for these foreign dynasties to refrain from engaging in the kind of abuses that could merit foreign *protective* intervention against native rulers; they were also obligated to deliver a superior form of governance to that their foreign subjects could provide for themselves. Thus, in the case of the foreign dynasties without an heir to their throne, Mill was willing to exploit this opportunity for counter-intervention in the form of annexation if they had failed to govern in a sufficiently paternalistic manner (XVI, 1202–3).

2. Mill's liberal-nationalist thesis

Having stated his *prima facie* case for nation-states in *CRG*, Mill supplements it with the "more vital consideration" now known as the liberal-nationalist thesis:

> Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities […] it is in general a necessary condition of free institutions, that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities (XIX, 547).

Before turning to Mill's explicit explanation of this claim, three preliminary observations are necessary.

Firstly, Mill says that this consideration is only vital when the population in question is "ripe for free institutions," by which he means narrowly civilized enough, *ceteris paribus*, to sustain them. Indeed, this allows Mill to acknowledge that when other impediments to free institutions exist, and hence paternalistic despotism would be optimal anyway, a multinational population may be an advantage (XIX, 548–50). Consequently, Mill's vital consideration concerns cases in which the distribution of the relevant sympathies *within a (more or less) narrowly civilized society* does not

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unite the entire population with "fellow feeling" but rather produces more than one nationality instead (XIX, 547).

Secondly, although Mill is not *always* careful to do so, it is important to distinguish between how the factors he cites might (1) undermine a multinational liberal democracy after it has been established (the Preservation Problem); and (2) make it particularly difficult to transition from a (narrowly civilized) multinational despotic state to a multinational state with free institutions (the Transition Problem) (Beaumont 2023, 1208–9). Indeed, given the Sovereigntist Interpretation of Mill's Self-Determination Condition, the difficulties of overcoming either problem are already implicit in the presupposition that nations want "government by themselves or a portion of themselves, exclusively" (XIX, 546). After all, in the case of the Preservation Problem, the Sovereigntist Interpretation indicates why an established multinational liberal democracy will be animated by forces tending to either (a) degenerate into autocracy or partial democracy privileging a single nationality; or (b) fissure into separate sovereign states. Conversely, these possibilities also indicate why it might be difficult for several nations living under a shared despotism to cooperate to solve the Transition Problem in the first place. After all, the possibility of (a) means that each nation would have to fear that such cooperation would ultimately result not in free institutions but in the creation of a new despotism by one of the others, thus making proceeding directly to (b) appear a lower risk option. Although Mill's explanation of his vital consideration does not purport to show that such tendencies can never be counteracted by other factors, it adduces further exacerbating tendencies that make such counteraction extremely unlikely.

To illustrate, addressing the Preservation Problem, Mill claims that: "Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, *necessary to the working of representative government*, cannot exist" (XIX, 547, emphasis added). Earlier in the text, Mill suggests that for representative government to function, there must be sufficient mass interest "in the general affairs of the State," along with the physical means of conveying information across the country (such as newspapers), for it to be meaningful to speak of "the formation of public opinion." Without this, he worries, instead of attending to the good of the country as a whole, "the electors will seldom make any use of the right of suffrage but to serve their private interest, or the interest of their locality, or of someone with whom they are connected as adherents or dependents" (XIX, 414). Consequently, returning to Chapter 16, Mill worries that people in multinational societies will tend to derive their political beliefs from sources within their partial national communities, thus allowing public opinion to form but only as an inducement to voters to attend to their relatively narrow communal interests. Mill further worries that this will not only make the distinct national communities unintelligible to each other but also incline them to (potentially ill-motivated and demagogic) mutual misinterpretation, animosity, and grievance when their policy preferences conflict. Indeed, Mill suggests the likelihood of this even producing petty vindictiveness such that if "any one of them feels aggrieved by the policy of the common ruler," this alone "is sufficient to determine another to support that policy" (XIX, 547).

It is easy to see how such communal friction and political dysfunction (Waldron 2009, 171–2) would tend to reinforce each national community's desire for self-government, and thus also the Preservation Problem, rather than mitigate it. Indeed, Mill emphasizes how it could lead people to consider it more important that their nation either escape from or triumph in such rivalries than that they preserve liberal democratic institutions for themselves:

> each fears more injury to itself from the other nationalities than from the common arbiter, the state. Their mutual antipathies are generally much stronger than jealousy of the government (XIX, 547).

For example, members of one national community might be willing to give up their liberal democratic rights to a would-be autocrat among them in return for the promise of either national secession or the subjugation of their communal antagonists. That said, Mill makes clear that, even if

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the government of a multinational state were to remain relatively neutral, the focus of each nationality on its own affairs, alongside their relatively weak inclinations to cooperate with members of other nationalities, would make it harder for them to mount a "joint resistance" to the government's encroachments on their common liberal democratic rights (XIX, 547). Finally, but extremely significantly, Mill notes the special problems posed by the army of a multinational state. Such an army could either be divided in a manner that mirrors the society's communal divisions or mercenarily loyal to the state as such rather than to the population. In either case, it should be evident why its lack of loyalty to the population *as a whole* would make it more inclined to supply the force required to either splinter the state, impose the dominion of its favored national faction, or simply end the experiment in liberal democracy entirely (XIX, 547–8).[6]

With only a minor inflection, the same considerations explain why Mill thinks that the (internal) international relations of a multinational despotic state tend to exacerbate the Transition Problem rather than mitigate it. Firstly, supposing that dissident newspapers already find it harder to campaign for reform or revolution under despotic rule, one would expect the balkanization of the press along with its readership into separate national factions to make it even harder to establish a united opinion on whether, how, and to what end the despotism should be resisted and replaced. Perhaps most obviously, given that the nations would prefer self-government to multinational government, *ex hypothesi*, one would expect it to be hard for them to agree on preserving the existing state and establishing shared liberal democratic institutions.

Secondly, in this kind of case, Mill thinks that the preceding obstacles to cooperation between nationalities against the despotic state will empower it and encourage each group to curry favor with the despot instead: "Even if all are aggrieved, none feel that they can rely on the others […]; the strength of none is sufficient to resist alone, and each may reasonably think that it consults its own advantage most by bidding for the favour of the government against the rest" (XIX, 547). Moreover, Mill argues, a multinational population tends to further the despot's ability to divide and rule by allowing for the use of segments of the army of one nationality to crush rebellions by members of another whom the soldiers consider "foreigners" (ibid.).

3. National sentiments "Characteristic of Barbarians"

The preceding analysis lays the groundwork for Varouxakis's first objection to the conventional view: that whereas an authentic nationalist would celebrate nation-states, Mill's liberal argument for them seems to be characterized by regret. However, care must be taken to decipher Varouxakis's concern as he is well aware that Mill's theory of civilizational progress means that he no more regretted the emergence of nationality as such than Marx regretted the emergence of capitalism out of feudalism (Marx and Engels 2002, 219–22). For example, while discussing a "naïve" form of cosmopolitanism, which assumes "that if only it were not for nationalism/patriotism and the particularistic barriers created by attachment to the nation-state, people would naturally identify with the whole of humanity," Varouxakis offers a Millian-cum-Burkeian retort:

> Whatever else they might have done, the nation-building projects of nation-states have tended to enlarge people's circle of fellow feelings from the smaller units of family, tribe, village, or region to the much broader one of a whole nation (2008, §24).

Nevertheless, if Mill also implies that there is something intrinsically bad about nationality, it might still seem odd to categorize him as a liberal-*nationalist.* After all, isn't Marx's charge that capitalism is intrinsically exploitative and alienating (Marx and Engels 2002, 222, 226–8) *a* reason not to categorize him as pro-capitalist,[7] his belief in its progressive historical role notwithstanding? It seems to be in this spirit that Varouxakis denies that Mill's vital consideration suffices to make him a liberal-nationalist, because his warning that "nationalist 'sentiments'" must be "pragmatically

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accommodated" is appended with the judgment that such sentiments "were 'characteristic of barbarians'" (2008, §4).

Here Varouxakis quotes from one of Mill's earlier works, "Vindication of the French Revolution of 1848" ("Vindication") ([1849] XX, 317–66), which also affirms the vital consideration but with the following clarification:

> It is far from our intention to defend or apologise for the feelings which make men reckless of, or at least indifferent to, the rights and interests of any portion of the human species, save that which is called by the same name and speaks the same language as themselves. "These feelings are characteristic of barbarians; in proportion as a nation is nearer to barbarism it has them in a greater degree […]" (XX, 347).

More specifically, he expresses "deep regret" that the Revolutions of 1848 led nationalist groups in Germany, and other more "backward parts of Europe," to exhibit "a sentiment of nationality" that "so far outweighs the love of liberty, that the people" were "willing to abet their rulers in crushing the liberty and independence of any people not of their own race and language" (ibid.).

However, one reason for denying that this passage shows that Mill considers the sentiment of nationality to be *intrinsically* barbaric is that this would contradict the connection he posits between fully-fledged nationality and narrow civilization (Section 1). Indeed, that connection also seems to be affirmed in Mill's defense in "Vindication" of the Foreign Minister of the French Second Republic, Alphonse de Lamartine, for asserting a "right" to counter-intervention in the form of "afford[ing] military aid to [narrowly civilized] nations attempting to free themselves from a foreign yoke" (XX, 347).[8] For example, opposing an absolute moral norm against such counter-intervention — which would aid two of the counterrevolutionary forces that had crushed liberal-nationalist uprisings, the multinational despotisms of Imperial Austria and Imperial Russia — Mill declares that the "great interests of civilized nations in the present age" are "liberty, just government, and *sympathy of opinion*" (XX, 349, emphasis added). In doing so, Mill presupposes the possibility of international solidarity transcending barbaric hostility and indifference, even while falling short of conational fellow feeling. Indeed, by implying that there is no contradiction between this argument and his vital consideration, Mill thereby suggests that well-drawn borders can help to civilize international relations by bringing the best rather than the worst out of otherwise narrowly civilized peoples.

Nevertheless, even supposing that Mill's "Vindication" implies that the sentiment of nationality becomes barbarous *beyond a certain degree* (cf. X, 135–6), it would not follow that this is the view he holds by the time he defends his definition of "nationality" in *CRG*. To see the significance of this, consider a similar passage therefrom concerning the Habsburg monarch's use of soldiers of one nationality to crush rebellions by members of another. According to Mill, this problem with multinational despotisms is exacerbated by the fact that the "military are the part of every community in whom […] the distinction between their fellow-countrymen and foreigners is the deepest and strongest." For others, "foreigners are merely strangers," but:

> to the soldier, they are men against whom he may be called […] to fight for life or death. The difference to him is that between friends and foes—we may almost say between fellow-men and another kind of animals (XIX, 547–8).

As in "Vindication," Mill insists that his vital consideration is not intended to deny that "so broadly marked a distinction between what is due to a fellow countryman and what is due merely to a human creature, is more worthy of savages than of civilized beings, and ought, with the utmost energy, to be contended against" (XIX, 548). However, by defining "nationality," *CRG* also makes it much clearer why *so marked* a distinction between conationals and foreigners is not intrinsic to nationality as such. After all, there is nothing in Mill's Partiality Condition that renders this

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distinction a variant of that between friends and foes; *x* could be more sympathetic to *y* than *z* — and thereby caused to be more inclined to cooperate, commune, and collectively self-determine with *y* than with *z* — without *x* being indifferent or hostile to z. Consequently, by implying that indifference or hostility to foreigners is "worthy of savages" (XIX, 548) — the most selfish beings in his theory of human development — Mill is not saying the same of the sympathies that unite a people into a nationality.

4. "Nationality" in the vulgar sense of the term

Similar reasoning can be adduced in response to a variant of the same objection that Varouxakis bases on changes Mill made to "Coleridge." Varouxakis observes that, in the first edition (1840), Mill initially lists "a strong and active principle of nationality" as one of the conditions of a stable society, but in the second and revised edition (1859), the principle of nationality becomes "a strong and active principle of cohesion among the members of the same community or state" (X, 135; Varouxakis 2002, 126–7). Moreover, Mill also insists upon distinguishing this principle from "nationality in the vulgar sense of the term":

> a senseless antipathy to foreigners; an indifference to the general welfare of the human race, or an unjust preference of the supposed interests of our own country; a cherishing of bad peculiarities because they are national; or a refusal to adopt what has been found good by other countries (X, 135).

Consequently, while arguing that Mill endorses cosmopolitan patriotism — more on which below — Varouxakis infers that he did this *instead* of promoting nationality, citing as evidence the fact that the former was "*defined carefully so as not to identify it with 'nationality'*" (2008, §8–9; see also Lopez 2014, 117–24).

In Section 7, we will endorse Varouxakis' categorization of Mill as a cosmopolitan patriot. However, for now, the key point is that Varouxakis' defense of that interpretation is predicated on distinguishing cosmopolitan patriotism from other kinds of patriotism that Mill explicitly rejects (2008, §11). For example, in a letter Mill wrote in 1865, besides opposing "national vanity," and affirming the importance of telling "his countrymen of their faults," Mill disapproves "of *the narrow, exclusive patriotism*" that:

> made the good of the whole human race a subordinate consideration to the good, or worse still, to the mere power & external importance, of the country of one's birth (XVI, 1108, emphasis added).

Consequently, just as Varouxakis observes that this does not mean Mill "simply reject[s] 'patriotism' tout court" (2008, §12), advocates of the conventional view can argue that the same is true of Mill's argument in "Coleridge," *mutatis mutandis* (Beaumont 2023, 1200–1; see also Lopez 2014, 119; Donner 2009, 143).

To illustrate, it is worth noting that Mill's distinction between defensible and indefensible forms of patriotism is not unique to that concept. For example, in "Remarks on Bentham's Philosophy" ([1833] X, 3–18), Mill makes a similar move while discussing Jeremy Bentham's egoistic doctrine that "men's actions are always obedient to their interests." Mill concedes that this egoistic thesis may be plausible, if not correct, provided that it employs a capacious, "philosophical" sense of 'interest,' incorporating both "self-regarding" interests and "social" interests taken in the welfare of others. However, he insists, it is thoroughly implausible if it employs a narrow, "vulgar" sense of "interest," incorporating self-regarding interests alone. Indeed, despite being a self-avowed utilitarian in ethics, in "Sedgwick's Discourse" ([1835] X, 31–74) he even says that the "utility principle" would

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be wrong if it were predicated upon a narrow, "vulgar sense" of "interest," reduced to people's concern for such things as "wealth, power, [and] social position" (X, 69).

The key upshot is that, since Mill can endorse utilitarianism whilst rejecting the vulgar variant, and embrace patriotism without embracing the narrow variant, his criticism of "nationality *in the vulgar sense of the term*" (emphasis added) does not show that he opposes it in every other sense. Indeed, that Mill's principle of cohesion in "Coleridge" is not an alternative to nationality *as Mill understands it* in *CRG* can be seen from his explication of the former as a:

> principle of *sympathy*, not of hostility; of union, not of separation. We mean a feeling of common interest among those who live under the same government, and are contained within the same natural or historical boundaries. We mean, that one part of the community *does not consider themselves as foreigners* with regard to another part; that they set a value on their connexion; feel that they are one people, that their lot is cast together, that evil to any of their fellow-countrymen is evil to themselves; and do not desire selfishly to free themselves from their share of any common inconvenience by severing the connexion (X, 135; emphasis added; see also Donner 2009, 143).

Here, the distinction between sympathy as a cause, on the one hand, and a variety of behaviors and attitudes as corresponding effects, on the other, is not laid out as explicitly as in his definition of "nationality" in *CRG*.[9] However, the role that sympathy plays in both suggests that the former provides the first sketch from which the latter evolves.

Of course, this raises the question of why Mill would have been wary enough of the term 'nationality' not to use it in the second edition of "Coleridge" but then confident enough to revert to using it in *CRG*. One philosophical rationale can be found in a posthumously published essay, "Nature" ([1874] X, 373–402), written at some point in the 1850s, in which Mill claims that:

> it is unfortunate that a set of terms which play so great a part in moral and metaphysical speculation should have acquired many meanings *different from the primary one, yet sufficiently allied to it to admit of confusion.* The words have thus become entangled in so many foreign associations, mostly of a very powerful and tenacious character, that they have come to excite, and to be the symbols of, *feelings which their original meaning will by no means justify*; and which have made them one of the most copious sources of false taste, false philosophy, false morality, and even bad law (X, 373, emphasis added; see also Loizides 2013, 127).

"Coleridge" offers a list of positive things Mill associates with cohesion (nationality) and a list of negative things that he does not. Only once Mill formulated a clear definition of "nationality," logically shorn of the negative associations, may he have felt comfortable publicly promoting state institutions based upon it again in *CRG* (see also Lopez 2014, 119). Indeed, this establishes a parallel between Mill and David Miller, a liberal nationalist who initially embraced Mill's term 'nationality' to avoid the negative connotations of "nationalism" (Miller 1995, 10) but now seems comfortable identifying himself with the latter (2020, 25–8).

5. The instrumentalism objection

Of course, to show that Mill does not think of nationality as intrinsically bad is not to show that he considers it intrinsically good. Consequently, this leads to a further objection that Varouxakis raises against the conventional view, that whereas a liberal-nationalist must attribute intrinsic value to nationality — Varouxakis uses Miller as his model — Mill's vital consideration only implies that it has instrumental value (2008, §5–6, 10). For example, while defending the variant of the vital

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consideration in "Vindication," Mill asserts that "Nationality is desirable, as a means to the attainment of liberty," without affirming its desirability in its own right (XX, 351).

One counterresponse to this objection is that, whilst Mill's vital consideration highlights the instrumental value of nationality for free (liberal democratic) institutions, his *prima facie* argument for nation-states is noninstrumental. After all, rather than implying that nation-states are a means to freedom of association, the *prima facie* case implies that they constitute an embodiment thereof (compare Miller 2016, 69–70). Of course, this raises the question of whether Mill attributes intrinsic value to liberty. Moreover, answering this question yields a second response to Varouxakis: that the instrumentalism objection fails because it could only succeed by entailing the falsehood that Mill is not a liberal either.

To illustrate, note that Mill's defense of liberalism, including his Harm Principle, is also instrumental qua grounded in utilitarian ethical theory. For example, Mill's ultimate reason for recommending liberal democratic institutions only if a people is narrowly civilized is that only then can such institutions promote "utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of man as a progressive being" (XVIII, 224). In *Utilitarianism* ([1861] X, 203–60), Mill construes utility in terms of a hedonistic conception of happiness according to which:

> pleasure, and freedom from pain, are the only things desirable as ends; and that all desirable things (which are as numerous in the utilitarian as in any other scheme) are desirable either *for the pleasure inherent in themselves*, or as means to the promotion of pleasure and the prevention of pain (X, 210, emphasis added).

Does the italicized line show that Mill can attribute intrinsic value to liberties insofar as they are experienced as pleasurable? If not, the premise that a liberal must attribute intrinsic value to (at least some) liberties entails the false conclusion that Mill is not a liberal, thus undermining the credentials of Varouxakis' necessary condition for categorizing Mill as a nationalist. However, if so, as the term "inherent" strongly suggests (ibid.), the instrumentalism objection is also invalidated because Mill can satisfy the condition by attributing intrinsic value to the pleasurable sympathies on which nationality is based. Indeed, Mill famously declares that "the pleasures of the intellect, *of the feelings* and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, [have] a much higher value *as pleasures* than […] those of mere sensation" (X, 211). Moreover, for reasons consistent with the argument below, within the category of such feelings, Mill's *Autobiography* ([1873] I, 1–290) even declares "*the pleasures of sympathy with human beings*, and the feelings which made the good of others and especially of mankind on a large scale the object of existence," to be the "greatest and surest source of happiness" (I, 143, emphasis added).

Nevertheless, although we think the instrumentalism objection fails, it contains an element of truth worth highlighting. Of the "feeling of nationality" (with its attendant behavioral effects), Mill says it:

> may have been generated by various causes. Sometimes it is the effect of identity of race and descent. Community of language, and community of religion, greatly contribute to it. Geographical limits are one of its causes. But the strongest of all is identity of political antecedents; the possession of a national history, and consequent community of recollections; collective pride and humiliation, pleasure and regret, connected with the same incidents in the past (XIX, 546).

Consequently, although factors such as community of language and religion have an experiential dimension in which pleasure can be taken, Mill's theory implies that insofar as they remain unmanifested in conscious experience, they can only bear instrumental value. Likewise, insofar as theorists of nationality, including non-Millian liberal-nationalists, take things like "identity of race and descent" (ibid.) to constitute rather than cause it, Mill's account will not imply that

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'nationality' can bear intrinsic value when understood in this non-feeling-based sense of the term (consider Varouxakis 2008, §10).[10]

6. Mill as an ethical cosmopolitan

Mill suggests that none of the potential causes of nationality listed above "are either indispensable, or necessarily sufficient by themselves," noting that "Switzerland has a strong sentiment of nationality, though the cantons are of different races, different languages, and different religions" (XIX, 546; Beaumont 2023, 1203–6; Waldron 2009, 169; cf. Tamir 1993, 128; Wieldand 2001, 228). Since some contending theories of nationality categorize Switzerland as multinational (Dardanelli and Stojanović 2011, 361), and Mill qualifies his vital consideration by positing conditions in which multinational states may become liberty-compatible by morphing into mononational ones (XIX, 549–51; see also Coakley 2018, 254–5),[11] one can see how a liberal-multinationalist interpretation could be motivated. For example, drawing on Varouxakis' objections to the conventional view, Rosario López argues that "Mill does not rule out the possibility of a multinational state, as we would call it today" (2014, 114–5). However, since this is not Varouxakis' position, we will consider whether his cosmopolitan patriot interpretation (implicitly) aligns Mill with liberal-postnationalism instead.

The roots of Varouxakis' interpretation lie in the hedonistic axiology of Mill's utilitarian ethical theory.[12] For any given pair of possible or actual states of the world, this axiology implies that the better state is that which contains greater "general happiness, looked upon as composed of as many different units as there are persons, all equal in value except as far as the amount of the happiness itself differs" (XV, 762). By abstracting away from both the identities of these units and their relations to each other,[13] this axiology commits its adherents to acknowledge that one possible or actual state of the world could be better than another even though they, or other people towards whom they are sympathetically partial, would be better off in the latter. Developing this axiological "conception of our own happiness as a unit, neither more nor less valuable than that of another" (XV, 762), into an action-guiding ethics, Mill states his Utility Principle thus: "actions are right in proportion as they tend to promote happiness, wrong as they tend to produce the reverse of happiness" (X, 210). However, he also declares it the equivalent, "in Christian language," of "the doctrine of loving one's neighbour as oneself, this being of course understood not of the feeling or sentiment of love, but of perfect ethical impartiality between the two" (XV, 762).

The preceding indicates that Mill's ethical theory is fundamentally cosmopolitan at the level of its basic axioms and first principles (Varouxakis 2002, 117–8; 2008, §3). After all, it implies that, *ceteris paribus*, the *best* acts are those that maximize the general happiness across space and time, irrespective of how particular individuals or groups (including tribes or nations), towards whom the agents performing these actions are sympathetically partial, are affected by them. In conjunction with Mill's conception of historical progress, this ethical theory indicates why the emergence of (non-vulgar) national sympathy is likely to motivate individuals to engage in ethically better acts than if they were entirely selfish. However, it also raises the possibility that they would be more likely to act as a purely impartial spectator would bid them if their sympathies for foreigners were raised to the *same* level as those felt for conationals.

This is extremely significant because, given Mill's definition of "nationality," a world of truly *impartial* cosmopolitan sympathy would be a world in which nationality is transcended. After all, even if it were a world in which certain linguistic, cultural, religious, or ethnic groups continued to (1) cooperate and commune among themselves more than with others; and (2) engage in self-determination separately in distinct sovereign states; *ex hypothesi*, this would not be because their members have *greater* sympathy for each other than for members of other groups, so Mill's Partiality Condition would no longer be satisfied. Moreover, with nationality transcended through an expansion of sympathies, the reasoning underpinning Mill's vital consideration would no longer

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indicate that mononational states are necessary for liberal democratic institutions to function; it would be a world in which the liberal-postnationalist thesis is true instead.

As we will see (Section 7), when Varouxakis examines the politico-theoretical implications of Mill's ethical cosmopolitanism, he does not frame them in terms of a post-national terminology, so it is difficult to judge whether his cosmopolitan patriotism interpretation is intended to go that far. However, we submit that Varouxakis' cosmopolitan patriot interpretation would need to do so in order to compete with the liberal-nationalist interpretation rather than collapse into the most plausible version thereof. After all, to return to the Marx analogy, the best reason for not categorizing him as pro-capitalist, despite his belief in capitalism's progressive historical role, is his belief that it will be transcended by a more enlightened communist alternative (Marx and Engels 2002, 226–33, 238–44). Indeed, as we will also see, one ambiguity in Varouxakis' position is whether it implies that Mill treats cosmopolitan patriotism as a final ideal or as a mere improvement on vulgar nationalism that could and should ultimately be transcended in turn.

One passage that Varouxakis points to in Mill's "Utility of Religion" ([1874] X, 403–28), which might suggest that Mill's ethical cosmopolitanism translates into such a *post-national* political cosmopolitanism, concerns an "exalted morality" that could emerge in the future. Labeling this a "religion of humanity," Mill observes that:

> When we consider how ardent a sentiment, in favourable circumstances of education, the love of country has become, we cannot judge it impossible that the love of that larger country, the world, may be nursed into similar strength, both as a source of elevated emotion and as a principle of duty (X, 421; Varouxakis 2002, 114–5; 2008, §23).

However, to show why it would be too tenuous to base a cosmopolitan post-nationalist reading on this passage, three key points can be made. First, the claim that this level of progress is "not impossible" does not entail that it is either likely or imminent (cf. Marx's attitude to communism). Second, the claim that such cosmopolitan sympathies could be "nursed into *similar* strength" to national ones (X, 421, emphasis added) does not entail that it would thereby equal them in the way transcendence would require. Mill's *prima facie* case for nation-states, along with his Partiality Condition, pertains more to a prerogative to prioritize conationals in various ways than to a duty to do so, even if the forms of intranational authority and cooperation this generates produce special duties of reciprocity in the process (XVIII, 276; see also Miller 1995, 59). However, as a matter of logic, the claim that people's cosmopolitan duties extend far beyond anything recognized today (let alone Mill's time) is compatible with the claim that people's special duties to co-nationals extend even further, *ceteris paribus*. Consequently, even showing that Mill's conception of a realistic utopia entails levels of cosmopolitan solidarity that we can barely imagine would not suffice to show that it has a post-national character.

Finally, even if the preceding points were invalid, and hence Mill could be read as offering an unambiguous description of a future transcendence of nationality, the passage does not envisage *all* people cultivating sympathies to that degree. For example, when answering the question from whence such a "morality grounded on large and wise views of the good of the whole" would "derive its power," he distinguishes between the "superior natures," for whom the answer is "sympathy and benevolence and the passion for ideal excellence," and "the inferior," for whom the answer is "the same feelings cultivated *up to the measure of their capacity*, with the superadded force of shame" (X, 421, emphasis added). Consequently, even if Mill were envisaging the superior natures transcending nationality when sympathizing at full capacity, it would not follow that he is envisaging the inferior mass of humanity achieving the same level of broad civilization or moral enlightenment. Mill is certainly optimistic enough to believe that all could cultivate "feelings" for the "entire life of the human race" (X, 420; Varouxakis 2002, 114–5), but that would not necessarily suffice for a post-national future, as national partialities could remain.

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Of course, the obvious counter-objection is that the preceding is irrelevant because the ethical impartiality built into the Utility Principle suffices to imply that national partialities are wrong, and hence ought to be transcended. This is best refuted with direct reference to Varouxakis' discussion of the political dimension of Mill's cosmopolitan patriotism. However, the foundation of a response can be laid here by explaining the place of morality within Mill's theory of practical reasoning, which his *System of Logic* labels the "Art of Life" ([1843–1872] VIII, 641–952, 949).

There, Mill writes that "the general principle to which all rules of practice ought to conform" is "that of conduciveness to the happiness of mankind,"[14] but that the sub-principles and rules can be divided into "three departments." His first department, "Morality," is conceived as only one of the three because it construes "the Right" (VIII, 949) narrowly in terms of rules to which one must adhere to avoid blameworthiness or wrongdoing. According to Mill, in the least serious cases, the sanctions for the violation of such rules can be administered by the guilt of the agent's conscience alone. In more serious cases of wrongdoing — especially those constituting injustice, conceived as violations of someone else's rights — the sanctions include the superaddition of expressions of condemnation or blame by others. Finally, in the most serious cases of injustice, they include the superaddition of legal sanctions (X, 246). As Mill puts it, while linking this narrow conception of morality to the Harm Principle, in summary form: "As a rule of conduct, to be enforced by moral sanctions, we think no more should be attempted than to prevent people from doing harm to others, or omitting to do such good as they have undertaken" (X, 339).

The second department, "Prudence or Policy," concerns "the Expedient": the careful and appropriate calibration of means to ends, including but not limited to those pertaining to self-interest, bearing in mind Mill's reservations about crude or vulgar conceptions of egoism highlighted above. Finally, the third department, "Aesthetics," concerns "the Beautiful or Noble, in human conduct and works" (VIII, 949; see also Varouxakis 2013, 13). This concerns the realization of ideals of human virtue and excellence in which an agent can take legitimate pride, and which may warrant praise and admiration from others. However, these rules are supererogatory from the perspective of the first department, as failing to live up to them does not constitute (blameworthy) wrongdoing (X, 246).

Mill's recognition of a category of actions or ways of life that may be ethically optimal (from an impartial perspective) but morally supererogatory entails that the sub-optimality of a world of nation-states would be insufficient to make national partialities wrong or unjust. However, in "Auguste Comte and Positivism" ([1865] X, 261–368), Mill goes even further. For example, while one might think his conception of ethical impartiality entails it is optimal for each human being to devote themselves to utility maximization alone, cultivating their lives "into a single system of means" to that "single end," that is not his view. Instead, he indicates "that mankind, who after all are made up of single human beings," are more likely to "obtain a greater sum of happiness when each pursues his own, under the rules and conditions required by the good of the rest, than when each makes the good of the rest his only object" (X, 337). In this way, Mill reconciles the perspective of ethical impartiality with the individual pursuit of "personal enjoyments" deriving from "egoistic propensities" (X, 339).

Indeed, rather than condemning such propensities, Mill's vision of the optimal scenario involves everyone "cultivating the habitual wish to share them with others, and with all others, and scorning to desire anything for oneself which is incapable of being so shared" (X, 339). In the case of personal enjoyments taken in national solidarity, this aligns with Mill's geographical hindrances caveat to his *prima facie* case for nation-states; there is nothing wrong with people seeking nation-states in principle, but two nations may still have to forgo states of their own when they need to accommodate each other by sharing the same territory. Moreover, it is self-evident why the prospects of performing a successful liberty-compatible national fusion in such a scenario, as opposed to having to resort to paternal despotism to hold the state together, could hinge on how far cosmopolitan sympathies have been cultivated.[15] However, of the "habitual wish," Mill also declares: "There is only one passion or inclination which is permanently incompatible with this condition—the love of

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domination, or superiority, for its own sake; which implies, and is grounded on, the equivalent depression of other people" (X, 339). This implies that there is no necessary incompatibility between non-vulgar national partialities and a realistically optimal world from an impartial point of view. After all, the non-vulgar partialities that attend a people's relish for their own national life do not entail a will for domination or superiority for its own sake. Moreover, they are compatible with the nation enthusiastically sharing the fruits of that life — whether these be cultural, intellectual, technological, economic, and so on — with other nations while refraining from precluding them from producing fruits of their own.

7. Mill as a political cosmopolitan

The discussion of Mill's "Religion of Humanity" above (X, 421) concerned a scenario in which people's cosmopolitan sympathies *are running at full capacity*. But what are the political implications of Mill's ethical cosmopolitanism for a nation in which people's cosmopolitan sympathies are less developed? Varouxakis' answer builds on Mill's observation that self-interest and pride can lead people to act as morality properly understood requires or authentic supererogatory ideals commend, without being motivated by, or even recognizing, those standards (X, 184–5; Varouxakis 2002, 113–4). For example, in the case of pride, someone might act consistently with an authentic ideal less because they care for excellence for its own sake — and thereby making themselves *worthy* of pride — than because vanity drives them to seek the admiration of others. Similarly, someone committed to an inauthentic ideal, such as conformity to nationality in the vulgar sense, might nevertheless act consistently with an authentic ideal when their requirements happen to overlap.

Drawing upon this observation, Varouxakis describes Mill's cosmopolitan patriot position as follows:

> If individuals could not be induced to pursue the good of the whole of mankind directly, then one way to convince them to act in the interests of mankind is to give them incentives they might be more amenable to. Now, national pride being, in Mill's time (and, it seems, ours) incomparably more likely to serve as an incentive for a much greater number of individuals than love of that greater country, the world (which it was Mill's ultimate aim should become the feeling inculcated in everybody eventually), Mill proposed – and, especially, practised – strategies of using that more limited selfless incentive to promote the good of humanity (2002, 123).

Here, the second bracketed qualification could be read as supporting the post-nationalist interpretation rejected above by implying that (i) Mill only takes cosmopolitan patriotism to be a strategy for a nonideal world, because (ii) its patriotic component would drop out of the picture in an ideal one. However, supposing that Varouxakis does not think Mill envisages cosmopolitan patriotism eventually becoming defunct, there are two further variants of the position that Varouxakis could be attributing to him.

According to the more pessimistic and manipulative version, which we will term the *cosmopolitans-among-patriots* interpretation, Mill thinks that the best that can be hoped for is a world containing only a few committed non-patriot moral cosmopolitans, such as himself. Furthermore, their political imperative is to appeal to the vanity and vulgar nationalism of others in order to align their patriotism with objective moral duties and supererogatory ideals of excellence to which they would otherwise lack a commitment. For example, recall Mill's defense in "Vindication" of military counter-intervention in Europe, in the name of the protection clause, to assist narrowly civilized liberal nations subject to military intervention by foreign despots. When Mill rearticulates that defense in "Non-Intervention," emphasizing that it would make his countrymen "the idol of the friends of freedom throughout Europe," he could be read as appealing to their national vanity. Likewise, when he says that the "prize" at stake is "too glorious not to be

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snatched sooner or later by some free country," he could be read as appealing to their vulgar nationality, by warning that failure to act could enable another country to snatch the glory instead (XXI, 124).

This cosmopolitans-among-patriots interpretation is far too pessimistic to ground the liberal post-nationalist interpretation. However, Varouxakis clearly and correctly takes Mill to be far more optimistic than this:

> [Mill encourages] his fellow countrymen […] to take pride in the right things and feel shame when their country was doing the wrong things – right or wrong *from the point of view of* the welfare, "civilization" and "improvement" of mankind as a whole (2008 §3, emphasis added).

Here, the idea seems to be that eventually (almost) everyone will be able to adopt this point of view, thereby rendering them both cosmopolitans and (non-vulgar) patriots at once. Indeed, in the passage from "Non-Intervention" just cited, Mill simultaneously makes a higher-brow appeal to the supererogatory ideal of "heroism" for its own sake (XXI, 124), thereby suggesting that there are already people with cosmopolitan ears to hear him.

A similar point applies to a speech Mill made to parliament in 1867 while serving as the Liberal MP for Westminster (1865–8). Setting out to defend the traditional British practice of targeting the "commerce of our enemies" in times of war, Mill informed his audience that he would do so without appealing to "British patriotism" or "even a tinge of nationality" by invoking only "the broadest cosmopolitan and humanitarian principles" (XXVIII, 223; Varouxakis 2013: 14). Mill's adoption of this approach could be taken as anticipating a broadly civilized world in which patriotism and nationality have no legitimate place in ethical discourse. However, rather than foregoing national partiality altogether, Mill's approach seems to be designed to prove that he can vindicate Britain's interest in recourse to such naval tactics without "claim[ing] anything for my country which" would "be a damage and an injury to the common interests of civilisation and of mankind" (XXVIII, 223; see also Varouxakis 2008, §34; Beaumont 2024, 279–80). Moreover, this interpretation, which we label the (non-vulgar) *patriots-as-cosmopolitans* position, aligns closely with Mill's defense of protective counter-intervention in "Non-Intervention." After all, qualifying his appeal to the supererogatory ideal of "heroism" for its own sake, Mill also warns of excessively dangerous cases in which it would be imprudent to counter-intervene against a despotic aggressor, given the "regard which *every* nation is bound to pay to *its own* safety" (XXI, 124, emphasis added; Beaumont 2024, 282–4). This posits a level of partial national self-regard that is not merely morally permissible but optimal.

Nevertheless, the most crucial point is that this second version of the cosmopolitan patriot interpretation does not support the liberal-postnationalist interpretation either. For example, considering how Mill would respond to the objection that the "universality" underpinning political cosmopolitanism entails "detachment from the bonds, commitments, and affiliations that constrain ordinary nation-bound lives," thus rendering his view "a luxuriously free-floating view from above,"[16] Varouxakis claims that:

> Mill's was a different conception of cosmopolitanism, for it tried to orientate the "national mind" itself to a cosmopolitan outlook, rather than to detach individuals from their nation-bound lives. Mill wanted to use the nation and the ties it generated in the interests of "the improvement of mankind" (2002, 123).

However, if this is the interpretation Varouxakis ultimately settles on, absent the uncharitable assumption that liberal-nationalism is intrinsically vulgar (critiqued by Tamir 1993, 79; Gustavsson and Miller 2020, 1–2), it is unclear why it does not tie Mill to the tradition. Indeed, since Mill's qualified defense of protective counter-intervention is an ethical argument for nations to work together to uphold each other's right to self-determination (compare Tamir 1993, 91–3), it seems

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equally apt to characterize it as a *nationalist-as-cosmopolitan* view, or simply *cosmopolitan nationalism* as such. Consequently, although Varouxakis provides a compelling case that Mill is a cosmopolitan patriot — much of which our interpretation can supplement — we conclude that it serves less to undermine the conventional view than to highlight the most nuanced way to defend it.

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Notes

1 References to Mill's works are to the *Collected Works of John Stuart Mill* (1963–1991), cited by volume and page number.
2 Mill addresses federalism in Chapter 17 of *CRG* (XIX, 553–61).
3 For an alternative reconstruction of the *prima facie* case that does not structure it through the Harm Principle, see Benner (2012, 724–5).
4 A strong desire for independence would not suffice for Mill's "savage tribe" to satisfy his Self-Determination Condition, because his definition requires this desire to be caused by the common sympathies that, on his view, are either absent (binary perspective) or minimal (scalar perspective).
5 The year of its nationalization by the British government.
6 For a liberal-nationalist who argues that this concern is no longer valid, see Tamir (1993, 163–5).
7 We consider a more obvious reason in Section 6.
8 Varouxakis (1997, 70–5) discusses whether "Vindication" endorses a more radical interventionist position than Lamartine's.
9 Beaumont (2023) elucidates the definition's causal character in light of Mill's philosophy of social science.
10 For discussion of Mill's views on race, see Varouxakis (2002, 38–52).
11 For discussion of whether Mill endorses coercive assimilation as a means to that end, see Beaumont (2022).
12 Several of the references to Mill cited in this paragraph are quoted by Skorupski (1989, 317–20).
13 Miller argues against grounding liberal-nationalism in this kind of axiology (1995, 49–65). See also Tamir (2019, 145).
14 Mill then transcends a merely human cosmopolitanism by extending it to include "all sentient beings" (ibid.).
15 For Mill, the greatest obstacle to fusion arises when the two nations are of "equivalent strength," an obstacle he considers insurmountable "*in the present state of civilization*" (XIX, 548, emphasis added).
16 A readily understandable criticism of Mill's axiology.

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