

# Edmund burke and john stuart mill history essay



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This essay will look at Edmund Burke and Stuart Mill's approach for justification for intervention in another state, this essay will also investigate if their approaches for just or unjust war undermine the liberal credentials of the state. Both Burke and Mill political thinker could be described as Burke to be a critic and Mill as defender of the empire. Daniel and Kohn (2006: 192) argue that Burke embrace the notion of anti-empire, He see the British rule in India as an evil, nevertheless, for Burke, imperialism could be justifiable when both states have common views and culture, Burke also views France revolution as the danger to Britain, and support Britain's intervention in France, on the other hand, Mill believe in human progress, and the human progress goes hand by hand with a civilized society. Mill (Daniel & Kohn 2006: 192) as an employee of East India Company defended British rule in India, whereas, Burke opposed the British rule in India and criticised the abuses of the East India Company in India.

Mill's (Daniel and Kohn 2006: 193) social, political writings at the time when he was serving for East India Company, reveals that Mill is a tolerant Imperialist, and he believed that the East India's Company involvement in Indian society is a sign of progress that revealed liberal values and protects legal rights. Mill praised the development in India's health care system, Railway system and educational institutions that were made possible through collaboration with Indians in East India Company. Mill views intervention in India just, Mill believe that the protections of legal rights, the respect and toleration of different views points in country like India with massive population, and the need for commercial society that can cope with the society's demand; In all these cases Mill believes it's just to intervene

and support the high level of civilization. Mill ( Tunick 2006: 588) sees India as uncivilized society and assumes that Indians have little experience in how to govern and there is a need for correction and completion by enlightened guides. Mill ( Brown, Nardin & Rengger 2008: 487) argues that it's the duty of the civilized nations to support civilization in other states, where their independence are evil or despotism regime. According to Mill (Daniel & Kohn 2006: 192) this supports imperialism and also protects liberal values, Mill believes that liberal values applies to only civilized societies, on other hand, Mill argues that " to go to war for an idea if the war is aggressive, not defensive is as criminal as to go to war for territory or revenue" ( Brown, Nardin & Rengger 2008: 486). Mill has been widely criticised for the way he approaches imperialism, which undermines the liberal and cultural values the colonized state. Mill ( Tunick 2006: 586) has also been criticized for ethnocentrically seeking to impose British liberal values to the rest of the world, this would also influence British culture assimilation, furthermore, Parekh ( Tunick 2006: 587) view Mill's assumption that some cultures are superior to others, and by encouraging them for liberal diversity; Parekh's argued that this could be the intolerant of non liberal ways of life. Some of Mill's critics ( Tunick 2006: 587) argued that though motivating and forcing British liberal values on colonies could undermine individuals legal right and could damage their liberal credentials. Furthermore, Mill support the British raj in India to civilize Indian society, by using soft or hard power encouraging people on to how to live, without realising the validity of different conceptions. Tunick (2006: 588) argued that Mill shall not assume that civilization will always make all humans happy. On the other hand, Burke (Daniel and Kohn 2006: 193) argue that the abusive distortions of

civilization, racial superiority and assumption of cultural impoverishment by which Britain has expanded its empire and commercial revenue. It is arguable that the expansion of British Empire through racial superiority and distortions of civilization could undermine the liberal values of colonies. Burke could be classified as anti-imperialist political thinker of the eighteenth century, but Burke sees imperialism from a different prospective. Burke (Daniel and Kohn 2006: 194) argued that its right to intervene into France revolution and this is because France's revolutionary war may shatter the European balance of power. Burke also believed that France revolutionary war was a threat to national interest of Britain and to all other European states, and the crusade against revolution in France could be just and necessary war ( Armitage 2002: 627), therefore, Burke argued that the intervention against France would be a " prudent precaution" (Daniel and Kohn 2006: 194).

On the issues of the Slavery; Burke accepted slavery for economic purpose. Burke also concluded that slaves shall be treated less brutally and more humanly, Burke argued that if slaves are treated well humanly; could be more productive. Burke (Daniel and Kohn 2006: 194) view slavery as justifiable by economic consideration. On the other hand, Mill sees barbarous societies not to be left alone and misgovern themselves. According to Brown, Nardin & Rengger( 2008: 488) civilized nations cannot tolerate the barbarous neighbours. And there is barbarous governments, it often cannot defence itself. Therefore, Mill argues that it's the responsibility of civilized nations such Britain to rule these barbarian societies despotically, this is because it brings benefits of higher civilization to these societies and as well as it

protects the threat of violence in neighbour states. Mill (1874: 252) argued that “ the only moral laws for the relation between a civilized and barbarous government are the universal rule of morality between man and man”, therefore, Barbarians have no right as a nation. In cases such as in Asia and Africa societies were barbarian and uncivilized, in these cases Britain provided despotism rule, whereas in colonies such as Australia, New Zealand and Canada, which had European race who were at the same stage of civilization as compare to Britain. These societies were capable of governing themselves. Mill (Sullivan 1983: 606) supported the home rule for them; that these white colonies shall be in control of their internal affairs and could be subject to control of England only in their foreign affairs. Or in other words Britain was the in charge of protecting these colonies from foreign attacks. In this case Mill sees these colonies from a different perspective than the colonies in Asia and Africa. This is because these white settlers were at the same level of civilization as Britain and their dependent status should be continue as long as they consented.( Sullivan 1983: 606). Mill argues that Britain provided security and productivity to these colonies and this also encourage businesses to invest in these colonies and enables businesses to make profit into some extend as well as contribute to the growth of colony. On the other hand, colonies would then be able to export cheap food materials to Britain, this will also decline the unemployment and will make benefit both the colony and the empire. According Sullivan (1983: 607) Mill applied this economic argument for imperialism in white settlers’ colonies. As the level of civilization is high in these colonies could have the potential to export materials to Britain. Mill did not expect the same from the Asian and African colonies; this is because of their low level of civilization. Mill did

expect Britain to focus more on the white settlers colonies for investment and trade, rather than Asia or Africa, nevertheless, Mill also argue that uncivilized colonies also contributed to Britain's economic interest through cheap agricultural products. Mill argues that Britain had to rely more heavily on foreign trade and investment, According to Sullivan (1983: 607) Mill Argues that an advanced capitalist nation, England suffered from a surplus of population and capital. Mill reacted against the mercantilists view that England shall maintain colonies in order to the colonies trade, in opposition the liberals argue that Britain has not benefited from the colonial trade monopoly, however, Mill (Sullivan 1983: 608) rejected the liberals views on economic benefits and argued that Britain's economic and political interest were best served on the expansion of its empire.

According to Brown, Nardin & Rengger (2008: 489) Mill has compared the colony as to a country even not existed, Mill argues that a government which ask for the needs of foreign troops to support the law and order in its society; is one which ought to not exist, Even if the assistant given to it by foreign powers is hardly ever anything but one despotism with another. Mill view is relevant to the Russian invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. On the other hand, Mill ( Sullivan 1983: 605) argued that the emerging mid nineteenth century that Britain was the world's leading power; was threatened by internal capitalist instability and by surplus population and capital. This is how Mill comes to the conclusion that imperialism is the solutions for all these economic and political problems, and the economic motives were possible only because Britain governed these countries and provided social order and security necessary for investment and productions. Furthermore, these

different types of colonies, white settlers and colonies in Asia and Africa had to be governed in different ways depending on the stage of civilization they have reached.

**According to Tunick (2006: 592) Mill want Britain to civilize India and other colonies similar, Mill does not entail forced assimilation, “ not should the despotism it involves deny the right of use of arbitrarily against India.” At a one stage Mill cannot be criticise for how Mill tolerates even illiberal practices of Indians and recognize the importance they play in their society, cause Mill is facing different forms of life from the European one, this is how different the Indian religion and tradition are or the lack of humanity and the low level of civilization, but still Mill support the British imperialism, defends toleration, liberty and experiment in living.**

Ultimately, Mill justified imperialism on grounds that it served Britain's economic and cultural and political interest, all thought Mill is not in favour of harsh treatment of colonies, but has been criticised for the liberal values of colonies. On the other hand, Burke is see war justifiable, and Burke argue that it is just to intervene in civil was states and in particular these states should have in common, such as culture or religion, Burke saw France revolutionary war as threat to whole Europe and supported the intervention in France as just. According to Brown, Nardin & Rengger (2008: 298) Burke argues that “ men are never in a state of total independent of each other.

According to Sparks and Isaac (2004: 199) the central mill conception of human nature not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly

the work prescribed for it but a tree which grow and develop itself on all sides.