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"FEELINGS OF ALARM": CONSERVATIVE CRITICISM OF THE PRINCIPLE OF NATIONALITY IN MID-VICTORIAN BRITAIN*

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This article is an account of the mid-Victorian conservative reaction to the increasing prominence of the notion of nationality in British debates on European affairs. Conservatives perceived the idea of nationality as a threat, which they tried to deflect by deploying three sets of arguments. They attempted to marginalize the notion by reframing nationality as neither a valuable nor a fundamental aspect of political life; they argued that the sentiment of nationality increased aggression in international affairs and was a threat to the European order; and they argued that nationality was often incompatible with constitutional liberty and a proper patriotism, thereby presenting liberals' support for nationality as inconsistent with their own values. This conservative rejection and problematization of nationality in mid-Victorian Britain has been absent from existing scholarly work, which has focused on the qualified acceptance of the notion by Victorian liberals and Edwardian conservatives.

The notion of nationality featured prominently in mid-Victorian British debates on international affairs, as many British liberals and radicals felt involved with those peoples struggling for freedom under autocratic Continental governments.[1] After 1848, and especially with the unification of Italy from 1858 to 1861, the concept of nationality gained such salience in commentary on European affairs that even authors unsympathetic to the notion needed to react, to reckon with its ubiquity in debate. Conservative British commentators saw the idea of

* This research was partially supported by a scholarship from Queen Mary, University of London. The author is grateful to Georgios Varouxakis, the editors and two anonymous reviewers for their comments and suggestions.

1 Christopher Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism: University Liberals and the Challenge of Democracy 1860–86* (London, 1976); and Christopher Kent, *Brains and Numbers: Elitism, Comtism, and Democracy in Mid-Victorian England* (Toronto, 1978).

nationality as a clear threat, and in reaction to liberal and radical enthusiasm they deployed a range of arguments to discredit the notion.

This article is connected to previous work on nationality and patriotism in Victorian Britain, which has touched on the use of these concepts by Disraeli and by late Victorian conservatives.[2] What these works have omitted, however, is the mid-Victorian conservative reaction to the initial ascendancy of the notion of nationality.[3] With this the scholarship has missed a major problematization of nationality in British political thought. Liberal Victorians generally conflated a sense of nationality with patriotism, which the established scholarship has consequently emphasized or assumed as a feature of mid-Victorian political thought.[4] Conservatives, in their turn, came to affirm a sense of organic nationality and of the English national character during the late Victorian and Edwardian eras.[5] The perception which arises of nationality in British thought is of a qualified acceptance, with initially liberals and later conservatives mostly evincing a self-assured incorporation of nationality into their world views, where it was placed in a position subordinate to and potentially generative of liberty and patriotism.[6] But this is only part of the picture. This article argues that British political thought displayed a wider range of reactions, more sceptical and anxious, to the increasing salience of the notion of nationality. In particular, it shows how mid-Victorian conservatives problematized the idea of nationality,

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2 See e.g. E. H. H. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism: The Politics, Economics and Ideology of the British Conservative Party, 1880–1914* (London, 1995); Peter Mandler, *The English National Character: The History of an Idea from Edmund Burke to Tony Blair* (New Haven, 2006); Jon Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830–1886* (Cambridge, 2006); Roberto Romani, *National Character and Public Spirit in Britain and France, 1750–1914* (Cambridge, 2002); as well as the additional literature referenced throughout the article.

3 See, for a brief allusion, however, Geoffrey Hicks, *Peace, War and Party Politics: The Conservatives and Europe 1846–59* (Manchester, 2007), 209.

4 See e.g. Georgios Varouxakis, "'Patriotism,' 'Cosmopolitanism' and 'Humanity' in Victorian Political Thought," *European Journal of Political Theory*, 5/1 (2006), 100–18; and Jon Parry, "Patriotism," in David Craig and James Thompson, eds., *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (London, 2013), 69–92, at 71, 78, 88. Lord Acton was an acknowledged exception to this rule, but Casper Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism, 1880–1930: making progress?* (Manchester, 2009), 177–8, characterizes his as a "Continental mind."

5 H. S. Jones, *Victorian Political Thought* (Basingstoke, 2000), 76–7; Mandler, *The English National Character*, 60, 126, 132.

6 Casper Sylvest, "James Bryce and the Two Faces of Nationalism," in Ian Hall and Lisa Hill, eds., *British International Thought from Hobbes to Namier* (New York: 2009), 161–79, notes how this liberal assurance in the "virtues of the principle of nationality" waned in the early twentieth century.

warning their compatriots of its dangers to the peace and order of Europe, and to the liberty and patriotism of its peoples.

This important strand of mid-Victorian thought on international affairs has remained obscured for various reasons. The specialist literature on Victorian international political thought has overwhelmingly focused on liberal and radical perspectives, conservatives having been overlooked.[7] At the same time, general accounts of mid-Victorian political debate have a tendency to study Disraeli and assume that he summed up the conservative position. Disraeli was not a particularly representative figure, however, as Geoffrey Hicks and others have argued persuasively.[8] Moreover, in agreement with E. H. H. Green this article advocates "the importance of the 'middlebrow' in Conservative thought," rather than a canon of exceptional individuals.[9] The opinions investigated here are consequently those of the conservative educated classes, as represented in the major conservative periodicals of the time.[10] These periodicals themselves have been neglected as a venue for political theorizing, treated instead as a location for partisan political posturing. While pre-eminent conservative periodicals such as the *Quarterly Review* and *Blackwood's Magazine* certainly had a partisan editorial policy, they also consistently published high-calibre reflective articles which helped conservatives formulate their reactions to political developments.[11]

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7 See e.g. Duncan Bell, ed., *Victorian Visions of Global Order* (Cambridge, 2007); Duncan Bell and Casper Sylvest, "International Society in Victorian Political Thought," *Modern Intellectual History*, 3/2 (2006), 207–38; Michael Fitzpatrick, ed., *Liberal Imperialism in Europe* (London, 2012); Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*; Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*; and Varouxakis, "'Patriotism,' 'Cosmopolitanism' and 'Humanity'." For a similar assessment see also Duncan Bell, "Empire and International Relations in Victorian Political Thought," *Historical Journal*, 49/1 (2006), 281–98.

8 Hicks, *Peace, War and Party Politics*; Geoffrey Hicks, ed., *Conservatism and British Foreign Policy, 1820–1920: The Derbys and Their World* (London, 2011).

9 Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism*, 3, 16. For further arguments that the history of political thought should move beyond canonical thinkers see Duncan Bell, "What Is Liberalism?", *Political Theory*, 42/6 (2014), 682–715; Michael Freeden, *Ideologies and Political Theory: A Conceptual Approach* (Oxford, 1996), 119, 348; Edward Keene, *International Political Thought: A Historical Introduction* (London, 2005), 15–16.

10 The opinions represented in these periodicals were not exhaustive of the conservatism of the time—indeed, these aristocratic and middle-class authors explicitly distinguished their conservatism from that of the masses. See e.g. R. Cecil, "Political Lessons of the War," *Quarterly Review*, 130 (Jan. 1871), 256–86, at 272–3; and C. C. Chesney, "Our Panics and Their Remedy," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 23 (April 1871), 449–57, at 450–53. This article does not treat the thought of Whigs or centrist liberals, whose opinions on nationality diverged markedly from the conservative discourse.

11 See the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, as well as Stefan Collini, *Public Moralists: Political Thought and Intellectual Life in Britain 1850–1930* (Oxford, 1991), 51–4; Anna Gambles, *Protection and Politics: Conservative Economic Discourse, 1815–1852* (London,

The composition of the conservative element of educated England changed markedly from the late 1870s onwards, which explains the final reason why the mid-Victorian conservative animosity towards nationality was mostly forgotten. Whereas these *mid-Victorian* conservatives saw nationality as an outside threat, the notion was slowly incorporated in the conservative world view from the 1880s onwards. As explained in the conclusion, the character of British conservatism changed in the 1880s, as a broad set of individualist liberals, generally committed to the principle of nationality, joined its ranks. This shift then fed into a broader change in the conservative view of society, emphasizing first organicism and then an organic nationalism. This new self-understanding of the conservative world view left no room for the memory of an earnestly felt rejection of the notion of nationality in earlier times.[12]

The mid-Victorian conservative reaction to nationality had three parts. First, conservative commentators tried to marginalize the notion by reframing nationality as neither a valuable nor a fundamental aspect of political life. They spoke of the sentiment rather than the principle of nationality, with its referent lying in the imagination rather than in reality; they argued that national sentiment was not the main driving force behind the unifications of Italy and Germany; and they rejected the normative power of the principle of nationality. Second, conservatives identified the notion of nationality as a threat to the European order. Nationality increased aggression in international politics, by undermining the Vienna settlement and legitimizing foreign interventions; by fostering bids for hegemony over Europe; and by undermining the domestic stability of states. Third and finally, conservatives hoped to deflect the threat of nationality by making it an indictment of the liberals' own world view, arguing that nationality was often incompatible with constitutional liberty and a proper patriotism.

Absent from this mid-Victorian conservative repertoire of argument was an invocation of the principle of legitimacy. This principle had never been favoured in Tory foreign policy, with both Castlereagh and Canning rejecting legitimist arguments when they were put forward by Continental powers.[13] It had appeared, however, within the broader conservative movement in the first half of the nineteenth century. The Ultra-Tories of the late 1820s and early 1830s

1999), 10–11, 18; and Walter Houghton, "Periodical Literature and the Articulate Classes," in Joanne Shattock and Michael Wolff, eds., *The Victorian Periodical Press: Samplings and Soundings* (Leicester, 1983), 3–27, at 10–13, 18.

12 The authors studied here never used the term "nationalism," writing only of "nationality." For them, "nationality" was not a neutral concept, and had connotations closer to nationalism than to citizenship. To avoid anachronism, this paper too uses "nationality" throughout.

13 Michael Byrne, *Britain among the European Powers, 1815–65* (London, 1998), 40–43, 126–7.

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had generally taken a legitimist position in foreign affairs.[14] John Croker and Archibald Alison—two major conservative authors of the 1830s and 1840s—had proposed legitimism as a potential locus of stability when reflecting on the 1848 revolutions.[15] By late 1850s, however, there had been a generational shift among conservative commentators. The new set of authors, whose perspectives are discussed in this paper, still favoured the status quo in general and the established power in particular areas of unrest such as Italy and Poland, but legitimism had disappeared as a salient trope together with the previous generation.[16]

REFRAMING AND MARGINALIZING THE NOTION OF NATIONALITY

Marginalizing nationality: nationality as a sentiment of the people

Conservative commentators attempted to marginalize the notion of nationality by downplaying its importance to international affairs. They did so in part by reframing nationality as not a trait of populations, but as a flight of fancy of the masses and of particular classes of persons. Nationality was not part of the core identity of a population; it was merely an idea flitting about certain people's imagination. Conservatives associated the idea of nationality with liberals and their particular perspective on the international sphere. Robert Patterson spoke of the liberals and their "pet principle of nationality," and Robert Cecil characterized "Nationality and Free Trade" as "the doctrines of the Liberal party."[17] Conservatives did not themselves discern a role for nationhood as an empirical fact rather than a notion held and furthered by particular parties—they viewed nationality as an idea, part of a rhetoric, with its referent lying in the imagination rather than in reality.

Most conservative commentators did recognize that the notion of nationality had increasingly gained currency since the end of the Napoleonic wars. Some

[14] Richard Gaunt, "From Country Party to Conservative Party: The Ultra-Tories and Foreign Policy," in Jeremy Black, ed., *The Tory World* (London, 2015), 150–66, at 157, 163.

[15] A. Alison, "The Revolutions in Europe," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 63 (May 1848), 638–52, at 641; J. W. Croker, "The Republic in the King's Coaches," *Quarterly Review*, 88 (March 1851), 416–34, at 434. Conservative commentators generally connected the 1848 revolutions to notions of democracy and class warfare, not to the idea of nationality.

[16] I wish to thank one of the anonymous reviewers for bringing this area of inquiry to my attention.

[17] R. H. Patterson, "The Position of the Ministry," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 95 (May 1864), 638–48, at 647; and Cecil, "Political Lessons of the War," 266. Robert Patterson (1821–86) was an author and editor (of the conservative *Press* and *Globe*) who was close to Disraeli. Robert Cecil (1830–1903), the Marquess of Salisbury from 1868 onwards, would serve as prime minister three times between 1885 and 1902.

of them, however, placed the concept in the realm of art and high culture, rather than of politics and general society. In the conservative periodicals, Italian feelings of local patriotism and nationality were, for instance, discussed primarily in articles dealing with recent Italian cultural output. In this way, conservatives portrayed the sentiment of nationality as involved first of all with the imagination of artists and authors—all the easier, then, to paint the principle of nationality as a delusion, without connection to reality, merely the "visionary vapouring" of idealists.[18]

Conservatives also generally spoke of "the sentiment of nationality," as compared to liberal talk of "the principle of nationality."[19] For liberals the notion denoted first of all an ethical norm and was prescriptive. For conservatives the notion denoted only a certain emotional commitment. They, for instance, characterised of the "idea of German unity" as a "romantic," "poetic notion."[20] By framing nationality as a sentiment emerging from the imagination rather than reality, located in the realm of passion rather than reason, conservative authors hoped to imply that the notion was without legitimacy and without the compelling force enjoyed by the real interests of a country.[21]

Following from this understanding of the sentiment of nationality as a passion, conservatives linked it primarily to the general populace, as opposed to statesmen. Conservatives mostly assumed, with Charles Lever, "that the upper and lower classes of society have nothing in common, and speak each in a different political language."[22] Cecil observed that German authors, in trying to justify the German conquest of the Danish duchies of Schleswig and Holstein, employed two different

[18] J. B. Atkinson, "Italy: Her Nationality or Dependence," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 85 (March 1859), 350–65, at 353–4. See also R. Cecil, "Lord Castlereagh," *Quarterly Review*, 111 (Jan. 1862), 201–38, at 230; F. Hardman, "Notes and Notions from Italy," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 97 (June 1865), 659–74, at 665–6; and J. White, "Italy," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 89 (April 1861), 403–20.

[19] Some conservatives—especially military men—did not discuss the notion of nationality at all. W. G. Hamley (1815–93), an army officer who became a colonel in 1866, did not mention it in any of his six leaders on the Franco-Prussian War for *Blackwood's Magazine*.

[20] R. Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," *Quarterly Review*, 115 (Jan. 1864), 236–87; and G. W. Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," *Quarterly Review*, 129 (Oct. 1870), 293–327. See also Cecil, "Lord Castlereagh," 221–2.

[21] These authors' focus on the centrality of the imagination in constructing nationality is corroborated by modern scholarship, such as Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 2006). Their subsequent suggestion that the imaginative lacked salience, influence and constancy was, however, born of hope more than insight.

[22] C. J. Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 110 (Dec. 1871), 728–33, at 733. C. J. Lever (1806–1872) was appointed vice-consul at La Spezia in 1858 and consul at Trieste in 1867 by successive Conservative governments.

discourses: one aimed at statesmen, focusing on treaty rights and obligations, and one aimed at the people in general, which played on the sentiment of nationality, or what Cecil termed "the language grievance," which "has been kept chiefly for popular use."[23] This characterization had the strong subtext that the former claims could be reasonable—even if they were not in the complex context of the Danish duchies affair—while the latter were merely an emotional appeal, without legitimate purchase in the first place.

While statesmen, in the conservative reading, did not subscribe to the sentiment of nationality, the notion could still influence them in their actions. Statesmen might either try to utilize the sentiment as a means to further their own objectives—as conservatives thought Cavour, Napoleon III and Bismarck did—or they could feel forced to pander to the passion present amongst their people—which conservatives at different times observed among rulers such as Napoleon III and the Tsar Alexander.[24] Conservatives lamented this influence, however; international politics, when properly conducted, would not bother with notions of nationality.

Marginalizing the role of nationality in the unifications of Italy and Germany

In reflecting on the unifications of both Italy and Germany, conservative authors accorded the notion of nationality little influence. They argued that nationality played a role not as a fundamental driving force of events, but merely as a superficial justification for all-too-common schemes of aggrandizement.

As the events of 1859–61 led to the unification of Italy, conservatives at no moment thought that a widespread Italian desire for national unification was propelling these events.[25] There was, indeed, no Italian national community

[23] Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 271, 273. See also L. Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 95 (March 1864), 383–96, at 389–90; R. H. Patterson, "The European Crisis," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 95 (Jan. 1864), 110–32, at 122, 129–30. See, for a similar distinction on Russia's internal debates in 1876–8, A. W. Kinglake and A. Austin, "The Slavonic Menace to Europe," *Quarterly Review*, 149 (April 1880), 518–48, at 526–7.

[24] On Napoleon III see Cecil, "Political Lessons of the War," 263; Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 299; and R. H. Patterson, *The New Revolution or the Napoleonic Policy in Europe* (London, 1860), at 34, 41–51, 94–9. On Bismarck see R. Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," *Quarterly Review*, 129 (Oct. 1870), 540–56, at 546; Cecil, "Political Lessons of the War," 257–8; Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 295; and J. Wilson, "Count Bismarck, Prussia, and Pan-Teutonism," *Quarterly Review*, 130 (Jan. 1871), 71–92, at 80. On the tsar see H. Cowell, "The Prospects in the East," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 120 (Aug. 1876), 245–56, at 250.

[25] When they did discuss the likelihood of unification, they focused on the influence of Italian geography, rather than the desires of its peoples. See Atkinson, "Italy," 352, 363;

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which could spur unification on.[26] Frederick Hardman observed that the Piedmontese supported the war with Austria from deference to their king and possibly a detestation of the Austrians—the people did not understand or care about the notion of Italian independence, let alone unity.[27] In contrast, Matthew Arnold—and with him many other liberals—explicitly argued for the force of Italian nationality, based as it was in the shared history of glorious Rome.[28] George Swayne gently suggested that the appeal of the Roman classical heritage to educated Britons had resulted among them in an imagined vista of Italy "far brighter and more glorious than reality."[29] Most conservatives were less tactful, with, for instance, Joseph Atkinson writing that "we deem Italian nationality, unity, or indeed, political independence, to be among those wild chimeras and alluring phantoms," those "words . . . of delusion," characteristic of demagogues rather than statesmen.[30]

Their different thoughts on the causal force of nationality also led conservatives and liberals to assign a different significance to the treaty of Villafranca, in which

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Cecil, "France and Europe," 11; Forsyth, "Italy," 166–7; Tremenheere, "Napoleonism and Italy," 243–4.

[26] Atkinson, "Italy," 355; W. E. Aytoun, "France and Central Italy," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 87 (Feb. 1860), 245–54, at 250–51, 253; R. Cecil, "France and Europe," *Bentley's Quarterly Review*, 2 (Oct. 1859), 1–32, at 9–10; W. Forsyth, "An Election in France," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 88 (July 1860), 107–21, at 107; Forsyth , "Italy," *Quarterly Review*, 109 (Jan. 1861), 133–77, at 135; C. J. Lever, "Italian Brigandage," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 93 (May 1863), 576–85, at 583; Lever , "A Glance at the Italy of Cavour," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 93 (June 1863), 653–67, at 657; Lever , "Why Has Not Italy Done More?", *Blackwood's Magazine*, 93 (July 1863), 54–64, at 54, 62; L. Oliphant, "Switzerland and French Annexation," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 87 (May 1860), 635–50, at 636–8, 641, 647; R. H. Patterson, "Foreign Affairs and Disarmament," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 86 (Sept. 1859), 375–90, at 376–7; G. C. Swayne, "Greece and Italy," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 80 (July 1856), 77–91, at 88–9; and J. H. Tremenheere, "Napoleonism and Italy," *North British Review*, 31 (Aug. 1859), 243–68, at 244, 259–61.

[27] F. Hardman, "Tidings from Turin," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 85 (May 1859), 612–25, at 621. F. Hardman (1814–74) was a former military officer, and foreign correspondent for *The Times*.

[28] M. Arnold, *England and the Italian Question* (London, 1859), 4, 11–17. J. S. Mill similarly wrote of "the attempts of Italians to *re-constitute* an Italy" (emphasis added): J. S. Mill, "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848," in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, ed. F. E. L. Priestly and J. M. Robson, 33 vols. (Toronto 1963–1991), 20: 317–63, at 348.

[29] Swayne, "Greece and Italy," 77. G. C. Swayne (1818–92) had been assistant master of Harrow from 1851 to 1855 and worked as curate, chaplain and essayist.

[30] Atkinson, "Italy," 350–51; see also 353–4, 361, 365; Cecil, "Lord Castlereagh," 221–2, 229–30; Forsyth, "Italy," 147. J. B. Atkinson (1822–86) frequently wrote on art and aesthetics for *Blackwood's*.

France, without consulting its ally Piedmont, signed a ceasefire with Austria in which the latter retained some of its territories in Italy. Both conservatives and liberals thought that with Villafranca Napoleon III had effectively distanced himself from the realization of independence for Italy. Unlike conservatives, liberals took this as a reason to increase their support for the Italian cause. Support for Italy no longer implied support for France, and could thus be all the more wholeheartedly given.[31] For liberals Italian events had their own impetus, based on the ideals of Italian independence and national unity.[32] For conservatives, though, the liberals' ethical ideals did not reflect a second impetus to events, but rather a mere sham structure of justification for expansionist actions. Events such as Piedmont's annexation of the central Italian provinces and its cession of Savoy and Nice were driven not by national sentiment but by Cavour's and Napoleon III's desire for aggrandizement.[33] Villafranca had not, as for the liberals, decoupled an admirable movement based on moral ideals from Napoleon III's initiatives of doubtful morality, but had rather shown the irrelevance of the moral ideal of the principle of nationality to the substance of international politics.

Similarly, in making sense of the unification of Germany from 1864 to 1871 conservatives envisaged only a minor role for the sentiment of nationality. Liberals regarded these events as revolving around the German "national cause," the creation of "the unified nation for which Germans had yearned," part of the broader *telos* of the international sphere.[34] Conservatives, in contrast, did not think that unification had been propelled by the sentiment of nationality. Political

31 Derek Beales, *England and Italy 1859–60* (London, 1961), 111; Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, 228. For the example of J. S. Mill see Georgios Varouxakis, *Liberty Abroad: J. S. Mill on International Relations* (Cambridge, 2013), 86–9.

32 See e.g. Arnold, *England and the Italian Question*, 4–11.

33 Lever presented this view even in his series of retrospective articles, "Italian Brigandage," 580–81, 583; "A Glance at the Italy of Cavour," 653, 657, 659, 661–4; and "Why Has Not Italy Done More?", 54, 59–61. See also Cecil, "France and Europe," 4; Forsyth, "Italy," 133–4; F. Hardman, "From Spain to Piedmont," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 83 (April 1858), 451–66, at 464; Hardman, "Tidings from Turin," 612–15; L. Oliphant, "Universal Suffrage in Savoy and Nice," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 87 (June 1860), 734–53, at 735, 740; Patterson, *The New Revolution*, 104–7; Patterson , "Italy and France," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 92 (Oct. 1862), 503–26, at 503–5.

34 E. J. S. Dicey, "The New Germany," *Macmillan's Magazine*, 14 (Oct. 1866), 480–88, at 484; and Michael Pratt, "A Fallen Idol: The Impact of the Franco-Prussian War on the Perception of Germany by British Intellectuals," *International History Review*, 7/4 (1985), 543–75, at 557. See also W. Bagehot, "The Gains of the World by the Two Last Wars in Europe," in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, ed. N. St John-Stevas, 15 vols. (London, 1974), 8: 154–60; F. D. Dwyer, "The War," *Fraser's Magazine*, 2 (Sept. 1870), 385–402, at 390–94; W. E. Gladstone, "Germany, France, and England," *Edinburgh Review*, 132 (Oct. 1870), 554–93, at 569–70.

integration was not the inevitable outcome of events and was mostly driven by various forms of great-power competition.

Conservatives saw unification as an explicitly political project, resting on the twin pillars of German ambition and the threat of France to the minor German states.[35] Prussia's and Austria's patriotic desire for glory focused on having the sole, uncontested leadership of the German states. Bismarck did not "care one straw for German unity," but was interested instead in the "ascendancy of Prussia in Germany, to the exclusion of Austria."[36] The smaller German states also desired greatness, but, due to their limited power, could not achieve imperial glory without deferring to the leadership of a major state, such as Prussia.[37]

The unification of Germany was emphatically not, in the minds of conservatives, the unification of an otherwise harmonious national community. Laurence Oliphant, who had travelled through Schleswig and Holstein during the crises of 1863–4, in which German armies defeated Denmark in a war over control of the duchies, emphasized repeatedly the dislike and distrust evident between Prussia, Austria and the local German states.[38] Cecil at this time considered disintegration "a far likelier" outcome for Germany than unification.[39] The threat of French conquest was needed to galvanize the process of unification. By giving the German states a stark, immediate choice between Prussian supremacy and

35 Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 554; Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 296, 299; Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 394; L. Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein II," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 95 (April 1864), 503–18, at 503; L. Oliphant, "The European Situation," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 97 (Jan. 1865), 118–30, at 122; Patterson, "The European Crisis," 131; G. C. Swayne, "Eavesdropping at Biarritz," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 101 (Feb. 1867), 192–8, at 195, 197; J. Wilson, "Prevost-Paradol and Napoleon III," *Quarterly Review*, 129 (Oct. 1870), 369–92, at 384, 386, 389; Wilson, "The Third French Republic, and the Second German Empire," *Quarterly Review*, 130 (April 1871), 351–73, at 362, 364, 371–2.

36 Swayne, "Eavesdropping at Biarritz," 197; and Wilson, "Count Bismarck, Prussia, and Pan-Teutonism," 78; see also Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 297.

37 Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 239–2, 248, 262, 267–8, 270, 275; W. G. Hamley, "Thoughts Suggested by the War," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 108 (Dec. 1870), 774–91, at 784; Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 391–2; Oliphant, "The European Situation," 124; Patterson, "The European Crisis," 128–32; and Wilson, "Count Bismarck, Prussia, and Pan-Teutonism," 78, 87, 90.

38 Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein II," 503, 513, 516; Oliphant, "The European Situation," 120, 122–3. See also Wilson, "Count Bismarck, Prussia, and Pan-Teutonism," 78. Laurence Oliphant (1829–88), traveller and author, had connections of patronage to Palmerston and Russell, which ended with Oliphant's criticism of their handling of the Danish duchies affair. Later in life he would seek and gain the patronage of Disraeli and Salisbury.

39 Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 284.

French subjugation, the French declaration of war "precipitated" their unification under Prussian leadership.[40]

Conservatives thus thought of German unification as fundamentally "the great drama of Prussian aggrandisement," with Prussia "absorbing Germany" into its empire.[41] Liberals, in contrast, perceived the unifications of Italy and Germany as part of a natural development towards a Europe configured in accord with the principle of nationality.[42] Conservatives rejected this vision of progress, hoping to convince their audience that the sentiment of nationality was a marginal influence, a mere veneer for old-fashioned great-power politics and ambition for glory.

Marginalising nationality: rejecting the normative principle of nationality

Conservatives did not consider nationality a prescriptive concept and they consequently rejected the normative argument for particular state boundaries based on the *principle* of nationality. For many liberals, the principle of nationality prescribed what the proper boundaries of a state could be.[43] Commenting on the Prussian demand for the cession of Alsace and Lorraine during the Franco-Prussian war, Gladstone stated that annexation was only "justified ... [if] the population be willing parties to the severance."[44] Since the people of Alsace and Lorraine had no wish to join Germany, the demand for cession, Gladstone

[40] Wilson, "Prevost-Paradol and Napoleon III," 386. See also Wilson, "The Third French Republic," 362, 371.

[41] Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 545; and Swayne, "Eavesdropping at Biarritz," 195. See also Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 252–3; Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 293–4, 300, 312; G. R. Gleig, "The Great Collapse," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 108 (Nov. 1870), 641–56, at 654; Gleig , "Why Is Prussia Victorious?", *Blackwood's Magazine*, 108 (Dec. 1870), 657–72, at 662; Hamley, "Thoughts Suggested by the War," 784; C. J. Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 109 (May 1871), 580–85, at 582; Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 394, 396; Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein II," 503; Oliphant, "The European Situation," 122; Patterson, "The European Crisis," 130; Patterson, "The Position of the Ministry," 641; Wilson, "Prevost-Paradol and Napoleon III," 383; Wilson, "Count Bismarck, Prussia, and Pan-Teutonism," 73–4, 78, 81–2, 90; Wilson, "The Third French Republic," 368.

[42] See e.g. Bagehot, "The Gains of the World"; and Dicey, "The New Germany," 483, on "the passion for unity ... north [and] south of the Alps."

[43] Harvie, *The Lights of Liberalism*, 98; Kent, *Brains and Numbers*, 24; and Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, 233.

[44] W. E. Gladstone, "Germany, France, and England," *Edinburgh Review*, 132 (Oct. 1870), 554–93, at 582. See also W. Bagehot, "Are Alsace and Lorraine Worth Most to Germany or France?", in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, 8: 187–91; Bagehot, "The German Terms of Peace," in *The Collected Works of Walter Bagehot*, 8: 251–5. See further Pratt, "A Fallen Idol," 565–6.

thought, was "repulsive to the sense of modern civilisation."[45] Conservatives also argued that Prussia ought not to annex Alsace and Lorraine, but the basis for their arguments was different. Conservatives asserted that Prussia's demand for territory was ill-advised and short-sighted. They recognized that victory in war implied a right to territorial gain; there were "precedents ... for treating cessions of territory as the natural prize of a successful campaign."[46] Annexation was not, as for Gladstone and other liberals, a moral wrong because the people of Alsace and Lorraine did not want to be a part of Germany; it was instead a practical mistake.[47]

More generally, conservatives did not consider claims for self-determination morally weighty. John Wilson, for instance, considered the idea of "what is termed ... nationality, as the only legitimate basis of dominion" a ridiculous "extravagance."[48] The prolific commentators Cecil, Oliphant and Patterson all distinguished between territorial claims based on history (established practice and treaty recognition) and on nationality (the territory where an imagined people resided). They took seriously the claims based on treaties, on "customary right" and "the history of actual practice," and discussed them even if they rejected them, while they dismissed claims based on the principle of nationality as too absolute and essentialist.[49] A contingent commonality of customs or even language conferred no rights, held no normative power.

Most conservative authors, unlike liberals, simply did not perceive international affairs through the normative lens of the principle of nationality. Herbert Cowell remarked on "the redistribution of territory, which is sure to follow in the wake of a considerable war," without any sense that this change in governing state could be inherently problematic.[50] This contrasted with the liberal belief that the territory of state and nation should coincide, or at least that territory was not to be transferred from one state to another without the wishes

[45] Gladstone to Granville, 4 Oct. 1870, quoted in Deryck Schreuder, "Gladstone as 'Troublemaker'," *Journal of British Studies*, 17/2 (1978), 106–35, at 114.

[46] Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 543. See also Hamley, "The End of the War," 488; C. J. Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 108 (Oct. 1870), 508–12, at 511.

[47] Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 543, 547–52; Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 313; Hamley, "The End of the War," 493; Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd" (Oct. 1870), 510–11.

[48] Wilson, "Count Bismarck, Prussia, and Pan-Teutonism," 88.

[49] Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 243, 244. Compare, for instance, Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 243–69 on established practice and treaties, with 271–3 on claims of nationality. See also Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 385–6, 390–91, 396; Patterson, "The European Crisis," 128–30.

[50] H. Cowell, "Eastern Prospects," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 123 (Oct. 1878), 499–510, at 499. Herbert Cowell was a barrister and author, who had served in British India during the 1860s.

of its inhabitants being considered.[51] Since conservatives did not acknowledge the salience of the idea of nations, the latter's self-government was for them a non-issue.[52] Conservatives furthermore argued against nationality's significance for the unifications of Italy and Germany, and they rejected nationality as a prescriptive concept, taking precedence over the de facto arrangements of politics and implying a more ethical configuration of the European sphere.[53] Instead they were primarily concerned with the peace and stability of Europe.

THE NOTION OF NATIONALITY AS A THREAT TO EUROPE

Even as conservative commentators ridiculed the notion of nationality as a mere flight of poetic fancy, they warned of the dangers it presented to the established order of European international relations. The main role which conservatives discerned for the sentiment of nationality was as a spur to aggression. On the one hand, for people passionately caught up in the idea of nationality, the sentiment would function as an encouragement to war. The likely mismatch between the principle of nationality's normative order and the de facto configuration of Europe would imply territorial acquisition through military conquest. On the other hand, for people overtaken by a more general territorial ambition and desire for military glory, the principle of nationality functioned as an ad hoc justification available to legitimize, to audiences who subscribed to the principle, a course of conquest. In particular, conservatives worried that the principle and sentiment of nationality subverted the Vienna settlement and legitimized foreign interventions, fostered bids for hegemony over Europe, and undermined the domestic stability of states.

Nationality as a justification for military intervention: Italy and the Vienna settlement

During the 1850s, conservative commentators still viewed the 1815 Treaty of Vienna as the basis of European order and stability. By the late 1850s, they had become

51 See e.g. W. E. Gladstone, "Third Mithlothian Campaign Speech, 27 November 1879," in Kenneth Bourne, *The Foreign Policy of Victorian England 1830–1902* (Oxford, 1970); Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*, 230–31, 283–4; Schreuder, "Gladstone as 'Troublemaker'," 111–13; Sylvest, *British Liberal Internationalism*, 42; Varouxakis, "'Patriotism,' 'Cosmopolitanism' and 'Humanity,'" 101.

52 See e.g. S. Northcote, "Lord Hartington's Resolutions, and the Position of the Opposition," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 123 (Sept. 1878), 357–63, at 357.

53 For instances where one would expect nationality to be considered as a normative category see C. J. Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 106 (Sept. 1869), 346–62, at 361; Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 385–6; Oliphant, "The European Situation," 122.

alarmed at the Treaty's possible disintegration, and they identified the principle of nationality as a particular threat to the treaty's normative force. British liberals seemed to privilege various sentiments of nationality over the Vienna settlement, which implied replacing the Treaty of Vienna with the principle of nationality as the ordering principle of Europe. Conservatives hoped to preserve the treaty system, in the context of new ideological and political realities, as a valuable legacy of great-power consensus and compromise.

In an 1862 article, Cecil defended the Vienna settlement against the attacks of liberal authors like Matthew Arnold. Arnold argued that the treaties of Vienna, "which took no account of popular ideas," had actually ensured the instability of Europe "with their arbitrary distribution of the populations of Europe."[54] Cecil disagreed vehemently with this assessment. He argued that the great powers had successfully "adjusted their differences at Vienna," "so secur[ing] lasting peace to Europe."[55] The aim of the Vienna settlement was to avoid another great war between the great powers, and in this aim it had succeeded admirably. Problems arose only when the domestic affairs of states became an issue in international politics. The principle of nationality, Cecil noted, functioned exactly to bring this pernicious state of affairs about—it even made the domestic configuration of states into the ordering principle of international affairs.[56] As a consequence, the principle of nationality made possible "interventions in the internal affairs of other nations on the plea of political sympathy" whenever an unscrupulous statesman wanted. It constituted "the real danger to Europe's future peace."[57]

In the Italian context in particular, conservatives thought that the invocation of the principle of nationality had allowed Napoleon III and Cavour to gain support and approbation among liberals for what was in effect a policy of military conquest and territorial aggrandizement.[58] As William Forsyth remarked on the implications of Italian events, "[Russell's] 'Italy for the Italians' is a captivating cry. It seems to express the sentiment of liberty with the force of a truism . . . [but it in fact implies] the right of one independent State to interfere and foment insurrection in the dominion of another."[59] The notion of nationality,

54 Arnold, *England and the Italian Question*, 36–7.

55 Cecil, "Lord Castlereagh," 212–13.

56 Ibid., 212–17, 235.

57 Ibid., 235.

58 Aytoun, "France and Central Italy," 247–8; Cecil, "France and Europe," 4; Cecil, "Lord Castlereagh," 235; Forsyth, "An Election in France," 107; Lever, "A Glance at the Italy of Cavour," 656–7, 665; Lever, "Why Has Not Italy Done More?", 61; Oliphant, "Universal Suffrage," 735; R. H. Patterson, "Napoleon III and Europe," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 85 (March 1859), 375–92, at 376.

59 Forsyth, "Italy," 135, see also 150, 154–5, 166–7. William Forsyth (1812–99) was a lawyer, and Conservative MP from 1865 to 1866 and 1874 to 1880.

conservatives argued, fostered aggression and military interventions by making for confusion of the boundaries between the domestic and the international.

Confusion there was indeed in the debate on non-intervention, with liberals and conservatives having markedly different senses of where the boundaries between "inside" and "outside" were located. When discussing Italy as a political entity, conservatives used the existing states of Italy and their borders to demarcate the internal and external.[60] William Aytoun, discussing the internal disturbances in the Papal States early in 1860, portrayed the possible involvement of either Naples or Piedmont as external intervention, the thin end of a wedge which might lead to multiple great powers becoming involved.[61]

Liberals' affirmation of the notion of nationality led them to view Italian affairs as not intrinsically international, but primarily a matter of "local freedom and reform in the several states."[62] Unlike conservatives, liberals had a tendency to think of Italy as a distinct realm. In January 1860 Gladstone was very concerned to prevent external, foreign intervention in central Italy, in the form of Austrian, Russian, or Prussian involvement. Only as an afterthought—a literal postscript in a letter to Russell—did Gladstone mention that Piedmont, too, was not to interfere in central Italy.[63] Liberals acted as if, morally speaking, the demarcation between the Italian nation and the rest of Europe, rather than the demarcations between existing states, was the salient distinction to make when considering the threat of external intervention in Italy.[64]

As Piedmont meddled in and annexed first central and then south Italy, liberals argued that Britain should stand ready to protect this internal, progressive development of Italy against reactionary foreign intervention. Conservatives, lacking the assumption of Italian nationhood and endorsement of the principle of nationality, remarked rather incredulously that liberals fulminated against *potential* acts of external intervention, in order to safeguard a whole series of *actual* interventions in the affairs of other states on the part of Piedmont. Forsyth criticized Russell's position in the latter's October 1860 dispatch, arguing that

60 Lever, "Italian Brigandage," 580–81; Swayne, "Greece and Italy," 88–9; Tremenheere, "Napoleonism and Italy," 261.

61 Aytoun, "France and Central Italy," 253. W. E. Aytoun (1813–65) was a Scottish lawyer and author.

62 Gladstone quoted in Beales, *England and Italy 1859–60*, 34.

63 W. E. Gladstone, "Letter to Russell, January 3 1860," in Derek Beales, "Gladstone on the Italian Question 1860," *Rassegna storica del Risorgimento*, 41 (1954), 96–104, especially at 99–101, 104. See further Granville quoted in Beales, *England and Italy 1859–60*, 106.

64 W. E. Gladstone, "War in Italy," *Quarterly Review*, 105 (April 1859), 527–564; J. Russell, "Russell to Cowley," No. 498, 15 Nov. 1859, F.O. 27/1287; and Russell quoted in Beales, *England and Italy 1859–60*, at 99–100. See also C. T. McIntire, *England against the Papacy 1858–1861* (Cambridge, 1983), 132–3, 225–6.

"the Government had preached to Austria and France the doctrine of non-intervention as the one sole principle to be observed by the Great Powers in the question of Italy," but that "in the opinion of Lord John Russell, this doctrine of non-intervention did not apply to Garibaldi or Victor Emmanuel ... [who were] justified in interfering because he was an Italian patriot ... an Italian king."[65]

Forsyth's rejection of the principle of nationality played a central role in his argument:

> we cannot admit that Garibaldi was "a patriot fighting for the independence of his country," unless we assume that there was no difference between a subject of Sardinia and a subject of Naples, because both were Italians ... Will [Russell] venture to assert that community of language effaces distinction of country, or that, according to the doctrine of natural boundaries, geography is to determine citizenship and allegiance?[66]

Forsyth subsequently argued for the priority of the established European order over the principle of nationality:

> The question ... is not as to the rights of subjects to resist, but the right of a stranger to interfere. But then it is alleged that Sardinia is not a stranger, because she is Italian; and that this gives her a title, which makes the case exceptional ... we cannot admit that Sardinia alone ... [is] to be held free from the obligations of international law.[67]

For many liberals, including J. S. Mill, the principle of nationality was crucial to the logic of their position on intervention. Mill argued that when a government was foreign, like Austria in Lombardy, or depended on the support of a foreign power, like those of central Italy, then there existed a state of continual external intervention. Here Mill supposed the existence of a nationality and he considered this the entity which was to be sovereign, to decide on the configuration of its internal affairs without outside interference. The polities actually existing, let alone their governments, were secondary, and could only lay claim to a right to non-interference if they conformed to the wishes of their people.[68] Conservatives, in contrast, thought of the principle of non-interference as a simple injunction to respect the boundaries and accept the governments of the existing polities of the

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65 Forsyth, "Italy," 148–9. Russell's dispatch of 27 Oct. 1860 "justified the actions of Cavour and Garibaldi on general principles" and aimed to deter the other great powers from intervening in Italy; Beales, *England and Italy 1859–60*, 156.

66 Forsyth, "Italy," 150.

67 Ibid., 154–5, 166–7.

68 J. S. Mill, "A Few Words on Non-intervention," *Fraser's Magazine*, 60 (Dec. 1859), 766–76; J. S. Mill, "Letter to James Baal," in *The Collected Works of John Stuart Mill*, 16: 1031–5. See also Georgios Varouxakis, *Mill on Nationality* (London, 2002), at 77–8, 85–6; Varouxakis, *Liberty Abroad*, 95–6.

European sphere. By subverting this simple but powerful norm, the principle of nationality would, conservatives argued, throw Europe into conflict and disorder.

Nationality and the threat of hegemony over Europe

Mid-Victorian conservative commentators consistently argued that the notion of nationality was a primary enabler of military aggression in Europe. The exact content of this argument changed over the decades, however, to fit the changing realities of European international relations. During the unification of Italy, as Austria's treaty rights regarding the peninsula were widely ignored, conservatives cast the principle of nationality as a threat to the Treaty of Vienna and its politics of compromise and great-power consensus. By the mid-1860s, however, they felt obliged to acknowledge the demise of the Vienna settlement. Conservatives now argued, in reaction first to German unification and then to Russian belligerence, that nationality was a threat because it could easily excuse already powerful countries to expand further and seek hegemony over Europe. Conservatives thus attempted to delegitimize the novel notion of nationality by associating it with that classic bugbear of European international politics: a monarch or country's attempt at universal dominion over the Continent.

Patterson, Cecil, Dasent and Wilson, some of the conservative commentators who paid most attention to the role of nationality, thought of nationality as a new influence—"the modern sentiment of nationality"—but one which fitted well within the established narrative of countries making a bid for universal monarchy or European hegemony.[69] While the sentiment of nationality might in theory seem more constrained in its scope than these aims—even seem antithetical to them—in practice, these conservatives argued, the sentiment of nationality was effectively on the same continuum as the desire for European hegemony.

This was the role in which Patterson cast the principle of nationality in his discussion of Napoleon III's foreign-policy project. Patterson developed this argument through a direct analogy with the developments surrounding the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars: "Napoleon III revives the policy of his Uncle."[70] The project of Napoleon III was different only in that these days one needed a justification—"a homage, however insincere, to public opinion"—to obscure a policy of territorial aggrandizement: "his Principle, 'the sovereignty of the people,' ... is a mere mask for his ambition"; "in the principle of nationality ... he finds a safe and potent lever for assailing the existing fabric of European

[69] Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 551.

[70] Patterson, *The New Revolution*, 97.

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power ... to aggrandise France amidst the general disorder."[71] The principle of nationality, Patterson argued, functioned first of all as an excuse for Napoleon III to destroy the Vienna settlement and gain European hegemony, after which he could reorder Europe to the glory and aggrandizement of France.

Conservatives perceived this possibility of nationalist passion leading to a project of hegemony over Europe most strongly during the 1870s, first in the pan-Teutonism of Germany and later in the pan-Slavism of Russia.[72] Wilson remarked that the exhortations in German debates for Germany to rule "wherever any vestige of that nationality is extant" were in effect "German claims to something like universal dominion."[73] George Dasent worried that due to the dominant influence of the sentiment of nationality in Germany "the world ... [might] see a repetition of the Napoleonic conquests."[74] Here the German sentiment of nationality directly implied a bid for European hegemony. Wilson noted that this combination of German nationalism and the resurrection of the Holy Roman Empire was intellectually incoherent: "but the baseless fabric of an anachronistic vision."[75] In practice, though, they were mingled without problem. This was the realm of ideas and emotion, after all, not reason. Cecil affirmed the same conclusion. The sentiment of nationality, he thought, revolved mostly around a wish for one's nationality to have hegemony over Europe.[76] Certainly, it was related to a notion of rightful territorial boundaries. For Cecil, however, as for Wilson, a crucial feature of this conception was the expansive character which it could assume.[77] In the end, pan-ethnic unity and universal dominion were similar goals in that both implied the creation of a vast empire through a series of major wars, resulting in the absence of any semblance of a balance of power in Europe.

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71 Ibid., 41–51, 97–9. See also Patterson, "Napoleon III and Europe," 379, 382, 384–5, 392; Patterson, "Foreign Affairs and Disarmament," 375; Patterson, *The New Revolution*, 9–12, 34, 75, 90, 94–6, 114–15, 125–6; Patterson, "Ten Years of Imperialism," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 92 (Aug. 1862), 245–60, at 255, 259–60; Patterson, "Italy and France," 518, 524.

72 On Russia see Cowell, "The Prospects in the East," 253; H. Craik and W. Smith, "National Interests and National Morality," *Quarterly Review*, 144 (July 1877), 277–310, at 307; W. G. Hamley, "The Storm in the East IX," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 123 (Feb. 1878), 225–44, at 242; Kinglake and Austin, "The Slavonic Menace to Europe," 526–7, 536–7, 541; and A. I. Shand, "Foreign Opinion on England in the East," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 123 (June 1878), 734–54, at 739.

73 Wilson, "Count Bismarck, Prussia, and Pan-Teutonism," 87–8; see also Wilson, "The Third French Republic," 359–60.

74 Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 312–13. G. W. Dasent was a scholar, and assistant editor at *The Times* from 1845 to 1870.

75 Wilson, "The Third French Republic," 359–60.

76 Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 238–42, 247–8, 260.

77 Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 551–2, 555–6.

For conservative authors, the notion of the balance of power held a strong normative force as the best means, long-established and its efficacy proven by nothing less than the Napoleonic wars, through which to preserve the order of Europe and prevent the hegemony of a single state. Conservatives perceived the principle of nationality undermining the norm of a balance of power, being proposed as an alternative ordering of European politics. In the context of German unification and Russian abrogation of the neutrality of the Black Sea, a leader writer for *The Globe* juxtaposed both principles and argued that the balance of power was still the best lodestone for international affairs. Its detractors argued, according to *The Globe*, that the ethical principle of nationality trumped the pragmatic considerations of the balance of power. It was unacceptable to prevent a state from expanding though "the natural concretion of kindred [races]." "But," the *Globe*'s author continued, "what then? What is to prevent an empire of race from becoming an empire of conquest?"[78]

Once a state had become the dominant power through national accretion, there would be no barrier left to stop it from expanding further and conquering its neighbouring small, independent states. And, the author noted, there was every reason to assume such a development: "We shall be told, of course, that we start from a mistake, because empires founded on nationality will respect nationality in others. But that is the purest assumption. Is it not characteristic of dominant races to assume they have missions?"[79] Allowing the principle of nationality to trump the balance of power—not stopping a state from expanding into a position of continental dominance, when such an expansion came through national accretion—would finally allow that anathema of European politics, a hegemonic state bent on universal dominion, to be realized. The organizing principle of international politics should, the author argued, first of all provide "security for the peace of the world [and] the liberty of nations [i.e. states]."[80] The balance of power, conservatives observed, had always secured Europe against both general war and universal dominion, and was still Europe's best guarantee of order, stability and independence. The notion of nationality, in contrast, was a threat to the order of Europe: the sentiment of nationality fostered the other bellicose passions, while the principle of nationality provided yet another excuse for wars of aggression and bids for European hegemony.

This second type of conservative argument against nationality was in tension with the first: the notion of nationality was imaginary, not a real driving force of international affairs, and the notion of nationality effectively threatened the peace and order of Europe. Conservative authors did not address this seeming

78 *The Globe*, Nov. 21 (1870), 4.
79 Ibid.
80 Ibid.

contradiction; indeed, both strands sometimes appeared entwined in the same article.[81] In the most charitable interpretation, this was a paradox resulting from nationality's artificially created influence among the masses. The sentiment of nationality did not motivate the actual agents of international politics: statesmen, states and their institutions. It could thus, *pace* liberals, not have a positive force as a counterbalance to schemes of aggression. Quite the opposite: the sentiment of nationality was influential only when demagogues chose to utilize it as a justification for aggrandizement. At times, however, these same authors warned that statesmen would come to feel obliged to pander to nationalist passion, at which point the notion of nationality surely would have causal force, and the paradox indeed collapsed into a contradiction.[82]

The sentiment of nationality as a threat to domestic as well as international stability

While discussing the role of nationality in international affairs, conservative commentators also presented the sentiment of nationality as a cause of domestic instability—whereas liberals affirmed the opposite conclusion. Many liberals perceived the principle of cohesion of society as present among the population, which was to "feel that they are one people," a national community with a national character.[83] For conservatives, in contrast, cohesion lay not in a shared identity, but rather in a shared patriotic pride in certain institutions. People all had a vertical relationship with certain institutions, such as the Crown and the empire, rather than a horizontal relationship with one another.[84] A sentiment of nationality was not needed, and could indeed prove positively harmful, a cause of instability and strife. The inconvenient "new-born enthusiasm of nationality" could make for disloyal subjects domestically, and internationally for a neighbour intent on forcibly recovering "its" territory.[85] Domestic discontent and a foreign desire for revenge were possible without any sentiment of nationality, but the latter, conservatives thought, intensified and prolonged these passions, to the

[81] See e.g. Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 238–9, 262, 270–71; Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 295–6, 312–14.

[82] See e.g. Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 553.

[83] J. S. Mill quoted in Varouxakis, "'Patriotism,' 'Cosmopolitanism' and 'Humanity'," 100, see also 108. See further Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, 43–4, 57–8; Jones , "The Idea of the National in Victorian Political Thought," *European Journal of Political Theory*, 5/1 (2006), 12–21, at 15–17; Julia Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals and Public Identities in Britain since 1850* (Manchester, 2001), 31–2; Varouxakis, *Mill on Nationality*, 126–7.

[84] See Mandler, *The English National Character*, especially 7–8, 106–7, 123, for detail on conservatives' institutional patriotism.

[85] Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 552.

extent that certain territories could become a burden rather than a boon to the country.

The first problem which the sentiment of nationality could create for states was that of disaffected subject populations. These were a source of domestic instability and thus of state weakness. Conservative commentators observed this phenomenon in a variety of contexts, from discussions of the lack of vigour of the Austrian Empire to the future relationship between North and South after the American Civil War.[86] Oliphant in 1864 noted the troubles which Poland caused Russia, Hungary caused Austria and Holstein caused Denmark.[87] Commenting on Prussia's intention to annex the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine in 1870–71, Cecil was one of several conservative authors who argued that annexation would merely saddle Prussia with intractable problems—and that it was exactly the sentiment of nationality which made these problems intractable.[88]

Cecil started with the observation "that the French sentiment is intense among the population."[89] And while in previous times one could have expected the people to switch their allegiance to Prussia over time—these people had in the past been part of a (very different) Germany, after all, and were now staunchly French—with the modern sentiment of nationality, such a shift in loyalty was unlikely to take place.[90] Instilled by teachers and publicists, the sentiment of nationality ensured that any disaffection on the part of subject populations would linger, that their loyalty would persistently be in doubt.[91] Alsace and Lorraine would not, Cecil concluded, be a source of strength to Prussia, with its population restive and loyal to another state, and would even come to impair the governance

[86] On the paralysis of the Austrian Empire see H. Cowell, "The Political Results of the War," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 122 (Nov. 1877), 611–27, at 621; and W. G. Hamley, "The Storm in the East VIII," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 123 (Jan. 1878). On the disaffected South as likely an enduring thorn in the side of the North see R. Cecil, "The United States as an Example," *Quarterly Review*, 117 (Jan. 1865), 249–86, at 280–81; A. J. L. Fremantle, "The Battle of Gettysburg and the Campaign in Pennsylvania," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 94 (Sept. 1863), 365–94, at 389; R. H. Patterson, "The Crisis of the American War," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 92 (Nov. 1862), 636–46, at 636.

[87] Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 389. On Poland and Russia see also Patterson, "The European Crisis," 120–24.

[88] Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 540, 543, 549, 551–2; Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 313, 315; Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd" (Oct. 1870), 511.

[89] Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 547.

[90] See also Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd" (Oct 1870), 510–11; and Patterson, "The European Crisis," 128, arguing that in the past, when "the modern principle of nationality was unknown ... populations readily united or parted according to any changes in the persons or fortunes of their rules [*sic*]."

[91] Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 237–40; Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 548–9; Patterson, "The European Crisis," 120.

of Germany as a whole.[92] The sentiment of nationality, conservatives thought, had made any conquest and annexation a decidedly less attractive proposition, and put firm constraints on the worthwhile extent of any polity.

The second problem which the sentiment of nationality could create for a state was that of a neighbouring country with a persistent desire to recover territories lost to it. The annexation of Alsace and Lorraine would, conservatives argued, guarantee Germany another war with France. The other peace terms were relatively inconsequential and quickly forgotten—ask only them and Germany could be at peace. But demand territory and a passion for revenge would simmer in France, leading to renewed conflict at the earliest opportunity.[93] Conservatives did not themselves affirm the indivisibility of a country's territory, but they did recognize that elements of the general populace, infused with the sentiment of nationality, would perceive their country's territory as such.[94] These people would consequently persist in looking for an opportunity to go to war and recover the lost lands.

Conservative commentators thus presented the notion of nationality as a threat. The sentiment of nationality caused instability in both the domestic and international realms, while the principle itself functioned as an excuse for varied forms of aggression in international affairs, from military interventions in the affairs of other states all the way to grand projects for hegemony over Europe.

NATIONALITY VERSUS LIBERTY AND PATRIOTISM

Finally, in addition to marginalizing the notion and painting it as a menace, conservative commentators hoped to deflect the threat of nationality by making it an indictment of the liberals' own world view, by arguing that a commitment to nationality often hindered the advancement of constitutional liberty and a proper patriotic loyalty to institutions. Whereas liberals tended to assume that all these values were closely connected and that progress would be general across all fronts, conservatives countered that the sentiment of nationality and demand for self-determination could put the causes of liberty and patriotism in jeopardy—thereby implying that liberals, if they truly valued liberty and patriotism,

92 Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 549–50.

93 Ibid., 544, 551–5; Dasent, "The War between France and Germany," 309–11, 318; Gleig, "Why Is Prussia Victorious?", 663; Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd" (Oct 1870), 511–12; Wilson, "The Third French Republic," 370.

94 For the crucial role of the sentiment of nationality in sustaining animosity, compare Cecil's pessimistic forecast of German–French relations, taking this sentiment into account, with Hamley's more hopeful predictions, which did not discuss nationality. Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 551; Hamley, "New Year's Musings," 255.

would rescind their approval of the principle of nationality.[95] Conservative commentators admonished liberals that they sympathized only with groups arguing from "an ideal basis" and proposing "revolutionary measures."[96] The principle of nationality was an absolute idea, could not admit the possibility of compromise, and consequently could not recognize or value established rights, incremental improvements in liberty, or a limited autonomy providing the institutional trappings of patriotism.

For conservatives, separatism was wrong because its patriotism involved the nation and with it the desire for self-determination. For the radically liberal British positivists, patriotism was admirable exactly when it involved nationalism. Harrison praised the moment among any people "when the lofty conception of nation first comes to supersede the narrower idea of clan or tribe."[97] Varouxakis concludes that "the implication is that the Positivists ... respected all patriotisms"—all patriotisms which were based in a focus on the people, on nationality, as this shift from the local to the national was what made them valuable.[98] Conservatives, in contrast, held that any patriotism which involved nationalism would quickly, in its focus on the nation and its self-determination, marginalize any concern for those institutions which conservatives considered the proper focus of patriotic sentiment.[99]

Italy, Poland and the Danish duchies affair were the main debates where conservatives emphasized the perverse effects which striving after the principle of nationality had on the values of liberty and institutional reform. Conservative commentators invariably noted that the main obstacle to reform in Italy was not Austria, but "the wicked dogma of the extreme revolutionary party," agitating for national independence, which left Austria no choice but repressive rule.[100] The principle of nationality also distracted people from more worthwhile endeavours, leading them to reject the authority of their de facto government and "dwell

[95] Lord Acton, a cosmopolitan Whiggish Catholic, argued that the principle of nationality did not further the end of liberty and—here diverging from conservatives—would jeopardize both the progress of civilization and the "civilized" patriotic attachment to the "political nation," replaced by the "animal" attachment to the "race." J. D. Acton, "Nationality," *Home and Foreign Review*, 1 (July 1862), 1–25, at 15, 17, 19–20.

[96] Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 390–91.

[97] F. Harrison, *National and Social Problems* (London, 1908), at 256.

[98] Varouxakis, "'Patriotism,' 'Cosmopolitanism' and 'Humanity'," 110.

[99] On these institutions see e.g. Mandler, *The English National Character*, 7, 15, 123; and Parry, "Patriotism," 85.

[100] Swayne, "Greece and Italy," 87–8. See also Atkinson, "Italy," 350–51, 355, 361, 364; Aytoun, "France and Central Italy," 247–8; Cecil, "France and Europe," 4, 27; Forsyth, "Italy," 154, 171; Patterson, "Italy and France," 525; Tremenheere, "Napoleonism and Italy," 268; White, "Italy."

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either in memory or imagination," rather than pursue practical, local reforms of administration.[101] Cecil complained of the "obtuseness ... [and] confusion ... engendered by that strange mania for ideal nationalities which is the moral epidemic of the age, and which appears to have the power of overshadowing all substantial grievances."[102] Conservatives considered the nationalist movement in Italy a distraction for its peoples at best, and the main cause of their repression at worst.

Patterson, Oliphant and Cecil all commented upon annexation, separatism and nationalist sentiment, in the context of the 1863–4 Polish question and Danish duchies affair. The tenor running through their arguments was that nationalists were too absolute in their demands. The separatists were wholly focused on independence and pursued this end at the cost of liberty, autonomy and the institutional trappings of their (erstwhile) polity, all the latter of which would be better realized if only the separatists could countenance compromise.

Conservatives thought that the established power, by virtue of being established, could expect to be reasoned with by disaffected parts of its population, rather than wholly rejected. Even if a territory had initially been "unjustly acquired," Patterson argued—as Russia's Poland had been—after the conquering state had institutionally integrated the territory into the whole country, the conquering power "cannot be expected to cede it," either to another state or to secession.[103] The problem with separatism based on the sentiment of nationality, Patterson argued, was that it could only conceive of independence as its end. If separatists were willing to grant their loyalty in return for concessions, then Russia could feel comfortable granting the occupied populace significant liberty, autonomy and the institutions which were the focus of the people's patriotism—in the case of Poland its Diet, army and fortresses. But since nationalist separatists did not care about the character or quality of government, only about the identity of it, "reconciliation becomes impracticable, and a cordial union ... hopeless." Separatists consequently forced the state into a choice between allowing the territory to secede and practising an "iron despotism." The latter alternative was abhorrent, Patterson affirmed, but it was also "the natural consequence" of separatism; "what other course could [the ruler] follow?"[104]

While Cecil and Oliphant were not as quick to absolve statesmen of censure over their repressive rule, they shared Patterson's assessment of the character of nationalist separatism—of its absolute aim and the counterproductive extremes to which this attitude led. Cecil remarked that the separatists in Holstein

[101] Atkinson, "Italy," 361.
[102] Cecil, "France and Europe," 4.
[103] Patterson, "The European Crisis," 120.
[104] Ibid., 121–4.

unequivocally rejected Danish rule, even when constitutional reform meant that Danish citizens would be "enjoying a liberty with which they are little acquainted" in the neighbouring German polities.[105] The sentiment of nationality cared not for the "reconciliation of conflicting interests ... [or] attainment of constitutional liberty," those proper "modest objects of desire."[106] "How impossible it is," Oliphant grumbled, "to devise a form of government which shall satisfy a people whose sole aspiration is separation," since "unfortunately there is no amount of political liberty which will satisfy the sentiment of national independence, which is in most instances unreasonable ... people would rather govern themselves badly than let other people govern them well."[107]

For conservatives, the crucial factor in matters of annexation and separatism was the emotional nature of the sentiment of nationality. This meant an absolutist politics with little scope for compromise or settlement, which would fail to further the values of liberty and patriotism. As a consequence, while conservatives were generally sceptical of the benefits of annexation, they also lacked sympathy for separatist or nationalist movements, let alone argued that ethics put these movements in the right.

Even effective secession and the granting of self-determination could, conservatives argued, be a curse for a people, rather than a blessing. Some people would be better off as safely part of an empire. Discussing the Ottoman Empire, conservatives argued that there were two goods which an empire provided and which would be lost were it to disintegrate. First, an empire had the role of ruling the various ethnic and religious groups living throughout its territory.[108] Conservatives predicted that these groups, if given free rein, would in fact harass each other more than the Ottomans oppressed them. The Ottoman Empire was all that stood "between its subject races and the fearful misery incident to a race-struggle and a religious war."[109] Second, collecting multiple

[105] Cecil, "The Danish Duchies," 271; see also 270–73.

[106] Ibid., 239 and *passim*; see also Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 391–2; Patterson, "The European Crisis," 128–32.

[107] Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 388, 396; Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein II," 504; see also Cecil, "The Terms of Peace," 548; Lever, "Cornelius O'Dowd" (Sept. 1869), 362.

[108] H. B. E. Frere, "The Turkish Empire," *Quarterly Review*, 142 (Oct. 1876), 480–512, at 483; Craik and Smith, "National Interests and National Morality," 277; W. G. Palgrave, "The Revival of Turkey," *Quarterly Review*, 146 (Oct. 1878), 549–94, at 550–51; W. Smith, "The Eastern Question," *Quarterly Review*, 142 (Oct. 1876), 544–86, at 555–8.

[109] This strife was not primarily the result of a general incompatibility between Muslims and Christians, but rather of the different local factions trying to increase their influence. See e.g. W. Smith and E. B. Cowell, "Turkey," *Quarterly Review*, 143 (April 1877), 573–600, at 576–8.

peoples in an empire made it possible to have a polity powerful enough to be independent. Conservatives here invoked precedent; Greece, Serbia and Romania had separated from the Ottoman Empire but had never really become sovereign states. And just like Serbia and Romania, conservatives argued, any newly created autonomous states in south-eastern Europe would fall under the domination of Russia.[110] Empire secured order and a certain independence, neither of which self-determination would provide.

Conservatives thus deployed two variants of a jeopardy argument against the sentiment of nationality and self-determination. One generally applicable argument entailed that the sentiment of nationality made it impossible for a people to retain, when part of an empire, those institutions valued by a "proper" patriotism. The other was aimed at liberals in particular and argued that the sentiment of nationality advanced at the cost of constitutional liberty. For the British Liberal Party, the conceit that they were the champion of constitutional liberty in Europe was a central tenet of their self-image and their political vocabulary.[111] Liberals generally assumed that constitutional liberty progressed in tandem with self-determination. Discussing the futures of Poland and Italy, J. S. Mill, for instance, stated that "nationality is desirable, as a means to the attainment of liberty" and that "liberty often needs nationality in order to exist."[112] Conservatives tried to disprove this assumption and to imply that British liberal supporters of national movements were willing to sacrifice liberty and constitutional principles for the principle of nationality.[113] The liberals would either have to reconceive their role in Europe, relinquishing their identity as the champion of constitutional liberty, or, if they truly valued liberty, they would have to renounce the sentiment of nationality and the popular movements for self-determination. The abstract idea of nationality, conservatives argued, endangered the real, valuable achievements of liberty and patriotism.

CONCLUSION

Mid-Victorian conservatives positively disapproved of the notion of nationality—both of its reality, in effecting a detrimental homogenization

[110] H. Cowell, "The New Year," *Blackwood's Magazine*, 121 (Jan. 1877), 108–26, at 108; Frere, "The Turkish Empire," 494–6; Hamley, "The Storm in the East IX," 242–3; Northcote, "Lord Hartington's Resolutions," 359; Palgrave, "The Revival of Turkey," 550–51; Smith, "The Eastern Question," 555–8; Smith and Cowell, "Turkey," 584.

[111] Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism*.

[112] Mill, "Vindication of the French Revolution of February 1848," 348; and from 1859, quoted in Varouxakis, *Liberty Abroad*, 86.

[113] See e.g. Oliphant, "A Letter from Schleswig-Holstein," 385–6.

of society, and of its idea, in providing many an excuse for war and in marginalizing the values of constitutional liberty and patriotic loyalty towards institutions. The only sense in which, some conservatives conceded, nationality was incontrovertibly present, was as a sentiment among parts of the people, merely providing demagogues with yet another strategy of justification for acts aimed at aggrandizement and martial glory. Conservative commentators thus perceived and presented the notion of nationality as a threat—a threat which they tried to deflect by pointing out how the principle and sentiment of nationality undermined not just the established international order, thereby fostering aggression, but also the ends of patriotism and of constitutional liberty, which the British liberal supporters of national movements professed to respect.

This strong animosity towards the notion of nationality was a distinct feature of mid-Victorian conservative opinion. This attitude faded from the 1880s onward, eventually to be replaced by a positive affirmation of nationality and the English national character. Why this sharp change, which has consigned the mid-Victorian conservative problematization of the notion of nationality to obscurity? Partly it was a side effect of a more general change in the character of British conservatism in the 1880s, and in particular of the sections of the intellectual elite who were its opinion-formers. Over the 1880s and 1890s the intellectual core of conservatism became an individualist position against idealist collectivism.[114] With this shift, a large tranche of centrist, individualist liberals (such as J.F. Stephen and Henry Maine) came to espouse a conservative position. These individualist liberals, writing primarily in the *Saturday Review*, had in fact been strongly committed to the principle of nationality during the mid-Victorian era, proposing the application of the principle to resolve conflicts and establish stability and order in Europe.[115] Over the last decades of the nineteenth century the conservative view of society evolved from a focus on traditions and established institutions to first an organicism and later an organic nationalism, until by the First World War the affirmation of British nationalism and the national character had become the mainstream conservative position.[116] These developments left little scope for the memory of the earnestly felt problematization of nationality by the conservative authors of mid-Victorian Britain.

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[114] Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism*, 15–16, 78, 117, 130, 159; Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, 76–77; Stapleton, *Political Intellectuals*, 41, 51. Green, *The Crisis of Conservatism*, 160, notes that during the Edwardian era "a distinctive brand of Conservative Collectivism" also became established.

[115] See e.g. *Saturday Review*, 25 June 1859, 767; 17 May 1862, 555; 14 March 1863, 341–2; 23 July 1870, 97–8; 8 Oct. 1870, 453.

[116] Jones, *Victorian Political Thought*, 76–7; Mandler, *The English National Character*, 60, 126, 132–3.