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## Liberal Quotidian Practices of World Ordering

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In Tim Dunne and Trine Flockhart (eds) (2013) *Liberal World Orders*. Oxford: Oxford University Press: 157-172. ISBN 9708197265529/ 9780191760334 (e-bk)

For some commentators, the current world order is imperial in ways analogous to earlier explicitly imperial orders, in which the centre exercised hegemonic power over the periphery through complex legal, political, economic, and institutional relationships. This is sometimes identified as a good or necessary thing, since only an imperial order (with benign intentions) will enable the world to be made safe for liberalism. Alternatively, it is identified as a bad thing, with imperialism being defined in terms of systematic exploitation, and the claims of hegemonic powers to endorse liberal values and intentions being dismissed as ideology or hypocrisy. Whilst supporters of liberal imperialism argue that the ends of liberalism justify the means of liberal empire, opponents challenge the idea that there is anything distinctively liberal, as opposed to imperialist, going on at all.<sup>1</sup> This debate raises a double question: first, it raises the question of whether contemporary world order, commonly identified as liberal, is imperial; second, it raises the question of how a liberal world order can be liberal and imperial simultaneously.

I am not concerned here with evaluating the relative strengths either of the case for understanding liberal world order as a new form of empire, or of the cases for and against liberal world order as a particular package of values, rules, and institutions. Instead, this chapter is interested in addressing the second 'how' question outlined above. Poststructuralist, postcolonial, and feminist arguments all suggest that liberal world order is

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<sup>1</sup> A case famously made in the 1990s by, for instance, Chomsky (1998).

simultaneously liberal and imperial in a different way to that claimed by the proponents and opponents of the idea of liberal empire. Rather than liberalism and imperialism being understood in substantive terms as institutions or ideologies that are antithetical to one another, these critical theories focus on how the identification of state and non-state actors with liberalism—as an institutional form, market economy, legal framework or set of prescriptive values—depends on prior self-identification as a particular kind of subject. Without this form of self-identity, a range of liberal practices and beliefs in contract, private property, free trade, international law, human rights, representative democracy, and so on, become unworkable and unintelligible. But in order for this self-identity to be sustained, a range of quotidian, embodied practices that reproduce hierarchal relations between international actors (individual and collective) are needed.<sup>2</sup>

These critical accounts argue that to be a liberal subject requires a lot of work, much of which consists in inscribing and reinscribing discrimination between liberal and non-liberal or illiberal practices and subjects. This line drawing happens in different contexts and in all kinds of ways. The aim of this chapter is to explore one aspect of liberal international ordering and to examine it from the point of view of the focus on how liberal subjectivity is reproduced through line drawing in the international arena. I focus especially on the paradoxical uses of violence to sustain a world order committed to liberal values.

The chapter proceeds in three sections. In the first section, I outline what I mean by line drawing in relation to the liberal subject. In the second section, I examine the relationship between liberalism and imperialism in the work of the exemplary liberal thinker, John Stuart Mill. Mill explicitly acknowledged the dependence of liberal states on reproducing particular

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<sup>2</sup> This argument has been central to feminist and postcolonial histories of nineteenth-century liberal imperialism as well as to poststructuralist, postcolonial, and feminist thinking in International Relations (IR) post-Cold War (see, for example, Hall, 1992, 2000, 2002).

kinds of liberal subjects. I argue that the ambiguities and shifts in Mill's thinking (and political engagement) with issues of national self-determination, settler colonialism, and imperialism, articulate and enact the meaning and implications of liberal self-identity for liberal world order. An important aspect of this articulation and enactment is the drawing of lines between legitimate and illegitimate violence. In the third section, I turn to practices, characteristic of the 'liberal peace' in the post-Cold War era, of humanitarian intervention and liberal peacekeeping and peacebuilding, and examine the ways in which such practices require the production of hierarchical discriminations between civilized and barbarous, masculinized and feminized subjects. When these practices are examined at the level of their quotidian implementation, it becomes clear how liberal ordering is accomplished through micro-practices that embed hierarchical relations of power, even as they seek to promote liberal values. In the conclusion, I return to the significance of the fact that we have yet to see a world in which the self-understanding of actors in distinctively liberal terms has not been reproduced at the expense of others. The 'win win' possibilities celebrated by classical liberal thinkers, such as Mill, translate in practice into systematically asymmetrical power relations, as liberal subjects are caught in a bind between corruption and reinvention.

### **<H1>Liberal subjects and line drawing</H1>**

For those who read liberal world order in explicitly imperial terms, phenomena such as NATO's military humanitarian intervention in Kosovo in 1999, the invasions and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq in 2001 and 2003 and Libya in 2011, the articulation of the doctrine of 'responsibility to protect' (R2P), and the overall growth of UN peacekeeping, peacebuilding and state-building work in the post-Cold War period, are all evidence of ways in which liberal hegemony is imposed and maintained. But such arguments tend to concentrate on the intentions or effects of such practices at a macro level, whether to confirm their liberalism,

their hypocrisy, or their effectiveness or ineffectiveness. My interest is in the micro-level ordering effects that the kinds of practices of violence mentioned above embody at the level of the reproduction of the self-identity of liberal subjects. I will argue that when we look at this dimension of practices of world ordering, our account of the relationship between liberalism and imperialism becomes complicated. It isn't possible to state straightforwardly that liberal imperialism is a liberal pathology, or that liberalism is somehow essentially imperial. Following in the footsteps of historians of the nineteenth-century British Empire, such as Catherine Hall (1992) and Karuna Mantena (2010), I suggest that the 'political entailments' of the international projection of liberalism continuously confront self-identified liberal subjects (collective and individual) with the task of demonstrating their distinction from non-liberal or illiberal others.<sup>3</sup> For this reason, as long as world ordering is bound up with the production and reproduction of specifically liberal subjects, this provides an ongoing basis on which deeply hierarchical practices in international legal, economic, and political relations can be legitimated.

Liberal political ideas demonstrate certain intellectual continuities with earlier Christian and republican modes of thought. Nevertheless, as a distinctive political ideology and mode of organizing political, economic, and social relations, liberalism is very much a nineteenth-century phenomenon. Ideologically, liberalism gives priority to individual freedom, but different liberalisms interpret this in many different ways, from the extremes of libertarianism to the advocacy of welfare rights. In practice, the modes of government associated with the label of 'liberalism' have developed a variety of instruments legitimated by the ideology of individual freedom, ranging from institutionalizing private property rights and free markets,

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<sup>3</sup> I borrow the expression 'political entailment' from Mantena's work, which offers a powerful argument for the dilemmas thrown up by the encounter between liberal ideologies and political actualities for liberal actors in nineteenth-century British imperialism.

to protecting freedom of speech, to major state intervention in the education and welfare of populations. It could be argued that the very idea that there is such a thing as 'liberalism', whether as an ideology or form of order, is misleading, given the tensions between different phenomena that all carry the 'liberal' label. However, I suggest that we can make sense of a connection between these diverse ordering principles and practices if we focus on the heart of any position that calls itself liberal: the valorization of individual freedom. All liberals value individual freedom, but liberals differ in their account of the individual. Some forms of liberalism assume that all individuals are already, whether they realize it or not, liberal subjects; other forms of liberalism see liberal subjectivity as something to be achieved.<sup>4</sup>

In the context of contemporary international politics, liberal internationalism is associated with principles and practices that are frequently in tension with one another (see also Rae and Reus-Smit, this volume): human rights and rights to national self-determination, neoliberal markets and commitments to development aid, state sovereignty and responsibility to protect, are all somehow part of the liberal package. It seems that within the international context all the varieties of liberalism can be identified. What renders the international distinctive, however, is that there is a clear rationale for this mixture of elements. Liberal internationalism has always operated on the principle that some subjects (states, nations, and individuals) within the international community are closer to being liberal subjects than others. In this respect, the liberalism of the contemporary international order is perfectionist and unfinished (See Sylvest, this volume). Because liberalism in the

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<sup>4</sup> The former would encompass liberalisms, often of the contractualist kind, that subscribe to a fixed account of human nature, most commonly in minimal terms as rational and self-interested (represented by scholars such as Hayek, Nozick, and Rawls); the latter more avowedly perfectionist forms of liberalism identify true liberal subjectivity with the capacity to use freedom well (represented by Mill, for example).

international sphere is still a project, it relies on the agency of liberal subjects within the international order for its accomplishment.

Liberal international subjects are involved in improving the world in accordance with a commitment to freedom. This means that they have explicitly identified themselves as subjects who not only grasp the idea of freedom as a supreme moral and political value, but also have the capacity to distinguish and enact what that commitment means in particular international contexts. This feature of liberal subjectivity has been particularly obvious in the military interventions of liberal state actors in the post-Cold War context. In successive interventions in Somalia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Afghanistan, Iraq, and most recently Libya, liberal state actors have used a variety of different kinds of force for a variety of different purposes. Critics of liberalism often draw attention to what is seen as liberal hypocrisy or double standards. How, for example, is it possible for liberal state actors to espouse just war standards on the one hand, and engage routinely in assassination operations on the other? But what appear to be the paradoxical or even self-contradictory practices of liberal international actors are rendered consistent when the meaning of liberalism is identified less with a fixed set of principles (see Flockhart, this volume) and more with a commitment to freedom. Whether the means involve aerial bombing or drone attacks, and whether the goal is the protection of humanitarian enclaves or regime change, the legitimacy of the action is always fundamentally grounded in the capacity of liberal international actors to tell the difference between what is in accordance with the principle of freedom and what is not. Liberal subjects are characterized by agency and judgement. They are identified by their capacity to revise their views about what is compatible with the cause of freedom and the maintenance of liberal subjectivity, in the light of experience. And it seems that what counts

as compatible with freedom is particularly wide open to revision when the transformation of non-liberal or illiberal subjects into liberal subjects is at stake.

Liberal subjects are distinguished from non-liberal subjects, who either lack the capacity or lack the will to discriminate and act on the requirements of freedom. If the project of liberalism is to succeed internationally then it needs a world made up of liberal subjects, who are able to demonstrate the capacity to draw lines in the service of freedom. The example of Afghanistan, from the rationale for the invasion to the rationale for the withdrawal, is particularly telling. It demonstrates how the failure of liberalism is tied to the failure to cultivate liberal subjectivity, at collective and individual levels. Time and again, individual and collective Afghani actors have, from the viewpoint of liberal international actors, failed to demonstrate a grasp of the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate modes of governance and between legitimate and illegitimate uses of violence. They have failed to become liberal subjects. This demonstrates that the most significant lines drawn by liberal subjects in the international context are those between themselves and other kinds of subject. At the collective level, the identification of Afghanistan as a fundamentally non-liberal international subject has underpinned punitive, protective, and educative efforts to transform both state and society on the part of liberal state actors over the past decade, and now underpins the decision to withdraw. At the individual level, those punitive, protective, and educative efforts have created a myriad of contexts in which individual liberal subjects have drawn lines between legitimate and illegitimate action in their interactions with those identified as non-liberal or illiberal. My particular interest in this chapter is with the latter kinds of interaction, and how the meaning of liberal subjectivity is reproduced in everyday encounters already structured by the assumed distinction between liberal and other subjects. Regardless of whether the aims of these interactions are beneficent on the part of liberal



subjects, they rest on asymmetrical assumptions about which parties to the encounter partake of agency and wisdom. For this reason, I will suggest, they embody volatile possibilities that can rebound on the liberal subject in unexpected ways, and often work against the explicit aim of an egalitarian transformation of the quotidian terms of engagement.

In this respect, I would argue, there is much to learn about liberal practices of world ordering from the history of the entanglement between liberal and imperial projects, which is exemplified in the work and life of Mill. Mill's liberal perfectionism offers a useful example of how the importance of liberal subjects to liberal states and liberal world order justifies a seemingly contradictory mix of ordering practices in the international realm. In addition, Mill's life demonstrates the costs, benefits, affects, and effects of the aspiration to liberal subjectivity. If his work offers us intellectual reasons for ongoing links between liberalism and imperialism, his life demonstrates the centrality of a particular form of self-identity to these links, and their unintended, and seemingly paradoxical, consequences. We will look first at Mill's arguments for national self-determination, colonialism, and imperialism, and then reflect on their implications for his account of the place of violence in a liberal world order. Throughout, we will see how Mill's arguments and actions are permeated by presumptions about how liberal order relies on the reproduction of subjects with political agency, who combine the capacity to choose (freedom) with the capacity to discriminate (judgement). These are line-drawing subjects *par excellence*.

## <H1>Mill, liberalism, civilization, and corruption</H1>

Traditionally there has been a tendency to split the reading of Mill's oeuvre between different disciplines: *Utilitarianism* was studied in moral philosophy; *On Liberty* and *Considerations On Representative Government* in political science; the essays on self-determination,

**Commented [CE1]:** Does the use of both of these terms require brief explanation here as to their specificity in this context? On reflection, I think just delete 'affects' and leave it at 'costs, benefits and effects'

imperialism, and intervention in International Relations (IR); *System of Logic* in philosophy of science and social science. In relation to Mill's political theory, this encouraged partial and disconnected accounts of his work, which missed or glossed over his support for what appear to be the potentially conflicting goals of individual liberty, national self-determination, settler colonization, and British rule in India. More recent scholarship has looked at Mill's work more holistically and contextually, and has shown that what rendered all of these positions compatible for Mill was his commitment to a particular vision of human flourishing.<sup>5</sup> In *Utilitarianism*, Mill argued for certain amendments to Bentham's version of the principle of utility. He accepted that the principle underlying moral judgement and action should be that one should act in such a way as to maximize the greatest happiness (pleasure) of the greatest number of people. Unlike Bentham, however, Mill rejected a quantitative understanding of the concept of happiness. Instead he introduced the idea of different 'qualities' of pleasure, some things were more worthwhile than others. And the way to work out which pleasures were more worthwhile was through processes of trial and error, as in the experimental method that revealed truths about the natural world. For Mill, the centrality of individual liberty as a value was due to the link between freedom and the capacity to know and pursue the good of all.

Mill makes progress, in all fields including politics, dependent on the capacity to distinguish between 'higher' and 'lower' pleasures and on the freedom to exercise that capacity independently in the ongoing search for goods that are worthwhile. Moral and political

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<sup>5</sup> See Robson (ed.) (1965–91). Mill's works that are particularly relevant to the interpretation given here, and to the concerns of this chapter are: *Civilisation* (1836); *Principles of Political Economy* (1848); *A Few Words on Non-Intervention* (1859); *On Liberty* (1859); *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861); *Utilitarianism* (1863). There has been a tremendous revival of scholarship on Mill in recent years, in all aspects of his thought, including on the question of the relation between liberalism and imperialism in his work and life.

superiority, therefore, are not related to some essential list of attributes or qualities, but to capacities that manifest themselves in the activity of using freedom well. It is in this context that he is able to be a passionate proponent of individual and collective self-determination, whilst at the same time defending colonialism, imperial rule, and expressing deep concerns about the corrupting effects of mass society and majority rule. For Mill, the pursuit of truth through experimentation, necessary for maximizing the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is enabled through maximizing individual freedom, which is in turn enabled through political arrangements in which political communities are self-determining. However, this only works if individuals have the capacity to learn from the experimentation that becomes possible in conditions of liberty (Mill in Robson, 1965–91: 224, 118–19, 122). To give freedom to those unable to benefit from it would be pointless. This means that it is necessary to identify criteria by which to discriminate between those with the character to support a liberal domestic and international order, and those without (Ball, 2000).

In an early work, Mill links his criteria for judging the character of individual and collective subjects to the notion of 'civilisation' (Mill in Robson, 1965–91: XVIII). For him, civilization has two meanings: first, it means the attainment of liberal subjectivity as identified above (normative); second, it means levels of economic and social development (descriptive). A particular state may be more civilized than others in the latter sense, but not support civilization in the former sense, but not vice versa. On Mill's account, it is not possible for 'savage' communities, with minimal wealth, cooperative relations and infrastructure to support improvement in the higher sense of the attainment of liberal subjectivity. The way to judge whether people (or peoples) were in a position to learn (civilize in the normative sense)—that is to say, to use their liberty for maximizing the good of all—was to see whether they valued liberty, and would be capable of preserving it for that greater good as opposed

to using it arbitrarily or for purposes of immediate gratification. Civilization in the higher, normative sense was not a necessary consequence of civilization in the more descriptive sense, but Mill still saw the most highly economically developed state of his day (Britain) as a more fertile ground of civilization (normative) than other civilized (descriptive) states. This is evident in his support for settler colonialism by English, Welsh, and Scots (not Irish) on normative as well as descriptive civilizational grounds (Bell, 2010).

Mill drew distinctions between those who were ready for self-government (more civilized—descriptively and normatively) and those who were not (less civilized—descriptively and normatively). In cases where people/ peoples were not yet ready for self-government, those populations needed to be educated into an awareness of the responsibilities of liberty and how to exercise those responsibilities appropriately. Such tutoring was the business of those already in possession of the capacity to use freedom wisely. By definition, these tutors were drawers of lines and their civilized character was tied up with their ability to identify the civilized from the barbarian in the first place. Mill's political views on self-determination, colonialism, and empire were not static. In particular, and as discussed below, there is evidence that his views on colonialism changed. Nevertheless, at any given time his opinion on appropriate modes of government in different parts of the world was bound up with the distinction between those who had the capacity to put freedom to good use and those who did not.

Some of the contemporary struggles for national self-determination in Europe fulfilled Mill's standard of civilization, as did settler communities in British colonies. In his view, these were people/ peoples who had demonstrated not only their commitment to liberty, but also their suitability for it. Thus we find Mill supporting Hungarian struggles for self-determination, and waxing lyrical about the capacity of British colonies, such as New Zealand, to become

exemplary laboratories of human progress. At the same time, however, Mill defended the need for British rule in India in the long term, and rejected the Irish as suitable immigrants into the colonies on the grounds that they neither sought nor could properly benefit from liberty. Even in Britain, the advanced colonial power, Mill had persistent worries that the masses had yet to develop sufficiently for political power to be put in their hands, and that the ruling classes were collapsing into 'moral effeminacy' bred by wealth, leisure, poor education, and the lack of incentive to struggle for improvement (Levin, 2004).<sup>6</sup>

Commentators disagree about how to interpret the connection between liberalism as a mode of political and economic organization, and colonial and imperial rule, in Mill's thought. Some argue that, given the developmental nature of his reading of the relationship between people/ peoples, liberty and the good of all, Mill's liberalism is ultimately antithetical to colonialism and imperialism. This reading stresses the *contingency* of the relation between liberalism and colonialism/ imperialism on Mill's account. Others see Mill's standard of civilization as a proxy for a taken-for-granted racial hierarchy in world order, which *fixes* his liberalism in a permanent dualism between liberal order in one part of the world and imperial paternalism in the rest (Varouxakis, 2002, 2005). In my view, however, it is more illuminating to focus not on the consistency or otherwise of Mill's opinions about international political order, but on his underlying understanding of the necessary relation between liberal order and character, and of the practical implications of this understanding.

Smits (2008) argues that Mill's view on settler colonization changed over time. Whereas initially, Mill's enthusiasm for British settlement in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada was justified equally on economic and civilizational grounds, towards the end of his life he

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<sup>6</sup> See also Mantena, 2010; Smits, 2008; Bell, 2010; 'John Stuart Mill on the Antipodes: settler violence against indigenous peoples and the legitimacy of colonial rule', *Australian Journal of Politics and History*, 54, 1–15.

changed his mind about the civilizational dimension. This followed, Smits argues, his increasing realization 'that the practice of imperial rule inevitably subverts what he saw as its progressive potential' (Smits, 2008: 3). Whilst not accepting the view that Mill entirely abandoned support for settler colonization, Bell suggests a similar pattern, arguing that if one examines Mill's views on colonialism over time, he shifts from a 'romantic' moment of enthusiasm to a 'melancholic' moment of disillusionment. This shift is explained as a reaction to cases of colonial violence towards indigenous populations in New Zealand, and cases of what Mill deemed to be excessive violence in reprisals against challengers to the rule by imperial and colonial powers in India after the sepoy-led uprising in 1859 and in Jamaica after rioting over the conditions of free black workers in 1865 (Bell, 2010). I will go on to suggest that this shift in Mill's position is interesting not because it can resolve the question of whether or not his liberalism is essentially connected to imperialism as a mode of world order, but because of what it tells us about liberal subjectivity and its implications.

It is important to note here that Mill was not an armchair political theorist, but an active politician, a member of Parliament, and with an important role in the British public sphere of his time. His earlier views on colonization were manifested in active support for colonial settlement policies and for self-government for settler colonial peoples. His arguments in favour of colonization were bound up with his dual understanding of civilization. On the one hand, he thought that colonial settlement would enable economic and social development, and on the other hand, he thought that the right kind of immigrants would also bring civilization in its higher sense, making the settler colonies laboratories for universal human improvement (Reeves, 2007; Miller, 2005). Although colonial violence (for instance genocide in Tasmania) was part and parcel of settler colonization during the period of Mill's most

enthusiastic advocacy for it, it was not something he explicitly acknowledged or discussed (Smits, 2008).

Mill's later doubts about colonialism were a response to what appeared to be a rather belated grasp of the practical effects of the self-understanding of colonial settlers. He had himself consistently argued for the superiority of these civilized communities in relation to indigenous and other peoples. But he reckoned without the effects of this self-understanding on the ways in which colonial settlers interacted with the people they displaced or over whom they ruled. In this context it seemed that the affirmation of liberal subjectivity, the drawing of the line between truth and error, civilized and barbarian, encouraged a punitive rather than a pedagogic relation to the subordinate populations. Mill's response to what he saw as the excesses of the Governor Eyre of Jamaica (Hall, 2002), who ordered a draconian response to civil unrest, was to move into punitive mode himself. Eyre needed to be punished because he had acted like a barbarian. In this respect, Mill affirmed his own liberal subjectivity through leading the campaign against Eyre (Hall, 1992), thus confirming in practice his capacity to draw lines in the right kind of way. At the heart of this particular example of line drawing was the capacity to distinguish and enact the difference between legitimate and illegitimate violence (Hall, 2002; Miller, 2005).

Mill did not give up on the idea that colonialism could be a force for good, but he preserved his commitment to it through his capacity to make a double discrimination. This was expressed by on the one hand drawing a line between civilized and barbarian, and on the other by drawing a line between reasonable and barbaric uses of violence in response to challenges to colonial or imperial power. The civilizational language in which Mill articulates this double discrimination is interestingly gendered. Whereas the first dimension of discrimination situates the liberal subject as father and tutor, the latter situates him as

protector and punisher. The self-evident quality of the gendered terms of Mill's discourse provides a gloss on the ways in which normative and descriptive elements in Mill's position are entangled. And they also provide a sense of self-certainty for liberal subjectivity that is lacking in Mill's more abstract accounts of liberal perfectionism. It seems that liberal subjectivity simultaneously enacts paternalistic masculinity in contrast to the feminized, child-like ignorance of the barbarian other, whilst at the same time allowing liberal subjectivity to enact chivalrous, law-governed masculinity in contrast to the hyper-masculinized barbarism of wilful error.

As explained above, for Mill, liberty is a requirement for the pursuit of the greater good, but liberty without the capacity to use it wisely is ultimately worthless. Everything therefore depends on the capacity to draw lines between civilized (those capable of using liberty well) and uncivilized (those who would transform liberty into mere consumerism or arbitrary power). The liberal subject, by definition, is one capable of judgement in the light of the greater good, on behalf of all. Mill exemplifies this, from the line he draws between the pig's happiness (lower pleasure) and that of Socrates (higher pleasure), to the one he draws between India (in need of imperial rule) and Britain (ready for genuine self-government), or the Irish (bad immigrants) and the Scots (good immigrants). But what does it mean to be a subject whose affirmation of self-identity (the capacity for judgement) is simultaneously the affirmation of superiority? At the theoretical level Mill was not dogmatic, but believed that judgements in relation to the greater good could and should be revised in the light of experience. But the very capacity to revise his judgements and redraw his lines was itself evidence of the superiority of liberal self-identity. The drawing of lines is perpetual, and it always divides up the world into truth and error, the knowledgeable and the ignorant.



In Mill's later work and political activism, he condemned colonial cruelty and recognized that it stemmed from the conviction of superiority on the part of the colonizers. But, for Mill, this confirmed rather than disturbed his view that you had to be the right kind of person, the right *character*, to be able to sustain liberal order. The right character was one who could understand and enact educative and punitive responsibilities towards the other (those in error) in appropriate ways (be teacher, father, protector, avenger), even when the results of enacting those responsibilities challenged liberal expectations and assumptions. Eyre had started his imperial career as a paternalistic defender of the rights of indigenous people and a fierce opponent of the whip, yet he ended it with ordering a bloodbath of hanging and flogging (Hall, 2002). For Mill, this exemplified a corruption of character into illiberalism of the worst sort. By leading the prosecution of Eyre, Mill enacted a specifically *liberal* response to a crisis in liberal empire, one that reaffirmed his claim to civilization in his capacity to distinguish between justified and unjustified violence in a way that Eyre could (or did) not. Only the liberal subject is able to determine the point at which judgement is corrupted, and only the liberal subject is one whose judgement is not either ignorant or corrupt.

Mill, the exemplary liberal subject, was faced with the continuous responsibility to draw and redraw the line between liberal and non-liberal. Paradoxically, therefore, this placed on him a continuous responsibility to confirm, through his judgements and action, his superior character in relation to others who either did not understand or wilfully rejected liberal values and institutions. The assumption of the eventual perfectibility of all subjects in Mill's thought presents constant dilemmas for the liberal subject prior to the achievement of a universal liberal condition, and in particular when other subjects prove recalcitrant in the face of the projection of liberal values and institutions. There is no substantive meaning to the nature of the liberal subject, only a capacity for discrimination that is confirmed in its own exercise as

part of an ongoing project of improvement through experiment and learning. What remains constant, however, is that this process of discrimination is always involved in reproducing what liberal subjects *are not*. The figures of the ignorant and the wicked are essential to the learning process envisaged by Mill, and they acquire meaning for us through the gendered civilizational tropes in which they are presented to us as the catalysts and foils of progress.

### <H1>Sustaining the liberal peace</H1>

In what follows I will argue that, regardless of whether one interprets the current world order in explicitly imperial terms or not, it is certainly one that is sustained by the production and reproduction of liberal subjects in Mill's sense. That is to say, by the production and reproduction of subjects with the capacity to draw hierarchical lines between themselves and those whose line-drawing capacity is either underdeveloped (feminized victim barbarians) or corrupted (masculinized perpetrator barbarians). This is evident in mechanisms for establishing and sustaining liberal peace that have risen to prominence in the post-Cold War era, such as humanitarian intervention, peacekeeping, peace building and state building (Towns, 2009). In particular, military humanitarianism and the use of force for progressive regime change, which bring together paternal and pedagogic dimensions of humanitarianism with the discriminate use of violence, have been marked by the return of gendered civilizational language very strongly reminiscent of Mill (Young, 2003). The failures and successes of individual and collective liberal international actors have repeatedly represented and enacted the distinction of the liberal subject from backward (helpless and ignorant) peoples on the one hand, and corrupt holders of power on the other. As in Mill's case, the uses and abuses of violence and coercion in a context legitimated in terms of education and punishment provide a fertile ground for reaffirming who counts as a liberal subject and who does not.

The authority of the liberal just warrior, whether in the person of the political leader representing a state or in that of a soldier on the ground, is dependent on his capacity to draw lines between himself and victim/ perpetrator others. When former British Prime Minister Tony Blair justified the NATO bombing in Kosovo in 1999, he utilized a gendered civilizational language to explain the meaning of liberal international order and his own place, as well as his state's, within it. Setting aside the arguments as to whether or not—from the point of view of the liberal subject—intervention was justified in this case, the ordering effects that the intervention produced confirmed and reinforced a hierarchical relationship between the liberal subject and both the victims he sought to protect and the perpetrators he sought to punish. It could even be said that the more the legitimacy of the Kosovo action was challenged, the more the liberal subject became invested in affirming his superiority, that is to say, his capacity to draw lines that others were unable to draw, such as an innovative line between legality and legitimacy. The attitude of the NATO powers on the reluctance to endorse the action in Kosovo of Russia and China, interestingly replicates Mill's view as to the incapacity of these two civilizations (descriptive sense) to encourage civilization (normative sense) (Wheeler, 2001).

In general, examples of military humanitarian intervention or of uses of violence justified to some extent in humanitarian terms (as in Afghanistan and Iraq) in the post-Cold War era have witnessed the proliferation of practices of line drawing, from academic reworkings of just war theory (Barnett and Weiss, 2008; Duncanson, 2009) to decisions on vulnerability taken by peacekeepers or humanitarian workers (Carpenter, 2003; Price, 2008). Particular instances of line drawing are always contestable, and provoke endless arguments about where and how to draw the line. Ultimately, however, the point is always that a line must be drawn (otherwise we are all barbarians) and that those who draw that line must have the capacity to do so. The

only way you know that you can draw the line is by drawing it, and thus the liberal subject finds himself or herself constantly reinscribing hierarchical distinctions in his or her interaction with others and how that interaction is characterized. This operates at the level of political leadership, in which the liberal nature of states, peoples, or policies is affirmed in their condemnation of and sanctions against illiberal states, peoples, or policies. And it also operates at the level of the myriad of practices entailed by the liberal peace, from the training of soldiers to the organization of humanitarian relief. In all of these contexts, relations of superiority and inferiority are reproduced in response to the actual, political consequences of the violent international projection of liberalism as a form of rule, of legal, economic, and social organization, or as a package of values suitable for all.

For the purposes of illustration, let us assume that a set of actors engaged in military humanitarianism in various ways are not hypocrites but are, like Mill, liberal perfectionists aiming to produce a world in which subjects are able to use freedom well. Such actors include politicians, journalists, soldiers, and humanitarian workers. In all of these cases, the one thing that cannot characterize practice or discourse, even if it may be stated to be the overall aim of the intervention, is an assumption of equality between the liberal actors and the others involved. All of these actors must represent victims as unable to help themselves, perpetrators as incapable of drawing the line between legitimate and illegitimate violence, and themselves as embodying the capacity to tell the difference between civilization and barbarism and put it to work. These representations are enacted in processes of rescue, from establishing safe havens to providing food, in many different schemes and instruments for post-conflict state building and democratization, in the killing and capture of those defined as illegitimate fighters. In each of these practices, liberal subjects meet and confirm their relation to non-liberal or illiberal others, and play out this relation in a variety of ways. These quotidian

encounters spin off in several directions, producing latter-day Eyres and Mills in the process.

For example, prison guards at Abu Ghraib play out one fate of liberal subjectivity in the face of a recalcitrant population; lawyers, determining legitimate targets on the battlefield, play out another. At stake are the seemingly unavoidable, mutually exclusive alternatives of the corruption of liberal subjectivity on the one hand or its constant reinvention on the other.

This is evident in the interminable drawing and redrawing of the lines that distinguish the rescuer from the rescued and from the threat in response to actual events. Killing civilians, bombing the wrong (illegitimate) targets, and the human rights abuses that have been associated with aspects of the liberal peace, rather than undermining its claims, effectively reinforce liberal self-understanding and its hierarchical relation to its others. Such phenomena, like Eyre's abusive treatment of the black population of Jamaica, provide an occasion for the reinvention of the distinctively liberal capacity to draw lines in conditions of freedom. Killing civilians is something that we minimize (as *they* do not). Bombing the wrong targets is regrettable but at least we recognize that there are such things as wrong (illegitimate) targets (as *they* do not). Abusing prisoners is wrong, but *they* (the abusers) are corrupt and wicked as *we* are not. And all of these discriminations are backed up by an array of practices and technologies: civilians are evacuated and the departure of the women and children is witnessed, lawyers advise on the legitimacy of targets, weapons are 'smart', prison guards are audited and regulated, and all those individuals involved continually encounter others in terms of the divisions that those practices institutionalize between those with the capacity to discriminate and those without.

One particularly interesting context in this regard is the context of peacekeeping and peace enforcement, which has grown massively as a responsibility of the international community over the past twenty years (Duncanson, 2009). On the face of it, such operations exemplify

the difference between Mill's world and the current world order. Most peacekeepers on the ground are not citizens of 'advanced' liberal states, and the point of the exercise is to stop the fighting and potentially make space for longer-term solutions to ongoing conflict, not to either educate or punish the local population. Nevertheless, peacekeeping practices have been shown to reinscribe liberal subjectivity in ways that reflect Mill's gendered civilizational terms. The purpose of peacekeeping operations is protective and preservative, not aggressive, and the individual peacekeeper therefore needs to reorient the military priorities of normal soldiering. One of the ways in which this is done is to make sense of the mission in terms of familiar oppositions between the liberal subject, victim, and perpetrator. Training for peacekeepers presents peacekeeping practice as the enactment of chivalrous masculinity, contrasted to helplessness on the one hand (women and children), and indiscriminate violence on the other (parties to the conflict). The everyday enactment of this form of military masculinity confirms the superiority of the peacekeeper and potentially legitimates a variety of hierarchical relations between peacekeepers and locals, some more benign than others.

Some peacekeeping missions have been characterized by major abuse of locals, far more have been characterized by involvement in black markets and prostitution. These dramatic and everyday corruptions have provided the occasion for the reinscription of liberal subjectivity as the capacity to discriminate, a reinscription given an interesting twist in that it is largely (though not entirely) peacekeeping troops from poor, postcolonial states who are identified as in need of discipline, whether of an educative or punitive kind. Once more the wheel identified and perpetuated by Mill is reinvented. Practices designed to improve the world have corrupting consequences that must be addressed through further practices designed to improve the world. And each time, the hierarchy between some people (usually the same ones) and others (usually the same ones) is reaffirmed.

## <H1>Conclusion</H1>

Mill's perfectionism and contemporary liberal internationalism both hold out the promise of a world in which freedom is well used. In doing this, they legitimate modes of political rule and social and economic organization that will best enable the simultaneous development of freedom and wisdom. Where there is already some kind of track record of the capacity to use freedom wisely, then free markets, individual rights, collective self-determination, and democratic government are recommended. But where barbarism, through ignorance or corruption, is in place then a tutelary or punitive relation between the more and the less civilized should prevail. In terms of the ideology of liberal perfectionism, this is a passing phase, no population is essentially attached to barbarism—and universal progress is possible. But in terms of its practice, liberal perfectionism reproduces and reinforces hierarchies even as it sets itself to overcome them. In this respect, it grounds the ongoing legitimation of inequalities of power and resources at the international level. It is difficult to find examples of liberal progress that do not simultaneously inscribe relations of superiority and inferiority between particular actors. This suggests that even if liberal world order need not be imperial, it will always be unequal, and will therefore always carry seeds of imperialism within it.