

CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS ON MILL'S THEORY OF DEMOCRACY: A PHILOSOPHICAL EVALUATION

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Abstract

This paper critically evaluates the democratic theory of John Stuart Mill, its normative foundations, contemporary defenses as well as highlights the critiques of his position on democracy. In works such as Consideration on Representative Government and On Liberty, Mill advances a particular model of representative democracy clearly designed not merely for administrative or governance efficiency and convenience but for the intellectual and moral development of all citizens of the state. Mill's conception of democracy is highly anchored on utilitarian ideology that prioritizes both the collective well-being and the individual liberty. The study employed the philosophical method of analysis to evaluate Mill's highly challenged democratic ideology. Mill did his best as a democrat to see how to safeguard the individual's right, freedom and liberty, but, amidst its critical, philosophical and intellectual depth and significance, Mill's democratic thought attracted and generated key several substantial criticisms, highly challenged and fought against by critics. His opponents contend that his defense of plural voting undermines, contradicts and compromises the egalitarian democratic foundations of political equality by favouring the privileged intellectual class and/or elites. Some feminists also criticized him and spotted his contradictions and inconsistency between his progressive arguments on the rights of women in the The Subjugation of Women and the elements of paternalism that consistently showcases its face within his broader theoretical framework. Postcolonial critics question the inconsistency in-between Mill's commitment to his justification of imperial domination over societies he tagged less developed and to liberty, hence, arguing on the authenticity and possibility of his democratic principles and ideals. Contemporary theorists also further criticized his several inconsistencies by questioning the actual feasibility of his numerous emphases on rational, political apathy as well as informed participation in the modern mass democracies reddened by inequality. The paper concludes by arguing that although Mill's democratic theory remains foundational to liberal political ideology and continues to create liberal democratic discourse amongst scholars and political thinkers due to its emphasis on political participation, civic responsibility and on liberty, its lacks and limitations reveals significant tensions between historical universal democratic values, equality, collective decision-making, meritocracy, inclusivity, individual liberty and global justice principles. Hence, by engaging critically Mill's ideas and contributions, appraisals and critiques, the study demonstrates that his theory continues amidst all odds to be a valuable insight to evolving contemporary global

challenges and democratic governance in the human continents.

Keywords: Individual liberty, Equality, Justice, Fairness, Subjugation of Women, Political Participation, Global Democratic Values

Introduction

Philosophy began in the ancient Greek cities with an inquiry into the ultimate cause of all things. This would later diversify into different aspects of human enquiries and endeavors. These enquiries did not leave out the area of politics and one of the concepts in politics that have occupied the thoughts and minds of philosophers of all era is the area of democracy. Hence, this study does not focus only on John Stuart Mill's concept of democracy, but also has a general overview of other philosophers' views and contributions on the concept of democracy. Our main point of reference and purpose here is to bring out the complexity of the problem, and not to pronounce any final verdict on it. Political philosophy can only provide certain provisional solution or a working formula in the light of our understanding of a particular given situation, but debate on the subject matter must go on at any point in time notwithstanding.

Following our subject matter on Mill's democratic theory, it is then crucial to note that so many thinkers or philosophers have in their different ways tackled this problem in their best ways of understanding it, and what in their own views and mindsets the term democracy is all about. Therefore, let us expose, evaluate and analyze the several notions and conceptions concerning democracy according to our selected and chosen prominent political thinkers of choice, in order to see where their views are similar as well as dissimilar to Mill's own notion of the matter in question for more understanding and clarification.

A careful review of the concept of democracy in this study would begin with John Stuart Mill himself. Mill lived between 20th May, 1806 and 8th May, 1873. He was an English philosopher, political economist and a civil servant. One of the most influential thinkers in the history of liberalism, he contributed widely to social theory, political theory and political economy. He was regarded as the most influential English-speaking philosopher of the nineteenth century. Mill's writings of (1806-1873) reveal that he was acutely aware of the fact that he lived in a time of great change. The industrial revolution was changing the old economic order and new political movements challenged the traditional ways of doing politics. In Mill's view the fundamental aspect of these changes was that the masses were gaining more power. This meant, in turn, that democracy was becoming ever more powerful. Since the phrase democracy can be given different meanings at all times, it is necessary to first explain what Mill meant by it.

Mill was an ardent Benthamite in his youth. He eventually came to consider Bentham's philosophy as too narrow, but he did retain many of the basic tenets of Bentham's thought. Mill thought that Bentham's greatest weakness as a philosopher was that he did not care much about the ideas of others. But this self-reliance was precisely the characteristic which allowed Bentham to expose the common law system to devastating criticism. Mill also retained his belief in utilitarianism, even though he revised the theory extensively. He

thought that Bentham had not adequately dealt with the criticism aimed at utilitarianism. Mill wanted to show that utilitarianism did not imply that the only goal in life should be maximizing one's own pleasures. He said the aim was the maximization of the pleasures of everybody. Mill also emphasized that the pleasures aimed at did not have to be bodily pleasures. In fact, for him, the most pleasurable experiences could be gained from philosophy and art. He stated that it was also important that utilitarianism provided an alternative to the notion of natural rights. This work demonstrates contemporary defenses and democratic reinterpretations of the democratic theory of Mill, with more focus on the way recent political scholars accepted his viewpoints to examine the institutional and normative challenges of the modern liberal democracies. His theory developed in one of his master works *Considerations on Representative Government* and also *On Liberty* joined together a very strong personal commitment to individual liberty, educational political participation and handling democracy as a powerful means used to cultivate citizen's moral capacities and intellectual capabilities.

Mill and Other Influential Philosophers on His Concept of Democracy

In the beginning of *On Liberty*, Mill made it clear that his understanding of individual liberties was not based on some notion of abstract rights that were independent of utility. Mill's conception of [liberty](#) justified the freedom of the individual in opposition to unlimited state and social control. About a century and half after its appearance, *On Liberty* remains the classic defense of individual freedom and the open society. Mill, in his work on human happiness and development stated that individuality is one of the elements of well-being. Liberty enables people to cultivate their faculties and develop their character, making it essential for genuine human happiness and social progress rather than merely satisfying immediate desires.¹

Human happiness for Mill is the greatest good which is only possible in any state that maintains free society and protection of individuality, where individuals are at clear liberty to make personal decisions about their lives and how they live. In these decisions, what to do, what to think, what to say, what to read and what to write, are all embedded in it and should be free from any state interference of any kind, and must be left to the actual discretion of individuals directly involved. Believing that discussion, debate, and diversity were essential to the progress of society, hence, Mill called for a bigger degree for individual expression and even encouraged experiments in human living by opining that the only purpose for which power can be rightfully exercised over any member of a civilized community, against his will, is to prevent harm to others. His own good, ether physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. Over himself, over his own body and mind, the individual is sovereign.² For Mill, as long as individuals respect the rights of others people, they should be allowed unrestrictedly to think and live and do their things in the best way suitable for them and as they choose. Some beliefs and ways of living obviously might be far better than the other, but it is improper for the state to regulate such matters because it is purely personal to people.

Consequently, unlike classical liberals, Mill did not base his argument for liberty on natural right, but on utility or the 'greatest happiness' principle. While this led him into some

curious criticisms, his strong defense of individual liberty and self-determination place him in the vanguard of most liberal political thinkers. *Considerations on Representative Government* as one of his major works is sometimes characterized as the mold into which Mill poured out the principles contained in *On Liberty*. With the belief that a government is never neutral in its effects, Mill proposed a number of broad reforms designed to be a better form of representation for the electorate, improve the quality of representatives and give intellectuals a dominant role in legislating. Basically, Mill envisioned an administrative state in which an elite bureaucracy would govern with the advice and consent of the legislature whose principal function was to serve as a check and balance on the executive. He did embrace popular government for its tendency to galvanize the energies of the people as well as encourage self-reliance and public-spiritedness. For Mill, some advanced republic represents the ideal. He did not, however, believe this model was suitable for less advanced peoples, whose level of development might require more autocratic system and methods. There was some ambivalence regarding Mill's approach to self-regarding and other-regarding actions. Mill wrote that people had the right to express their disapproval of self-regarding acts and he even maintained that these sentiments should be expressed more often. Mill's commitment to defending individual liberties can be questioned as regards the pressure of the public. This aspect is present in Joseph Hamburger's interpretation of *On Liberty*, in which Hamburger emphasizes the elitist sentiment in Mill's thought. Hamburger claimed that Mill accepted the controlling of self-regarding acts by public opinion, if the opinions of the public were influenced by the intellectuals.³

Furthermore, the connection between Mill's elitism and liberty is clearer in his views on representative government. J. H. Burns has claimed that, Mill was after all not much of a democrat because he was so concerned with limiting the influence of state on the individual.⁴ The interpretations given by Hamburger and Burns have of course been challenged by Mill's defenders. Burns wrote about the development of Mill's views on democracy in his two articles on *J.S. Mill and Democracy* between 1829 and 1861. Burns claimed that:

In the early 1830s Mill had thought that the uneducated would simply recognize that the more educated deserved to have the political power. However, in the mid-1830s Mill's views changed and he became convinced that a rival power had to be created to resist the influence of public opinion, since it was no longer certain that the majority would defer to their superiors. Mill claimed that a permanent antagonism between the public and the educated elite was necessary, because otherwise human progress would end.⁵

Burns maintained that Mill's democratic thought was thoroughly elitist. In the 1830s he thought that the majority of the people could not really understand political issues. Their duty as voters was to recognize which individuals could be trusted with political power and then vote them in to govern and represent them. Dennis Thompson, on the other hand, claimed in his book *John Stuart Mill and Representative Government* that Mill could be seen as a proponent of some kind of participatory democracy. Thompson did not deny the elitist element in Mill's thought but said that Burns had exaggerated its significance. In the

later writings from the 1850s and 1860s Mill dropped his claim that the people could not understand political issues. On the contrary, he considered it very important that everybody should participate in politics. In Thompson's view, Mill wanted to strike a balance between participation and competence, public and elite opinion.⁶ Thompson even claimed further that Mill was not completely committed to plural votes for the educated.⁷ But Burns, on the other hand, considered Mill's support for plural voting as a crucial evidence of his elitism since plural voting implied that people were not equal.

Additionally, Joseph Hamburger criticized in his book *John Stuart Mill on Liberty and Control, the traditional interpretations of On Liberty*. In Hamburger's view, the individual liberties Mill wrote about in *On Liberty* were meant for the intellectuals, who could use the liberties to further the moral reform of mankind.⁸ This interpretation was based on the fact that Mill allowed individuals to express their contempt for self-regarding actions they did not approve of. Before public opinion became enlightened enough, only the educated had the right to express their contempt for self-regarding acts. Once public opinion had become more enlightened by the influence of the intellectuals, it could also control self-regarding acts.

Hamburger claimed that in *On Liberty* Mill expressed his negative view of the existing public opinion while in other writings he envisioned conditions where a more enlightened opinion controlled the conduct of individuals. He said that Mill's more benign evaluation of public opinion is at most only obscurely present in *On Liberty*, yet it is an important part of his moral and political thought. Therefore, one must also read Mill's other writings in order to completely understand his views about it.⁹ An example of Mill's more benign evaluation of public opinion was his opposition to secret voting. Mill could not be against the pressure from public opinion since he specifically said it should be exerted on the voters.

More so, among the traditional interpretations on Mill that Hamburger criticized was the one given by C. L. Ten in *Mill on Liberty*. Ten claimed that Mill wrote *On Liberty* because he wanted individual liberties for everybody and thought that public opinion threatened these liberties. But this was because Mill made a distinction between legitimate and illegitimate interference. Mill allowed the expression of one's opinions, but not moral coercion of public opinion.¹⁰ Ten did recognize the fact that Mill encouraged people to express their contempt also for self-regarding acts. Hamburger was not the first scholar to claim that Mill was ultimately quite illiberal; Maurice Cowling did so in *Mill and Liberalism*, published in 1963. Gertrude Himmelfarb, on the other hand, wrote in *On Liberty and Liberalism*, first published in 1974, that *On Liberty* promoted some form of extreme individualism by opining that, the essay represented only one phase in Mill's intellectual life, since both before and after its publication Mill had expressed more conservative and elitist views.¹¹

Hamburger's interpretation bears some resemblance to these earlier ideas. He claimed that Cowling had correctly emphasized the illiberal side of Mill's thought, but had still exaggerated it, since Mill was, as the title of Hamburger's book suggested, concerned with both liberty and control. The main argument of Hamburger's interpretation was totally

contrary to the one given by Himmelfarb because Hamburger tried to show how Mill's illiberal side was expressed also in *On Liberty*, while Himmelfarb emphasized how *On Liberty* differed from the other writings of Mill, unlike Hamburger who did not do so. Ten had already criticized the earlier interpretations of the elitist elements in Mill's work in *On Liberty*. Consequently, a direct reply to Hamburger's criticism was given by him in the article *Was Mill a Liberal?* Ten claimed that, even though Hamburger had managed to create a quite sophisticated and original interpretation of Mill's writings his claims were still deeply flawed.¹² Regardless of the value of Hamburger's interpretation as a whole; he made some valid and significant points, pointing out the fact that Mill allowed public opinion to pressure voters since he opposed the secret ballot. It should be noted that voting was an other-regarding acts and in *On Liberty* Mill was concerned with how public opinion could interfere with self-regarding acts. In *On Liberty* Mill described public opinion in this manner:

Society can and does execute its own mandate: and if it issues wrong mandates instead of right, or any mandates at all in things with which it ought not to meddle, it practices a social tyranny more formidable than many kind of political oppression. If all mankind minus one were of one opinion, and only one person were of the contrary opinion, mankind would be no more justified in silencing that one person than he, if he had the power, would be justified in silencing mankind.¹³

Jeremy Waldron who evaluated Mill's appearance and testimony in 1871 before a Royal Commission established to assess the Contagious Diseases Acts, which required public supervision of the health of prostitutes, especially those frequented by soldiers. Mill's testimony to the Commission according to Waldron is interesting because one might have assumed that he would have approved of these laws. Their aim was to regulate prostitution in naval towns, in an effort to cut the incidence of sexually transmitted disease and infections amongst the armed forces. Looking at it from this light, the laws, as Waldron notes would appear quite consistent with the approach to legislation that Mill defends in *On Liberty*.¹⁴ Yet Mill opposes these laws. Like many feminists, he objects to the way that they target women only, who would face, if they are suspected of prostitution, an invasive physical examination and scrutiny. For Mill, whatever 'harm prevention' the laws might achieve, they do not justify treating women in this invidious manner and fashion. Hence, Mill argues in the Contagious Diseases Acts issue thus, I object to the Acts because they violate the security of personal liberty. I do not think it is part of the business of Government to provide securities beforehand.¹⁵ For Mill, government should not in any way deprive women of their fundamental right and liberty through any preventive measure, legislation, or coercion just because they were just suspected of carrying a disease.

However, faced with Mill's doggedness, unacceptability and puzzling hostility to the Contagious Diseases Acts, Waldron considers three possibilities by opining that Mill changed his mind subsequent to writing *On Liberty*; Mill is here balancing harms - the harm of forcing various women to undergo a physical examination against the harm of sexually-diseased sailors; and lastly, Mill objects to the unfair distribution of liberty that results from

these Acts.¹⁶ Waldron tries to show that Mill ultimately relies on an argument from the distribution of liberty. On this note, Mill's political theory contains a prototype of current arguments employed by constitutional lawyers to criticize the discriminatory impact of legislation on specific groups of citizens. Thus, if Waldron is right, then Mill's political theory is certainly more pertinent to contemporary political debates than we might have thought of it. This act had provoked intense opposition, especially from an influential group of feminist activists who argued that they licensed unwarranted intrusions and interference into women's privacy while entirely ignoring and tactically condoning and protecting their male counterparts. According to Waldron, Mill's testimony before the commission and his unequivocal opposition to the acts raise a number of questions about the 'Harm Principle' and about his willingness to endorse regulation of 'harmful' behavior.¹⁷ Waldron's analysis challenges common readings of the Harm Principle as well as the role of liberty in Mill's political thought, thereby drawing attention to Mill's concern about the fair *distribution* of liberty and restraint in society.

Basically, the apparent tensions between Mill's activities as a political actor and a political theorist led Dennis Thompson to pose the question: when is it justified for a politician of principle to accept or reject a compromise? Mill, as Thompson points out, was one of the few great political thinkers to have had a career as a politician. Mill was elected as a Member of Parliament for Westminster in 1865 and was voted out of office to his disappointment just three years later. Like Waldron, Thompson is struck by some of the positions that 'Mill the politician' adopts that seem very hard to square along with 'Mill the political theorist.' According to Thompson:

Mill's zealous prosecution of Governor Eyre is a case in point. Eyre's brutal suppression of the Jamaican rebellion earned him the censure of many liberal politicians. Mill, however, was unwilling to settle for any form of censure short of criminal prosecution. Mill's failure to compromise on this point - even in the face of evidence suggesting that the effort to prosecute Eyre would jeopardize the agreement on a lesser form of censure - was a factor in Mill's electoral defeat in 1868.¹⁸

Thompson notes here how Mill refused to consider the narrower political consequences of his efforts, even to the point of damning others in his party for acting from expediency, and fixating solely on the importance of upholding 'the principle of government by law.' In a suggestive concern to his essay, Thompson gathers together some precepts concerning the permissibility of politicians compromising their principles. He opined thus:

It's not clear, however, that this is an issue about which one can formulate a generalizable theory. Whether a compromise is justified surely depends on the relative likelihood of realizing, what might be termed principled gain as opposed to compromised gains. In this respect, a politician always labors in various degrees of darkness.¹⁹

Thompson uses Mill's brief career in Parliament as a way of studying the relationship between the theory and practice of representative democracy. His aim is to see what can be learned about the challenges a theorist faces when he enters politics and, more generally,

the challenges a theory confronts when one of its leading proponents and defenders tries to put it into practice. A number of contributors rest their case for Mill's enduring relevance and contributory significance on his keen awareness of the forms of domination present in modern society. A scenario exists here, however, because in contrast to most contemporary liberals thinkers, Mill allows that despotism can sometimes be a legitimate form of government as at were the need arises.

Nadia Urbinati also emphasizes the central role of the idea of subjection, domination or subjection in Mill's political thought. She approaches this theme through a study of Mill's treatment of despotism, which she takes to be the antithesis for Mill on liberty. According to her, despotism manifests itself in two related phenomena: on the one hand, absolute arbitrariness in the decisions of those who command; on the other, the exclusion of those who obey from participation in these decisions.²⁰ Urbinati shows that Mill applies the category despotism to Western and non-Western societies in a way that it's both classical and innovative. She argues that he uses despotism to understand both public and private relations and to justify reforms in political, economic, and familial life alike. She maintains, further, that Mill developed his concept of freedom through a critical examination of the effects and consequences of despotism on social, political and moral life of the citizens in the state.

Urbinati explores this tension in her illuminating essay. She shows how Mill differentiates between tyranny and despotism, and how he extends his critique of domination into areas where liberals even today do not like to delve in. One of Mill's most insightful critiques of domination can be seen in his various essays on the *Subjection of Women*, which Maria Morales discusses in her excellent essay. Morales, too, raises fundamental questions about the conventional readings of Mill's ideal of freedom. Her emphasis rests on Mill's *The Subjection of Women* and the conceptions of freedom and subjection that informed Mill's criticisms of Victorian gender relations. Morales systematically building upon her own important book on Mill's political thought and idea argues against the grain of scholarly convention that many of Mill's feminist concerns are dominance concerns that cannot be reduced to difference concerns. She demonstrates this point clearly by focusing on Mill's condemnations of domestic violence. Morales shows that Mill possesses a sophisticated understanding of the social pressure on women to present themselves as weak, dominated, and inferior as an essential part of sexual attractiveness.²¹ On this view, Mill is strikingly more modern and even post-modern as well in his understanding of the mechanisms of domination than generally recognized public-wise. While Morales is very sympathetic to Mill's critique of sexual domination, it might still be asked whether Mill actually appreciates human sexuality at all or to a reasonable extent. Hence, Morales argues that Mill is too often read simply as a liberal feminist concerned mainly with the achievement of formal equality and equal political rights for women. She maintains that Mill was in fact more focused on the problem of domination and patriarchal domination to be precise that cut cleanly across public and private life in the state. She advances a reading of Mill on freedom that better accommodates the argument of the *Subjection* and that has broad implications for his political work as a whole.

Additionally, Bruce Baum also explores Mill's theory of domination, although in the economic rather than the sexual sphere. In his systematically penetrating essay, Baum contends that Mill's political economy of freedom is consistent with a form of liberal socialism.²² Baum explores Mill's efforts to reconcile liberalism and socialism and in doing so discusses Mill's applications of the concept of freedom to economic life. He shows how Mill justified egalitarianism through appeal not to distributive justice or fairness, but to what Baum calls 'maximal economic freedom.' He also argues that Mill understood socialism to be quite continuous with liberalism and suggests therefore that Mill's works *on socialism* can help us better understand the nature of his liberal commitments. Baum maintains, further, that Mill's writing on socialism can offer moral resources to contemporary, egalitarian critics of market capitalism as they did to liberal socialists in earlier decades.²³ Baum's essay raises the crucial question whether individuals would have greater freedom by experiencing less domination in a socialist or a capitalist economic system. Part of the difficulty in answering this question is that 'freedom,' however it is conceptualized and recognized, is very hard to measure, and on this we simply don't know what particular variant of welfare capitalism or market socialism is likely to maximize freedom in its real sense. It is also worth remembering that for Mill 'happiness' not freedom, although closely related, is the ultimate value of human life and existence. Hence, to carefully assess Mill's institutional recommendations in favor of liberal socialism or something else, we need to come to terms with his developmental conception of happiness at its core.

This developmental conception plays an especially important role in Mill's argument for representative democracy. Given that Mill believes that only a 'noble character' can experience full happiness, it might seem that he would have preferred an oligarchy of the well-educated rather than a liberal representative democracy. Jonathan Riley's very smart essay explains why Mill rejects the oligarchic option. Riley recognizes that, for Mill no one, no matter how individually advanced, can experience full happiness outside a society of equals. Unless society educates all individuals up to a certain developmental level, then no one can achieve genuine happiness.²⁴ Riley also looks closely at Mill's assessment of ancient Athenian democracy and at Athens' influence on Mill's own political theory. Riley argues that Mill drew inspiration not only from Athens' participatory institutions but also from its system of checks and balances, which resulted in a prudent blend of popular participation and competent political leadership.²⁵ Riley rejects the common argument that Mill's elitism made him an equivocal democrat and argues instead that Mill was firmly committed to *liberal* democracy and admired the specifically liberal aspects in Mill's idea as pertains the Athenian constitution.

Wendy Donner's essay portrays his opinion which generalizes this point to give a comprehensive account of the role that education plays in Mill's moral and political theory. Like Riley, she emphasizes the extent to which representative democracy for Mill involves a process of education. In some respects, Donner's essay seems the most useful in the entire collection, because it gives a very clear account of Mill's conception of happiness and the theory of life in which it is embedded. Donner reconstructs Mill's views on democratic education, drawing not only on Mill's explicit reflections on the subject in his *Inaugural*

Address Delivered to the University of St. Andrews but also on Mill's treatment of the democratic character throughout his political works. Donner discusses the importance of virtue in Mill's ideal of democratic character and explores its relationship to his utilitarianism and happiness principles. She also defends Mill against the charge that his emphasis on character undermines his commitment to pluralism. In his own very astute essay, Alex Zakaras notes some internal tensions in Mill's argument for democracy. He argues that there exists a tension between Mill's discussion of democratic participation in *Considerations on Representative Government* and passages on the same subject in *On Liberty*. Hence, Zakaras opined:

Representative Government presents an optimistic view of the effects of political participation on the intellect and the moral sentiments: Mill here describes the practice of democratic politics as a “school of public spirit” and contrasts it favorably with a private life that he imagines to be dominated by the prerogatives of economic self-interest.²⁶

In *On Liberty*, by contrast, Mill associates political participation with the tyranny of the majority, with the will to dominate others, and with the crippling effects of a hostile public opinion on the individual's mentality. Zakaras argues that Mill's conception of individuality, understood as an ideal of citizenship, can help make sense of this discrepancy. According to him, at one level, Mill worries about the consequences of tyranny of the majority; and yet at another level, he emphasizes the educative function of participatory democracy.²⁷ On Zakaras's interpretation, the Millian account of 'individuality' is not merely an expression of a higher form of happiness, but a presupposition of Mill's own argument for participatory democracy.²⁸ The individual's capacity to reflect and modify his or her character and worldview in the context of rational debate 'reflective-self-disruption' as Zakaras puts it is essential if democracy is to escape the dangers of majority tyranny and mass conformity. This interpretation does, however, presuppose that 'individuality' is something other than a minority trait.

Frederick Rosen and Alan Ryan both draw our attention to the theory of progress that plays such a significant role in Mill's approach to these topics. Rosen clarifies the nature of Mill's liberalism by contrasting it to Bentham's and by studying Mill's early borrowings from Coleridge. Rosen argues that Mill's style of radical liberalism is distinguished by its method of reform. According to Rosen, Mill believed that political reforms could be effective only insofar as citizens were prepared to receive and support them, and that successful reforms would have to understand and incorporate elements of the conservative resistance to them.²⁹ Thus, Rosen also points out that Mill is often misread as an ideal theorist (and often criticized because his policy proposals are not radical enough for contemporary tastes). These readings misunderstand Mill's critical ambitions, which were very deliberately adjusted to the social and historical circumstances of Victorian England.³⁰

Rosen as earlier indicated traces Mill's distinctive 'method of reform' back to his two very important essays on Bentham and Coleridge and his social scientific theory. For Rosen:

Mill was more of a Coleridgean than many recent scholars have recognized.

Through Coleridge's influence, Mill rejected the deductive social scientific methodology of James Mill (and contemporary rational choice theorists), in favor of a social theory that allowed him to identify (or as he thought) the stages of social progress and the necessary components of social cohesion. Mill tried to ground this social theory in a new socio-psychological science of human character formation (or "ethology"). Mill had a lot more confidence in this social theory than seems warranted, not least because he failed to confront a number of crucial ambiguities in the theory.³¹

Alan Ryan's very insightful and important essay inquires into the apparent discrepancies between early essays such as *The Spirit of the Age* and Mill's later political works, especially as concerns the role of authority in modern politics and society. He asks, whether Mill ever achieved a stable balance between a utilitarian concern with benevolent management and an Athenian concern with the self-assertive, engaged, independent-minded democratic citizen. He uses this question to examine the role of bureaucratic expertise in Mill's democratic theory. For Gordon Arlen, Mill's theory of democracy is neither purely elitist nor purely majoritarian. Democracy should empower ordinary citizens while protecting society from domination by wealthy political elites. Political participation is viewed as a means of moral and intellectual development.³² In this case, Gordon Arlen was of the opinion that democracy should focus more on empowering ordinary people of the state and the same time doing everything possible to prevent the politicians and political office holder's subjugation and domination of the ordinary citizens of the society, and as well rejected the common view that Mill was merely an elitist following his theory. He insisted that Mill's theory of democracy encourages democratic participation, and citizens' moral and intellectual capacities and development, thereby making democracy as propounded by Mill both an educational institution and a political system.

Georgios Varouxakis argues that Mill's views on nationality, patriotism, and cosmopolitanism have been widely misunderstood. Mill's most famous treatment of these topics appears in *Considerations on Representative Government* which critics have sometimes read as an uncritical embrace of nationalism. Varouxakis rejected this reading emphatically and argues that:

Mill is best understood as embracing a form of cosmopolitan patriotism. Mill believed that patriotism could be used to broaden people's sympathies and, if properly understood, to heighten their concern over the morality of their nation's foreign policy. Mill believed, in other words, that patriotism could be used in service of moral cosmopolitanism.³³

Stephen Holmes specifically considers Mill's writing on interventions, with a particular emphasis on democratization. Since the end of the Cold War, 'democracy promotion' has been an explicit goal of U.S. foreign policy. Holmes asks what Mill can teach us about the prudence of this ambition. He argues that Mill's views on democratization occupied a

middle ground between voluntarism and fatalism. According to Holmes, Mill believed that:

Democracy could not be suddenly transplanted from London to New Delhi. Democracy is a machine that must be “worked” by the people themselves. It therefore depends, in Mill's view, essentially on their skills, habits, attitudes, and expectations. And although the latter may be stubborn, they are not unchangeable: Mill rejected determinism in favor of the modest hope that societies could, over the long term, be guided toward democracy.³⁴

Michael Walzer also explores Mill's writing on interventions, though he focuses exclusively on Mill's influential 1859 essay *A Few Words on Non-Intervention*. In that essay, Mill argued that states ought to be treated as self-determining communities, whether or not their internal politics are free.³⁵ His prescriptions could be summed up as '*always act so as to recognize and uphold communal autonomy*.' Walzer offers a close reading that is simultaneously critical and sympathetic of this short essay. He gives line-by-line commentary with the aim of clarifying which parts of Mill's argument still stand and which parts need revisiting and revision. Holmes who mines Mill's *Considerations on Representative Government* in his essay for lessons on the practicality of military intervention for democratic purposes; and Walzer, who offers a new re-articulation and re-reading of Mill's work on intervention, are especially important, because they bring into focus some important differences between the Millian approach to foreign policy, and contemporary liberal approaches. Again the key point of difference in this scenario lies in Mill's reliance upon a theory of progress.

More so, for Mill unlike his father and most liberals today, liberal democracy is not a form of government suitable for all societies. Walzer, who would prefer to drop Mill's theory of progress, believes that Mill would be heartened by the efforts of Amnesty International and others to spread freedom as a universal human right. In Lederman Shmuel believes in his viewpoint that the central concept in Mill's democracy theory is representative government.³⁶ But continues that Mill's theory has contradictions embedded in it. For him, Mill defended democracy and self government for developed societies, he denied the same right to some colonized people. Mill's theory is both influential and inconsistent.³⁷ In this sense, Lederman clearly identifies the tensions between Mill's defense of self-government and his ideas on colonial rule.

Consequently, Mill believes that state building and nation building are necessary steps on the road to liberal democracy. To this end, he not only allows but encourages despotism as the need arises. But if Iraq and some other Asian countries have shown us anything, it's the futility of trying to plant democracy in a society fractured by ethno-religious divisions. It's obvious that Amnesty International has been trying their best on this to find adequate solution to it, but there is little or nothing much to show for it yet in the real sense, hence, Mill's proposal for a despotic solution as only probable option for securing relative peace and stability in such a divided society or region. However, clearly Mill in this case would

only support an improving and progressive minded despot to handle the society, but still prefers any form of despot to a Hobbesian state of nature of chaos, animal kingdom and survival of the fittest scenario.

Evaluation and Conclusion

The research work examines in detail John Stuart Mill's democratic idea and ideals as well as highlights the various views of scholars on democracy and their effects on the general development of the society in our contemporary world today. It is worth asking, by way of evaluation whether Mill's confidence in his own principles and foreign policy prescriptions is warranted. Normatively, for Mill, only in a free and democratic society could all individuals have a reasonable chance of achieving happiness. It is difficult to understand how any contemporary liberal could dissent from this position, even if there remains room for disagreement on the precise nature of this happiness and its normative principles and authority. Sociologically, Mill does not think that there is any necessary reason why societies will actually follow the normative path he identifies. Stagnation and regression are always possible in one way or the other. Nonetheless, he appears to know what stages and order societies must pass through on the road to liberal democracy, peace and stability.

Therefore, having reviewed John Stuart Mill's concept of democracy and other prominent philosophers and political thinkers' notions on the same concept, we recognized clearly that some philosophers eulogized him; some criticized him while some others shared similar or nearly the same view point with him concerning democracy, its conception and practices. But, notwithstanding the criticisms meted out against his theory, the study reveals that there is something very pertinent, crucial and significant that those who seriously criticized Mill could not recognize and noticed in his idea about democracy which this study found out to be the happiness of all human beings, justice, fairness, freedom and equity for all in the society, for which without it, having a well ordered, coordinated and better society for the growth and development of all will be seen as a 'Day-Dream' and subsequently, unrealistic.

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