

Fukuzawa Yukichi's Liberal Nationalism

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Discussing *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* by the Japanese thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi, this essay shows how theorists of liberal nationalism might draw on “non-Western” theoretical resources to enrich their normative ideas and better appreciate their own tradition. I argue that Fukuzawa’s work represents an alternative strand of liberal nationalism that complements its mainstream counterpart pioneered by David Miller, Yael Tamir, and others. More specifically, I argue that Fukuzawa’s contributions help us reconsider three central claims made by his more mainstream peers: (1) cosmopolitanism poses the most important threat to liberal nationalism, (2) the strength of liberal nationalism lies in its perceptiveness about ordinary people’s sense of national belonging, and (3) liberal nationalism emerged in mid-nineteenth-century Europe and spread elsewhere in the age of decolonization. In so doing, I show how the current “comparative turn” in political theory can benefit a specific debate—on liberal nationalism—within the discipline.

INTRODUCTION

What is the liberal nationalist tradition? Whose ideas should one study if one wants to understand the idea of liberal nationalism? Several writers and their works immediately suggest themselves: John Stuart Mill’s chapter “Of Nationality” in his *Considerations on Representative Government* (Mill 1998a, 427–34), Ernest Renan’s “What Is a Nation?” (Renan 2018, 247–63), Giuseppe Mazzini’s *The Duties of Man* (Mazzini 1862), and Isaiah Berlin’s essays on nationalism (Berlin 2013a; 2013b), followed by more recent contributions by Yael Tamir (1993), David Miller (1995), and others. The purpose of this essay is to show that *An Outline of a Theory of Civilization* (*Outline*, hereafter)¹ by the Japanese thinker Fukuzawa Yukichi² (1835–1901) should be added to this list of the liberal nationalist classics. Although *Outline* is widely recognized as a monumental work in the “Japanese Enlightenment” (Blacker 1964) and has been available in English translation since 1973 (Fukuzawa 1973), it has been overlooked by most Anglophone political theorists, as indeed have virtually all such texts by non-Western thinkers. This is regrettable not only because there is something morally questionable about the West-centric bias of political theory but also because our understanding of liberal nationalism will remain impoverished if we continue to fail to consider theorists located in non-Western parts of the world,

where the development of nationalist sentiments, ideologies, and movements has been inseparable from the reality and legacy of European imperialism. If liberal nationalists across the world have taken up the task of “placing national thinking within the boundaries of liberalism without losing sight of either” (Tamir 1993, 12), those in the non-West more specifically have often been burdened with the additional task of taming popular anti-imperialist sentiments and channeling them into liberal politics. Knowing more about this latter group of thinkers enriches our understanding of liberal nationalism and challenges its cultural biases and geographical limitations.³

Of course, the “non-West” is a crude category encompassing diverse cultural spheres, and the difference between two non-Western countries can be as great as that between a non-Western country and a Western one. This indisputable fact, however, is hardly reason enough to exclude non-Western texts altogether from our understanding of liberal nationalism. Rather, it demands that different types of non-Western texts should be recognized as “must-reads,” so that we may better appreciate how liberal nationalist ideas have developed in response to various power dynamics unfolding in different parts of the world. Japan in Fukuzawa’s time is a fascinating place to look at from this perspective. Born in 1835, Fukuzawa grew up in the late Tokugawa period, when a long-established system of class division, gender hierarchy, and social norms seemed firm and secure. He received a Confucian education as a child, typical for the sons of the samurai class of his time, and subsequently learned Dutch and began reading Western books in his twenties. The Tokugawa regime came to face an existential threat in the mid-nineteenth century, as Western powers penetrated into East Asia and

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¹ Citations from *Outline* are from the latest English translation (Fukuzawa 2009). But I modify it where necessary in light of the original Japanese text (Fukuzawa 1970b).

² In this essay, East Asian names are written in the form by which they are commonly known in the Anglophone world.

³ The most important contribution to the study of liberal nationalism in recent years (Gustavsson and Miller 2019) remains resolutely West-centric, drawing empirical evidence taken solely from Western Europe and North America.

triggered a series of crises in Japan, eventually resulting in the Meiji Restoration of 1868. Fukuzawa emerged as an increasingly powerful voice during this turbulent period, presenting a prophetic vision of modernized Japan, which some found alluring but others infuriating. He never held an office in the Meiji government, but he often advised and lent his support to government officials, making important contributions to the Meiji state as well as to the civil society of modern Japan. He died in 1901, having contentedly witnessed Japan's victory at the First Sino-Japanese War, which he took to be a battle between a sinking barbarism (Qing China) and a rising civilization (Meiji Japan; for example, Fukuzawa 1970c; 1970d; 2007, 335). He did not live to see Japan's disastrous course in the first half of the twentieth century. But the shift of Japan's position from the receiving end to the other end of imperial aggression was already under way in his lifetime, producing a complicated context for the development of his ideas.

Fukuzawa's work in general and his *Outline* in particular deserve special attention for several reasons. First, he was an exceptionally popular writer, exercising significant influence over the public opinion of his rapidly changing country. Second, his enduring influence went beyond the world of letters, as he played a central role in establishing some of the chief liberal institutions of modern Japan, such as the nation's first university Keiō Gijuku and the influential newspaper *Jiji shimpō*. Third, his posthumous reputation sharply rose in the postwar period, when Japanese scholars attempted to restore the country's liberal tradition in the aftermath of World War II. Maruyama Masao played a pivotal role in this reCanonization of Fukuzawa, and his three-volume commentary on *Outline* (Maruyama 1986) remains widely read to this day. Finally, regarding *Outline* more specifically, Fukuzawa "was at his most liberal" when he wrote it in 1874–75 (Hopper 2005, 83). As will be discussed later, his ideas developed in illiberal directions as he aged, attracting the charge that he departed from his earlier liberalism during the last two decades of his life. But the story is different with the earlier Fukuzawa of *Outline*, whose liberal credentials are firm and secure. Indeed, it is in this book that he expressed his *liberal* nationalist thought in a most systematic manner—thus my focus on *Outline* in this essay.

This essay is in five sections. The first two give an overview of Fukuzawa's liberal and nationalist thought, discussing its diverse sources and their contexts. My goal is to specify *what kind* of liberal nationalist he was. It is an important goal because both liberalism and nationalism are highly contested concepts, and calling Fukuzawa a "liberal nationalist" means little unless we clarify which variant of liberalism and what form of nationalism he defended. Then, in the following three sections, I juxtapose Fukuzawa with contemporary proponents of liberal nationalism and consider what we—Anglophone political theorists today—may learn by engaging with his thought. It is argued that his work contributes to the current debate in three distinct ways. First, it helps us to appreciate that recent theorists of

liberal nationalism have not paid sufficient attention to the threat of *illiberal* nationalism, as they continue to hold the outdated view that cosmopolitans are the principal opponents of liberal nationalism. Second, I show that Fukuzawa's work may be used as an important resource to overcome one of the chief weaknesses of contemporary theories of liberal nationalism—namely, their overreliance on purportedly "normal" human psychology that gives rise to a supposedly "natural" sense of national belonging. Finally, I discuss how Fukuzawa's contributions provide a hitherto neglected comparative perspective on the liberal nationalist tradition. Although a "comparative perspective" is often taken to mean a "radically non-Western" one in recent political theory, I show that Fukuzawa's work poses a challenge to this exoticizing tendency, offering us a different kind of comparative angle.

FUKUZAWA'S LIBERALISM

Liberalism can take many different forms, but each of its major variants has recognized a conception of liberty as its core value (Freeden 1998, 139–314). If so, Fukuzawa was confronted with the rather special task of reflecting on the meaning of liberty/freedom⁴ at a time when his native tongue did not even have a standardized word to designate the idea. Introducing the Western idea of liberty/freedom to his fellow countrymen and women, he in fact played a crucial role in establishing 自由—pronounced variously as *ziyou* in Chinese, *jiyū* in Japanese, *chayu* in Korean, and *tu do* in Vietnamese (Kelly 1998, 15)—as the standard translation of "liberty" in Japan and East Asia more broadly. Of course, Fukuzawa did not invent the word *jiyū*. This had had a long history originating from classical Chinese and had been used in various senses across East Asia prior to the arrival of Western travelers. Nor was he the first to suggest *jiyū* as a possible translation of "liberty." The credit here goes to the Portuguese Jesuits, who used *jiyū* as one of the terms to translate *libertas/liberdade* and other "liber-" family words in their ground-breaking Latin-Portuguese-Japanese dictionary, published in 1595 (*Dictionarium Latino Lusitanicum, ac Iaponicum*, 1595). Two and a half centuries later, however, *jiyū* was still competing with other translation candidates, and it was amidst this semantic uncertainty that Fukuzawa made his decisive intervention whereby *jiyū* emerged as the standard translation of "liberty."⁵

Combining the two Chinese characters 自 (*ji*) and 由 (*yū*), *jiyū* literally means "self-direction" or "self-cause." This literal sense is still discernible in the

⁴ Fukuzawa uses liberty and freedom as synonyms. I shall follow his usage in this paper.

⁵ Fukuzawa was not the only one in this period to choose *jiyū* as the best translation of liberty, but his influence was greater than that of most others. According to Howland (2001, 95–6), the only work that matched Fukuzawa's in this respect was Nakamura Masanao's translation of Mill's *On Liberty* as *Jiyū no ri*, published in 1871.

ordinary Japanese language today, such as when someone having difficulties walking says, “*ashi ga fujiyū da*” (literally, “my legs are not free”) to mean “I cannot move my legs at will” (Watanabe 2010, 270). Although this usage of *jiyū* is a morally neutral one, the word was sometimes used pejoratively in nineteenth-century Japan to indicate selfishness or being a libertine (see Howland 2001, 101–7; Wang 2015). Fukuzawa was aware of, and indeed worried by, such negative connotations, but he believed that *jiyū* was nevertheless the closest approximation to the Western idea of liberty. His most explicit discussion of the translation difficulties is found in *Conditions in the West* in which he introduced no fewer than eight words that had been used by Sinophone scholars to translate “liberty/freedom,” only to dismiss them as all inadequate (Fukuzawa 1969, 486). Of particular interest among them is *jishu* (自主), literally meaning self-mastery, which Fukuzawa thought was a less appropriate translation than *jiyū*. He was certainly aware that there was some overlap between liberty and self-mastery, but he thought that the two were not identical and that *jishu* would be too narrow a term for liberty. He consequently chose *jiyū* to cover a wider semantic field. To put it in our contemporary Anglophone vocabulary, *jishu* seemed to him to be geared too strongly towards positive liberty, whereas *jiyū* allowed sufficient flexibility to encompass a diversity of meanings, including negative liberty.

Fukuzawa’s conception of liberty, however, was by no means purely negative. On the contrary, he repeatedly underlined the difference between liberty and selfishness, sometimes going so far as to argue that liberty would be no liberty if it was used to “infringe upon the liberty of others” (Fukuzawa 2012, 5; see also Fukuzawa 1969, 487). Again, to use our contemporary vocabulary, he departed from the negative liberty tradition in insisting that whether someone is free to do X depends not only on the absence of the relevant constraints or interference but also on the *value* of X. For example, according to the standard negative conception, if a criminal wants to commit a crime, she is free to do so if there is nobody or nothing that stops her doing so. Of course, negative liberty theorists usually condemn such use of liberty as morally wrong. However, their conception of liberty is such that they cannot say liberty badly used is no liberty; negative liberty is about whether one’s action is blocked or not and not about whether the goal of one’s action is worth undertaking or not. Fukuzawa disagrees. According to him, one’s action cannot be called free if it “harms public morals” (Fukuzawa 2012, 5). Freedom “should exist in balance” and should always be constrained by other moral considerations, *or else it ceases to be freedom* (Fukuzawa 2009, 176). Although Fukuzawa does not conceptualize liberty so positively as to equate it with self-mastery or self-realization, he incorporates both negative and positive components, emphasizing an inherent connection between liberty and the good.

In *Outline*, Fukuzawa’s focus moved from individual liberty to what he called the “spirit of freedom.” This phrasing might appear Hegelian, but his idea had

greater affinity with Mill and Tocqueville. According to Fukuzawa, what made nineteenth-century Western societies freer than that in Japan (or China, for that matter) was that they had been characterized by the plurality of opinions and the persistence of disagreement. What the West had enjoyed was not so much the right to free speech as the culture of trust that allowed competing parties to coexist in a peaceful manner, despite their divergent opinions. Fukuzawa explained how the West became what it was by way of a Whigish interpretation of European history, integrating major episodes such as the rise of the medieval city-states and the Reformation into his grand narrative of the development of the spirit of freedom. This part (Chapter 8) of *Outline* was followed by a chapter telling a mirror-image history of Japan. In this chapter, he explained why a spirit of freedom had failed to grow in this unfortunate country. His narrative was explicitly indebted to various historiographical works of the nineteenth century, most notably François Guizot’s *Histoire de la civilisation en Europe*. Like Guizot’s, Fukuzawa’s narrative, *qua* history, is “of not much interest to us today” (Craig 2009, 125). Nevertheless, it is of considerable merit if read as a proxy for theoretical argument. His main argument in fact remains persuasive, if not novel: the persistence of disagreement is something to cherish rather than to regret, as it indicates the richness of intellectual life and as such contributes to social progress. Unanimity, in contrast, is a symptom of either despotic rule or the tyranny of public opinion. Consequently, Fukuzawa made the provocative suggestion that the Warring States period had been China’s golden age from the viewpoint of liberty (Fukuzawa 2009, 26–8). Once China was unified and brought under the rule of the First Emperor, despotism reigned and the spirit of freedom vanished; before that, disagreement was rampant amid constant wars, providing some room for the growth of the spirit of freedom. Fukuzawa thus saw a trade-off in China’s unification in the third century BCE: peace and order were achieved, but liberty was lost.

As should already be clear, Fukuzawa’s political thought has a strongly temporal aspect, and his brand of liberalism is closely tied to his developmental theory of civilization. Two central aspects of this theory are worth highlighting. First, civilization, in Fukuzawa’s sense of the term, represented the end point of human progress, the complete attainment of the “spiritual refinement” and “material well-being” of humankind (Fukuzawa 2009, 48). This was an unreachable goal or, in his words, a goal that might be reached in “thousands of years” (Fukuzawa 2009, 20, 149–50, 154). Second, however, this far-off goal provided a sense of direction in the here and the now. By this civilizational measure, Japanese society, like other non-Western societies, was behind the West because the latter was endowed with a greater level of “intellect and virtue” (*chitoku*) on which both material well-being and spiritual refinement rested. Regarding intellect and virtue, Fukuzawa was principally concerned with the former, which covered both rationality and knowledge. Conceptualizing

virtue in minimalist terms as the most basic moral codes that govern all human societies, Fukuzawa considered the Japanese already to be virtuous, thanks partly to Confucianism. But they hardly knew how to channel their virtues into the greater good. Instead, due to their double-edged Confucian heritage, they tended to direct their virtues to personal relations within one's family and one's own close-knit community. Unfortunately, Fukuzawa continued, this way of being virtuous often misfires because it exacerbates factional divisions, as illustrated by the recent civil strife in Mito-han (one of the powerful domains of the Tokugawa Period), which claimed an estimated 2,000 lives (Fukuzawa 2009, 134). What made Japan less "civilized" than the West was not the absence of virtues but that of "intellect," which connected private virtues to the common good and prevented such virtues as loyalty from degenerating into factionalism.

As for the economic aspect of Fukuzawa's liberalism, his emphasis on the equalizing force of modern capitalism is worth underscoring. The type of equality at issue here is neither the equality of opportunity nor that of outcome, but rather that of status. As is well known, the Japanese populace during the Tokugawa period was hierarchically divided into the ruling samurai class and the ruled farmer, craftsman, and merchant classes, with the so-called abject classes below them all. Although this class system was in the process of dissolution when Fukuzawa wrote *Outline* in 1874–75,⁶ equality of status was hardly a reality among ordinary Japanese. A perceptive student of the Scottish Enlightenment and classical political economy, Fukuzawa appropriated the idea of the division of labor to reconceptualize the differences between the Japanese classes in egalitarian terms. From an economic perspective, he explained, the difference between the ruling samurai and the ruled classes was no more than an occupational one. The former maintained order to enable economic activities, whereas the latter engaged in productive activities in an orderly society overseen by the samurai. The samurai needed the ruled classes because they did not produce goods, whereas the ruled classes needed the samurai because otherwise order would be undermined and peaceful economic activities would be impossible. Similarly, the difference between farmers and merchants was not, contrary to the popular neo-Confucian belief, that the former contributed more to the country because they produced tangible essential goods and paid higher taxes. Rather, both groups *equally* contributed to the well-being of the nation, albeit in differing ways, because a range of activities, including commerce as well as food production, was essential for the economy. Although the modern capitalist economy is often associated with *free* markets, economic *freedom*, and so on, Fukuzawa recognized an egalitarian logic inherent in capitalism, which turned a

hierarchical class division into a horizontal system of cooperation.

However, this is not to say that Fukuzawa was a champion of the laissez-faire economy. For one thing, he showed profound ambivalence toward the consumption of luxury goods, explicitly criticizing two opposing tendencies that grew out of the long peace of the Tokugawa period. One was the successful merchants' obsessive interest in wealth accumulation, stimulated by their resentment at the Tokugawa class system, whereby even the most well-bred and well-educated merchant would be ranked lower than the furthest fallen of the samurai, at least in principle. The other tendency Fukuzawa criticized was the samurai's disregard for commercial activities, reinforced by their sense of superiority over the productive classes. Fukuzawa's recommendation for both the money-worshipping merchants and the money-averse samurai was curiously traditional and even struck a faintly Confucian note: a mix of hard work, honesty in business, restrained consumption, and a moderate interest in economic prosperity. Similarly, he remained skeptical of what we today call the "invisible hand," whereby the optimal macroeconomic equilibrium is automatically generated by open competition among self-interested actors in the free market. In his view, human intellect must play a role if a harmonious whole is to emerge from conflictual parts. What this might mean in practice is difficult to tell, and one is left to wonder *whose* intellect was supposed to connect the parts to the whole and how the intellect of different economic actors and institutions might be adjudicated between if they conflicted with each other. Consequently, it remains debatable how interventionist Fukuzawa was when it came to economic policy.

Fukuzawa's assessment of international trade showed similar ambiguity. As Chuhei Sugiyama (1994, 40–63) argues, there was certainly a protectionist streak in his economic thought. Instead of seeing international trade as beneficial to all parties involved, Fukuzawa often saw it in terms of a zero-sum game in which the abstract doctrine of free trade was used to disguise economic exploitation of vulnerable countries, such as India, by powerful ones, such as Britain. In fact, he expressed the worry that Japan might follow India's fate and become a victim of economic exploitation if it deregulated too hastily and allowed uncontrolled foreign investment at an inopportune time (Fukuzawa 2009, 238–40). However, he was no simple-minded protectionist, and it remains unclear whether he saw exploitative relations as an inherent feature of free trade per se or as a particular feature of the specifically imperialist phase of global capitalism. Either way, he was a cautious economic liberal, expressing various reservations about the harms of the modern capitalist economy while celebrating its equalizing as well as liberating forces.

FUKUZAWA'S NATIONALISM

Fukuzawa's most explicit discussion of the concept of nationality is found in the second chapter of *Outline*. As

⁶ Recent historians tend to emphasize the de facto breakdown of the status distinctions in the late Tokugawa period. Fukuzawa himself, however, said he "lived under the iron-bound feudal system" during his childhood (Fukuzawa 2007, 179).

historians have noted,⁷ this part is almost certainly indebted to the sixteenth chapter (“Of Nationality”) of Mill’s *Considerations on Representative Government*, and Fukuzawa makes an innovative translational suggestion to equate the Millian conception of nationality with the Japanese idea of *kokutai*, literally meaning the “national body.” He writes,

[*kokutai*] refers to the grouping together of a race or ethnicity⁸ of people of similar feelings, the creation of a distinction between fellow countrymen and foreigners, the fostering of more cordial and stronger bonds with one’s countrymen than with foreigners. It is living under the same government, enjoying self-rule, and disliking the idea of being subject to foreign rule; it involves independence and responsibility for the welfare of one’s own country. In Western countries it is called nationality. (Fukuzawa 2009, 30)

In these few lines, Fukuzawa at once specifies racial or ethnic homogeneity, emotive bond, and (political) self-rule as the three central features of nationality. He then immediately complicates this analysis in the following few pages, observing that those three features are not necessarily connected to each other. Of particular interest is his emphasis on the contingency of the race/ethnicity factor, and he discusses the case of Switzerland by way of illustration. Although this country had been internally divided in terms of ethnicity, language, and religion, the Swiss nationality was “firm” and its peoples shared “a feeling of familiarity” (Fukuzawa 2009, 30). Fukuzawa saw Switzerland as an exception to the rule, however, writing that a durable sense of nationality was *usually* buttressed by racial/ethnic, linguistic, and religious homogeneity. He was not especially concerned that the racial/ethnic aspect was only contingently related to the emotive and the political because his focus was on late nineteenth-century Japan in which racial/ethnic homogeneity, shared history, and common ancestry could be taken for granted, at least in his view (Fukuzawa 2009, 30). Consequently, he focused on the emotive and political aspects of nationality and considered how to enrich a shared national consciousness and promote self-rule.

Both issues appear prominently in the final chapter of *Outline*. Calling Japan “a country in the East,” Fukuzawa draws attention to the fate of native populations in various parts of the world that had been “converted into suitable slaves for the white man” (Fukuzawa 2009, 248–9). He had had a glimpse of the reality of colonial rule during his travels to Europe during 1862–3, when he stopped at several port cities, including Hong Kong, Singapore, Point de Galle, Trincomalee, and Aden. Based on his first-hand

observations, he highlights the fate of India in particular to draw lessons for Japan. He tells the following story to illustrate the inhumanity of British colonial rule:

In legal trials in the Indian government, the law excludes Indians from participating and limited the membership to Englishmen. Once when an Englishman was brought to court for having shot an Indian dead in an outlying district in India, his defense was that he had caught sight of something moving and, thinking it a monkey, had shot at it, but it turned out to be a man. The story goes that the jury unanimously acquitted the defendant. (Fukuzawa 2009, 246)

Fukuzawa’s indignation at Western invaders has some affinity with what Isaiah Berlin famously calls “bent twig” nationalism (Berlin 2013a). Likened to a forcibly bent twig violently hitting back at the source of deformity, this pathological form of nationalism tends to grow in a country that has been subjected to externally induced humiliation. A case in point, according to Berlin, is Prussia after the Napoleonic invasion (Berlin 2013a, 261–2; 2013b, 437, 442; 2013c, 303–4, 307–8). The sense of humiliation that the defeated Prussians felt turned their natural sense of national belonging into an inflamed and aggressive form of nationalism. One detects a hint of this Prussian sentiment in *Outline* when, for example, Fukuzawa shows his disdain for his cowardly and servile compatriots who never dared to challenge ill-behaved Western visitors who beat up the local Japanese as they pleased (Fukuzawa 2009, 241). Nevertheless, Fukuzawa made it clear that Japan, unlike India, had never been subjected to colonial rule. Nor had it experienced, as had Prussia, a wholesale military defeat and occupation (Fukuzawa 2009, 251). Thus, Fukuzawa’s nationalism was fueled not by the actual humiliation of Japan by foreign invaders but by the *fear* of it—not by the actual bending of the Japanese twig but by the *anticipation* of it. Nevertheless, he considered the prospect of an actual invasion to be realistic and repeatedly expressed a sense of exasperation with those who took too much comfort from the relative safety that the country had so far enjoyed.

Of course, not everyone in late Tokugawa and early Meiji Japan was servile or oblivious to the prospect of a Western invasion. In fact, violent attacks on Western visitors and their purported sympathizers, including Fukuzawa himself, by self-nominated patriots were not rare in his time.⁹ In *Outline* he mentions in passing a recent occurrence, known as the Namamugi Incident (1862), when a group of Britons was attacked—and one killed—by samurai guards for apparently violating the local code of conduct (Fukuzawa 2009, 247). Fukuzawa had something of an insider’s knowledge of this affair, as he was one of the translators for the government, dealing with the British who demanded

⁷ Mill’s influence on Fukuzawa has been studied extensively. For *Considerations on Representative Government* specifically, see Ogasawara (2017).

⁸ Fukuzawa’s term here is 種族, which he uses interchangeably with 人種. Both words are usually translated as “race,” but Fukuzawa uses them in a broad sense, encompassing both race and ethnicity.

⁹ See the chapter entitled “The Risk of Assassination” in Fukuzawa (2007, 225–38).

“satisfaction” from the Japanese (i.e., execution of the Japanese culprit responsible for the death of the British subject and the payment of £125,000 in total in indemnities). What did Fukuzawa say about the self-nominated patriots? At first glance, he seemed unreservedly to condemn them, calling them “a variety of lunatics, [...] the sick victims, as it were, of a plague-stricken nation” (Fukuzawa 2009, 252). On closer scrutiny, however, it is clear that Fukuzawa’s criticism was not as harsh as it might initially appear. He blamed the self-nominated patriots not because they were patriotic but because they were patriotic *in the wrong way*—that is, they were “mistaken as to the methods of dealing with [the burden of national defense]” (Fukuzawa 2009, 252). His criticism was essentially a consequentialist one, pointing out that some of the self-nominated patriots’ ill-considered acts, such as assassinations of Western visitors, inadvertently inflicted damage on the country they wanted to serve. The problem with the self-nominated patriots was that, with their hot tempers and lack of prudence, they failed to be good nationalists (see Matsuda 2015, 67–71).

Fukuzawa in this way drew a strong connection between patriotism and intellect, which consisted of knowledge and rationality. The ingenuity of this suggestion is hard to overstate. Many writers in Fukuzawa’s time associated patriotism with fidelity to the internal Japanese tradition and knowledge and rationality with the external Western tradition. Fukuzawa challenged this dichotomy in two ways. First, he argued that knowledge and rationality belonged not to the West but to the universal ideal of civilization. He conceded that the nineteenth-century West enjoyed a higher level of rationality and a greater amount of knowledge than did contemporary Japan or other parts of the non-Western world. But that was a matter of mere historical contingency. The comparative advantage that the West currently enjoyed might cease or even be reversed in the future, depending on how the course of history unfolded. He thus de-essentialized the concept of “Western rationality,” arguing that the level of rationality then prevalent in the West was far from that of the universal rationality that was a property of civilization. Second, Fukuzawa challenged the connection between Japanese patriotism and the Japanese local tradition, arguing that blind fidelity to the latter could be *unpatriotic* if it did not contribute to the nation’s well-being. What the self-nominated patriots failed to see was that they no longer lived in a time when the continuation of a long-established national tradition automatically served the national interest. Indeed, they now lived in a new age when adherence to long-established customs could have adverse effects, unintentionally assisting a foreign invasion and a resulting loss of national independence. If one were to be a true patriot, one must renounce old habits and embrace knowledge and rationality. To do this would not be to yield to the West, Fukuzawa insisted, because knowledge and rationality do not belong to the West. They belong to humanity.

An inability to grow out of the old mind-set, however, was not a problem unique to the self-nominated patriots. On the contrary, it plagued the entire nation, in Fukuzawa’s view. Accepting Europe’s self-serving myth of “Oriental despotism,” he claimed that Japanese history over the past 2,500 years had been characterized by a complete separation of the ruler from the ruled, accompanied by an absolute imbalance of power between them. Although different groups *within* the ruling class had fought with each other to seize power, the ruled had been unconcerned with who their master happened to be. They saw continuous power struggle within the ruling class as little different from “the daily changes of weather” (Fukuzawa 2009, 183). The vast majority of the Japanese population had in this way been contentedly powerless, showing no interest in the idea of self-rule. Would such people take up arms and defend themselves should their country be attacked by foreign invaders? Fukuzawa thought not. Most would choose to be bystanders, failing to see their country as *their own*. This meant that “there [was] a government but no nation” in Japan (Fukuzawa 2009, 187).

How, then, could the Japanese *become* a nation? Fukuzawa’s theory of education gives an answer. As he wrote in *An Encouragement of Learning*, the goal of education was not only to improve literacy and numeracy and acquire some knowledge of individual subjects such as economics and geography. It was also, and more fundamentally, to combat the “spirit of subservience” that had long plagued the minds of the ordinary Japanese (Fukuzawa 2012, 32). To learn in Fukuzawa’s sense is to learn to be independent. In *Outline*, he made this point in explicitly anti-Confucian terms, appropriating Mill’s discussion of mental slavery in *On Liberty* (Fukuzawa 2009, 198–9). The backward-looking Confucian tradition was to the Japanese what the “fear of heresy” had been to the Europeans. It turned individuals into “mental slaves,” who were well-mannered and well-behaved but passive, servile, dependent, and unfree (Mill 1998b, 39). Buddhism in Japan, for its part, had been less harmful than Confucianism, but it had always submitted itself to those in power and had never established an independent authority of its own. It hardly counted as a religion in the proper sense, and Buddhist monks were in truth “slaves of the government” (Fukuzawa 2009, 193). Such was the sorry state of Confucianism and Buddhism, the two dominant spiritual traditions of Japan. Consequently, *yōgaku*, or “Western learning,” suggested itself as the only school of thought capable of allowing the Japanese to navigate through the new age of global competition. Only when everyone in Japan had familiarized themselves with this new (Western) learning, and come to see themselves as contributors to their country, would the Japanese be able to acquire a national consciousness and develop into a self-ruling nation. This new nation would also see the emergence of a new middle class, mediating between those of the rulers and the ruled. Fukuzawa thus conceptualized the new Japan in holistic terms. Different parts of the nation would play their respective parts “to make the glory of their country shine forth” (Fukuzawa 2009, 235). If so, the only thing that could

connect the parts to the whole would be intellect. This in turn could only be acquired by means of forward-looking, Western-style, and decidedly anti-Confucian education. His well-known pedagogical slogan struck a distinctly nationalist note: “national independence through personal independence” (Fukuzawa 2012, 20).

Fukuzawa shows considerable ambiguity, however, as to how durable the nation as a basic political unit will be in the long run. In the second and third chapters of *Outline*, he emphasizes the transitory nature of nationality, speculating on a distant future in which humankind reaches “a perfect civilization” and government of all forms “would become entirely superfluous” (Fukuzawa 2009, 57–8). In these pages, he discusses the value of nationality in instrumental terms, arguing that the unique characteristics of the Japanese nation are valuable only to the extent that they can be used for stable government and the progress of civilization. In short, national uniqueness is a “thing [...] not to be valued for itself, but for its function” (Fukuzawa 2009, 43). In the final chapter of *Outline*, in contrast, he underlines the normative importance of national independence, criticizing various idealists who are reluctant to accept that the division of the world into multiple nations is likely to remain a nonnegotiable fact of modern political life. Moreover, he sometimes goes further in a nationalist direction, writing as if nationality claimed *normative* primacy over civilization. He writes,

The only reason for making the people in our country today advance toward civilization is to preserve our country's independence. Therefore, our country's independence is the goal, and our people's civilization is the way to that goal. (Fukuzawa 2009, 254)

As Koizumi Shinzō writes in his classic study, there is strong tension between the earlier part of *Outline* in which nationality is presented as a means of advancing universal civilization and the latter part in which civilization is presented as a means of preserving the independence of the particular Japanese nation. Fukuzawa's way out of this conundrum, according to Koizumi, was fundamentally to separate the ideal from the nonideal (Koizumi 1966, 106; see also Maruyama 1986, 1:116–8). He encouraged his readers not to lose sight of the ultimate goal of civilization, while arguing that they should *at present* focus on the short-term goal of national independence to respond to the immediate threat of Western imperialism. The ideal goal is civilization, the nonideal goal, nationalism. I think Koizumi's interpretation is correct, but it still leaves a series of important questions unanswered. When will we reach a higher civilizational stage at which the goal of national independence becomes obsolete? How do we know that we have, or have not, reached such a stage? And if competition among nations is a feature of the *current* stage of civilizational development, does not one's effort to enrich one's own nation impede rather than promote the progress of universal civilization? In short, how can we move from the nonideal to the ideal if the two are so different from each other? Fukuzawa hardly

answers these questions in *Outline*. Nor does his later work help in this respect, for it is mostly devoted to real-world issues of his time. Nevertheless, it is worth highlighting that his nationalism would likely have been an illiberal one had it not been constrained by his theory of civilization. It was thanks to his ideal theory of civilization that his nonideal nationalist commitment stayed in line with Mazzini's injunction: humanity is the ultimate objective and the *Patrie* is the starting point (Mazzini 2009, 53).

LIBERAL NATIONALISM AND ITS ENEMIES

Having discussed Fukuzawa's liberal and nationalist thought, I would now like to consider why his ideas should be of interest to those of us who study liberal nationalism today. Does his work help us identify and overcome some of the weaknesses of contemporary theories of liberal nationalism? And how important is it that he lived and thought in a non-Western part of the world? To consider these questions, I shall juxtapose Fukuzawa with David Miller and Yael Tamir, joined by Isaiah Berlin as their shared source of inspiration. Although there are other notable contributors to the recent liberal nationalist movement, Miller and Tamir (and Berlin) stand out as especially important not only because of their stature and standing but also because of their unusual willingness to carry the banner of nationalism. As is well known, those who hold nationalist sympathies often hesitate to call themselves “nationalist” because of the term's unfortunate association with right-wing movements and ideologies. A number of contemporary political theorists conform to this pattern, preferring to use less loaded terms such as “patriotism” (e.g., Soutphommasane 2012) and “national solidarity” (e.g., Kymlicka 2015) to describe their own ideas. In contrast, Miller, Tamir, and Berlin have been explicit about their *nationalist* sympathies. Their contributions in fact lie in their efforts to delineate the boundaries between liberal and illiberal forms of nationalism, to “detoxify the ideas of ‘nation’ and ‘nationalism’” (Miller 2019, 24), and to situate their work in a specifically *liberal* nationalist tradition. It is partly for this reason that they have played such important roles in the revival of liberal nationalism in contemporary political theory. Still, their theories of liberal nationalism have their downsides, as can be seen by paying attention to Fukuzawa's contributions.

Consider, first, what liberal nationalism should stand *against*. As we have seen, Fukuzawa's primary target of criticism was *illiberal* nationalists, whose zealous efforts to serve their nation had the adverse effect of harming the national interest. In contrast, Miller and Tamir have had little to say on illiberal nationalism, assuming that the exclusionary and xenophobic sides of nationalism “are too well known to need further elaboration” (Miller 1995, 184; see Tamir 2019, 24). They have consequently directed their critical attention at those who allegedly dismiss nationalist sentiments as irrational, reactionary, and destined for disappearance in the

near future. In this respect, they follow the example of Isaiah Berlin and his Cold War-era attack on a Soviet communism that denounced nationality as a remnant of bourgeois class consciousness. Moscow revealed its inhuman face, according to Berlin, when Khrushchev sent tanks to Budapest in 1956 to suppress the Hungarian people's demand for national autonomy (see Hiruta 2021, 192–6). This Berlinian argument has been appropriated by Miller and Tamir since the early 1990s to criticize their cosmopolitan rivals. Cosmopolitans like to believe that the nation-state is becoming obsolete due to the rise of supranational organizations, such as the EU, on the one hand, and the increasing importance of subnational group identities, such as being a British Muslim, say, rather than simply British, on the other. However, Miller writes, “the majority of people are too deeply attached to their inherited national identities to make their obliteration an intelligible goal. [...] Premature reports of the death of nationality have abounded in the twentieth century, and those who deliver them have constantly been caught off guard by the actual course of political events” (Miller 1995, 184). Cosmopolitans of the late twentieth century are thus said to have repeated the mistake made by the Soviet communists of the mid-twentieth century: the former, like the latter, fail to recognize the nation's ability to satisfy ordinary people's fundamental aspiration to belong to a group that they can claim as their own.

In their recent writings, Miller's and Tamir's ideas have developed in somewhat different directions, as they respond to different social and political trends unfolding in various parts of the world. On the one hand, the issue of cosmopolitans' disregard for the enduring power of nationalism appears less prominently in Miller's recent work, which focuses on a series of real-world questions concerning territory, borders, self-determination, and migration. On the other hand, Tamir continues to see cosmopolitanism as posing the most important threat to liberal nationalism. Her 2019 book *Why Nationalism* contains an extensive attack on her cosmopolitan opponents, whom she now pejoratively calls “the global elites.” She writes,

[The global elites] build their home(s) and stay in them the exact number of days their tax consultant advises. They send their children to the best global schools and universities that can secure their future. They buy and sell commodities in the international stock exchange and own homes in several countries. They ski in the Alps, sunbathe in Bermuda, and enjoy theater in London and restaurants in Paris. In fact, the elites of the world have been united; they are citizens of the world and would not like any national affiliation to be forced on them (Tamir 2019, 101).

Tamir contrasts this group of wealthy, mobile, and selfish individualists with “the less well-off members of the majority,” who are purportedly honest, hard-working, and nationally rooted (Tamir 2019, 159). Hard hit by the forces of hyperglobalization, the latter have a wholly legitimate grievance against the

dominant social order and the cosmopolitans who benefit from it. They ask their respective nation-states for help, simply to attain basic security and stability. Their nationalism is thus “the last hope of the needy” (Tamir 2019, 141). And yet, Tamir continues, the global elites fail to recognize it, as they are in the habit of looking down on the less well-off, whose lived experiences are barely intelligible to them. Worse still, the liberal media indulge in a kind of victim blaming, as they join forces with the global elites to caricature the vulnerable and dismiss their hopes and fears as unreasonable, irrational, and xenophobic. True, Tamir briefly acknowledges, the nationalism of the vulnerable can develop in “reactionary and populist” directions (Tamir 2019, 9). But the risk is small and, at any rate, the elites are to blame for the little risk there is, for it is their inability to appreciate the legitimate needs of the vulnerable that exacerbate their grievances in the first place. In short, the recent waves of populism are part of “a revolt against the betrayal of the global elites” (Tamir 2019, 9).

Is Tamir right to follow the orthodox Berlinian line to target globalists and cosmopolitans as the main adversaries of liberal nationalism today? Is she right to continue to make the long-held liberal nationalist assumption that the harms of illiberal nationalisms “are too well known to need further elaboration” (Miller 1995, 184)? I doubt it. *Pace* Tamir, if nationalism today is seen as a dangerous ideology saturated by racism and xenophobia, it is not (only) because the global elites have misrepresented “the less well-off members of the majority” and disseminated the false image of them thorough the liberal media (Tamir 2019, 159). Rather, it is because more than a tiny fraction of nationalists today are as a matter of fact infected by racism and xenophobia, which are ingrained in our culture, language, and institutions. Of course, racism and xenophobia are notoriously difficult to measure, and there will always be some room for debate about the extent to which existing nationalisms are infected by racism and xenophobia. But one does not need a perfect dataset to realize that nationalisms today have been contaminated by white supremacism, antisemitism, islamophobia, anti-Black violence, anti-Asian hate, and other such problems. Surprisingly, however, Tamir is exclusively concerned with racism against working-class whites in *Why Nationalism* (Tamir 2019, 127–41), as if to say that they have been the only victims of racism.

The liberal nationalists' failure to distance themselves unambiguously from their illiberal cousins have indeed raised the suspicion that their views are little different from those of “much of the far or ‘alt-’ right” (Finlayson 2020, 145). Although I do not share this view, I would like to suggest that theorists like Miller and Tamir could have defended liberal nationalism better had they tackled the problem of illiberal nationalism more forthrightly—had they, that is, been less indebted to Berlin (and others like him) and more to Fukuzawa (and others like him). This is the case because, unlike Berlin, Fukuzawa identified illiberal nationalism, rather than globalism or cosmopolitanism,

as the *primary* obstacle to the realization of his liberal nationalist vision. Not that Fukuzawa was more liberal than Berlin. Nor did he have nothing critical to say about the globalists of his time—namely, Western empires plundering across the globe. Rather, the difference between the two thinkers is largely due to the different circumstances in which they found themselves. Writing in the postwar West where Soviet communists dismissed nationalism as bourgeois and reactionary and Western liberals automatically associated it with Nazism, Berlin felt the need to highlight the productive potential of nationalism. In contrast, writing in late nineteenth-century Japan, where self-nominated patriots were indiscriminately attacking foreigners and their alleged sympathizers, Fukuzawa underlined the harm done by illiberal nationalism to the national interest properly conceived. Needless to say, Berlin's influence over later liberal nationalist thought far outweighs that of Fukuzawa. The Anglo-Russian-Jewish philosopher's work is a part of the liberal nationalist canon; that of the Japanese is not (so far). But the latter is no less relevant than the former to us today when, to take the United States as an example, far-right terror plots easily outnumber those of the jihadists and the far-left combined (Jones et al. 2020). Surprising though it may sound, liberal democracies today are more like nineteenth-century Japan than like the postwar West in the following respect: self-nominated patriots pose a greater threat than do the “global elites” to the credibility of *liberal* nationalism.

One might ask if I am being unfair to Berlin, if not to Miller and Tamir. Did Berlin not pay sufficient attention to the risk of a natural sense of national attachment exploding into malign nationalism? Is it not precisely this process that Berlin so helpfully elucidated with his “bent twig” argument? I agree that this idea has significantly enriched our understanding of nationalism. But Berlin's admirers overstate their case when they describe his work as “[t]he best guide to our current encounter with nationalism” (Zaretsky 2018). This is the case because Berlin, just like Miller and Tamir, underestimates the ease with which benign nationalism develops in aggressive, violent, and xenophobic directions. Although he leaves some room for ambiguity on this issue (as on many issues), he tends to claim that a wholesale national humiliation inflicted by an external enemy is necessary for the rise of a bent twig nationalism, repeatedly using Prussia after the Napoleonic invasion as his example. By the same token, he contentedly believed that nationalism in his beloved England could not possibly develop in a bent twig direction, as the country had not been “invaded or seriously defeated for eight hundred years” (Jahanbegloo 1992, 101–2; see Hiruta 2017). Therefore, his work cannot account for the recent rise of far-right movements in England (or in the United States for that matter), illustrated by such facts as the murder of Labour MP Jo Cox in June 2016 and the 124,091 hate crimes recorded by the police in England and Wales, of which 85,268 were racially motivated, between April 2020 and March 2021 (Allen and Zayed 2021). Fukuzawa knew better. Although he observed, rather like

Berlin, that Japan had not been subjected to foreign rule “since the dawn of her history” (Fukuzawa 2009, 34), this did not prevent him seeing what Berlin failed to see, or at least did not acknowledge sufficiently: the *fear* of foreign invasion is sufficient for the rise of a bent twig nationalism. Of course, today we should go further than Fukuzawa to recognize that an *imaginary* “foreign invasion” is sufficient to trigger a bent twig nationalism, at least among certain people. If one convinces oneself that a “white genocide” is under way due to migration and mixed marriage, one may, with a little help from the internet, end up as a terrorist. Reading Berlin's essays does not help us to appreciate this type of radicalization, as he draws too strong a contrast between good (English) and bad (Germanic) nationalisms. Fukuzawa's work, backed by some knowledge of late Tokugawa Japan, serves as a useful counterpoint, although no single text from the past can serve as an adequate guide to our current encounter with new nationalisms.

LIBERAL NATIONALISM, RATIONALITY, AND EMOTION

Fukuzawa's work also helps us reconsider what we might call the psychological appeal of contemporary theories of liberal nationalism. Again, Miller's and Tamir's works are exemplary. According to them, one of the chief weaknesses of (nonnationalist) liberal political theory is its tendency to subordinate psychological reality to moralistic fantasy. Their shared target of criticism in this context is Kantian liberals inspired by John Rawls's work. Miller and Tamir both criticize them for their neglect of the emotive aspect of politics in general and for their inability to appreciate the sense of national belonging in particular. In one of his finest essays on this issue, Miller writes that Kantians are so “committed to forms of reasoning, to concepts and arguments, that are universal in form” that they “have great difficulty in coming to grips with” the emotional attachments that ordinary people feel towards their own nation (Miller 1993, 3). Tamir similarly criticizes Rawls's pretensions to impartiality, approvingly citing Bernard Williams's prioritization of “the Humean step [...] from the self to someone else” over “the Kantian leap from the particular and the affective to the rational and the universal” (Williams, cited in Tamir 1993, 106). In contrast to such Kantian moralism, liberal nationalists claim to adopt a more realistic psychology, seeing human beings as situated in, and constituted by, their own communal ties and their own national histories.

I think contemporary liberal nationalists are right to criticize a certain psychological shallowness characteristic of the neo-Kantian strand of liberalism. And yet, it is debatable whether the purportedly normal psychology that liberal nationalists find in “ordinary people” is quite as normal as they make it out to be. Tamir's *Why Nationalism* is especially problematic, for it portrays a one-dimensional picture of “ordinary” people, who appear to represent only a subset of the declining majority population. When, for example, she describes “women, blacks, immigrants, and indigenous people”

as “line jumpers” who benefit unfairly from affirmative action (Tamir 2019, 169), she speaks exclusively for poverty-stricken, resentful white men in rural areas who identify themselves as neither “immigrants” nor “indigenous people.” In fact, elsewhere in her book, Tamir openly expresses her special sympathies for “male members of the majority” who, unlike “[w]omen, people of color, immigrants, [and] members of other minority groups,” cannot “refer to their identity in order to vindicate their social position” (Tamir 2019, 135).

Miller—as well as the earlier Tamir of *Liberal Nationalism*—is more nuanced, paying greater attention to the issues of segregation and integration in contemporary multicultural societies (Miller 2016, 130–50). But the “we” for whom Miller speaks is also a “we” of the declining majority. Although he is acutely concerned with the emotions of those “who have a sense that they and their ancestors are deeply rooted in a place” (Miller 2016, 18), he does not show a comparable interest in the emotions of those whose daily experiences do not conform to his liberal nationalist conception of the “ordinary.” What I have in mind are such ordinary experiences as “looking a little different” from the dominant majority; being constantly asked “where are you from?” by one’s fellow citizens (Hirsch 2018, 32); being “randomly” searched by the police on a regular basis; being forced to hear their would-be President or would-be Prime Minister denigrating them and their loved ones as “rapists,” “letter boxes,” and so on;¹⁰ and seeing TV commentators who have never been on the receiving end of racism insisting that racism is not really a serious issue in “our country,” wherever this might be. Although Miller and Tamir may well be aware of the existence of such experiences, they do not give much thought to them, which fall outside the sphere of the “ordinary” narrowly demarcated in liberal nationalist terms. In fact, seemingly forgetting his earlier criticism of allegedly heartless Kantians, Miller recently suggested that “distressing” stories about the lived experiences of desperate migrants *should be ignored* for the purpose of designing immigration policy, as “hard cases” provide a poor foundation for policy making (Miller 2016, 159). All too often, contemporary liberal nationalists’ promise to consider the emotive aspect of politics is betrayed by their majoritarian biases.

Reading Fukuzawa’s work helps us a little here, although it by itself is far from satisfactory. On the one hand, like Miller and Tamir, he speaks from the perspective of the majority, triply privileged as a man, as a samurai, and as a member of the “ethnic” Japanese. He assumed the existence of “the Japanese” as a primordial entity, notwithstanding the existence of the indigenous peoples on Japan’s periphery, such as the Ainu in Ezochi (renamed Hokkaidō and incorporated into Meiji Japan in 1869) and the Ryukyuan in

Ryukyu (renamed Okinawa and incorporated into Meiji Japan in 1879). Moreover, he did not need to tackle difficult questions raised by the mass migration of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, whereas contemporary liberal nationalists cannot afford to ignore them. On these issues, Fukuzawa’s work is too antiquated to be of much use to us today.

On the other hand, his work helps us appreciate that liberal nationalists need not draw too strong a contrast between Humeanism and Kantianism, between the appreciation of emotive bonds and communal ties on the one hand and an emphasis on universal reason and impartiality on the other. In fact, it shows that liberal nationalists need not see those two stances as posing an either-or choice. Like Miller and Tamir, Fukuzawa assumes that most people naturally feel attached to their own nation but, unlike them, he insists on the centrality of intellect for nationalism. The task with which liberal nationalists, like himself, are entrusted is not to fight the tyranny of reason with an invocation of “normal” human psychology. Rather, it is to figure out how to use group loyalty in the national interest instead of letting it slide into xenophobia, factionalism, and the like. Again, the difference between Fukuzawa and contemporary liberal nationalists is partly due to their differing historical and geographical circumstances. Fukuzawa, unlike Miller or Tamir, did not engage with heartless Kantians or tax-evading globalists when he developed his liberal nationalist thought. Instead, he had weapon-carrying, self-nominated patriots to confront, and he attempted to teach them how to use knowledge and rationality to be a better nationalist. Reading Fukuzawa *alongside* Miller and Tamir can serve us to remind us that the latter pair’s emphasis on normal human psychology is representative of only one strand of the liberal nationalist tradition and not a conspicuously helpful one at that, at least in the current political climate.

LIBERAL NATIONALISM AND ITS NON-WESTERN SOURCES

Finally, as has been implicitly suggested already, engaging with Fukuzawa’s work allows us to reconsider the liberal nationalist tradition from a refreshing comparative perspective. Although our standard understanding of this tradition in Anglophone academia already has a certain global dimension, it is hardly comparative and in fact follows what Dipesh Chakrabarty called the “‘first in Europe, then elsewhere’ structure of global historical time” (Chakrabarty 2008, 7). According to this understanding, liberal nationalism first appeared in Europe in the mid-nineteenth century, “when liberal demands for personal freedom and representative government were linked to national liberation claims made by national minorities within the European empires” (Miller 2019, 23). This early development was followed by Woodrow Wilson’s Fourteen Points, which seemed to have placed the principle of national self-determination “on the winning side” of history (Tamir 2019, 13). This

¹⁰ Needless to say, I am alluding to the notorious speech by the then Presidential candidate Donald Trump on June 16, 2015 (Time Staff 2015) and the equally infamous *Telegraph* column by the then backbench MP Boris Johnson on August 5, 2018 (Johnson 2018).

prospect, however, was soon to shatter, as authoritarian nationalisms swept across Europe and the demonic force of nationalism was unleashed in Germany in particular. As a result, Tamir writes, “nationalism was discredited in the West” in the postwar period, while it kept “its liberating power in the developing world and was the engine behind postcolonial movements” (Tamir 2019, 15). Thus, so the story goes, the epicenter of liberal nationalism moved from Europe to elsewhere. If nationalist movements in Italy, Greece, and Poland inspired the first generation of liberal nationalists in the mid-nineteenth century, anticolonial movements in Israel and India inspired their descendants in the twentieth.

Fukuzawa’s contributions complicate this standard narrative and challenge its “first in Europe, then elsewhere” structure. In terms of chronology, he is obviously closer to the nineteenth-century liberal nationalists in Britain and Europe than to their descendants in the (post)colonial world. Although he was a generation younger than Mazzini (b. 1805) and Mill (b. 1806), Fukuzawa’s effort to forge a modern Japanese nation on the Western model began as early as the 1860s, when some of the foundational texts of liberal nationalism, including Mazzini’s *Duties of Man* and Mill’s *Representative Government*, were published. Nevertheless, in terms of geography and the hermeneutic context, Fukuzawa has a greater affinity with later proponents of national liberation in the age of decolonization in that the most important source of motivation for his work came from the aggression of Western empires against Asia. When he expressed his indignation at his servile and cowardly compatriots as well as at arrogant and violent Westerners protected by unequal treaties, he voiced the same sentiments as were to be expressed by many a nationalist in colonized countries in the twentieth century. And yet he did so within a distinctly nineteenth-century theoretical framework—that is, by way of developing a theory of civilization rather than of decolonization. In so doing, he accepted and internalized a civilizational hierarchy found in the latest European and American texts of his time in which the West was considered “civilized,” Asia (or at least parts of it) “half-civilized,” and Africa “barbaric.”

Thus, Fukuzawa’s work contains a good deal of a distinctly nineteenth-century West-centrism that has been thoroughly discredited by now, even though it also has the ability to challenge our standard, Eurocentric understanding of the liberal nationalist tradition. Put differently, his thought is not as radically non-Western as some proponents of comparative political theory might wish it to be. According to an important contributor to this subdiscipline, a text, a thinker, or a tradition must be “alien” if it is to be a proper object of comparative work. “Mere difference is not enough,” he writes, “there must be something that seals it off from us [i.e., Westerners], so that it will remain alien to us no matter how long we engage with it” (March 2009, 552). In other words, comparative political theory must focus on disputes “between two fairly autonomous, more or less identifiable traditions of thought” (March 2009,

554). I agree that this type of comparison is one important type that deserves comparativists’ attention. But I fail to see why it must be the sole or even primary focus of comparative political theory. In fact, to focus exclusively on this type of radical difference is to exoticize the non-West and exaggerate its purportedly alien nature, thereby failing to appreciate the fact that some non-Western thinkers are more Western than are others. As Fukuzawa’s example shows, a non-Western thinker can be profoundly divided between strong anti-Western sentiments and equally strong pro-Western ideas and ideologies. Of course, there have been other Japanese thinkers who regard Fukuzawa’s pro-Western sympathies as a threat to the integrity of Japan’s national tradition. Such reactionary thinkers sometimes develop fascinating ideas, but there is no reason to assume that their works are necessarily of greater value than texts produced by their pro-Western rivals, such as Fukuzawa. Comparative perspectives can vary greatly, as different texts require different kinds of comparison. As I have shown, juxtaposing Fukuzawa with Western liberal nationalists today provides *one* comparative perspective, which shows that nineteenth-century Japanese thinkers’ works can have a profoundly ambivalent bearing on the issue of West-centrism.

With this in mind, Fukuzawa’s complicated stance on imperialism and anti-imperialism is worth highlighting. During the final two decades of his life, his foreign policy ideas developed in a hawkish direction. The late Fukuzawa appeared to support the very imperialism that his younger self had so passionately denounced, provided that the “civilizing mission” was undertaken by the Japanese empire. Of particular relevance here is his aforementioned support for the Sino–Japanese War of 1894–95. Civilized Japan, he opined, had a moral duty as well as a right to “liberate” China, by force if necessary, from its own backwardness, barbarism, and Confucianism. A similar idea is discernible in his interventionist stance on Korea. Although this partly originated from his realist view that instability in Korea posed a threat to Japan’s national security, it also derived from his distinctly imperialist idea that Korea, rather like Japan prior to the Meiji restoration, ought morally to be “liberated” from its own backwardness and barbarism and its historic subservience to China (Fukuzawa 1969–71, 8–16: *passim*). Scholars have long debated whether the late Fukuzawa abandoned his earlier liberalism. Some regard his shift as a sudden and total “existential turn” to ultranationalism (Hwang 2020, 120); others see it as a gradual, cumulatively significant, and yet ultimately incomplete move toward authoritarianism (Blacker 1964, 122–37; Craig 2007, 373–429; Hopper 2005, 109–27); and still others emphasize the continuity between the early and the late Fukuzawa (Maruyama 2001). It is beyond the scope of the present essay to discuss this issue in detail. My present point is that Fukuzawa is in conformity with mainstream liberal nationalism in struggling, and perhaps failing, to restrain his nationalist sentiments sufficiently to keep his liberalism uncompromised. In this

respect, the nineteenth-century Japanese thinker's efforts are no "alien" to Anglophone scholars of liberal nationalism today. The late Fukuzawa's imperialist sympathies, accompanied by recurring outbursts of nationalist sentiments, illustrate how difficult it is "without contradiction to be both a liberal and a nationalist" (Miller 2019, 23).

CONCLUSION

In his notoriously chauvinistic newspaper column dated March 28, 1882, Fukuzawa fantasized about the future when Japan would surpass Britain as a global superpower (Fukuzawa 1970a, 64–7). The Japanese flag would fly across the Pacific and Indian Oceans, Japanese ships would be found in port cities across Europe, and the Japanese would do to the British what the latter had done to the Chinese: "dominate [them] as though they were slaves, tying their hands and feet" (Fukuzawa 1970a, 66).¹¹ If Fukuzawa was occasionally overwhelmed by such "bestly sentiments" (Fukuzawa 1970a, 66), however, he tamed them in the majority of his writings, including *Outline*. In this book, he integrated liberal and nationalist ideas into a progressive vision, showing how the current, "half-barbaric" Japan might move toward civilization. In so doing, he mounted a powerful attack on illiberal nationalists, underlining the indispensability of intellect in serving the nation. Whether Fukuzawa consistently took a liberal nationalist position is a matter of controversy, however. There is some evidence to show that the late Fukuzawa moved in the direction of illiberal nationalism. But even if his defense of liberal nationalism ultimately failed in this way, his work does not thereby become less interesting to those of us who study liberal nationalism today. On the contrary, his struggle to tame his "bestly sentiments" is of interest for two reasons: first, because the same difficulty recurs in liberal nationalist thought and, second, because ours is a time when bestly sentiments abound among a great many people, especially among self-nominated patriots. Recent theorists of liberal nationalism have done an excellent job of exposing the naivety of those globalists and cosmopolitans who prematurely prophesized the arrival of a postnational era. And yet, regrettably, they have not seriously confronted the threat coming from the right. It is high time that they rose above this complacency and reclaimed a neglected strand of liberal nationalism, represented by Fukuzawa, that sought to save nationalism from its enemies closer to home: the racists and xenophobes in our midst.

¹¹ Fukuzawa, however, was not particularly sympathetic to the oppressed Chinese. On the contrary, he fantasized about dominating both the British and the Chinese, suggesting that the will to power is more fundamental than a sense of justice to human psychology.

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ETHICAL STANDARDS

The author affirms this research did not involve human subjects.

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