

# Toward an Individualist Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism

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In her powerful book, Adom Getachew reconstructs the anticolonial nationalism of several Anglophone Black Atlantic thinkers.<sup>1</sup> I will often refer to ‘anticolonial nationalism’ generally, but I mean more specifically the strands Getachew reconstructs.<sup>2</sup> She says her new understanding of anticolonial nationalism has implications for contemporary thinking about normative questions in global justice.<sup>3</sup> However, Getachew focuses heavily on the historical re-construction of anticolonial nationalism, spending much less space developing her normative conclusions. Here, I sketch an alternative account – in some ways consonant with and in some ways challenging Getachew’s account – of what anticolonial nationalism can teach us about contemporary controversies in global justice.

Getachew calls for the development of a ‘postcolonial cosmopolitanism that recenters the problem of empire’.<sup>4</sup> Unlike other contemporary cosmopolitanisms, she argues, the postcolonial variety should be ‘less aimed at the limits of the nation-state and more concerned with the ways that relations of hierarchy continue to create differentiated modes of sovereignty and reproduce domination in the international sphere’.<sup>5</sup> Opposition to

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1. Adom Getachew, *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2019).

2. For her characterization of these diverse strands under the umbrella of ‘anticolonial nationalism’, see *Ibid.*, 2.

3. *Ibid.*, 30–6.

4. *Ibid.*, 32.

5. *Ibid.*, 32.

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international domination, conceived of both as a wrong in itself and as a threat to collective self-government, should form the 'normative and utopian core' of postcolonial cosmopolitanism.<sup>6</sup> Other contemporary cosmopolitanisms emphasize the importance of individual rights, and argue that the international community should protect them, even (perhaps especially) at the expense of the nation-state; but, Getachew worries, this emphasis underestimates the moral importance of collective self-government and encourages powerful actors to practice (neo-)imperialism, ostensibly justified in the name of securing individual rights.<sup>7</sup>

Getachew sets up a dichotomy between two types of cosmopolitanism: (a) *individualist, anti-nationalist cosmopolitanism*, which mounts a criticism of the nation-state grounded in a commitment to the equal moral worth of individuals; and (b) *postcolonial cosmopolitanism*, which mounts a criticism of international domination grounded in a commitment to collective self-government. Here, I complicate this dichotomy. I argue that criticism of the nation-state as a political form, based on a commitment to individual rights, can reveal kinds of domination and threats to collective self-government that anticolonial nationalism (as Getachew reconstructs it) obscures. Moreover, an individualist, anti-nationalist cosmopolitanism can also be centrally committed to dismantling the imperial hierarchies that continue to shape global politics. I do not only mean such a commitment would be logically consistent with this kind of cosmopolitanism. Rather, I argue that asking (as Getachew calls us to) what both the achievements and the shortcomings of anticolonial nationalism can teach us about contemporary global justice ultimately lends support to a cosmopolitanism emphasising individualist criticisms of the nation-state (albeit a cosmopolitanism that is also centrally committed to resisting neo-imperialism). This, in turn, means anticolonial nationalism illustrates more about the 'generic' limitations of nationalism than Getachew lets on.<sup>8</sup>

## Confronting State Domination

One major shortcoming of anticolonial nationalism as Getachew reconstructs it – and I will take her reconstruction as authoritative – is that it under-emphasised the postcolonial nation-state's potential to dominate its own citizens. Granted, this may not have been an oversight, but a strategic political choice: perhaps anticolonial nationalists thought nation-states were the political formation most likely to be internationally recognised as legitimate, or perhaps they were reluctant to highlight their states' potential for domination when imperial powers might take this as evidence of their unfitness for self-government.<sup>9</sup> Thus, I do not mean to imply that anticolonial nationalists were ignorant of the nation-state's potential to dominate; I will assume, instead, that they strategically chose to under-emphasise it. Whatever the reason for this under-emphasis, though, it is a weakness of anticolonial nationalism considered as a system of political thought (even if its advocates rightly thought it strategic to publicly endorse anticolonial nationalism despite this weakness).

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6. Ibid., 33.

7. Ibid., 33–4.

8. Ibid., see discussion on 24–30.

9. Thank you to Shuk Ying Chan and Desmond Jagmohan for pushing me to clarify this point; see also Samuel Moyn, 'Fantasies of Federalism', *Dissent* 62, no. 1 (2015): 145–51.

Re-emphasising the state's potential to dominate (as I do below) allows us to re-discover the affinities between individualist criticisms of the nation-state and criticisms of domination grounded in commitments to collective self-government (thereby enabling us to complicate Getachew's dichotomy between *individualist*, *anti-nationalist* and *post-colonial* cosmopolitanisms). Indeed, anticolonial nationalists' political projects mostly focused on strengthening postcolonial nation-states so they could serve as vehicles for collective self-government, but this meant obscuring how the same states' potential to become vehicles of domination could actually undermine collective self-government.

I consider several replies to these criticisms on behalf of anticolonial nationalism, but show that they do not ultimately succeed. This interrogation of anticolonial nationalism goes beyond the 'new humanitarian' critiques of the late 20th century by emphasising not only the importance of protecting individual rights, but also how their violation can undercut collective self-government.<sup>10</sup> Thus, my discussion reveals how re-emphasising a commitment to individual rights (in particular individuals' claims to nondomination), as well as the threats nation-states (including postcolonial ones) can pose to them, allows us to more effectively pursue both nondomination and collective self-government.

As Getachew characterises it, anticolonial nationalism was fundamentally committed to nondomination. Anticolonial nationalists developed sophisticated accounts of the kinds of domination that constituted empire and the ways in which this domination survived even after formal decolonisation. Despite their deep understanding of the multiple forms dominating hierarchies could take, though, the anticolonial nationalists Getachew discusses under-emphasised the postcolonial nation-state's potential to become a source of domination. They primarily sought nondomination *for* the postcolonial nation-state: they sought political independence, and, for their independent nation-states, integration on equal terms with others in the international order. Granted, some anticolonial nationalists were inclined to cede a significant amount of national sovereignty to international institutions, as were Nkrumah and Williams in their ambitious visions of international federation in Africa and the West Indies, respectively.<sup>11</sup> But even they did not endorse internationalism (to use Getachew's term) as a means to curb the potentially dominating power of postcolonial nation-states. Instead, it was to be a means by which postcolonial nation-states could augment their political and economic power so as to better rival the power of imperial actors on the world stage.<sup>12</sup>

Although Getachew often talks generically about 'nondomination' or 'international nondomination' without explicitly answering the question – *nondomination for whom?* – her analysis strongly suggests anticolonial nationalists sought liberation in the form of independent postcolonial nation-states that could take part in world politics without being subject to the arbitrary power of imperial or neo-imperial actors. In other words, they sought nondomination *for* the postcolonial nation-state. So, for example, Getachew writes that the 'distinctively anticolonial account of self-determination' emphasised

10. Getachew, *Worldmaking*, 104–5.

11. *Ibid.*, 107–41.

12. *Ibid.*, 108–9, 112–4.

‘articulating the international conditions of nondomination *for existing territorial units in which popular sovereignty would be exercised*’.<sup>13</sup>

I will not deny that nation-states, considered as unitary agents, can be subject to domination, or diminish the importance of pursuing nondomination for those states representing people historically (and presently) subjugated by imperial hierarchies. Nevertheless, individuals are also subjects deserving of nondomination, and they may very well suffer domination at the hands of their own states. Placing too much (theoretical and political) emphasis on grounding and securing the *nation-state*’s claims to nondomination risks obscuring both these points and undercutting efforts to protect individuals from their own states’ power.

Anticolonial nationalists could mitigate this worry by noting that at least some iterations of anticolonial nationalism explicitly recognised individuals’ claims to nondomination. Some, for example, cast imperial hierarchies as objectionable because they rendered individual members of dominated societies ‘rightless’, or denied them important rights, including human rights.<sup>14</sup> Even these versions of anticolonial nationalism, though, de-emphasised the possibility that the postcolonial nation-state itself could subject individual citizens to domination in addition to that which they suffered at the hands of imperial powers. Getachew acknowledges this, writing, ‘the anticolonial view that human rights were to be secured in self-government and statehood offered no adequate response to instances where the state itself violated the rights of citizens’.<sup>15</sup>

Again, anticolonial nationalists have a possible reply: some of them acknowledged that there was dissent and conflict within postcolonial states and thought this reality should affect how they were integrated into the international order. For example, Azikiwe opposed the heavily centralised federation of African states Nkrumah advocated.<sup>16</sup> He thought integrating postcolonial states already riven with internal conflict into federal arrangements that required them to relinquish sovereign power was a recipe for disaster – weakening the state in ways that ‘might exacerbate internal instability and fragmentation’.<sup>17</sup> But notice that Azikiwe’s goal was to strengthen the postcolonial state so it could more effectively pacify internal conflict (and perhaps more closely resemble a truly uniform *nation-state*). Although he acknowledged there was conflict within postcolonial states, and that this implied certain normative conclusions about how they should be integrated into the international order, he did not seem to recognise parties to these internal conflicts as potentially identifying real ways in which postcolonial states were dominating them. Thus, Azikiwe’s acknowledgment of domestic conflict within postcolonial states does not signal a recognition of how nation-states (including postcolonial ones) may dominate their own citizens, or of the possibility that avoiding this danger may require limiting state sovereignty. His version of anticolonial nationalism, then, does not avoid the objection that it underemphasises postcolonial nation-states’ potential to dominate their own citizens.

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13. Ibid., 79, emphasis added.

14. Ibid., 81–4, 89, 92–7.

15. Ibid., 74.

16. Ibid., 134–8.

17. Ibid., 138.

I will consider one final reply on behalf of anticolonial nationalism: although postcolonial nation-states *can* dominate their individual citizens, these states' shortcomings (including their records of or potential for internal domination) are themselves results of the imperial system. As Getachew notes, theorising the ways in which the organisation of the international order (according to the rules of empire) affects states' domestic political arrangements was one of anticolonial nationalists' central innovations.<sup>18</sup> However, even conceding the imperial system was to blame for the rise of oppressive regimes in postcolonial nation-states, the question remains: what is to be done for the victims of their oppression? Although dismantling the imperial system that put these oppressive regimes in place may be necessary to uproot them, it is not clear that it would be sufficient. A political programme focused on strengthening postcolonial nation-states – so they could escape their subordinated position in the international order and mount more forceful challenges to neo-imperial hierarchies – might erase the conditions that encouraged them to adopt dominating domestic institutions in the first place. But this would not automatically dismantle domestic (national) structures or practices of domination that have already taken hold.

To understand these dominating structures and practices (the dominating structures and practices of the nation-state), we need theories that explicitly acknowledge the role they play in dominating individuals – even if they were originally created by the imperial system. And to mount an effective opposition to this domination (the domination orchestrated by the nation-state), we need political programmes that take the state's domination of its individual citizens as an explicit target. It is not clear that anticolonial nationalism as Getachew presents it has the resources to ground these theoretical or political projects. Although anticolonial nationalists' theoretical and political programmes were ambitious, radical, in many ways egalitarian, and often 'internationalist', they also evince (at least) a reluctance to acknowledge the potential of post-colonial nation-states to dominate their own citizens and (at most) a deep faith in the nation-state as a vehicle of liberation. As Getachew puts it, for anticolonial nationalists, 'The road to a universal postimperial world order was in and through rather than over and against the nation'.<sup>19</sup>

Not only does this mean anticolonial nationalism risks leaving nation-states' domination of their own citizens understudied, under-criticised, and under-opposed – shedding doubt on the strength of its commitment to nondomination. Anticolonial nationalism's reluctance to address nation-states' domination of their own citizens also threatens to undermine its own stated commitment to collective self-government. This is because, when a nation-state dominates its citizens, they arguably are not free to engage in genuine collective self-government. For example, when certain citizens are disenfranchised (either formally or effectively), when the government is reliably un-responsive to their interests and preferences or reliably fails to represent citizens' shared commitments, it is hard to make the case that their society is truly self-governing. Instead of the preferences and values of society as a whole, or of all citizens taken collectively, the government reflects the preferences and values of whatever faction happens to be in power.

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18. *Ibid.*, 34–6, 85, 105–6, 108.

19. *Ibid.*, 28.

Certainly, anticolonial nationalists recognised this. Hence Nkrumah's advocacy of parliamentary democracy<sup>20</sup> and association of self-government with freedom from both 'internal and external domination'.<sup>21</sup> Nkrumah also opposed preserving the political power of Ghana's chiefs during the process of decolonization, on the grounds that they would not govern democratically and would therefore dominate Ghanaian citizens.<sup>22</sup> Similarly, Nyerere endorsed the protection of individual citizens' human rights as a critical function of the self-governing state.<sup>23</sup> So, at least some anticolonial nationalists acknowledged the ways in which internal domination could undermine a state's ability to be a vehicle for its people's self-government. What I have argued here, though, is that the strands of anticolonial nationalism Getachew centres were overly-optimistic about the nation-state's potential to bring about the internal nondomination and democratic political formations necessary for self-government. Although Nyerere's response to the Nigeria-Biafra conflict – which I discuss below – arguably makes his thought an exception to this rule, Getachew presents his position on Biafra as an outlier among anticolonial nationalists.<sup>24</sup>

Individuals may be dominated by their own nation-states, just as individuals and nation-states are dominated by the imperial order, and either kind of domination could undermine their victims' ability to collectively self-govern. Thus, while appreciating the strengths of anticolonial nationalism should lead us to oppose domination and value collective self-government, a desire to correct its shortcomings (its relative inattention to nation-states' potential to dominate their own citizens and the threat this poses to collective self-government) should lead us to endorse an individualistic critique of the nation-state and adopt political programmes to protect individuals from domination at the hands of their own nation-states. This critique of the nation-state and prioritisation of individual rights resembles the 'new humanitarianism' that began to arise in the 1960s, but I propose the version of the critique I have sketched here can be coherently paired with postcolonial commitments in a way 'new humanitarianism' was not.<sup>25</sup> Already, I have embraced a commitment to collective self-government the new humanitarians evidently did not: rather than simply asserting the importance of individual rights over and above collective self-government, I have argued that securing the former may be necessary for securing the latter. In addition, the individualist critique of the nation-state I have sketched can be paired with an explicit commitment to undoing (neo-)imperial hierarchies. The next section illustrates how.

## Individualist Postcolonial Cosmopolitanism

What does the foregoing discussion mean for contemporary theorists and practitioners of global politics? How could a contemporary 'postcolonial cosmopolitanism' incorporate

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20. *Ibid.*, 94.

21. *Ibid.*, 23.

22. *Ibid.*, 83–4.

23. *Ibid.*, 94.

24. See *Ibid.*, 102–4.

25. On 'new humanitarianism', see *Ibid.*, 104–5.

an individualist critique of the nation-state while maintaining a robust commitment to nondomination and collective self-government that necessitates working to dismantle the (neo-)imperial hierarchies that continue to structure the world? How can we do so without exaggerating the potential of nation-states (even postcolonial ones) to rid the world of domination? In this section, I put forward one proposal: given that national sovereignty should sometimes be limited in order to protect individuals from state-sanctioned domination, any limitation on postcolonial nation-states' sovereignty should be accompanied by (at least) a comparable limitation on neo-imperial powers' sovereignty.

The foregoing analysis has suggested that protecting individuals from domination, and from its negative effects on the potential for collective self-government, requires some mechanism for protecting them from the threats their own nation-states pose. This, in turn, requires diminished sovereignty for the nation-state. (We might frame this turn away from national sovereignty as building on the internationalism of Nkrumah and Williams, but with a greater emphasis on the nation-state's capacity to dominate its own citizens. This is a capacity it possesses alongside capacities for enabling collective self-government and allying with similarly-situated nation-states to challenge imperial hierarchies – the capacities Nkrumah and Williams emphasised). The question is, then, how could we fashion a world in which nation-states had only limited sovereignty without neo-imperial powers weaponising this limitation against postcolonial states to further cement their international subordination? One part of the answer, I propose, would be to reciprocally limit the sovereignty of both postcolonial and neo-imperial nation-states.

This is a condition to strive for, first, because neo-imperial nation-states are at least as capable as their postcolonial counterparts of dominating their own citizens and undermining domestic collective self-government. (As Inés Valdez highlights, imperial powers have often leveraged the power of their national political institutions to dominate both the members of the societies they colonise and their own citizens – as seen in, for example, the US's denial of civil rights to black Americans).<sup>26</sup> So, if our goal is to protect individuals from domination and to bolster collective self-government, we should be at least as eager to limit the sovereignty of neo-imperial as postcolonial powers. But, more than that, reciprocally limiting neo-imperial and postcolonial nation-states' sovereignty would help to undo the 'unequal integration' that Getachew convincingly argues characterises an international community built around a system of empire.<sup>27</sup> Following Koskenniemi and Anghie, Getachew argues that colonised societies were not excluded from the international order (only to be included later, at the moment of formal decolonisation), but instead were included on unequal terms; these societies had well-defined positions in the international order, but they were decidedly subordinate positions.<sup>28</sup>

Diminishing the sovereignty of today's postcolonial nation-states without doing the same for neo-imperial powers would perpetuate this unequal integration. Reciprocal limitations of national sovereignty, on the other hand, would yield equal integration, but

26. Inés Valdez, 'Association, Reciprocity, and Emancipation: A Transnational Account of the Politics of Global Justice', in *Empire, Race, and Global Justice*, ed. Duncan Bell (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019), 120–44.

27. Getachew, *Worldmaking*, 17–22.

28. *Ibid.*, 17–22.

on different – less nationalist, more individualist – terms than those that define the status quo. Of course, this proposed limitation of sovereignty should be genuinely – not only formally – reciprocal. As Getachew's discussion of neo-imperialism illustrates, and as others have convincingly argued,<sup>29</sup> the formal equality of sovereign states far from guarantees their actual – political, economic, social – equality. And, as long as states' political, economic, and social power are radically unequal, their formal sovereign equality may do little to prevent their subordination. Similarly, *formally* diminishing the sovereignty of postcolonial and neo-imperial nation-states in reciprocal ways (by, say, subjecting them to the same international laws that specified identical conditions under which their sovereignty would be reduced in identical ways), would not alone guarantee their integration on equal terms into the international community. If, for example, postcolonial and neo-imperial nation-states' sovereignty was subject to the same limiting laws, but these laws were only enforced against postcolonial nation-states and to advance the interests of neo-imperial nation-states, the former would still suffer subordination in the international community.

What is called for, then, are limits on the sovereignty of postcolonial and neo-imperial nation-states that are symmetric in real, not merely formal, terms: an international practice of cross-border political contestation that aims to protect citizens from the abuses of their own nation-states, and that global political actors regularly take up to oppose the unjust power even of neo-imperial nation-states. For a model of how to actualize this dual commitment – to protecting citizens from their own nation-states' abuses *and* to opposing neo-colonial power grabs – we can look to Nyerere's response to the Nigeria-Biafra conflict. As Getachew acknowledges, anticolonial nationalism tended to emphasise the importance of postcolonial states' territorial integrity *taking existing borders as given* (despite their colonial origins).<sup>30</sup> This meant it was ill-equipped to deal with the claims of secessionist groups – like the Biafrans – within postcolonial states.<sup>31</sup> Appreciating this weakness, Nyerere rejected the 'consensus' view among anticolonial nationalists, formally recognising the Biafran state and arguing that Nigeria's failure to protect its citizens undermined its claim to sovereignty.<sup>32</sup> Nyerere challenged Nigerian sovereignty partly on individualist grounds – that Nigeria had not 'protected the life and liberty of all citizens'.<sup>33</sup> However, in doing so, he preserved anticolonial nationalism's central commitments to self-government, nondomination, and liberation from an imperial world order – by revising rather than abandoning anticolonial ideas of self-determination, criticising the Nigerian state for undertaking the domination and subjugation characteristic of imperial rulers, and questioning the legitimacy of a Nigerian border originally determined by colonial powers.<sup>34</sup> Nyerere may have envisioned Biafra as itself

29. See for example, Antony Anghie, 'The Evolution of International Law: Colonial and Postcolonial Realities', *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 5 (2006): 739–53; Makau Mutua and Antony Anghie, 'What is TWAIL?' *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)* 94 (2000): 31–40.

30. Getachew, *Worldmaking*, 102–3.

31. *Ibid.*, 102–3.

32. *Ibid.*, 103–4.

33. *Ibid.*, 103.

34. *Ibid.*, 103–4.

a *nation-state* that would protect its citizens and facilitate their self-government,<sup>35</sup> but this does not diminish the fact that his criticism of Nigeria demonstrates his commitment to opposing states (presumably including postcolonial nation-states) when they dominated their own citizens, and without abandoning other anticolonial commitments.

Thus, Getachew's own account of the Biafran episode undermines her dichotomy between *individualist*, *anti-nationalist* and *postcolonial* cosmopolitanisms. In Nyerere's treatment of Biafra, we can see elements of a cosmopolitanism at once individualist and postcolonial. While the international community's actual response to the Biafran conflict privileged the 'new humanitarianism' that under-valued collective self-determination,<sup>36</sup> an alternative possible outcome would have been (more in line with Nyerere's understanding of the issues at stake) the inauguration of a practice of resisting both nation-states' endangerment of their own citizens *and* exertions of neo-colonial power.

This leaves us with the question of how to inaugurate such a practice in the present. And if this is possible, it is evidence that we no longer need to put our faith in the nation-state as the primary vehicle of global liberation – even as a matter of political strategy. One way to start would be to prioritise devoting resources (material and otherwise) to a mode of cross-border political contestation that I have elsewhere called 'counter-hegemonic'.<sup>37</sup> Counter-hegemonic foreign influence as I understand it happens when political actors from one society exert influence on another society; and where the influencers are (or represent groups that are) currently and historically less geopolitically powerful than the recipient society (I am especially interested in cases where international influencers seek to remedy some injustice in the recipient society).<sup>38</sup>

Take the Latin American opposition to Arizona's 2010 immigration law, SB 1070. The law (among other things) allowed the warrantless arrest of suspected undocumented immigrants; it was challenged in the US Supreme Court, and several Latin American countries submitted amicus briefs opposing it (citing potential injustice to both their citizens and other Latin Americans living in the US).<sup>39</sup> The transnational associations that Valdez discusses, in which victims of colonial oppression and victims of domestic oppression in the US joined together politically to resist both forms of injustice, also provide a promising example of counter-hegemonic influence.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, one could argue that several European companies' decisions to divest from the Dakota Access Pipeline simultaneously opposed the US's attempts to dominate Native Americans by denying them control over natural resources on and around their tribal lands, and helped subvert the settler-colonial hierarchies that encouraged such domination.<sup>41</sup>

These examples illustrate that it is possible for international actors to challenge a nation-state's use of sovereignty to dominate its own citizens (e.g. Latinx people in the

35. Ibid., 103–4; see especially the discussion regarding Nyerere's comparison of Biafra to Israel.

36. Ibid., 104–5.

37. I defend this position in Lucia M. Rafanelli, 'Promoting Justice Across Borders', *Political Studies* (2019): 1–20, doi: 10.1177/0032321719875402.

38. Ibid., 2–3, 16.

39. See the discussion in Ibid., 6.

40. See Valdez, 'Association', 131–40.

41. See Rafanelli, 'Promoting Justice', 6, 13.

US who could be arrested on the basis of racial profiling under SB 1070, black Americans denied civil rights, or Native Americans denied control of their tribal lands) in ways that subvert rather than reinforce neo-imperial hierarchies, which tend to cast white Western actors as righteous interveners and people of colour in the ‘developing’ world as delinquents in need of behavioural correction. I can not claim that these counter-hegemonic struggles are dominant on the world stage, or that it would be easy to make them so. But, as participants in global politics – as activists who might join transnational social movements, consumers who might join boycotts, voters who might lobby our politicians, and so on – we can prioritise supporting these counter-hegemonic struggles. That is, we can, when faced with choices about how to allocate our scarce resources in support of various morally worthy political struggles, prioritise supporting those that are counter-hegemonic.<sup>42</sup> That would be a way to reconcile an individualist commitment to limiting nation-states’ sovereignty with postcolonial commitments to dismantling neo-imperial hierarchies and thereby serving the causes of nondomination and collective self-government.

## Conclusions: The Limits of the Nation-State

The previous section illustrated how one could develop a cosmopolitanism based on *both* an individualist critique of the nation-state *and* principled commitments to (domestic and international) nondomination and collective self-government. This complicates the dichotomy Getachew draws between *individualist, anti-nationalist* cosmopolitanisms, on the one hand, and *postcolonial* cosmopolitanism, on the other. It also suggests that an analysis of anticolonial nationalism (both its advantages and its shortcomings) can teach us something about the limits of the nation-state in general.

Getachew cautions against interpreting the failures of anticolonial nationalism as evidence of nationalism’s ‘generic’ faults or ‘congenital defects’.<sup>43</sup> She warns that doing so risks (1) obscuring the degree to which anticolonial nationalists were committed to remaking the world order, (2) overlooking the specific political and historical contexts that shaped the trajectory of anticolonial nationalism, and (3) falsely presenting anticolonial nationalism as a defective version of ideal-typical European nationalism.<sup>44</sup> But the analysis I have sketched above does not commit these errors. I have not denied that anticolonial nationalists proposed a radically new vision of the world order. Nor have I (I hope) papered over the specific contexts in which anticolonial nationalism evolved. Rather, I arrived at my main criticism of anticolonial nationalism (that it under-emphasised the nation-state’s potential to dominate its own citizens) by interrogating its various strains understood as responses to several concrete political questions (how postcolonial states could overcome (neo-)imperial domination, whether and in what way postcolonial states should federate, how to understand the state’s role in realising individuals’ internationally-recognised human rights, and how postcolonial states could reckon with the lasting impacts of imperial rule on their domestic politics). Finally, nothing in my

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42. Ibid., 14–7.

43. Getachew, *Worldmaking*, 26, 30.

44. Ibid., 26–30.

analysis depends on seeing anticolonial nationalism as a pale imitation of its 'purer' European variant.

My analysis *does* support the conclusion that nation-states' sovereignty should generally be limited to protect individuals from domination at the hands of their own nation-states (and thereby to secure the preconditions of collective self-government). To be consistent with postcolonial commitments, this limitation should be genuinely symmetric for both postcolonial and neo-imperial nation-states. This, in turn, means the political programmes designed to bring about a world in which nation-states' sovereignty is limited in the appropriate manner should emphasise counter-hegemonic cross-border political activity that, while opposing nation-states' efforts to dominate their citizens, also subverts the hierarchies constituting neo-imperial 'unequal integration'.

But none of this necessary specificity tempers the generality of the overarching conclusion: the potential of the nation-state to dominate its own citizens and to thereby undermine collective self-government means its sovereignty should be limited. Although Getachew does not explicitly define 'nationalism', the common thread in the various versions of anticolonial nationalism she centres is a characterization of the nation-state as a guarantor of nondomination and collective self-government for its citizens.<sup>45</sup> If this is nationalism, we also have a general conclusion about it: that its failure to appreciate the nation-state's parallel potential to dominate and undermine self-government misleads, and promises to misdirect political activity in ways that leave these dangers unaddressed. This critique of nationalism doesn't get its force from the erroneous attribution of some inherent defect to postcolonial nationalism in contrast to a European ideal type. In a way, it's quite the opposite: since one grave wrong of colonialism was that imperial powers denied colonised people the opportunity to exercise political authority in their own societies,<sup>46</sup> and since the postcolonial nation-state looks like a promising vehicle by which to reverse that dynamic, one would think that if *any* nationalism were to be morally defensible, it would be the anticolonial variety. Thus, the fact that an interrogation of anticolonial nationalism, in all its contextual specificity, *still* leads to these conclusions about the limits of the nation and nationalism should be all the more evidence of their strength.

All this leaves us with a somewhat different picture of postcolonial cosmopolitanism than the one Getachew provides. It is, as she says it should be, committed to international nondomination, collective self-government, and dismantling (neo-)imperial hierarchies. But it is also individualist, committed to protecting individuals from domination at the hands of their own nation-states, and thereby neutralising the distinct threats this kind of domination poses to collective self-government. The political programmes it calls for are not centred around bolstering postcolonial states' national sovereignty. They are instead centred around supporting the efforts of people within postcolonial societies to oppose the domination wrought by neo-imperial states, as a challenge to the latter's domestic oppression and to the dynamics of unequal integration that continue to haunt the international order.

45. For a parallel, illuminating discussion of different possible meanings of 'internationalism' in Getachew's text, see Shuk Ying Chan, review of *Worldmaking after Empire: The Rise and Fall of Self-Determination, Ethics and International Affairs* 33, no. 3 (2019): 375–77.

46. See the discussion in Rafanelli, 'Promoting Justice', 13–4.

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