

Is the USA a “Nation”?

John Stuart Mill was an English philosopher, political economist, politician, logician, and civil servant. He is considered one of the major intellectual figures of the 19th century and is one of the most enduring and indispensable writers of his time. Below is his formulation of what constitutes a “nation.”

“We mean a principle of sympathy, not of hostility, of union, not of separation. We mean a feeling of common interest among those who live under the same government and are contained within the same natural or historical boundaries. We mean that one part of the community shall not consider themselves as foreigners with regard to another part; that they shall cherish the tie which holds them together; shall feel that they are one people, that their lot is cast together, that evil to any of their fellow-countrymen is evil to themselves, and that they cannot selfishly free themselves from their share of any common inconvenience by severing the connexion.”

To the extent that J.S. Mill captured the essence of a “nation,” how close to this ideal is the United States of America in 2026? Perhaps the better question is how long, if ever, will it take for America to *recover* this sense of enduring and unwavering national community?