RESEARCH ARTICLE

Imperial Mythology in the Political Thought of Benjamin Disraeli

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Abstract

The article examines the construction of imperial mythology, its structure and its significance for political activity within Benjamin Disraeli's political thought. The research questions concerned the structure of Disraeli's imperial thought and the role it played within the broader framework of his political philosophy. The central hypothesis of this study posits that Disraeli developed a new myth of empire as a key component of his conservative national mythology. This mythology not only underpinned the ideological foundations of his political agenda but also served as a means of integrating society around the government and its leader. The article is using qualitative research methods. The methodological approach employed to achieve this research objective involves a critical analysis of primary sources, which constitute a diverse set of Disraeli's ideological pronouncements. The primary sources include Disraeli's parliamentary speeches, journalistic essays, and selected literary works. The text shows how the story of the British Empire gradually appears in Disraeli's conservative rhetoric, over time assuming a key role therein. Particularly after gaining power in the country, Disraeli was faced with the need to justify his vision of British foreign policy. In his typical manner, he then included the principle of strengthening the empire in the catalogue of national values. On the basis of these materials, the article reconstructs the structure of the ideas he articulated concerning the British Empire. The paper points that the integrative idea proposed by Disraeli was an element of a new political metalanguage. Imperial patriotism allowed the nation to unite, rejecting the temptations of cosmopolitan individualism or class struggle. Disraeli's goal was to create a sense of collective happiness for which the idea of empire would be the ontological axis. The conservative myth thus provided a foundation for rootedness and placed the Englishman in a common, national reality.

Keywords

Benjamin Disraeli, Conservatism, Imperialism, Great Britain

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Introduction

The main focus of this article is a crucial aspect of the political thought of Benjamin Disraeli (1804–1881), a prominent figure in British conservatism. In particular, it is the structure of the myth of empire, which became the ideological basis of Great Britain's foreign policy during the period of Conservative rule in the second half of the 19th century.

Benjamin Disraeli is a multifaceted figure. He was a politician and ideologist of the Conservative Party, Prime Minister of Great Britain in the years 1868 and 1874–1880, and at the same time, a writer and the author of several widely read novels, which constituted an important channel for the expression of his views. He is associated with an active imperialist foreign policy and reforms in domestic politics, including the electoral reform of 1867 which democratized the political system and the introduction of a number of laws in the field of social policy.

The aim of the work is to answer the research questions of what the structure of Disraeli's imperial thought was and what role it played within the political thought he formulated. In particular, the inquiry focuses on issues such as: how Disraeli employed the concept of "empire" for political mobilization; what moral justification he provided for imperial policy; how he argued for the benefits of *Pax Britannica* for the British themselves; and how he utilized the integrative potential of the imperial myth. The thesis of the work is the assumption that Disraeli created a specific myth of empire as a pivotal component of the patriotic, conservative national mythology, which was the ideological basis of the policy he pursued and—even more importantly—was an instrument of social integration (political mobilisation) around the government and its leader. The fundamental aim of Disraeli's conservative project was to revive the universal sentiment of British society towards the state and its policies despite the differentiation between economic classes and social strata. The culmination of the set of symbols constructing a self-conscious national community became the very idea of the British Empire. Apart from the obvious material goals, which were significant primarily from the perspective of individual and private entities, Disraeli utilized the imperial idea as an integrating myth—a central narrative of the entire conservative discourse justifying the unity of the national community.

Methods

In methodological terms, the paper employs qualitative methods. The subject of the analysis is the ideology of the British Empire in the political thought of Benjamin Disraeli. The study is based on the method of political text analysis, employing tools from historical hermeneutics and the contextualist approach to the history of ideas. By adopting a subject-centered perspective focused on Disraeli's personal convictions, the article defines a clear thematic scope, while simultaneously situating his brand of conservatism within the broader tradition of British conservative

thought. The analysis is humanistic in nature, in the sense that it engages with the realm of political motivations and actions as a space of human expression—that is, the expression of the political subject. The primary sources include Disraeli's parliamentary speeches, journalistic essays, and selected literary works, all of which are subjected to critical reading, taking into account their political function and place within the wider discourse of the Victorian era. The historical-political approach adopted here allows Disraeli's ideas to be anchored in the realities of British politics in the second half of the 19th century, including the rivalry with the Liberal Party and the growing tensions surrounding colonial issues. The methodological framework assumes not only the reconstruction of the historical meaning of Disraeli's political thought, but also reflection on its long-term impact on British political culture and on the forms of legitimization employed to support imperial expansion. The critical analysis of source material serves to uncover the anticipated explanations, encompassing a collection of highly diverse ideological statements by Disraeli, including political treatises, journalistic articles, public speeches, and his literary works. The literature used can be divided into primary sources, originating directly from Disraeli himself; secondary sources, consisting of works dedicated to him (monographs, articles, etc.); and tertiary sources, including other monographs and studies on the history of Great Britain and political thought. The most important sources are Disraeli's writings and the preserved texts of his speeches. Among these primary sources are political treatises, most notably *the Vindication of the English Constitution* (1835);[1] novels—Disraeli authored 17, with the two flagship "political novels" considered the most significant, conceived as contributions to the contemporary public debate: *Coningsby, or the New Generation* (1844) and *Sybil, or the Two Nations* (1845);[2] journalistic articles; and public speeches. The latter, in addition to parliamentary speeches, include preserved speeches delivered during election campaigns.[3] The speeches delivered at election meetings in the Crystal Palace and Manchester in 1872 solidified Disraeli's position as the principal ideologue of the Conservative Party.[4]

Disraeli's policy

Within the structure of the 19th-century British political system, Benjamin Disraeli achieved the highest possible position, which is remarkable considering his social background and the beginning of his career. He ruled Great Britain at the

[1] B. Disraeli, *Vindication to the English Constitution in a Letter to a Noble and Learned Lord* (Saunders and Otley, 1835).

[2] B. Disraeli, *Coningsby, or the New Generation* (R. Brimley Johnson, 1904); B. Disraeli, *Sybil, or the Two Nations* (Henry Colburn, 1845).

[3] B. Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield,* ed. T.E. Kebbel (Longmans Green and Co, 1882).

[4] E. Jones, "Impressions of Disraeli: Mythmaking and the History of One Nation Conservatism, 1881–1940," *Revue Française de Civilisation Britannique* 28, no. 1 (2023): 12, https://doi.org/10.4000/rfcb.10191.

time of its greatest power. Although it is an immeasurable category, Disraeli could easily be considered the most influential man in the world in the 1870s. At the height of Disraeli's career, in 1878, *the Spectator* expressed the prevailing opinion about him, "If, thirty years ago, some most astute political thinker had heard that this eccentric and flamboyant writer, who had given the *Sybil*, *Coningsby*, and *Tancred*, would one day govern England—and govern it according to the very program outlined in this series of remarkable political treatises—he would undoubtedly have thought himself confronted with the ravings of a madman. And yet, this is precisely what has come to pass".[5] Disraeli remained the authority for the Tories at least until the mid-20th century.[6] Reconstructing and interpreting Disraeli's political thought requires considering his career, with particular attention to the decisions he made at various stages, as these provide vital insight into the intentions of this Conservative leader.

To present Benjamin Disraeli's political biography in brief, one can identify at least four key moments that served as milestones in his career:

- Joining the Tory Party in 1835—following several unsuccessful attempts to secure a parliamentary seat as an independent candidate. This decision resulted in his electoral success and lasting ties with the Conservatives.
- His conflict with the party leader, Robert Peel, which reached its peak in 1846 when Disraeli opposed Peel's proposal to repeal the Corn Laws. As a result of the dispute, Peel left the party, and Disraeli's position among the Tory leaders was strengthened.
- Passing the 1867 electoral reform, which extended suffrage to a significant part of the working class.
- Assuming the office of Prime Minister in 1874 and serving in that role until 1880.

Most of Disraeli's key domestic policy reforms were implemented during the early years of his six-year tenure as Prime Minister. In 1874, when the Conservatives returned to power, Disraeli was already 70 years old and admitted that office had come too late for him.[7] The party's electoral program was largely based on two famous speeches delivered in 1872 during rallies in Manchester and at the Crystal Palace in London. Disraeli announced an active internal and external policy, expressed in the slogan "the maintenance of our institutions, the preservation of our Empire, and the improvement of the condition of the people".[8] The key positions in the Cabinet for Disraeli's policy were occupied by Richard Cross as Home

[5] C.C. Eldridge, *Disraeli and the Rise of the New Imperialism* (University of Wales Press, 1996), 52.

[6] N. Pearce, "Constructing Disraeli in Twentieth-Century Conservatism," *English Historical Review* 139, no. 600 (2024).

[7] I. John, *Disraeli and the Art of Victorian Politics* (Anthem Press, 2005), 143.

[8] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield*, ed. T.E. Kebbel, 534.

Secretary and Edward Stanley, Earl of Derby as Foreign Secretary (in 1878, he was replaced by Robert Cecil, Marquess of Salisbury).

In the field of internal affairs, a breakthrough achievement was the series of social policy laws adopted in 1875. The first of these, the Public Health Act, aimed to improve sanitary conditions in rapidly growing cities. The act required, among other things, that all new residential buildings be equipped with running water and sanitation systems. The Artisans' and Labourers' Dwellings Improvement Act gave local government authorities the right to purchase land inhabited by workers that was deemed to be slums and then demolish the buildings and replace them with new ones. The Employers and Workmen Act replaced the old Master and Servant Act. In contrast to previous arrangements, both parties to employment relationships were granted equal legal status in disputes over breaches of contract by either side. In particular, an employee's failure to comply with the contract for any reason was henceforth treated as a matter of civil law, not criminal law. It could not result in imprisonment if guilt were proven. The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act decriminalized trade union activity and allowed peaceful picketing and similar strike activities.[9] In announcing these actions, Disraeli referred to the idea of the Tories as a national party, representing in the spirit of solidarity broad social circles united by the national interest, "The Tory party, unless it is a national party, is nothing. It is not a confederation of Nobels, is not a democratic multitude; it is a party formed from all the numerous classes in the realm—classes alike and equal before the law, but whose different conditions and different aims give vigour and variety to our national life".[10] Disraeli created a British version of social conservatism called *One-Nation Conservatism.*[11] The postulate of national unity and what later became known as Tory democracy, i.e. the inclusion of the principle of equal suffrage in the Conservative programme, were, according to Disraeli, the recipe for the separation of the "two nations" he wrote about in *Sybil.*[12]

Disraeli did not have much experience in international affairs. Faced with the need to conduct British policy in such matters as the Balkan question and the

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[9] John, *Disraeli and the Art. Of Victorian Politics*, 144–151; E.J. Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire. Britain 1864–1914* (Edward Arnold, 1986), 84–91; G.M. Trevelyan, *History of England* (Longmans Green and Co., 1929), 682, 683; G. Himmelfarb, *Poverty and Compassion. The Moral Imagination of the Late Victorians* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1991), 207–218.

[10] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl of Beaconsfield*, 524.

[11] Jones, "Impressions of Disraeli: Mythmaking and the History of One Nation Conservatism, 1881–1940."

[12] In Disraeli's novel published in 1845, the famous idea of two nations appeared, meaning the division of society into two groups so different and antagonized that they actually lack common features that could constitute them as one nation, "Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by different breeding, are fed by different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws, (...) the rich and the poor"; Disraeli, *Sybil,* 149, 150.

colonies, he continued the general lines of state policy. This was particularly true in the important and complicated international game against a weakening Turkey. Starting in December 1875, Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia increased pressure on Turkey, demanding concessions for the oppressed South Slavs (following the Andrassy Note and the subsequent Berlin Memorandum of 1876). After the outbreak of the Russo-Turkish War in 1877, Great Britain sided with Turkey, preventing Russia from taking control of the Black Sea Straits and Russian domination of the Balkans. One of the greatest successes of Disraeli's career is considered to be his role in the Congress of Berlin in 1878, which ended the Russo-Turkish War and decided the fate of the Balkan nations. The Congress granted Britain the right to occupy Cyprus and prevented the creation of a *de facto* Russian-dependent 'Greater Bulgaria', which, according to the terms of the Treaty of San Stefano three months earlier, would have extended to the Aegean Sea and Lake Ohrid, and curtailed Russia's wartime gains, which London viewed as a threat to British interests. Salisbury, as minister, was responsible for the organisation of the mission and the details of Great Britain's negotiating position. Still, it was Disraeli who played a critical role during the Congress deliberations themselves. Disraeli's stance—supporting Turkey against Russia—was firm and controversial from the perspective of a significant portion of public opinion (Turkey was widely accused of crimes in Bulgaria, which had indeed occurred). However, it made his role during the negotiations all the more prominent.[13] The occupation of Cyprus was a source of pride to Disraeli because of the island's strategic role for Britain. "In taking Cyprus", said Disraeli in parliament, "the movement is not Mediterranean, it is Indian. We have taken a step there which we think necessary for the preservation of our Empire and for its preservation in peace".[14] The anti-Russian position was Disraeli's consistent policy announced before the election. Among other things, during a public speech in Manchester, he accused the Liberals of being too lenient towards Russia in the period after the Crimean War, when the Russell government "showed themselves guaranteeing their own humiliation".[15] Earlier in 1875, Disraeli had pushed through Britain's purchase of shares in the Suez Canal. To this end, before obtaining state funds, which would have required parliamentary approval, Disraeli obtained a loan from the banker Lionel de Rothschild.[16] Gaining influence over the canal was intended to serve British interests in India. In 1876, at Disraeli's urging and support, Queen Victoria assumed the title of *Empress of India*.[17] Disraeli's

[13] R. Blake, *Disraeli* (Prion Books Ltd, 1998), 649–654; W. Khun, *The Politics of Pleasure. A Portrait of Benjamin Disraeli* (The Free Press, 2006), 317–321; L.C.B. Seaman, *Victorian England. Aspects of English and Imperial History 1837–1901* (Meyhuen & Co, 1973), 210–219.

[14] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl of*, 200.

[15] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the Earl*, 519.

[16] E.J. Feuchtwanger, *Disraeli* (Edward Arnold, 2000), 143.

[17] Eldridge, *Disraeli and the Rise of the New*, 52, 53.

foreign policy also focused on the expansion of the colonial empire, which during his reign included Canada with Newfoundland, the Cape Colony, India with Burma and Ceylon, Australia, New Zealand, and numerous smaller colonies in Africa, the Caribbean, and other island territories. The vigorous imperial policy of the Conservatives was pejoratively named *Beaconsfieldism* by Gladstone.

Events in the outlying colonies ultimately contributed to the electoral defeat and end of Disraeli's government in 1880. Two events that shocked British public opinion were the military failures in the indigenous wars in South Africa and Afghanistan. In 1879, one of the columns of the British military expedition suffered a defeat in a battle with the Zulu army near Isandlwana. Although the defeat was of minor importance on the scale of the entire empire—the British unit numbered about 1,500 soldiers, half of whom were native auxiliary recruits—it caused a great stir in Europe.[18] Britain's prestige also suffered from the prolonged campaign in Afghanistan (1878–1880), where the British tried to force the local government to break off political and military cooperation with Russia. Disraeli justified military involvement in Central Asia with the need to defend Britain's position in Europe against the growing power of its competitors, especially Russia. "Afghanistan, if in the hands of a hostile Power, may a cheap time deal a fatal blow to our Empire," said Disraeli, "It is not a question of the Khyber Pass merely and some small cantonments at Dakka or at Jellalabad. It is a question which concerns the character and the influence of England in Europe".[19] In the election campaign of 1880, Gladstone convinced voters that the adventurous policies of *Beaconsfieldism* were exposing the state to unnecessary costs and that raids on Afghan highlanders and Zulus were a violation of God's law.[20] "The sanctity of life in the hill villages of Afghanistan among the winter snows", argued the liberal leader during the election campaign in 1880, "is as inviolable in the eye of Almighty God as can be your own".[21]

The category of empire in Disraeli's rhetoric

The terms colony and empire can refer to different types of states. Paweł Ziółek points out that the modern type of colonial imperialism differed significantly from the colonization processes known earlier in history. "Colonization in the initial Greek understanding meant the settlement of citizens of a given state in a foreign, overseas territory, either uninhabited or inhabited by an ethnically alien population. The moment it was founded, the colony (apoikia) became an entirely separate community and a state independent of the metropolis. The parent country did not gain anything from this in a territorial sense. […] So it was essentially a kind of ethnic diffusion. Imperial policy in its classical Roman form involved annexing other

[18] P. Fiszka-Borzyszkowski, *Wojna zuluska 1879* [The Zulu War of 1879] (Bellona, 2010), 91–147.

[19] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable the*, 249, 250.

[20] Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire. Britain 1864–1914*, 110, 111; Eldridge, *Disraeli and the Rise,* 52.

[21] Cited after: Seaman, *Victorian England. Aspects of English and Imperial History 1837–1901,* 222.

states or territories to one state and, over time, granting citizenship to the inhabitants of these new areas. The expansion was overland, i.e. maintaining geographical continuity between the cradle of the state and its provinces. […] The Roman imperial expansion was also accompanied by a process of colonization, with the significant difference from the Greeks that the colonists remained citizens of Rome and became part of it in the area it controlled, rather than a separate community. The colonial empire was something fundamentally different: the colonies neither became separate states nor were they part of the metropolis; rather, they were its «property». This public-law relationship of ownership was particularly characteristic of early colonialism. The metropolis perceived the indigenous population as an alien population, and the colonists could indeed be granted broad political rights, but these did not make them equal to the inhabitants of the metropolis, nor did they eliminate the sovereign (although sometimes limited) authority of the metropolis over the colony".[22] The term "imperialism" emerged in the English language in the second half of the 19th century, initially carrying a pejorative connotation in reference to the imperial policies of Napoleon III, subsequently, it was employed in William Gladstone's accusations against Disraeli's policy.[23]

The category of "empire" appeared in Disraeli's writings and speeches in a variety of contexts. As early as the 1830s, Disraeli occasionally used this term as a synonym for a strong state, emphasizing its stylistic and emotive resonance. The concept of an empire, not necessarily British, occurs, for example, in *Peers and People* (1835) and in some articles from the series *Letters of Runnymede* (1836).[24] However, at that time, the term did not yet have a clear persuasive function. Empire understood in this way did not refer directly to possessing colonies. In one of his articles from 1836, Disraeli wrote, "I do not recall who that wild theorist was who devised the absurd doctrine that ships, colonies, and commerce are the true foundation of empire. What an infinitely bizarre idea!"[25] In speeches from the 1970s the Indian Empire also appears in Disraeli's vocabulary. In accordance with the extension of Queen Victoria's title to Empress *of* India, which was enforced in 1876, this empire was a part of the British Empire.[26] In Disraeli's gradually maturing imperial thought, an important place was occupied by the meaning of the British Empire or the Empire of England as Great Britain and its overseas possessions, which designation stabilized late, and for a long time, he used the terms *British Empire*

[22] P. Ziółek, *Idea Imperium* [The Idea of Empire] (Wydawnictwo Naukowe PWN, 1997), 128, 129.

[23] A. Diniejko, "Benjamin Disraeli a idea imperialna," [Benjamin Disraeli and the imperial idea], *Zeszyty Naukowe Uczelni Vistula* 39 (2015): 10.

[24] Disraeli, *Whigs and Whiggism*, 84, 85, 96–98, 311–316; In *Peers and People* Disraeli raises the issue of imperial cohesion, but only in the context of maintaining Ireland's dependence on England; Cf. A. Middleton, "Conservative politics and Whig colonial government, 1830–41," *Historical Research* 94, no. 265 (2021): 542–545.

[25] Disraeli, *Whigs and Whiggism*, 228, 229.

[26] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right Honourable*, 240, 271.

and *Empire of England* interchangeably as synonyms.[27] In Disraeli's rhetoric, empire as an integrating myth only appears in the 1860s. Disraeli employed this term during the final period of his life, which was the least prolific in terms of literary output but the most significant in the realm of practical politics. Even in the 1850s, he spoke of the colonies as a burden rather than a source of pride. In a much-quoted private letter from 1852, Disraeli wrote, "*These wretched colonies* will all be independent in a few years and are a millstone around our necks".[28] The theme of colonies and colonial empire is almost absent from Disraeli's early ideological enunciations, such as *Who is He?, Peers and People*, *Vindication of the English Constitution*, and the political novels.

Disraeli's activity as an ideologue was one aspect of his practical political engagement. His political actions, as outlined above, were manifested in initiatives such as the purchase of shares in the Suez Canal, participation in the Congress of Berlin, the acquisition of Cyprus, the intervention in Afghanistan, and the strengthening of British influence in India More important for the development of conservative thought was the ideological interpretation of colonial expansion and the conceptual structure that Disraeli created for it. Not only did he seek to acquire new territories, but he also tried to make the expansion and protection of economic interests in Asia and Africa an issue of importance to British society as a whole. In justifying his government's foreign policy, Disraeli appealed to the "imperial interest", the autonomy of which he sought to emphasize—according to his narrative, it did not require economic or moral-religious justifications. His aim was to ensure that this way of thinking about empire would be adopted by British society, which would become a nation conscious of its place. In the context of rivalry with Russia in Asia and the Balkans, Disraeli said, "I am sure that as long England is ruled by English Parties who understand the principles on which our Empire is founded, and who are resolved to maintain that Empire, our influence in that part of the world can never be looked upon with indifference. If it should happen that the Government which controls the greater portion of those fair lands is found to be incompetent for its purpose, neither England nor any other Powers will shrink from fulfilling the high political and moral duty which will then devolve upon them (…) What is our duty in this critical moment is to maintain the Empire of England. Nor will we ever agree to any step, though it may obtain for a moment of comparative quiet and a false prosperity, that hazards the existence of that Empire".[29]

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[27] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late Right*, 238, 522, 528, 530.

[28] B. Disraeli, *Letters: 1852–1865* (University of Toronto Press, 1997), 113; Cf. Diniejko, "Benjamin Disraeli a idea imperialna," [Benjamin Disraeli and the imperial idea], *Zeszyty Naukowe Uczelni Vistula*, 16; Trevelyan, *History of England* (Longmans Green and Co., 1929), 683; J.K. Walton, *Disraeli* (Routledge, 2008), 27; W.S. Sichel, *Disraeli* (Methuen & Co., 1904), 200–202; As late as 1866, Disraeli, in a letter to Lord Derby, suggested limitations on involvement in the colonies, *The Concept of Empire. Burke to Attlee 1774–1947*, ed. G. Bennett (Adam and Charles Black, 1953), 229.

[29] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the Late*, 160; The same speech is commented on in a similar way by: A. Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli* (Schocken Books, 2008), 233; Cf. Pearce, "Constructing Disraeli in Twentieth-Century Conservatism," 1204–1206.

Even if Disraeli had not intended to use the persuasive potential of the imperial idea, his very entanglement in the colonial context forced him to justify the government's foreign policy. The Tory leader would have to explain to the public why he is committing public funds to such remote areas as Afghanistan and the Cape. This would be inevitable due to pressure from political opponents who were eager to exploit any government failure or moral controversy surrounding its actions. With the extension of suffrage, public opinion—especially among social groups that had no direct connection with colonial expansion and had little appreciation of the impact of international trade on their economic situation—became more important than in previous eras. The wealthier sections of the working class could not view the colonies in the same way as bankers, industrialists or the aristocracy. As a result, the political dispute between the Whigs and the Tories took the form of a battle of ideas, images and ethical demands rather than a clash over economic concepts. Gladstone criticised Disraeli's foreign policy, coining the term *Beaconsfieldism* (after Disraeli's title of Lord Beaconsfield). This concept was meant to denote adventurism, mindless aggressiveness and placing glory above Christian values and the real interests of the state. The main line of his criticism was based on questioning the ethical legitimacy of colonial conquests. The leader of the liberal party said that the prime minister's duty "was not to set up false phantoms of glory which are to delude the people into calamity, not to flatter their infirmities by leading them to believe that they are better than the rest of the world, but to proceed upon a principle that recognizes the sisterhood and equality of nations".[30]

In order to effectively perform a legitimizing function in the discourse of political dispute, the justification for colonial expansion had to contain answers to two fundamental questions: in the name of what reasons the British Empire had the right to subjugate distant countries, and why the British needed colonies. From the perspective of British foreign policy tradition, the second question was more significant; however, due to the growing influence of democratic public opinion and, more broadly, the marked religious revival in Britain already evident in the first half of the 19th century, Disraeli's modern imperialism required an ideology that explained the moral dimension of conquests. According to the historian Niall Ferguson, a certain specific moral intensification was a defining feature of the era. As Ferguson writes, "In the eighteenth century the British Empire had been, at best,

[30] Kirsch, *Benjamin Disraeli*, 235; Cf. Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire*, 110; Trevelyan, *History of England*, 684, 685 draws attention to the increased public interest in the affairs of the colonies, which was the result of the progressive democratization of British politics and, in particular, electoral reform. Similarly, although in a matter not directly related to the colonies, Disraeli was attacked by Gladstone over the conflict in Bulgaria, when the Tory government supported Turkey, seeing it as a natural ally against Russia, which was threatening London's Asian interests, while the opposition was mobilising public opinion against the government with a propaganda campaign about Turkish crimes committed against Balkan Christians; See A.S. Wohl, "Dizzy-Ben-Dizzy: Disraeli as Alien," *Journal of British Studies* 34, no. 3 (1995): 387; R. Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn* (WW Norton & Company Ltd, 2007), 272–276; Feuchtwanger, *Democracy and Empire,* 105–107.

amoral. The Georgians had grabbed power in Asia, land in America and slaves in Africa. Native peoples were either taxed, robbed or wiped out. But paradoxically their cultures were largely tolerated; in some cases, even studied and admired. The Victorians had more elevated aspirations. They dreamt not just of ruling the world, but of redeeming it".[31]

The first argument in favour of the right of the British to supremacy was the claim to the civilisational superiority of the Europeans and—as a consequence of this superiority—the beneficial effect of contact on other cultures. Disraeli took it for granted that association with the English enabled the "coloured" people to learn better customs, institutions and techniques. The British fleets and armies, as Disraeli put it in 1787, are for the realization of "peace and civilisation".[32] In the words of Rudyard Kipling, the white man, in fact, served his African and Asian subjects:

To wait in heavy harness,
On fluttered folk and wild--
Your new-caught, sullen peoples,
Half-devil and half-child

Secondly, the most important practical effect of the domination of the Anglo-Saxon race in the world was *the Pax Britannica*. Its charity was to benefit not only members of indigenous peoples of colour but also European colonists living in Canada, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. Disraeli saw the British Empire as the antithesis of the old-time tyrannies. He distinguished between the false, unrighteous imperialism of past eras and the enlightened and gentle imperialism. On the uniqueness of the British Empire, Disraeli said, "I know no example of it, either in ancient or modern history. No Caesar or Charlemagne ever presided over a dominion so peculiar. Its flag floats on many waters; it has provinces in every zone, they are inhabited by persons of different races, different religion, different laws, manners, customs. Some of these are bound to us by the ties of liberty, fully aware that without their connection with the metropolis they have no security for the public freedom and self-government; others are bound to us by flesh and blood and by material as well as moral considerations. There are millions who are bound to us by our military sway, and they bow to that sway because they know that they are indebted to it for order and justice. All these communities agree in acknowledging the commanding spirit of these island that has formed and fashioned in such a manner so great a portion of the globe".[33] Two years after Disraeli's death, a British historian could write with great satisfaction that the land of the Hindus had not been confiscated for the benefit of the English. The Hindus paid taxes, but only to maintain local administration and security within their country—an administration

[31] N. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World* (Penguin Group, 2004), 135.

[32] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of the*, 201; Cf. Ziółek, *Idea Imperium* [The Idea of Empire], 153.

[33] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches of*, 177.

subordinate to the British Parliament. India is not subject to England, as Egypt is to the Turkish Sultan, "India then is not a possession of England in the sense of being legally tributary to England, any more than any of our colonies are so".[34] Disraeli, like Burke a hundred years earlier, argued for the legitimacy of British domination in India.[35] Burke referred to the doctrine of natural law; Disraeli did not explicitly employ this type of argument, but he identified similar principles of just governance. Both conservatives believed that the British colonial authorities should treat the so-called "coloured peoples" as inferior due to their civilisational immaturity but with the preservation of the institutions of law-abiding government, fulfilling the archetype of the Roman Empire in Cicero's interpretation. The Roman Stoic ideal (affirmed by Christianity) encompassed the concept of *iustum bellum*—a just war that conferred the right to legitimate gains, including territorial ones (Disraeli referred to this as a necessary war)[36]—as well as *iustitia* and *clementia*, justice and clemency.[37] At the same time, Disraeli refrained from using arguments of a religious nature. They were more frequently used by political rivals, most notably Gladstone, who accused Disraeli of a lack of sympathy for Balkan Christians suffering persecution under Turkish rule during the Bulgarian crisis in 1878. However, Turkey was an ally of Britain. In fact, despite the pointed similarity to Burke's natural law argument, Disraeli wanted to be faithful above all to the national interest.[38]

Imperial mythology

Disraeli's conservatism, although rooted in the tradition of British Toryism, had important distinctive elements. Disraeli's distinctive feature as a politician and as an ideologist was his use of the instruments of romanticism: heroic anthropology, mythology, historicism and the method of redefining values. He implemented a new way of thinking, along with a new language, while pursuing the fundamental goal of conservatives: the defense of the traditional order. As a romantic, he was not afraid to create a national mythology. He saw himself as a modern hero and imposed the idea of the Empire upon the entire state, unifying classes and social strata. The myth created a narrative infrastructure of power, legitimizing the political project as the realization of an ontological necessity.[39]

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[34] J.R. Seeley, *The Expansion of England* (Robert Brothers, 1883), 183.

[35] Ziółek, *Idea Imperium*, 155; *The Concept of Empire. Burke to Attlee 1774–1947*, ed. G. Bennett (Adam and Charles Black, 1953), 55.

[36] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches*, 8, 247.

[37] Ziółek, *Idea Imperium*, 16.

[38] Aldous, *The Lion and the Unicorn. Gladstone vs. Disraeli*, 266–272; Sichel, *Disraeli*, 224–228; Despite his criticism of Disraeli's policies, Gladstone, in address to the Mechanics Institute, also spoke about the benefits that 'colored' peoples gained from British rule; in particular, the Whig moralist recognized an opportunity for their moral uplift, *The Concept of Empire. Burke to Attlee 1774–1947*, ed. G. Bennett, 153–157.

[39] More on this topic: T. Madras, *Konserwatyzm romantyczny. Myśl polityczna Benjamina Disraelego* [Romantic conservatism. The Political Thought of Benjamin Disraeli] (Wydawnictwo Sejmowe, 2020), 171–208.

In the present study, the category of myth is employed in order to interpret the nature of the narrative constructed by Disraeli. His storytelling is emotionally charged, persuasive, simplifying, and marked by an elaborate narrative structure that explains the roles and purposes of the collective. Most broadly, myth is a way of thinking which organises experience into cultural frames of meaning. A political myth may be defined as "an ideologically marked narrative which purports to give a true account of a set of past, present, or predicted political events and which is accepted as valid in its essentials by a social group".[40] Political myths can thus be understood as tools of mobilisation and legitimation, which operate not through rational persuasion, but through the attribution of meaning. Myths—stories that go beyond mere historicity—concretise collective imaginaries, enabling an intersubjective understanding of the most fundamental social questions. They relieve uncertainty and generate a sense of rootedness. As S. Filipowicz writes, "in explaining reality, myth imposes specific intellectual constraints, making that reality comprehensible in the same way to all. In doing so, it enables control over the collective imagination, effective intervention in the sphere of motivation, and ultimately the programming of loyalty and the enforcement of obedience. Myth therefore not only legitimises political authority by presenting those who bring the world into being and govern it, but also creates the infrastructure of the system of power, inspiring a sense of the inevitability of the existing order".[41]

Although Disraeli consistently defended the ethical and civilisational reasons for colonial expansion, he considered the interests of the empire—seen from the perspective of Great Britain—to be the most important argument. The conservative justification for imperialism focused on ensuring the social integrity and economic development of society and was considerably less moralistic than the discourse espoused by the Whigs and Radicals. The Tories, compared to their original motives for expansion, devoted much less attention to the economic side of colonialism. Moreover, the conservatives were not sure which side—the metropolis or the colony—derived greater material benefits from it. One of the key arguments for the beneficence of *the Pax Britannica* for the Hindus and other peoples of the empire was the funding allocated by the treasury for administration and the maintenance of order. The argument of the romantic conservative focused on intangible but—in his opinion—more significant benefits, such as the spiritual uplift of the nation. The legitimization of colonial policy typical of conservatives, as Ziółek lists, is based on four arguments. First, having a colonial empire ensures social peace and social cohesion through the economic expansion that accompanies annexations. Secondly, economic expansion into new markets cannot take place without political tutelage—the empire protects the national industry. Thirdly, the governance of vast

[40] Ziółek, *Idea imperium*, 144; Cf. Sichel, *Disraeli,* 206.

[41] C. Flood, *Political Myth: A Theoretical Introduction* (Routledge, 2002), 44.

colonial possessions satisfies the national sense of dignity. Finally, owning an empire unleashes the entrepreneurship of individuals.[42]

In the Crystal Palace speech, Disraeli outlined the essential thrust of his imperial policy. Imperialism was supposed to be a cross-class movement, promising benefits to all social strata, including the working class. In his interpretation, the working class was supposed to feel proud of the very fact of belonging to a powerful state, which was supposed to strengthen its bond with the empire. Disraeli said of the working class, "They are English to the core. They repudiate the cosmopolitical principles. They adhere to national principles. They are for maintaining the greatness of the kingdom an empire, and they are proud of being subjects of our Sovereign and members of such an Empire".[43]

The integrative power of the imperial myth was intended by Disraeli to also encompass the peoples and communities inhabiting the colonies. Disraeli wanted both the 'white' colonies and the 'coloured' peoples to feel part of a supranational community that was to benefit all its members. As he wrote in *Alroy*, "A universal empire cannot be founded upon sectarian prejudices and exclusive privileges".[44] The British Empire should, therefore, first, secure such self-government as can be granted to the individual territories without compromising the indissolubility of the whole and, secondly, respect local traditions and religions. In relation to the populated colonies, the British Empire should, therefore, first, ensure as much self-government as the unity of the whole empire permitted and, secondly, respect local traditions and religions. In the case of colonies inhabited by Europeans, Disraeli supported the gradual expansion of self-government while maintaining a common foreign policy, economic freedom, the movement of people and a system of defence.[45] The idea of self-government did not apply to the communities of the colonies, then referred to as "coloured". Yet Disraeli wanted to include them in the imperial community, not as equals but as co-participants. This was a condition of British rule over India, which was too large to be governed by armed force alone. "I think that—said Disraeli in 1857—the great body of the population of that country ought to know that there is for them a future of hope. I think we ought to temper justice with mercy—justice the most severe with mercy the most indulgent. […] You ought to issue a Royal Proclamation to the people of India, declaring that the Queen of England is not a Sovereign who will countenance the

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[42] S. Filipowicz, *Mit i spektakl władzy* [Myth and the Spectacle of Power] (Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, 1988), 13, 14.

[43] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches*, 528; Cf. Ziółek, *Idea Imperium*, 146; K. Pieliński, *W obliczu kryzysu*, *Konserwatyzm angielski od Burke'a do Lecky'ego* [In the Face of the Crisis, English Conservatism from Burke to Lecky] (Elipsa, 2011), 135; S. R. Graubard, *Burke, Disraeli and Churchill. The Politics of Perseverance* (Harvard University Press, 1961), 161.

[44] Disraeli, *Alroy*, 141.

[45] Cf. Sichel, *Disraeli*, 204, 205; In 1867, the first dominion was established in Canada.

violation of treaties—that the Queen of England is not a Sovereign who will disturb the settlement of property—that the Queen of England is a Sovereign who will respect their laws, their usages, their customs, and, above all, their religion".[46] Disraeli was one of the few members of the House of Commons who showed understanding for the rebellious Hindus and expressed this in a three-hour speech.[47] Among other reasons, Disraeli justified the idea of granting Queen Victoria the title of Empress of India by arguing that, from the perspective of her Hindu subjects, the new title elevated their sense of dignity, fostered a shared pride in the nation's power, and symbolized gentle and just governance.[48] After the bloody suppression of the Sepoy Mutiny (1857), the British consistently pursued a policy of respecting local religions and using local power structures, in particular the native aristocracy, as an intermediary authority. The gesture of creating an "Empire of India" was not a revolution, but a step forward.[49]

The relatively widespread acceptance of Disraeli's imperial ideas and rhetoric resulted, as J. Schumpeter noted, from an accurate recognition of the growing national consciousness and nationalist reflex: imperialism "satisfies the need for surrender to a concrete and familiar superpersonal cause, the need for self-glorification and violent self-assertion".[50] According to Schumpeter, Disraeli's imperialism was realized more in words than in deeds. It was largely a slogan and a "political arabesque"; it served to effectively integrate society around the conservatives and their leader. The slogan of strengthening the empire undoubtedly justified and inspired a certain foreign policy, but in the culmination of Disraeli's career, especially during the successful election campaigns in the 1970s, it was the banner of domestic policy.[51]

Ultimately, the myth was intended to make British society a community "for itself", self-conscious and united by the awareness of common goals and interests. Disraeli did not appeal to the mind but to the heart. Imperialism was supposed to be a society's self-interpretation, a narrative of greatness that justified greatness and inspired greatness. The romantic and heroic mentality demanded no other justification. In Disraeli's project, social conflicts were to dissolve into a higher quality, class divisions were to be replaced by the dichotomy of English and non-English. As Pieliński writes, Disraeli, "convinced of the human need to 'worship and listen', found that an individual left to his own devices would lead to the disintegration of

[46] B. Disraeli, parliamentary speech of 27 July, 1857, "Hansard's Parliamentary Debates," Hansard Publishing Union Ltd, 478, 479, accessed November 1, 2024, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard; Cf. Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern World*, 197.

[47] Diniejko, "Benjamin Disraeli a idea imperialna," 16.

[48] Disraeli, *Selected Speeches*, 231.

[49] Sichel, *Disraeli*, 217–221; H. Zins, *Historia Anglii* [History of England] (Wydawnictwo Ossolineum, 2009), 303; Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the Modern,* 227.

[50] J. Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes* (Augustus M. Kelly Inc., 1951), 17.

[51] Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes* (Augustus M. Kelly Inc., 1951), 12–15.

the «community spirit». Therefore, he aimed to create a sense of collective happiness, the ontological axis of which would be the idea of empire".[52] The imperial deed was autotelic, in a way analogous to the heroic deed of an individual hero. Disraeli asked the English a rhetorical question, "Will you be content to remain a comfortable England, modelled on continental principles, destined to meet, in due course, the inevitable fate of European nations?" Or will you aspire to be a great country, whose sons, rising to prominent positions, command the esteem not only of their fellow countrymen but of the entire world?".[53] The aesthetic setting that Disraeli's imperialism acquired was alien to the pragmatic, "hard-headed" style of the East India Company, but it was in keeping with the intention of influencing the hearts, not the minds, of the British people.[54] In the imperial doctrine, radical romantic individualism, manifested in the assertion of the decisive role of individuals in history, was transformed into a vision of a heroic nation standing out from the community of the world's nations. Just as a romantic hero was able not only to realize but also to create values, a great nation itself created a great empire that did not need any exogenous reasons for its existence.

The integrative idea proposed by Disraeli was an element of a new political metalanguage. Alongside the Church and the monarchy, cited in *Vindication* as the cornerstones of society, the Empire and its associated imperial patriotism emerged. Around these ideas, the nation could unite, rejecting the temptations of cosmopolitan individualism. Disraeli's goal was, therefore, to create a sense of collective happiness for which the idea of empire would be the ontological axis. The conservative myth created a ground for rooting and placed the Englishman in a common, national reality.[55] Disraeli had no doubt that the English, or at least the majority of them, were conservative by nature, "When I say 'Conservative', I use the word in its purest and loftiest sense. I mean that people of England, and especially the working class of England, are proud of belonging to a great country, and wish to maintain its greatness – that they are proud of belonging to an Imperial country, and are resolved to maintain, if they can, their empire—that they believe, on the whole, that the greatness and the empire of England are to be attributed to the ancient institutions of the land".[56] The imperial idea, however, differed from the monarchical and religious ideas in that it was completely new. When Disraeli, as Prime Minister,

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[52] Disraeli, as previously mentioned, initially associated the adjective democratic with the idea of governance carried out in the genuine interest of the people. In this paradoxical sense, according to the author of *Vindication of the English Constitution*, it was democratic Bolingbroke's Toryism; Cf. G. Himmelfarb, "The Politics of Democracy, The English Reform Act of 1867," *Journal of British Studies* 6, no. 1 (1966): 113.

[53] Pieliński, *W obliczu kryzysu. Konserwatyzm angielski od Burke'a do Lecky'ego*, 141.

[54] Cf. I. Berlin, *Against the Current: Essays in the History of Ideas* (The Viking Press, 1980), 271.

[55] Cf. Pieliński, *W obliczu kryzysu. Konserwatyzm angielski*, 141; Filipowicz, *Mit i spektakl władzy*, 15.

[56] Disraeli, *Selected*, 527, 528; Cf. Schumpeter, *Imperialism and Social Classes*, 15.

had to defend the idea of expanding Queen Victoria's titles, he was accused of introducing an institution alien to British tradition. Once again, as in the case of the electoral reform of 1867, the conservative justified the change as serving to strengthen traditional values. In fact, Disraeli did not hesitate to introduce an entirely new element into English mythology. It was an act of creation.

Conclusions

The above analysis confirms the thesis proposed at the outset: that the imperial myth constructed by Disraeli became a key component of a patriotic, conservative national mythology. This mythology provided the ideological foundation for his political agenda and served as a tool for integrating society around the government and its leader. Moreover, Disraeli's innovation influenced the modes of communication and political mobilization employed by subsequent generations of British conservatives. It was, without doubt, a testament to his success as an architect of political ideas.

Three elements can be identified as comprising the entirety of Disraeli's ideological legacy. First, it saved and perpetuated the Tories' attachment to the institutional framework of the British Constitution, in particular to the monarchy, the bicameral Parliament with an unelected House of Lords, and the Church of England. Secondly, he opened the party to the working class, to this end, instilling sensitivity to the so-called social issue. Thirdly, he created an imperial ideology. This third element completed the integrative structure contained in Disraeli's political mythology. It is significant that Gladstone's pejorative term *Beaconsfieldism* was intended to designate a certain type of foreign policy. As described above, the structure of the myth of empire comprised the affirmation of the nation, the justification of *Pax Britannica*, the stratification of colonies and subject peoples, and the legitimization of the monarchy's role. Disraeli's strategy of fostering imperial patriotism left its most visible mark on the British national character. Trevelyan draws attention to the originality of this form of patriotism in Britain, "We had long prided ourselves on being a seafaring people j that was part of the island habit. But consciousness of the Empire of which we had become the centre, lagged far behind the reality. In the middle of the Nineteenth Century popular patriotic songs still celebrated 'the right little, tight little island'. And that island was not yet generally thought of as the heart of 'an Empire on which the sun never set'. That aspect of our position was first fully appreciated at the two Jubilees of Queen Victoria (1887, 1897) when the pageant of distant and diverse lands, all come to pay homage to the little lady in grey, was first fully displayed, with startling effect, in London streets".[57]

As Eldridge put it, Disraeli "stole the empire"—he subordinated the collective imagination of the British people about their state to his own vision of imperial

[57] G.M. Trevelyan, *English Social History. A Survey of Six Centuries Chaucer to Queen Victoria* (Longmans Green and Co., 1946), 583.

patriotism.[58] He indelibly linked a sense of British identity with an interest in lands and events far beyond the natural boundaries marked by Albion's shores. The deep, shared conviction that what was important to the British was also happening in the most remote corners of the globe went beyond mercantile instincts and had the value of an effective tool for political mobilisation. As Disraeli intended, pride in a global empire became an idea that integrated successive generations of British people, regardless of their social background. In 1883, historian Robert Seeley published the bestseller *The Expansion of England*, in which he advocated the construction of a "Greater Britain"—a united federal state encompassing all the "white" dominions as "the union of related races with similar goals".[59] The turn of the 19th and 20th centuries marked the peak of *tory-mentalism*—a quasi-ideology whose supporters, led by Lord George Curzon (Viceroy of India from 1898), sought to recreate an idealized conservative social order in the colonies Curzon and his ilk demanded absolute obedience from the subjugated peoples, basing their governance on the local aristocracy and the entrenched social structure. They believed that spreading the "white man's civilization" was their duty, and even a natural task for the descendants of the knights and barons of England.[60] As Schumpeter wrote, "at the time of the Boer War there was not a beggar in London who did not speak of 'our' rebellious subjects".[61] The idea of empire became the main weapon in the political arsenal of conservatives, a dominant motif of their rhetoric in the decades of the late 19th and early 20th centuries.[62] As late as 1937, Stanley Baldwin spoke of consolidating the conscious basis of imperial patriotism, setting the goal of the Conservative Party as "helping our people to realise the obligations arising from our heritage. […] Other countries can focus on themselves: they are self-sufficient. The English can never be like *Sinn Fein*. The Empire is one and indivisible".[63] The English widely believed in the generally benevolent influence of their imperialism for a long time—certainly much longer than Gandhi and his compatriots did. 60 years after Disraeli's death, the English historian expressed pride in his own nation, which was so deeply civil in theory and practice: "For we held the surface of the sea, and the surface was then all in the oceans and along the shores of the world was used in the Nineteenth Century on the side of peace, goodwill and freedom. If it were to be destroyed, mankind would breathe a harsher air".[64]

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[58] Eldridge, *Disraeli*, 70.

[59] Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made the*, 266.

[60] Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain Made*, 227.

[61] Schumpeter, *Imperialism*, 15.

[62] Schumpeter, *Imperialism*.

[63] Cited after F. O'Gorman, *British Conservatism. Conservative Thought from Burke to Thatcher* (Longan, 1986), 182.

[64] Trevelyan, *English Social History. A Survey of Six Centuries Chaucer to Queen Victoria*, 584.

The attempt to engage the peoples subjected to the empire in a sense of communal pride proved effective. During World War I, Indians joined the British armed forces in large numbers, driven by a sense of "imperial patriotism" that often rivalled that of native-born British citizens. Shortly after the outbreak of the war, Mohandas Gandhi stated, "We are, above all, the British citizens of the Great British Empire. Now, when the British are fighting a just cause for the sake of human dignity and civilization's honor [...] our duty is clear: to do our utmost to support the British, to fight with our lives and our possessions".[65] This was not an isolated stance—around one million Indians voluntarily served on the fronts of World War I, a number nearly equal to the contingents from all the dominions combined. In total, one-third of all British units came from outside the British Isles, with dominions such as Australia and New Zealand standing out in particular.[66]

From the perspective of conservatism as proposed by Disraeli, if one accepts that the goal of the Conservative Party was not the institutions' content per se but their spirit and character shaped by tradition, his actions can be assessed positively. Disraeli set himself the task of transferring the "*virtue and genius of England"* to the contemporary society of 19th-century Britain. He exploited the existing layers of conservatism among the lower classes, such as attachment to traditional professions and lifestyles, scepticism towards capitalists, and religiosity. However, his greatest achievement was successfully convincing a large section of public opinion to support a party previously associated mainly with the interests of the provincial *squires*.[67] Imperial patriotism indeed reached the hearts of the working class.[68] Disraeli linked inevitable social change with conservative ideas, "he succeeded in diverting the torrent of progress into the canal of tradition".[69]

Data availability

No data are associated with this article.

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[65] Cited after: Ferguson, *Empire: How Britain*, 369.

[66] Ferguson, *Empire*; Cf. M. Bayly, "Imperialism: Beyond the 'Re-turn to Empire' in International Relations," in *Routledge Handbook of Historical International Relations*, eds. B. Carvalho, J. Costa Lopez and H. Leira (Routledge, 2021).

[67] Cf. Pearce, "Constructing Disraeli in Twentieth-Century Conservatism."

[68] In his *Historia Anglii* [History of England], Henryk Zins writes that *Beaconsfieldism* did not convince the working class, but it is difficult to agree with this statement. According to Zins, "a large section of English society, however, was not seduced by the slogans of chauvinism. They were resolutely resisted by the working class, and the Trade Union Congress of 1900 condemned the Boer War" (Zins, *Historia Anglii* [History of England], 329). However, both the condemnation of the Boer War and the fall of Disraeli's government 20 years earlier during the Zulu War were associated with military failures and the prolongation of conflicts. Colonial conflicts that were short and victorious did not provoke such a reaction. The Boer War itself contributed to the patriotic exaltation of English public opinion. Some episodes, such as the defence of the besieged Mafeking, became icons of English patriotism for generations. During the Boer War, the Conservatives, supporters of expansion, even won the elections; Cf. Trevelyan, *History of England*, 821.

[69] R. Kirk, *The Conservative Mind: From Burke to Eliot* (Regnery Publishing, 2000), 243.