The impact of the ‘one-nation’ and ‘one-empire’ concepts on British political culture, c. 1857-1900.

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Contents:

Introduction.................................................................................................................................................3

I: The changing nature of Britain’s Imperialist ideology in India: The collapse of Liberal Imperialism and the rise of ‘One-Empire Conservatism.’..................................................9

II: ‘The Unity of Empire’: The resurgence of the ‘One-Nation’ and ‘One-Empire’ during the Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1885-1886..............................................................32

III: The Second Boer War, the ‘Khaki’ Election, and the Vision of ‘One-Empire’..................................................51

Conclusion.......................................................................................................................................................68

Bibliography....................................................................................................................................................72
Introduction

Recent historical writing about the British Empire suggests that imperial history is going through a new period of debate and understanding. This is partly due to innovative terms and definitions of conquest and exploitation being used to describe the modern world, which has helped historians develop new approaches to understanding imperialism. Terms such as ‘neo-colonialism,’ ‘globalisation’ and ‘post-colonialism’ have all entered into, and shaped, the discourse. Stephen Howe writes that, “All these labels tend to come attached to heavy luggage: a great weight of history and ideology, sometimes of elaborate theorising, sometimes of raw emotion.”¹ Moreover, debates about the changing nature of imperialism are also altering. This is caused by the dramatic rise of American power in the modern world, defined as having a considerable imperial strategy, especially after the terrorist attacks against America on September 11, 2001.²

In contemporary studies, historians and academics are looking back to imperialism in the past to try and help us understand the present. British imperial history is, once again, facing revision because of this, with Britain increasingly being seen as a post-imperial nation, once viewed as a country where ‘Empire’ was central in the formation of a British identity. Moreover, there is gradually more of an emphasis placed on the everyday lives of those who were impacted by imperialism.

The mid-nineteenth century is a key turning point in British politics with the electorate significantly expanded after the first Reform Act of 1832, and Britain’s imperial power was ever increasing. Politicians had to find novel ways of ruling the people in a democratic age, whilst trying to avoid popular uprisings that had been engulfing Europe at the time. By 1867, directly after the Second Reform Act, the

electoral franchise was expanded significantly, and this permitted the rising aspirational classes to become more engaged in the democratic process. Political parties subsequently became the established means for permanent mass mobilisation; thus exerting control over forms of popular political expression in a way that appeared to be legitimate, and thereby competing to be the reflective image of the nation.\(^3\) In order to mobilise mass support among the increasing enfranchised classes, there was a great desire to ‘domesticate’ Britain’s imperial mission by relating it to the living standards of the mass of the British populace. Upon the economic unity of empire, they argued, depended on the strength of Britain’s industrial base and the productive power of its economy. In turn, this determined employment opportunities, wage levels, job security and the possibility of major instalments of social reform such as old-age pensions.\(^4\) Domesticating empire was not an easy task and it had to involve a narrative about Britain’s destiny that could be shared among the wider electorate.

The British Empire, undoubtedly, is one of the best examples of imperial power in human history. Britain managed to exercise its power and influence over a quarter of the world’s people and geographical land mass. It is still uncertain, however, as to how exactly Britain managed to impose an imperial ideology on subjects at home, and in their dominions, and historians are still at odds as to what extent the empire truly affected the people living in Britain. This leads to larger questions: how was Britain able to do this? And, what specific ideological concepts allowed them to achieve this?

Historians such as David Cannadine have tried to uncover this missing information, arguing that the British Empire was not always concerned with invasion


and exploitation as it was in trying to maintain its governance at home and abroad.\(^5\) Bernard Porter argued that the impact and support for empire at home has often been exaggerated and constantly shifting.\(^6\) Well as Andrew S. Thompson suggests that while empire was not always significant in the lives of the British, it still had a huge impact on society and political culture.\(^7\) What these historians have overlooked, however, is a certain ideological concept that allowed empire to have an impact on the lives of the British people, and the wider political culture. One of the political ideals that managed to manifest itself into British political life with incredible popularity was the idyllic concept of the ‘one-nation’ that was invented by Benjamin Disraeli and championed with the help of the Conservative party, which he commanded.

‘One-nation’ was the notion of uniting the working poor with the richer elites along similar values and interests. It was a simplistic view of politics, but it had a profound resonance on both the Conservative and Liberal parties, and even among the wider political elite. In order to achieve the ideal of the ‘one-nation,’ political elites decided to use a form of nationalism that linked Britain’s imperial mission with British patriotism in the domestic political sphere. In essence, ‘one-nation’ became ‘one-empire’, although the term ‘one-empire’ as such was never used.

The concepts of one-nation and one-empire and the way they functioned in Britain’s political culture is the topic of this research thesis. These idealistic concepts had a profound importance, as they were used as political instruments in order to attain and maintain power in British India and in domestic British politics. In short, whichever party could present themselves as the patriotic party and reinforce the ideals of ‘one-nation’ and the ‘one-empire’ could dominate British political life and shape the


\(^7\) A.S. Thompson, *Imperial Britain*, p. 1.
political culture. Following the logic of conservative ideology, one-empire became a sacred tradition that needed protecting, a contract not only between all parts of the empire, but also between those who are dead, those who are living, and those who were yet to born. Any political party or figure that deviated from this tradition would risk being beaten at elections and even considered to be treacherous. As will be shown in the chapters, the successful employment of this notion was at the heart of the rise of conservatism, and the party and those who suffered most from deviating away from these concepts were radical Liberals and the Liberal party itself.

With this in mind, we need to broaden the debate on British imperial politics by stressing the importance of these ideals and their impact. This thesis analyses the rise of the concepts of ‘one-nation’ and ‘one-empire’ and asks how they were being used and reinforced by political parties and political figures as an instrument to achieve popular, democratic and electoral success in the mid to late nineteenth century. Three case studies have been selected because together they exemplify, at key moments, when the concepts of one-nation and one-empire were implemented to solve particular crises in imperial and domestic policy. First of all, in order to understand these concepts, it is imperative to look more closely at how they came into being. Secondly, it is necessary to analyse how and why politicians, from both Liberal and Conservative parties, sought to attach themselves to these concepts, and Britain’s imperial might, in order to attain and maintain their power in domestic and imperial British politics. Therefore, the question this thesis will attempt to answer will be: How exactly were the concepts of one-nation and one-empire used by the British political class, in order to

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increase authority and legitimacy in their dominions, and mobilise popular support at home in an age of increasing democracy?

A wide variety of sources will be used to answer this question, which will include letters and speeches of notable political figures such as Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Salisbury and Joseph Chamberlain. Letters and speeches, although they reveal evident biases of political figures, are vital because they reveal a particular political language and phrasing that upholds the concepts of one-nation and one-empire, and helps us to understand the influence that these conceptions had on the British political class when it came to matters both domestic and imperial. Newspapers, party leaflets and propaganda posters will also be used as they bare a specific character about the ideology of media outlets and political parties, but also, around times of elections they expose what the parties and newspapers believed were the main priorities of the moment. In the case of the general election in 1886 it is the calamity surrounding Irish Home Rule, and in the 1900 general election it is the events surrounding the Boer War that dominated party politics and the media.

The first chapter of this thesis concerns the collapse of liberal imperialism following the Mutiny and Revolt of 1857, when a Sepoy regiment of the British army broke ranks and mutinied against their colonial rulers. The liberal imperialist vision always held that with British guidance and leadership, India could advance towards a higher stage of enlightenment. This whiggish narrative was smashed following the events of the mutiny, and liberal imperial thought was in disarray. The model that took over the mantle of liberal imperialism was a far more conservative outlook that was deeply pessimistic of the liberal vision. The rise of ‘one-nation’ with its profound impact on British politics subsequently crept its way into imperial affairs in India. In imperial terms the British nation and its empire were combined, and this allowed a
theme of ‘one-empire’ to enter into the political discourse. In India this was achieved by sacralising certain aspects of British imperial institutions, most importantly, the Crown. The ceremonial spectacle of the Imperial Assemblage was held in 1877 at Delhi, which provided Queen Victoria with the title ‘Empress of India,’ which was done in order to achieve ‘one-empire’ under a symbolic sovereign.

The second chapter will then concern domestic British politics, and how the concept of ‘one-empire’ was used in the debates surrounding the Irish Home Rule Crisis of 1885-86. Following the ascension of 86 Irish Nationalist Members of Parliament to the House of Commons in 1885, the consensus of the Irish position in the union, and the wider imperial sphere began to look astonishingly weak. With the governing Liberal party, under the leadership of William Ewart Gladstone, backing Irish Home Rule, there was a genuine panic among unionists across all parties that the union could dissolve, and severely damage the integrity and legitimacy of the empire. Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, in order to fend off the threat and win the general election of 1886, resurrected the language of one-nation and one-empire to try and defeat the Irish Nationalist onslaught in Parliament.

And, finally, the last chapter will chart the coming of the Second Boer War and how the same techniques of one-empire were used in order to pursue a conservative agenda and hound Liberal and radical voices that decided to speak out against the war, or disregard the issue. The use of media in spreading the ideals of British imperialism and one-empire conservatism will also be studied, with particular reference to the 1900 ‘khaki’ general election, which was one of the first elections where mass media heavily dominated the political culture, and another election where the language of one-empire proved to be a winning electoral strategy.
Chapter I – The changing nature of Britain’s Imperialist ideology in India: The collapse of Liberal Imperialism and the rise of ‘One-Empire Conservatism.’

The Battle of Plassey in 1757 established a major victory for the British when the English East India Company triumphed over the Nawab of Bengal and his French cohorts, and the British gained considerable control over India and the wider subcontinent. The historian U.S. Mehta opines that in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Britain and India encounter each other as ‘strangers’. They do not speak the same languages, share the same religion, or the norms and values of everyday life. Liberal administrators were placed in a position of supreme intellectual power over India and its people. They were not certain, however, as to how they were supposed to govern these people.

The difficult task facing the British was to attempt to establish how a conquering ‘civilised race’ was to turn a foreign collective of ‘uncivilised’ peoples towards British ideas of enlightenment. For more than a hundred years after 1757 this liberal programme of imperialism was based on governance, reform, and on the imposition of an educational structure on the lives of the Indian people, enabling them to be in a position to participate in a democratic process.

The event of the Sepoy Mutiny and the subsequent revolt in 1857, not only sparked a crisis in the political system, but a crisis in liberal philosophical thought, which caused an insurgence of conservative supremacy in values and governance. The values that occurred, as a result of the Liberal imperialism’s reformation, were highly pessimistic of human nature and tremendously authoritarian. This chapter concerns the decline of Liberal imperialism and the rise of one-nation conservatism as a force in

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Britain and India, and the individual behind this vision, Benjamin Disraeli (1804-1881), twice Conservative Party Prime Minister and Tory spearhead. It is time to broaden the aspects and philosophies of Disraeli’s writings with regards to British expansionism and the conservative philosophy so that we can seek to increase our understanding about the mentalities and complexities that allowed the British to rule India ever more greatly after 1857.

Whilst addressing the failures of liberal imperialism, Britain’s imperial ideology after the Revolt of 1857 was largely implemented from a conservative outlook. Writers such as Karuna Mantena and Thomas Metcalf have argued this effectively. However, we must be more explicit as to what else transpired as a result. The drive of the conservative outlook was met not only by increasing authoritarian rule, but also an extension of the one-nation conservative philosophy to include Britain’s imperial dominions. In India this was demonstrated through a sacralisation of imperial politics, where the crown became a potent, politically religious symbol of Britain’s imperial rule. This chapter will observe the complexities of Britain’s imperialist ideology in India, by looking closely at key individuals, and how they managed to use their own philosophies to bend this ideology to their will.

Britain built its empire on the basis of economic advancement. It provided a geographical and economic importance in the centre of Asia. It allowed Britain to control the entire Indian Ocean, including crucial sectors of the African coast and its surroundings. Furthermore, British exports such as cotton were booming in the nineteenth century, and the British balance of payments internationally relied on a

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payment surplus, which India provided.\textsuperscript{12} Since the origins of the empire, Britain had been struggling with the question of how to make sense of, not only the economic advancement, but of the ‘different’ and disparate indigenous peoples they were to govern. During the eighteenth century, and the greater part of the nineteenth century, British politics was dominated by the Liberals, and, therefore, led by their opinions and influences. The historian Thomas Metcalf asserts that the Liberals and their wider imperial goals were informed by a ‘radical universalism’; the conviction that the entire world would benefit from the same values.\textsuperscript{13} They held the strong belief that the world would be more stable and orderly if it was aligned with similar doctrines of liberalism.

The leading ideal of liberal imperial thought was termed a ‘civilising mission’.\textsuperscript{14} This ideal of a liberal philosophy, promoted by amongst others James Mill (1773-1836), was that the Indian people were simply not in a position, or intelligent enough, to determine their own fate.\textsuperscript{15} In line with the views of John Locke (1632-1704), whereby children were not yet political subjects, and non-white colonies were consequently placed into this category.\textsuperscript{16} Mill was a distinguished liberal philosopher who made strong arguments for Britain to govern India, along with the utilitarian philosopher Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832). Mill wrote frequently about India and addressed the complexities of British rule, and what the obligations of Britain should be towards its dominions. Similarly, to his case for Britain ruling Ireland, Mill believed that the initial dominance of imperial dominions was regrettable, but it was irreversible, and it would be thoroughly immoral to pull out of the dominions, ruining

\textsuperscript{13} T.R. Metcalf, \textit{Ideologies of the Raj}, p.34.
the lives of the Indians.\textsuperscript{17} The commitment to replace Indian barbarism for English enlightened civilisation was conceived of as a moral duty, but also an apology for the depravities of British takeover.\textsuperscript{18} Therefore, Britain’s duty was to right the previous wrongs of their rule, and maintain a level of superiority as a temporary measure while India learnt to become a civilised nation.

Britain had to ensure order and security to the Indians and prepare them to enter eventually into a higher stage of civilisation. The Indians had to be coerced into becoming free, autonomous individuals. Mill alleged that India needed to be transformed through a straightforward legal, land and educative process. This followed principles, outlined by Bentham, which stated that the instrument to make the transformation of a savage, barbarous society, was to implement a straightforward set of legal codes administered by an effective judiciary. This was a strong characterisation of the British imperialist ideology in India. The notion was that Britain was the advanced civilisation, while ignoring the previous domination of foreign lands, and was doing its duty as civilised peoples by bringing British values, such as the rule of law, education, property rights and other British freedoms to feudal and backward societies.

British officials, consequently, brought liberal legal codes, practices and systems into Indian society. Policies such as the Permanent Settlement of Bengal in 1793, the abolition of Sati (where women commit suicide on their husband’s funeral pyre) in 1829, and the suppression of Thuggee (organised gangs) between 1836 and 1848, were all introduced. These policies had a detrimental outcome on the functioning of Indian society and the relationship between Indian people and British


administrations. The Permanent Settlement tried to establish a legal framework of land, the rights of property, and fix the land tax in perpetuity. However, this resulted in failure, as the land was sold off to rich merchants who were not interested in the maintaining the land, leaving vast stretches of land decimated and open to vast corruption. Moreover, the abolition and suppression of Sati and Thuggee disturbed the complications of cultural customs that had existed in India prior to British rule. By condemning cultural acts that had been established long before the British had conquered India, the British ironically made these forms of ritual far more valuable to the Indian people than before, because the Indians became convinced their customs were at risk from outside, unfamiliar forces.

Liberals and utilitarians, like Mill, were insistent that English should also be the primary language, declaring ‘Indian Knowledge’ to be completely useless. One of the most famous and notable aspects of this belief was demonstrated by Thomas Babington Macaulay’s ‘Minute on Education’ in 1835, where he stated that English was the only language worth knowing. Moreover, the spread of the English language would help to create “a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.” This was the key message in Macaulay’s speech. Macaulay believed it was necessary to create a class of Indian administrators, under British influence, that would communicate with the Indians, and adapt themselves to British rule. The British avoided converting the Indians to the

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23 Minute by the Hon’ble T. B. Macaulay, dated the 2nd February 1835. http://www.columbia.edu/itc/mealac/pritchett/00generallinks/macaulay/txt_minute_education_1835.html
Christian religion, but, in actual fact, they converted and indoctrinated the Indians into traditional state customs, and legal practices from Britain. This was an issue to do with civilising, but also, of exerting influence and prestige.

Towards the end of the 1830s the age of Indian reform had come to a close, with Bentham and Mill dying by 1836.\textsuperscript{24} The liberal imperial ideology of the eighteenth century promoted the plain dichotomy of right against wrong, or civilised against uncivilised, and allowed the British administrations to believe that the liberal imperialist policies were essential in moving the Indian people towards enlightenment and progress. It was no longer straightforward, however, to suggest that through radical reform a foreign nation would willingly bend to the rule of the British liberals. In fact, the Indian people became discontented with British rule. These dogmatic principles dominated the liberal conceptions of imperialism in the early to mid-nineteenth century. This had a profound effect on administrators and British political conceptions of responsibility for foreign territories.

On the other hand, this did not deter the liberals from their positions. It would be James Mill’s son, John Stuart Mill (1806-1873), a statesman, and a renowned proponent of liberal thought, who continued his father’s belief that Britain had the responsibility and right to rule over the people of India. John Stuart Mill had his own ‘philosophy of history’ that underlined his theories of politics and international outlooks. He shared with other Enlightenment authors the assumption of cultural development for all of humankind and the ranking of existing, as well as extinct, societies on a scale of civilisation.\textsuperscript{25} Mill argued that in order to convert those who were uncivilised to a higher form of life and civilisation, the English East India

\textsuperscript{24} E. Stokes, \textit{The English Utilitarians and India} (Oxford, 1959), p.239.
Company had to implement a superior influence over India than it had ever been previously, especially more so than had been exercised in Britain itself. Mill set out his philosophy of history in each of his major writings to some extent. The most detailed and systematic exposition, however, we find is in his essay *Considerations on Representative Government* (1861). Mill argued that representative government is the best form of government – but like his father’s belief, only for civilised nations. He argued in favour of a British Empire composed of white settler colonies and of non-settler dependencies in Asia, Africa, and Ireland. Different colonies were governed in different ways depending on the stage of civilisation they had reached, and on the political arrangements they had inherited. Although, Mill’s arguments provided Britain with a notion of its superiority in ruling India, once again, they would not stop disastrous events from occurring. The regime that had been dominated by liberal imperialism – founded on accepted universal values and aimed at producing an ‘Anglicised’ India – was undermined by the Indian Revolt of 1857.

During the Indian summer of 1857, a Sepoy rebellion broke out in the headquarters of a division of the Bengal army. It was an extremely violent reaction by a section of Indian society in retaliation to their British rulers who were set on modernising and dramatically changing the social and cultural society around the Indian peoples; rumours spread rapidly that the British had greased Enfield rifle cartridges with pork and cow fat (the pig being unclean to Muslims and the cow being

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sacred to Hindus). This angered the Indian soldiers immensely, and eventually acted as a facilitator for further revolts, with the army mutiny transforming into a popular uprising as peasants, local notables and urban groups, cutting across castes and creeds, joined together to fight foreign rule in many northern and central areas of India. The rebellion was one of the strongest examples of extreme discontent towards British dominance throughout the rule of the Company, and now the British ruling powers were left in a considerable crisis of foreign and imperial policy. However, one of the British figures that remained completely tranquil throughout all of this was Benjamin Disraeli.

Disraeli was a conservative and an amateur orientalist. He serenely argued that the revolt was a direct consequence of weakening the inherent Indian society by liberals who were trying to make India an identical copy of Britain, while undermining India’s culture and religion. Prior to the Revolt, he criticised the British liberal reforms of Dalhousie and the Doctrine of Lapse, which automatically annexed some princely states that were already under East India Company control. Disraeli firmly claimed the cause of the revolt was not pure discontent with British presence in its entirety, but the certain policies, and a liberal dogma the British had been imposing on the Indians. He stood with discontented liberals, conservatives and other orientalists who argued that Britain should focus not on reforming India to liberal standards, but on being a guarantor of British imperialism and good governance towards the Indian people. This was amplified in Queen Victoria’s ‘Proclamation’ on the 1st November 1858 that explicitly renounced ‘the right and the desire to impose our convictions on any of our

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subjects’ and ‘deeply lament[ed] the evils and misery which have been brought upon India by the acts of ambitious men, who have deceived their countrymen, by false reports, and led them into open rebellion’. 33 Significantly, Queen Victoria’s proclamation provided proof that British imperialism was now becoming tinged with the sort of language that would normally be associated with Edmund Burke and other conservatives who were sceptical of human behaviour, utopias and the liberal mantra of progress. It was the first major sign of a breakaway from the liberal imperialist consensus.

The events of the Mutiny and its aftermath were to be all-important. The immediate response was to bring the paternalist systems of rule in India that focused on good governance, not the spread of British liberal systems. This lifted to being supported in common British administrations.34 Men like Disraeli were incredibly effective manipulators of the public mood and provided a voice for urgent reform and a complete rethink of British policy.35 In spite of this, what also emerged in the discourse was an alternative, highly pessimistic philosophy that gave the arguments for an adjustment in British policy in India. A liberal writer and lawyer would provide this philosophy at the time of the Mutiny, James Fitzjames Stephen.

Stephen is predominantly known today for being J.S. Mill’s main detractor, and promoted a sceptical argument of liberal imperialism. In 1873 Stephen wrote a book titled *Liberty, Equality, Fraternity* that was heavily critical of the doctrines of liberal imperialism that he believed had been detrimental in causing wide displeasure in India,

33 Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad, November 1st, 1858). British Library. I/OR/L/PS/18/D154
35 See Chapter on ‘Benjamin Disraeli, One-Nation Conservatism and its Impact on British Imperialism’ for more information regarding Disraeli’s ability to stir the events of the Mutiny in order to change British imperialism.
and even causing failures in the wider liberal movement.\textsuperscript{36} Stephen attempted to prove that J.S. Mill had perverted the utilitarianism of his father and Bentham by trying to bind it into the same frame as popular-style liberalism. He passionately defended the pragmatic forms of liberalism, which bore more than a shallow resemblance to the political ideas of conservatives. The main motivation behind Stephen’s arguments was his undying patriotism. He viewed Britain as a country that was loathed by the highly educated elites and popular leaders, especially in liberal cliques.\textsuperscript{37}

Along with figures such as Sir Henry Maine, Sir Alfred Lyall and Lord Cromer, Stephen stressed the ancient primitiveness of Indian civilisation, and that conquered states’ traditions and values had to be preserved. Furthermore, Stephen, and supporters around him, opposed the hasty imposition of western values and institutions for fear that they would undermine the stability of ‘traditional society’ and supported what became known as ‘indirect rule’ through local elites who would be more than happy to oblige in assistance.\textsuperscript{38} For Stephen, defenders of liberal imperialism had confused good government with representative government. He soon became an advocate of what can be described as ‘authoritarian liberalism,’ that detracted largely from Mill’s philosophy, which he described as having ‘too favourable an estimate of human nature’.\textsuperscript{39}

This harked back to philosophers such as Bentham, but more importantly to Thomas Hobbes, and his work \textit{Leviathan} (1651). Hobbes stressed that if man is left to his own devices he will engage in selfishness and greed, epitomised by Hobbes’s infamous phrase that life for all would then become “solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and

Stephen used this ideology to assert that the aim of government was to not liberate, but to provide happiness and protect as many individuals as possible. This, Stephen claimed, was what Britain should provide in India. Some liberals did take some of Stephen’s ideas on board, but, with Stephen inciting Hobbes’s arguments for authority and protection, they actually inspired the minds of those who were against the whig ideal of a progressive liberal imperialism.

Stephen provided liberal imperialism, and the imperialist ideology at large, with a truly “British” face, one of patriotism, order and service, rather than greediness and self-interest. His aim in doing so, was to take liberalism away from the damaging, meddling, mawkish and populist movement it had become during the first half of the nineteenth century, and direct it instead toward the devoted upholding of a fine, enduring and distinctively English inheritance. What caused conflict in the liberal movement was the distinction between ‘authoritarian liberalism’ and ‘sentimental’ liberalism.

By 1886, the Liberal Party eventually split over the issue of Irish Home Rule. Yet, even before this split the Liberals were heavily divided on imperial issues. It was to be the Conservative Party who would take on the ideas of Stephen and Disraeli. Conservative statesmen like Disraeli were angered by the liberal handling of the Revolt in 1857, and took their chance to establish strong authoritarian rule, rather than constant reforms and pettifogging interruptions in Indian society. These authoritarian liberals allied themselves with an increasingly strong Conservative Party who found ideas of leadership, hierarchy and tradition as imperative values that promoted stability. Authoritarian liberals became an influential part of the British political state.

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and conservative psyche.  

The reformation of liberal imperialism dramatically changed the way Britain ruled the Empire by halting the age of reform, leaving Indian cultures, religions and societies to themselves. The imperial ideology that the liberals had created had not collapsed, but merely shifted towards a more authoritarian style of liberal thought towards India that focused on conservative values of paternalism and good governance, not through reform to push Indians toward enlightenment. The ideological collapse of liberal imperialists allowed the conservative strand of imperialism to strike and gain supremacy at an opportune moment. The ideas they held later gained an influential force, largely due to Benjamin Disraeli and his ideas of one-nation conservatism. Disraeli linked his beliefs to India’s role in the British Empire. His new imperial paradigm incorporated ideologues of conservatism and nationalism that ultimately were far more intrusive into the lives of the Indian people, and created a new imperialism in India that would set a new agenda and shift Britain’s imperialist ideology.

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Disraeli gained iconic status in British politics by taking a profoundly moral stance in the Conservative Party and the public sphere at large. He was born in 1804 to a Jewish family in the upper-middle class of urban London, whereby he became an ambitious young man and stayed relatively protected by his family’s wealth. He tried to become an eminent writer, but later decided to enter the House of Commons in 1837, eventually became Prime Minister in 1868 and led a parliamentary majority by 1874.  

Disraeli is remembered primarily for his philosophy of one-nation conservatism that has become a dominant association for conservative politicians right up to the

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present day. It was a philosophy that was deeply strengthened through the political and literary novels that he wrote. The novels told simple and sentimental stories, but behind them lay Disraeli’s true ideological beliefs, and writing novels was one of many ways in which he expressed them.

His first major novel *Coningsby: Or, the New Generation* (1844) centred on the events of the 1832 Reform Act where the electorate was substantially increased from 366,000 to 650,000 in England and Wales, and Disraeli heavily criticised the large force from the Liberal Party and other utilitarians who tried to hold it back. It was at this time that Disraeli began to loathe the cultural strand of nineteenth-century elitism in British politics and wished to expose it and turn against it. Disraeli was highly active in the Westminster establishment, and treated himself as an outsider in the British Parliament who knew that his fellow politicians and countrymen were lucky to be born into the social lives they were consuming, and utterly ignorant of the troubles of the immensely poor labourers in fields and factories that were living in complete squalor.

His most celebrated work *Sybil* (1845) was an exposé of the conditions the poor in Britain. Disraeli told a story about a heroine, who is a simple version of Cinderella, and her connection with the hero ‘Egremont’ – first disguised as an commonplace member of the population – as the princely figure, but it was a merely a cover for Disraeli to promote his ideological propaganda. Disraeli’s novels are, in Blake’s words, “essentially the product of an extrovert, splendid novels… they deal with the problems, if not always with real people, and their vitality is attested by the fact that so

many of their expressions have passed into the very language of politics”.49 His works had a considerable influence in the British political sphere, precisely because he was able to worm his way into it and adapt it in whatever way he pleased.50 The sub-title of the novel was *The Two Nations*, these nations, Disraeli asserted, existed in the same geographical entity of Britain, being both the rich and the poor:

> “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 a different breeding, are fed by a different food, are ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws”.51

This idea of the two nations presented a powerful message to the elites of the British nation. Britain was immensely divided by wealth, a large amount of which was controlled by the elite who had become so distant, who had to be made aware of their social duties and moral responsibilities. If they did not address this problem, it would lead to revolution. This was a dangerous possibility, especially after the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* a few years later in 1848, and British establishment believed the working classes could have turned towards socialism.

Disraeli believed that the only solution to this problem was to evoke the ideal of one-nation whereby the rich, the poor, and all other social classes highlighted their similarities to become loyal subjects to the Crown, bring liberty to the individual, heighten the influence of the Anglican Church, to which Disraeli was a convert, and

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50 H. Pearson, *Dizzy*, p.94.
offset revolutionary politics. All of this released the unconscious patriotism, which had been neglected by the British establishment for many years previously, and closed the social and cultural gap between the ‘haves’ and ‘have-nots’. Disraeli soon linked this powerful mind-set of ‘One Nation’ to the Middle East, India and British imperialism. This came as a result of the Indian Revolt of 1857.

1857 was the year that the British began to mobilise and entrench authority and rule in India. It started officially with the Government of India Bill of 1858 that took power away from the English East India Company and allowed the British Crown to rule India indefinitely. In actual fact, it became a symbolic gesture, as Queen Victoria was the main figure behind the bill, with her Proclamation of 1858, declaring that Britain would no longer ‘impose’ its values onto Indian society. And it was Disraeli who monopolised on this development with beliefs he already recorded a decade previously in another of his political novels, Tancred.

Tancred, known by its other title, The New Crusade was published in 1847, two years after Sybil. Its central plot revolved around a title character that voyages through Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Egypt, representing an imaginary exportation of romance and innovation to the Middle East. It divulged Disraeli’s preoccupation with the spiritual, moral, and even racial renaissance of the nation through propagating the new conservatism in the British imperial sphere that Disraeli had brought to the political discourse. In Tancred, the meaning of the Asian mystery placed political and social restructuring around momentous philosophies, and was founded by merging the West and the East. Disraeli fundamentally urged the western world to seek its salvation

53 Proclamation by the Queen in Council to the Princes, Chiefs, and People of India (published by the Governor-General at Allahabad, November 1st, 1858).
and new enlightenment in the eastern world.\textsuperscript{55}

\textit{Tancred} is known now for being a particularly tiresome novel – Morris Speare called it “bizarre and incoherent and inorganic” – hence why it is not one of Disraeli’s more eminent pieces of work and largely overlooked.\textsuperscript{56} \textit{Tancred’s} silver-spoon style bildungsroman dissolves into a spiritual myth of Sisyphus where each new escapade puts Tancred back to the beginning.\textsuperscript{57} During the novel, Tancred comes across ‘Fakredeen’, an Emir of Lebanon, who explains to Tancred the importance of merging British symbolic power with the East:

\begin{quote}
\textldots quit a petty and exhausted position for a vast and prolific empire. Let the Queen of the English collect a great fleet, let her stow away her treasure, bullion, gold plate, and precious arms; be accompanied by all her court and chief people, and transfer the seat of her empire from London to Delhi. There she will find an immense empire ready-made, a first-rate army, and a large revenue… We will acknowledge the Empress of India as our suzerain, and secure for her the Levantine coast… Your Queen is young; she has an avenir. Aberdeen and Sir Peel will never give her this advice; their habits are formed. They are too old, too rusés. But you seal the greatest empire that ever existed; besides which she gets rid of the embarrassment of her Chambers! And quite practicable; for the only difficult part, the conquest of India, which baffled Alexander, is all done!\textsuperscript{58}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{55} C. Murray, \textit{Victorian Narrative Technologies in the Middle East} (New York, 2008), p.60.
\textsuperscript{58} B. Disraeli, \textit{Tancred: Or The New Crusade} (London, 1904), p.311
The passage even mentions using the power of the Crown to create a better land and society:

There is a combination which would entirely change the whole face of the world, and bring back empire to the East. Though you are not the brother of the Queen of the English, you are nevertheless a great English prince, and the Queen will listen to what you say; especially if you talk to her as you talk to me, and say such fine things in such a beautiful voice. Nobody ever opened my mind like you. You will magnetize the Queen as you have magnetized me. Go back to England and arrange this.\(^{59}\)

By observing those passages in *Tancred*, we can see signs that it was Disraeli’s ambition to make India the centre of British imperial might, with the sovereign being the essential symbolic tool of this profound authority. The ‘English prince,’ that is mentioned, is possibly Disraeli, perhaps seeing himself as the political royalty that can easily convince the Queen to carry out the desired scheme for India. Disraeli was famed for having a substantial flattery toward many distinguished ladies, none more so than Queen Victoria, whom he gave the most joyful adulation, treating her with courtesy and his charm.\(^{60}\) Disraeli led Victoria to believe that she was entering a role of triumphant direction, and Victoria herself believed this, but, in reality, he was using the monarchy as a theatrical emblem to bring India under the authority of British rule through similar principles of one-nation conservatism, not as a form of serious political leadership.\(^{61}\)

We can grasp an indication of his desire to enact his passages in *Tancred* when

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\(^{59}\) B. Disraeli, *Tancred*, page 310.


\(^{61}\) A.J.P. Taylor, *Essays in English History* (Harmondsworth, 1976), p.120.
he wrote a toadying letter to Queen Victoria in 1858, telling her that she had a new role to play in Britain’s majestic approach to India:

“Yr Majesty would do well to deign to consider the steps, wh: are now necessary to influence the opinions, & affect the imagination, of the Indian populations. The name of Yr Majesty ought to be impressed upon their native life. Royal proclamations, courts of Appeal in their own land, & other institutions [,] forms & ceremonies, will tend to this great result”.

This ‘great result’ that Disraeli referred to was the implementation of Queen Victoria, as the ultimate symbol of British imperialism that he hoped would unite the Indian people under the rule of the British. What Disraeli instigated was profound. He grasped his concepts of one-nation conservatism he had used on Britain’s working poor and moulded them into an Indian society under entrenched British rule. The philosophy of ‘one-nation’ extended to mean ‘one-empire’, although, Disraeli never officially used the term one-empire.

British imperialists, inspired by Disraeli, looked to a future in which the masses in Britain would join with Queen Victoria and her subjects overseas to further the cause of Empire. Disraeli, and his followers, or ‘Disraelians,’ encouraged a populist monarchism in Britain and India that limited the influence of middle-class liberal universalism that was deemed ‘sentimental’, and stifled the possibilities of working-class socialism and further revolts. They saw the masses in Britain, India and other dependencies in parallel positions. Both were in need of paternal direction; they lacked

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the character to ensure ‘ordered liberty’ whether through paternalist forms of nationalism, or spiritual fervour as in India, or because of dangerous visions of socialism and revolutions. By becoming one-empire, Disraeli’s philosophies were cultivating a powerful imperial ideology of order and control. In the eyes of conservative imperialists and authoritarian liberals, the Indians would never be able to ascertain full enlightenment.63

Disraeli finally obtained power in 1874, and did not set his sights on India immediately. He authorised campaigns in Afghanistan and South Africa first, before turning his attention to India, to turn it from colonial self-government to the empire. He entrusted the help of Lord Robert Bulwer-Lytton, the Viceroy of India from 1876 to 1880. He wrote to Lytton in 1876 explaining the necessity of his imperial vision, using the language of one-nation conservatism as a means to entice all Indian races under British control:

If England is to remain supreme, she must be able to appeal to the coloured against the white, as well as to the white against the coloured. It is therefore not merely as a matter of sentiment and of justice, but as a matter of safety, that we ought to try and lay the foundations of some feeling on the part of the coloured races towards the crown other than the recollection of defeat and the sensation of subjection.64

Well as one-nation conservatism was concerned with uniting different classes in Britain, one-empire conservatism seemed to be concerned with race. We can see this from Lytton’s statement in his memorandum. Lytton clearly saw it as vital in order to

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unite the coloured and white races under the symbolic influence of the crown. Moreover, Lytton took Disraeli’s advice, while Disraeli pushed through the Royal Titles Act of 1876 declaring Queen Victoria as the ‘Empress of India’. On the 11th of May 1876, Lytton followed suit, and issued a memorandum announcing his intention to hold an ‘Imperial Assemblage’ in Delhi on the 1st of January 1877 to commemorate Queen Victoria’s new title. Delhi was to become the ‘seat of her [Queen Victoria’s] empire’, just as Disraeli had described in *Tancred*. Lytton indicated that the ceremony would allow the transfer of the administration of India to the Crown:

In openly recognizing and adopting the Imperial title by which She is already popularly known to Her Indian subjects, the Queen identifies Her Crown, so far as regards this portion of Her Majesty’s dominions, with its special duties and interests as the symbol not of an alien, but of a national sovereignty.\(^65\)

Here, Lytton demonstrated the one-empire conservative view of India that the British state held consistently for over a century, that Britain was not an alien part of India, but an integral part of the British nation, and vice-versa. Furthermore, it made the Monarch a vital symbol of this connection between the two countries that united them far greater than before. This was solely an expression of Benjamin Disraeli’s beliefs, visualised in *Tancred* that were implemented in British imperial policy in India through symbolism and ceremony.

The Assemblage of 1877 was a grand ceremony in Delhi filled with crowds of British officials and a procession of elephants to celebrate the Monarch’s new role as

\(^65\) Memorandum by the Viceroy [on Queen Victoria’s assumption of title “Empress of India”] Lord Lytton, 11 May 1876. India Office Records and Private Papers. IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO33/19 (By permission of the British Library), page 1.
Empress of India. The Queen-Empress herself did not even attend.\textsuperscript{66} Many British newspapers initially loathed the event at the time. They thoroughly disapproved of using the term ‘Empress’ to describe the Monarch, since it had been highly associated with the negativity of the chauvinistic empires of the past, with Napoleon Bonaparte being the strongest example. \textit{The Times} commented on the:

\begin{quote}
inexpediency of giving to the sovereign in India a different title from that which she bore in England and on the danger of associating the Queen in the minds of the Indian people with the fierce conquerors who were Emperors of Delhi, or with the wretches who were the Roman Emperors.\textsuperscript{67}
\end{quote}

The historian Alan Trevithick has pointed out that most Indians, and to be more exact most Hindus, simply did not care about this grand ceremony, and ‘are rather indifferent to worldly titles and distinctions, having been taught by their Shastras to encourage highly values more spiritual’.

\begin{quote}
They would have found the whole event wholly peculiar and a complete waste of time, but to indulge in such an affair would also be sacrilegious to their original faith.\textsuperscript{68}
\end{quote}

Even the painter of the event Val Prinsep wrote of the preparations for the Assemblage with distaste, “They have been heaping ornament on ornament, colour on colour… The size… gives it a vast appearance, like a gigantic circus.”\textsuperscript{69} B.S. Cohn stated that many historians had previously dismissed the Imperial Assemblage as nothing more than a ‘tamasha’ or a costly event of grand pompery, although Cohn was absolutely right to suggest that it had far more practical

\textsuperscript{66} Imperial Assemblage Delhi, India Office Records and Private Papers, Mss Eur F86/166, 1877 (By permission of the British Library).
\textsuperscript{67} \textit{The Times} (London, England), Friday, Feb 18, 1876; pg.8; Issue 28555.
\textsuperscript{69} V. Prinsep quoted in T. Metcalf, \textit{Ideologies of the Raj}, page 80.
consequences than are not immediately obvious.\textsuperscript{70} It was largely to fulfil the essences and the philosophies of Disraeli and one-empire conservatism, which allowed the British to show the Indians their power and supremacy, but, crucially, it sacralised Britain’s rule in India by placing the Monarch as the upmost symbol of authority, and using the grand ceremonial aspects of the Assemblage in an attempt to demonstrate this.

The Assemblage ceremony led the British administrators to believe their own myths that India was an integral part of Britain and its Empire, and that they were the people destined to rule India. Lytton in his memorandum genuinely believed this: “When the administration of India was transferred from the company to the Crown, it had virtually come into possession of a suzerain power previously exercised by the Moghul Emperors”.\textsuperscript{71} Not only did Lytton believe that the British were the direct inheritors of the Mughal Empire, he firmly believed in the power of ritual being uniquely appealing to ‘the native mind’, and being part of the same values that the working poor in Britain also held with the Monarchy. This attitude fundamentally altered the shape of Britain’s imperialist ideology in India. The British administrators viewed its invasion and rule of India as a matter of historical circumstance and progress. One-empire conservatism became the supreme force for maintaining Britain’s ideological rule in India.

The implementation of the Royal Titles Act and the Imperial Assemblage were gestures that were an attempt to link the peoples of India under the symbolic authority of British rule. This was a concept that traced back to theories used on the working

\textsuperscript{70} B.S. Cohn, ‘Representing Authority in Victorian India’ in \textit{The Invention of Tradition} ed. E. Hobshawn and T. Ranger (Cambridge, 1983), p.207.

\textsuperscript{71} Memorandum by the Viceroy \textit{[on Queen Victoria’s assumption of title “Empress of India”]} Lord Lytton, 11 May 1876. India Office Records and Private Papers. IOR/L/PS/20/MEMO33/19, p. 1.
poor in Britain with one-nation conservatism, as outlined by the key figure Benjamin Disraeli. Following the collapse of the liberal imperial movement, one-nation theories were applied in India to further a notion of one-empire. This was a fundamental aspect of the shift in the imperialist ideology that Britain imposed on India toward the end of the nineteenth century, in order to control the Indian people. The British conservative administrators having adapted the concept of one-nation to mean one-empire in India would then seek to use this method to entrench their rule in Britain, and place a greater focus on one-empire conservatism as an electoral tool to gain the support of the British people.
Chapter II: ‘The Unity of Empire’: The resurgence of the ‘One-Nation’ and ‘One-Empire’ during the Irish Home Rule Crisis, 1885-1886

Ireland had been a member of the Union since 1801, following on from the wreckage of the 1798 rebellion, which was a concerted attempt, inspired by the revolutionary upheavals of France and the United States of America, to stave off British rule in Ireland altogether. It had opened up an increase in sectarianism with divisions of faith and race gapingly present, especially between Catholics and Protestants. Ireland was unified into British territory completely, although this managed to put off rebellions of the sort seen in 1798, Ireland still had a substantial population with certain hostilities towards British rule, especially since Ireland had a large number of Catholics in the country, yet this had no major affect against British dominance.

During the 1840s a horrific famine took place in Ireland, caused by Phytophthora infestans, a fungus disease that emaciated potato crops throughout most of Europe during the 1840s. The Irish people were highly dependent on potato farming, and, therefore, the social impact of the Great Famine was seen instantly: the Irish population fell by approximately 20% between 1841 and 1851. Labour was highly over supplied, particularly in agriculture, which imitated in low salaries, high levels of unemployment and dismal housing. The Great Famine in Ireland radically changed conditions in the Labour market, altering the scale and composition of demand for commodities and services, and affecting production patterns in the long run. Unusually, for such a disorderly force, it helped attract isolated local communities into a national mainstream. Furthermore, the famine left hatred behind, as Britain had failed to find a solution in enough time to save lives. Between Ireland and England, the

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memory of what occurred has continued to dominate Irish history and culture right through to the present day. The impact on Irish popular politics in the short years following the famine was not radicalisation or resistance, but submission and despair.

In 1848, when revolutions were transpiring across the European continent, the Great Famine was merely a feeble argument for national self-government, since no Irish administration, however sympathetic, could have handled the crisis unaided. However, Irish nationalist movements gained heavy ground by the 1880s in Westminster politics, with the famine being frequently incited as an argument for agitation, and a looser relationship with Britain. Yet the famine was not to be the major turning point for many of the Irish people to place their faith with Irish nationalism. For the first three quarters of the nineteenth century, parliamentary politics had been dominated in Ireland, as in Britain, by the landed interest.

Lands in Ireland were organised much the same way as the rest of Britain but they faced one major handicap, which was that Irish landlords had tenants on their land with a different religious and cultural background, which became incredibly significant in political terms. Unlike England – where there existed a sense in which landlord and tenant were of similar stock and all part of a common heritage – Irish landlords saw themselves as inherently Irish, but tenants often perceived them as foreign usurpers, culturally and religiously alien, and having no moral rights to the land they held. Moreover, the landlords lived in high levels of extravagance and were often in chronic levels of debt. This considerably affected the image of the Irish landlords who were no longer seen as being able to uphold levels of moral decency and a reflection of the Irish people, despite the landlords claiming they were. Once tenants became much more

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politicised during the 1880s, nationalist politicians were keen to highlight, and even exaggerate, this perception of the alien landlord as the manifestation of English rule in Ireland. This provided Irish nationalists with a high amount of power and leverage in Irish, and ultimately, British political affairs.\textsuperscript{76}

By the general election of 1874, the Irish nationalists, under the stewardship of the Irish Parliamentary Party – born out of the Home Rule League, led by Isaac Butt – won a staggering 60 seats in the House of Commons. The number of Home Rule Party seats increased steadily over the years. By 1880, under William Shaw the number of seats had increased to 63. Under the leadership of the charismatic Charles Stewart Parnell, the number of seats rose exponentially to 86 five years later. It became clear to the main political parties at Westminster, both Liberal and Conservative, that the same political consensus on Ireland was no longer viable.\textsuperscript{77}

There was a genuine risk of a major constitutional crisis. Benjamin Disraeli even felt the need to write an urgent letter to the Duke of Marlborough in 1880 calling the Irish nationalist success:

\begin{quote}
a danger, in its ultimate results scarcely less disastrous than pestilence and famine, and which now engages your Excellency’s anxious attention, [which] distracts that country. A portion of its population is attempting to sever the constitutional tie which unites it to Great Britain in the bond which has favoured the power and prosperity of both.\textsuperscript{78}
\end{quote}

\begin{thebibliography}{9}
\bibitem{76} O. Purdue, \textit{The Big House in the North of Ireland}, p. 25.
\end{thebibliography}
It seemed there was a genuine national and constitutional crisis, not necessarily in society, but in the regime itself. Would the separation of Ireland destroy the Union? Would it even go as far as undermining the empire? Contemplating these questions terrified politicians in both the Conservative and Liberal parties.\textsuperscript{79}

Moving on from the impact of one-nation and one-empire conservatism in India, it is important to turn now to Britain itself, and its union with Ireland, surrounding the events of the Home Rule Crisis. Having implemented the concepts of one-nation and one-empire in India, British political elites decided to reinforce these ideals in order to deal with the danger of Irish succession. Following disastrous incompetence and neglect from the British and their policies in Ireland, nationalist politics that had been occurring for a long period, began to gain political legitimacy in the British Parliament. In reaction to the events, the British establishment began to recoil, and realised that by giving Ireland concessions it could lead to the break up of the Union, or even worse, the empire itself. Following this, unionist Liberals and Conservatives began to place one-nation and one-empire conservatism at the centre of their campaigning and propaganda, predominantly around the debates about the second Home Rule Bill, and the general election of 1886.

The late Victorian era went through an enlargement of Britain’s prospects, and also, perhaps, a sense of British national identity. In this period the shift of attitudes of British politicians became part of a new imperial viewpoint. A sort of ‘Britannic nationalism’ underpinned the commitment of all the territories of Britain’s vast empire.\textsuperscript{80} In effect, Britain’s imperial role became a sacred aspect of British politics, and anyone who considered standing against it, or even arguing for modest reforms to


\textsuperscript{80} J. Darwin, \textit{The Empire Project: The Rise and Fall of the British World-System, 1830-1970} (Cambridge, 2009), p. 147
Britain’s relationship with Ireland was demonised, and considered a traitor to the nation and the empire. For Ireland was not only a member of the union with Britain, but was also seen by many of Britain’s political elite to be a part of the empire as well. To argue in favour of Irish Home Rule, thereby granting Ireland greater autonomy was seen not only as an act of great risk, but also one of blasphemy against the British Empire and its role in the world. In this chapter we will see that the British reinforced the concepts of one-nation and one-empire, and adapted them to British politics as a way of dealing with the problems of Irish Home Rule. Moreover, the concepts of the ‘one-nation’ and ‘one-empire’ were so strong that the Liberal party who were in favour of Home Rule were left completely divided over the issue, which eventually split the party, consigning the Liberal party to a woeful defeat at the 1886 general election.

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The first party to tackle the issues and developments earnestly were the Liberals. They were more than aware that Ireland posed a serious challenge to British governance, and that a formula had to be found which satisfied Parnell’s nationalist followers, and at the same time, avoid a complete separation, and an impression that a separation could occur in future.81 The strongest advocate for reform was the radical Liberal politician Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914).

Chamberlain came from a successful, hard working, and well educated background. He started off as a screw manufacturer and businessman before becoming the famed Mayor of Birmingham. He rose to prominence through the grassroots of the Liberal Party, and held considerably negative views towards the aristocracy. The Tory party and the Conservative press did all they could to disparage and deride Chamberlain. Lord Salisbury likened him to a ‘Sicilian bandit’, and other publications would refer to

him as ‘Radical Joe’, even going so far as to call him a communist, and even an
anarchist, someone who would enthusiastically abolish British society to expand his own
aspirations. Yet, these descriptions of Chamberlain as a Machiavellian chancer can be
highly misleading. If anything Chamberlain proved to be heavily ideological and
devoted with his staunch patriotic support for British unionism and imperialism.

Chamberlain gave his voice to a National Councils scheme outlined in *The Radical
Programme* (1885), a text written on behalf of radical Liberals, which Chamberlain
gave his backing to in the text’s foreword. *The Radical Programme* stipulated a set of
proposals in order to offset the political unrest in Ireland:

Nor can it be too strongly insisted on that the supervision and control now
exercised by the central authority in London involves, not only delay and
difficulty in the transaction of Imperial business, but an amount of irritation and
friction which is altogether superfluous… “Palpable as are the evils arising from
undue interference by the central authority with local government in England,
we find them intensified when we come to deal with the question of local
government in Scotland, and still more so in the case of Ireland… There the
interference is not merely that of a superior or an official, it is moreover the
interference of an alien authority.83

Chamberlain and the radical Liberals evidently recognised early on that the British
government was presenting itself unintentionally as an alien authority in the smaller
nations of the union. It appeared that the consensus on the radical wing of the Liberal
Party was that it was the lack of an answer to the “Irish Question” that would cause

82 D. Judd, *Radical Joe*, p. 124
83 *The Radical Programme: with a preface by The Right Hon. J. Chamberlain, M.P.* (London,
larger levels of division and threaten the Union and the British Empire itself. As The Radical Programme goes on to add:

Let it be always remembered that an alienated Ireland means a weakened England, and even a weakened Empire… Is an Ireland estranged from England to be accepted as the unavoidable and unremovable cause of the weakening, in the manner already described, of the British Empire?84

The radical Liberals, led by Chamberlain, were trying to adapt the ideology of the one-nation, and even one-empire inspired by their Conservative counterparts, in order to promote a new policy of radical devolution within the Union itself, to protect the bonds of British unity, and prevent the mass break up of Britain’s Empire. By unleashing a new form of devolution through a national councils scheme it could re-invent the ideas of British nationhood to suit a Liberal agenda. What Chamberlain failed to account for, however, was that his leader William Ewart Gladstone (1809-1898) wanted to go much further than Chamberlain was willing to, and in 1885, before the election of that year, promised to move towards granting Ireland Home Rule, and by February the following year had become Prime Minister with the help of Parnell’s nationalists, preventing Tory agitation in the House of Commons.

Gladstone had converted to the same cause as the Irish nationalists precisely to try and reach a compromise and move the Liberal Party in a different direction. The main setback with Gladstone’s argument, however, was that Irish nationalism, an expression of populist romantic idealism, was inconsistent with the traditional programme of the Liberal party. Home Rule, for the unionist Liberals, threatened Britain’s national power and imperial harmony, and they justified their association

84 The Radical Programme, p. 262-263.
with the Conservatives as the formation of a national bloc to protect the national interest. Gladstone’s Government, for these Liberals, had departed from the traditional conventions of the Liberal Party. The unionist Liberals stood distinctly in a tradition of their own, a tradition of resistance to divisive nationalist impulses. These sentiments were certainly revealed by Chamberlain at the Cobden Club dinner on June 11 1885:

> I believe that in the successful accomplishment of its solution lies the only hope of the pacification of Ireland and of the maintenance of the strength and integrity of the Empire – which are in danger, which are gravely compromised...  

There were clearly not only worried rumblings about what Irish Home Rule would mean for Britain and its empire, but also what it would mean for Ireland itself. Ireland was deeply divided over the issue, especially on Catholic and Protestant lines, as Protestants were more likely to favour maintaining the Union of Britain and Ireland. There was a fear that Home Rule could have increased hostilities within Ireland. This was exemplified by the Liberal imperialist Lord Rosebury, the Foreign Secretary, who supported the principle of Home Rule reluctantly, insisting that Ulster’s position required careful consideration in order not to cause any post-resolution conflicts. Chamberlain, himself, was unwilling to move on his ideas for a National Councils scheme. It was his version of radical devolution, and nothing more. Chamberlain also became furious with Gladstone for keeping him in the dark about his intentions and policies towards the matter. Gladstone even went as far as shutting Chamberlain out of

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the debates and negotiations between the Irish leadership and Gladstone.  

By the early months of 1886, it looked increasingly inevitable that Chamberlain would rebel against Gladstone, not just for shutting him out of major discussions, but also for his willingness to risk sacrificing the Union and Britain’s Empire all for the sake of the Irish Nationalists. On 8 March, Chamberlain seemed assured about what his response to Gladstone would be, and told his brother Arthur Chamberlain resolutely that “As regards Ireland I have quite made up my mind – indeed I have never felt the slightest hesitation. If Mr. G’s scheme goes too far, as I expect it will, I shall leave him.” Chamberlain then wrote to J.T. Bunce:

It is certain that any scheme of the kind attributed to Mr. Gladstone will lead in the long run to the absolute national independence of Ireland, and that this cannot be conceded without serious danger and the heaviest sacrifices on the part of Great Britain. This country would sink to the rank of a third rate power, and its foreign policy, already sufficiently embarrassing and absorbing, would be complicated by perpetual reference to the state of feeling in Ireland.

Chamberlain fears reflect the feeling that the nation and its empire was sacrosanct, any attempt to make concessions was plainly too dangerous to contemplate. Chamberlain felt that he had no choice left, and on 15 March, resigned from the government. Chamberlain was viewed as being nothing more than a cynical opportunist, although it is hard to see it this way. Chamberlain would have certainly been all too aware that his resignation came at an enormous personal cost, for it dashed his hopes of becoming

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89 D. Judd, *Radical Joe*, p. 139.
leader of the Liberal Party, and a future Prime Minister. Thus, it was vital to build a new reputation as a champion against Home Rule rather than a Prime Ministerial candidate.\textsuperscript{91}

A week later he was in meetings with his Tory rivals Arthur Balfour and Albert Grey to discuss future actions, revealing how distant he had become from Gladstone’s Liberal movement. Balfour persuaded Chamberlain, that his role as a ‘moderate Liberal’ was a crucial bridge in uniting factions of dissident unionist Liberals against Gladstone’s Home Rule Bill.\textsuperscript{92} When the Home Rule Bill was announced on 8 April, Chamberlain arose in the House of Commons chamber to raise major concerns and outline the Radical Unionists’ objectives to maintain the union and the empire. The Liberals that sided with Gladstone were too far to go back and stood firm behind their decision. This was seen in addresses made in the Liberal Party Associations across the country. One such example was seen in Colchester made by lawyer W. Willis:

\begin{quote}
Gentlemen, for my part I am glad that Mr. Gladstone refused to begin his reign as Prime Minister for the third time, with measures of coercion – (loud cheers) – and that he set to work to propound a scheme by which people may live in order in Ireland, and not affect injuriously the happiness and comfort of any other portion of the Queen’s Dominions. (Renewed Cheers).\textsuperscript{93}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{93} MR. GLADSTONE’S PROPOSALS FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF IRELAND: Their Nature and Effect. ADDRESS delivered by W. Willis, Esq., Q.C., to the members of the Colchester and County Liberal Club, on Wednesday, April 21, 1886. British Library 8146.f.23.(3.) 1886.
Willis’s speech reflects the attitude that Gladstone and his followers decided to take, which was a pragmatic, but stubborn way of dealing with the Irish question. It was a highly risky move, as he was beginning to alienate large numbers in his own party, and even the imperial symbol, the Monarch, for risking the traditional bonds of the nation and its imperial strength. Queen Victoria was far from impressed by the developments to grant Ireland Home Rule. She was a firm believer in the Union and Empire, and thoroughly disliked Gladstone and Chamberlain, and wrote to leading Unionist Liberal Lord Hartington on 11 April regarding the crisis:

As this is no party question, but one which concerns the safety, honour, and welfare of her dominions, the Queen wishes to express personally to Lord Hartington, not only her admiration of his speech on Friday night, but also to thank him for it. It shows that patriotism and loyalty go, as they always should, before party. And she trusts, with certainty now, that these dangerous and ill-judged measures for unhappy Ireland will be defeated.94

The interference of the Queen, a key figure of the nation and the empire, presented a wider consensus that confirmed the opinions of unionist Liberals and Conservatives. It proved that it was only a matter of months before the government under Gladstone would be seriously challenged. The moment came on 8 June, when 94 Liberals voted with the Conservatives against the second reading of the Government of Ireland Bill. The final count was 311 in favour and 341 against.95 The Unionist Liberals had dissented from the Gladstonian side of the party, but the tensions between the two groups of the party were already so high, with regards to revolts that occurred on

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questions of Irish policy, foreign and imperial policy, defence, land reform, radical initiatives directed against the House of Lords, and other institutions of privilege. Some of these disagreements cut deep into the Liberal party, sufficiently deep for some of these radical rebellions. Yet it was the issue of Home Rule that was more likely to be the tipping point for the unionist Liberals.96

The Liberal infighting and eventual split reflected a mood in British politics, not one where sorts of radical politics were rejected, but one in which the models of one-nation and one-empire, idealised by Disraeli, were considered too sacred to change. It is this factor most of all, other than policies and personalities that caused a split among the Liberals and a crisis in parliamentary politics. The ones who would benefit from the split were the Tories, who had made their stance on the matter of the ‘Irish Question’ clear from the outset, and were able to take complete advantage of Liberal infighting, and lead with ideas that they had invented previously.

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The reconstruction of Conservatism in the late Victorian periods was a two-way process. The Conservative party steadily shifted its support base from the land to property in all its forms, making room for the new middle classes who had slowly risen up with their new forms of wealth created by the Industrial Revolution.

Following the death of Benjamin Disraeli in 1881, the Conservatives lost one of their greatest leaders and a key ideologue. They decided to continue to invoke his ideal of the one-nation and empire as being inextricably linked. To the average Tory it became clear that economic forces should be made to accommodate themselves to the

established model of preserving Disraeli’s ideals.\textsuperscript{97} It is for this reason that Toryism was thoroughly anti-Liberal, as the Liberals were concerned with the notion that Britain was in a continuous progression to a higher stage of political thinking, which often went against the social customs of conservative minded Britons. Often popular Toryism played the politics of patriotism and jingoism, evoking protestant and anti-Irish feelings.\textsuperscript{98}

The combined effect of the 1884 Franchise Act and the Redistribution of Seats Act of 1885 was to alter both the proportion of county and borough seats in parliament, and the levels of electoral participation, following the growth of the middle class between 1850 and 1880, by around 300 per cent.\textsuperscript{99} This allowed a growth of a middle class electorate with socially conservative views, who were more likely to prioritise what they perceived as traditional and national values.

The Conservative party had already, years before, strengthened the ideals of one-nation and one-empire under Disraeli, and established themselves as the party of the empire. The ensuing Irish Question and Home Rule issue provided them with ample opportunity to reinforce this.\textsuperscript{100} The chief artisan of this new movement would be Robert Gascoyne-Cecil, 3\textsuperscript{rd} Marquis of Salisbury (1830-1903) who led the party after Disraeli’s death. Salisbury had descended from a strong line of landed gentry and was the epitome of hard-line British Toryism. He was exceedingly suspicious of democracy, liberalism, rapid change, and longed for what he saw as the stability of the past. Most of all, he was an unwavering defender of the British nation and its imperial

might. Unlike Disraeli, however, he saw no mystique in the Eastern world. Salisbury saw imperialism, chiefly as an expression of British power, one of destiny, and hierarchical dominance over other races, and would do whatever it took to defend it.101

Under the leadership of Salisbury the Conservative arguments, in the debates surrounding Home Rule were exceedingly clear: there was to be no suitable settlement between Union and full independence for Ireland. Moreover, Salisbury had a terrible impression that if Ireland were granted Home Rule the majority of Irish people being Catholics would ‘govern the minority [Protestants] in a way utterly inconsistent with its rights, and in a manner utterly fatal to all its industrial and commercial hopes.’102 Here we see a perfect example of Salisbury’s fear of democracy, and what giving the people greater power could mean. However, it also reflected a wider problem, that the interests of the empire, the interests of Irish independence, and Irish Home Rule were an incompatible and combustible mix. It was a political stance in which Salisbury and his parliamentary colleagues on the front benches were not ashamed to admit publicly.103

Following the electoral defeat of the Tories in 1885, Salisbury had trouble piecing together a proposal on which his party could contest. At Newport in 1885, following Gladstone’s conversion, Salisbury avowed that ‘to maintain the integrity of the Empire must undoubtedly be our first policy with respect to Ireland’.104 Behind that official declaration of policy laid an informal, but deeply rooted doctrine. Home Rule, in turn, as Salisbury famously pointed out, risked the disintegration of Empire. As he put it at the inauguration of the National Conservative Club, it was not a question of

102 M. Bentley, Lord Salisbury’s World, p. 61.
one party or the other, nor was it a question of the careers of statesmen. It was a question of being engaged in a struggle on the issue of ‘whether our existence as a great empire is to continue or not’.\textsuperscript{105}

He decided, therefore, to retreat to a recipe, which had often served the party well in the past – the idea that the Protestant traditions of Britain were in danger from Liberal and Irish reformers. Salisbury evoked a phrase that was becoming popular at the time: ‘Home Rule is Rome Rule’. Declaring that ‘the worst government in the world is the government by priests’.\textsuperscript{106} This was a direct implication that Britain should certainly never be dictated to by alien outsiders who had interests in serving unfamiliar, revolutionary forces, in this case, the Papacy. Ironically, this was the exact same line of argument the Irish Nationalists were using to agitate against British rule. It reveals that the two sides were deeply religious about their political positions, and would even go as far as to use religious bigotry in their arguments against their opponents. Crucially, however, it showed a clear political distinction between unionists and separatists.

Salisbury frequently travelled round Britain, giving speeches and spouting his rhetoric on strengthening the unity of the union and empire. He was, however, completely trumped in his promotion of the Protestant defence of nation and empire by a member of his own party, Randolph Churchill, who announced in a letter to his friend Gerald Fitzgibbon that he was going to travel to Ulster in the north of Ireland, and appeal for the support of Irish protestants and the Orange Order by ‘play[ing] the orange card’.\textsuperscript{107} Churchill achieved this on 22 February 1886, when he made a famous speech at the Ulster Hall in Belfast, calling on Protestants to gripe against Home Rule

\textsuperscript{105} R. Shannon, \textit{The Age of Salisbury, 1881-1902}, p. 281.  
\textsuperscript{107} J. Ramsden, \textit{An Appetite for Power}, p. 156.
and furthered the notion that ‘the dissolution of the legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland entails, at no distant day, the dissolution of the British Empire.’

Churchill’s speech was politically useful for the purposes of minimising the threat of Home Rule in the short term; however, it was highly dangerous as it agitated distinct divisions within Ireland itself, between Catholic and Protestant, between North and South. Yet, it demonstrated the lengths that certain political figures would go to in order to defeat Home Rule, but also to promote the ideal of keeping the country and the empire united.

By stirring Ulster Protestants against Home Rule, Churchill’s speech ironically showed how the language of one-empire conservatism also had the power to highlight and strengthen cultural divisions. It was an extraordinarily powerful message among a large swath of the electorate, not just in Ulster and England, but also in other parts of the Union, particularly Scotland. Gladstone’s surprise transformation to the cause of Home Rule in 1886 had a considerable impression on the Scottish people, and how they perceived their position in the union and the empire. Scottish national identity in this period adopted a belief that being a member of the union and participating in the British Imperial project strengthened the ideals of Scottish nationhood. Associations were frequently made between Ireland and Scotland, the purpose being to emphasise the former’s failure to integrate and praising the latter’s success in doing so. The connection of the union to empire became a heavy part of the Scottish political culture during and after the 1880s. The nationalistic taint allowed the Scots to believe that they were a stronger nation as part of the union, and even go as far as influencing Britain’s

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imperial ambitions.\textsuperscript{110} Scots were fully on board with the idealistic project of the one-
nation and one-empire simultaneously, with Conservatives and unionist Liberals
incensed that Scotland was where they could go to make new political ground to argue
for unionist and imperialist policies. With the nations of the union all investing so
heavily in the ideals of one-nation and empire, it was highly unlikely that Gladstone
support for Home Rule could be in line with the majority of the electorate’s opinions.

The defeat of the second Home Rule Bill in 1886 guaranteed the collapse of the
Liberal government, and campaigning for the general election began, campaigns in
which Conservatives and Liberal Unionists took full advantage to make it a campaign
largely based around positions relating to Irish Home Rule. This offered the Tories
and Liberal Unionists the opportune moment to fight the election based on who was
the more patriotic party. With the national interests so heavily staked on British
imperial survival, emotions typically ran high, and often debates turned into mud-
slinging matches. Gladstone went as far as to accuse Salisbury of being in favour of
“asking for new repressive laws and to enforce them resolutely for twenty years.”\textsuperscript{111}
Salisbury and his unionist supporters merely brushed these criticisms to one side often
declaring Gladstone’s ministry handling of the Home Rule affair as a “shipwreck”,
which Gladstone and the Home Rule supporters “clung to what they termed the
principle of the measure… one which threatened the ruin of the Empire.”\textsuperscript{112}

In the end the combination of a Unionist split from the Liberal Party with
Protestant, nationalist sentiment bolstered by the Conservative Party proved to be too
much for Gladstone’s government. At the 1886 election, the Conservatives and Liberal

\textsuperscript{110} R. Finlay, ‘National Identity, Union, and Empire, p. 293.
\textsuperscript{111} ‘Lord Salisbury on Mr. Gladstone’s Manifesto.’ The Western Daily Press, Bristol –
Thursday 17 June 1886. Courtesy of the British Newspaper Archive.
\textsuperscript{112} The Aberdeen Weekly Journal - Saturday, June 26, 1886. Courtesy of the British
Newspaper Archive
Unionists together took 51.4 per cent of the popular vote. In terms of seats, the Conservatives took 316, the Liberal-Unionists 78, the Liberals 191 and the Irish Nationalists 85 seats. Conservatives and Unionists combined, thus had a majority of 118 over Gladstone’s party in conjunction with the Nationalists holding an overwhelming mandate against Home Rule.\footnote{A.G. Porritt, ‘The Irish Home Rule Bill’, \textit{Political Science Quarterly}, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1913), p. 304.}

Gladstone was forced to resign in humiliation, his term in office had barely lasted a year. To make matters worse for Gladstone, he received a seething letter from Queen Victoria in response to the announcement of his resignation:

\begin{quote}
His [Gladstone] assumption that the Home Rule vote in England returned the Conservatives at the last election and will now return his followers has not been borne out by results. Nor have the Liberal masses supported Mr. Gladstone’s policy in any marked manner, but have on the contrary apparently voted in large numbers in favour of maintaining the legislative union with Ireland. Mr. Gladstone will remember that she has expressed this opinion before.

The Queen is sorry that Mr. Gladstone repeats the cry against the wealthy and educated classes of the country, which does not appear to rest on any foundation.\footnote{G.E. Buckle, \textit{The Letters of Queen Victoria, Volume 7}, p. 154.}
\end{quote}

Victoria had reserved a special loathing for Gladstone, which is plain for all to see in this letter, it also shows how Victoria was far from neutral in these matters and took the idea of the union and empire as seriously as Salisbury, Chamberlain, and in the end, the electorate. A year later the nation celebrated Queen Victoria’s Golden Jubilee in 1887, just ten years after she was hailed ‘Empress of India’ at the Imperial Assemblage
in Delhi. The country hailed Victoria as the maternal spirit of the British people at home and abroad, and as the personified symbol of their imperial greatness, with Victoria being more than happy to indulge in their feelings.\textsuperscript{115} The Home Rule Crisis was over, but only for a short time. With the Irish Nationalists still a persistent force in Parliament the issue was never likely to simply fizzle out. Further attempts for another Home Rule Bill were made under Gladstone in 1893, but they were defeated again, chiefly with the help of the House of Lords. Gladstone’s attempts for an amicable solution for Britain and Ireland seemed all but doomed.

The electoral success for the Tories and the Liberal Unionists in the 1886 election was not so much a victory for either of the parties. It was, in actual fact, a triumph for the idealistic principles of ‘one-nation’ and ‘one-empire’. The consensus across Parliament and the country in general was that these ideals had to be kept intact, and turned them into a sacred tradition that had to have the upmost protection. Irish Home Rule risked a disintegration of these proud perfectionistic principles, and had to be opposed at all costs. Gladstone and the Liberal Party’s stance on Home Rule placed them firmly in the firing line for being traitors to the one-nation and one-empire beliefs. The landslide victory of the unionist parties at the 1886 general election undoubtedly helped to confirm this. The politics of one-nation and one-empire that was used so effectively throughout the Home Rule Crisis would eventually be reinforced again. This time it would be at the turn of the century and involve Britain’s relationship with another of its territories.

Chapter III: The Second Boer War, the ‘Khaki’ Election, and the Vision of One-Empire

A Diamond Jubilee was held for Queen Victoria in 1897 for her service to the country by reigning as the British sovereign for sixty years of her life. Triumphant celebrations were held across the country, and central to the festivities was the ideal of Britain and its imperial strength and prowess. The march toward empire was seen as a greater progress with Victoria being a key symbol. The grandiloquence of imperialism that had been used to great effect by Disraeli, Chamberlain, and Salisbury, to name a few, became the domineering language of political debate around national issues. It is often noted how imperialism and patriotism went hand in hand, but British patriotism was, in fact, strengthened in the late nineteenth century because of the country’s rising imperial role.116

The British elite was provided a greater backing with the increasing presence of mass media. The media helped to inspire a new direction of ideological thought among Britain’s political elites and the general public. As the nineteenth century came to a close, the ‘popular’ and the ‘political’ press together were producing additional information about Britain’s colonies. With increased coverage came a change in attitudes towards Britain’s imperial dominions. Many journalists, esteemed editors, and successful newspaper owners of this period were enthusiasts for empire; with a disposition to link imperialism to British politics, which affected the ideas and supervision of some of the country’s most widely read and politically significant papers.117 Empire was a useful selling tool, with newspapers becoming prevailing weapons for circulating empire in the growing media, and endorsing the cause of imperial unity across the world. This, in turn, affected the day-to-day politics.

Following the increase of the electorate under a series of Reform Acts, associations were set up by Britain’s major political parties, after 1867, in order to campaign for votes in subsequent elections. The Conservative Party were by far the most effective party at dealing with this form of electioneering, appealing to the aspirations of the working and middle classes, and presenting them with patriotic visions of Britain’s place in the world. This was especially true in the years of dominance under Salisbury in the 1890s, making it rather ironic that someone with an aristocratic background who possessed a special loathing for democracy led the party through a party of increasing electioneering.\textsuperscript{118}

Moreover, Imperialism became a common aspect of Conservative propaganda through the form of letters, leaflets and posters, to name but a few examples. An everyday aspect of the Conservative Party’s propaganda was its use of patriotic, jingoistic language when it came to supporting Britain’s Empire, as we have seen with the events surrounding the Irish Home Rule crisis. It was especially the case, also, at times of war and other forms of conflict. This was insurmountably reinforced surrounding the events of the Second Boer War (1899-1902).

Britain’s most central commercial routes were through the Cape of Good Hope and the Suez Canal, and its imperial centre was India, the ‘Jewel in the Crown.’ International prestige needed to be defended and maintained no matter what, even if that meant acts of war. The South African war, therefore, was not some small local difficulty, but a war in defence of the empire, of both its present coherence and its future unity. Readman argues that the Second Boer War significantly impacted British politics and society. The Annual Register for 1900 noted, “the interest aroused by the

war, with all its side issues, was sufficient to occupy public interest to the exclusion of all other subjects.”

Therefore, the events of the conflict will show how Britain’s imperialist politicians and parties used the arguments of ‘one-empire’ in order to increase its support base, and crush the Liberal party and the wider Liberal movement in Britain through electioneering and campaigning, with the strongest example of this being the general election of 1900, dubbed the ‘khaki’ election. The argument put forward by Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, time and again, was that if Britain lost its influence in South Africa, the empire itself would start to unravel, and, thus, Britain would lose its power and prestige.

This form of patriotism, created out of the reinforcement of one-empire, fixated on securing the pleasures relished at home by British subjects throughout the empire. It viewed the frontiers of the nation as being overseas, extending as far as the colonisers and their ideals went. These chauvinistic notions played incredibly well into the hands of the imperialists who denounced Liberals and others who criticised the war itself, and other British policies towards South Africa.

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Britain had experienced a tumultuous relationship with South Africa. The country’s policies with regard to Southern Africa had always been to maintain an influence in individual states and colonies such as the Transvaal, the Orange Free State, and Bechuanaland. In the 1870s British officials had tried to unite all of South Africa into a confederation, however, this had very little success and the individual colonies were sceptical and spoke out. Afrikaners within the Transvaal soon began to stir up opposition to British rule. One in particular was Paul Kruger, who opposed the idea of

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a confederation and increasing annexations under British regulation led the Afrikaners.\textsuperscript{120}

By 1886 Frederick and Henry William Struben discovered gold along the Witwatersrand, around thirty miles south of Pretoria. The discovery of precious materials such as gold and diamonds produced a profound effect on Southern Africa, moving the region’s economy from agricultural to industrial, and its society from rural to urban in a rapid space of time.\textsuperscript{121} As a result of the economic boom in the area, thousands of migrants swept into the cape to work in the mining industry, and make a living. As a result, certain hostilities began to emerge among the Afrikaners who were already living there, denouncing the thousands coming into South Africa, calling them ‘Uitlanders’ as a form of discrimination. Devoted imperialists such as Joseph Chamberlain and Lord Salisbury were openly irritated at how Pretoria treated the Uitlanders who were living in the Transvaal as British subjects. It soon became a matter of secret British policy to try and counter Paul Kruger’s Afrikaner influence, even going as far as to use coup d’état-style tactics.

In late 1895, with the backing of Chamberlain, who at this point was Secretary of State for the Colonies, the unwavering imperialist Cecil Rhodes plotted the overthrow of the Transvaal government. The plan was to send an armed force, under the command of Dr. Leander Starr Jameson to capture Johannesburg and establish a provisional government under British rule.\textsuperscript{122} There was little support from the Uitlander community at the time for such an act; however, Chamberlain continued with the plan regardless, and failed in what was a complete act of folly, providing Kruger and the Afrikaner movement with far more support than was initially the case.

\textsuperscript{120} R.B. Beck, \textit{The History of South Africa} (London, 2002), p. 86.
\textsuperscript{121} R.B. Beck, \textit{The History of South Africa} (London, 2002), p. 78.
\textsuperscript{122} T. Pakenham, \textit{The Boer War} (London, 1979), p. 3.
Humiliated, the British knew that their influence over affairs in southern Africa was dwindling rapidly following the disastrous Jameson Raid. This was not to be the last of Britain’s attempts to reduce the influence of the Boer’s, however.

In 1899, a man called Mr. Edgar was shot dead in a fracas in South Africa by a drunken Boer police officer. This act of killing became significant due to the fact that Mr. Edgar was an Uitlander, triggering the cause of over 20,000 Uitlanders to sign a petition addressed to Queen Victoria, directly deploring the killing. In an attempt to whip up support against the Boers in Britain, Alfred Milner, 1st Viscount Milner (1854-1925), a keen imperialist and stringent believer in theories of racialism, mobilised those who identified with the Uitlanders, and those who were sympathetic to their plight, to throng their requests, and quickly drummed up an alliance with some of the gold magnates in South Africa. Milner wrote to Chamberlain in May 1899 that:

The spectacle of thousands of British subjects kept permanently in the position of helots, constantly chiefly under undoubted grievances, and calling vainly to Her Majesty’s Government for redress, does steadily undermine the influence and reputation of Great Britain and the respect for the British Government within the Queen’s dominions.

It was thought that to re-establish British authority in Southern Africa would bolster its position among other great powers and would have great strategic value. Chamberlain was equally worried about the standing of the Uitlanders at the time. In a reply to Milner five days later, Chamberlain claimed that if the Uitlander community

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was not declared equal with the Boer community it could cause unrest in the Transvaal, which in turn could weaken Britain’s Empire and its unity:

This ordinary right of all Government is strengthened in the present case by the peculiar relations established by the conventions between this country and the Transvaal, and also by the fact that the peace and prosperity of the whole of South Africa including Her Majesty’s possessions, may be seriously affected by any circumstances which are calculated to produce discontent and unrest in the South African Republic… Her Majesty’s Government, however, attach much less importance to financial grievances that to those which affect the personal rights of the Uitlander community, and which place in a condition of political, educational and social inferiority to the Boer inhabitants of the Transvaal, and even endanger the security of their lives and property.126

There was clearly a genuine concern for the Uitlanders, but Chamberlain and Milner’s letters show what it is about the situation in South Africa that particularly vexes them the most. The end of both correspondences reiterate that the greatest sin the Boers made was to defy the nation of Britain and the Queen’s empire with all its traditions, and by September, Chamberlain acted, demanding that Kruger allow full voting rights for the Uitlander populations. Refusal to do so would be to defy British rule, and could be met with action. Yet, Kruger was never likely to allow such a measure, especially if it meant risking Boer control over the South African Republic. Kruger, in retaliation, issued an ultimatum instead to the British in October, calling for them to withdraw their troops from the Transvaal and the Orange Free State. Kruger appeared to be

willing to initiate conflict if he needed to. In reality, however, Kruger was not looking for such a fight with The British Empire. Britain had control over the Cape, Natal, Rhodesia and Bechuanaland, all pressing upon the Boer republics’ frontiers, and the Uitlanders were merely a tiny minority within the Transvaal. Therefore, any such conflict was guaranteed to have severe ramifications.\textsuperscript{127} Unfortunately with the ultimatum issued by Kruger, conflict, at the time, seemed unstoppable, and it became a reality soon after, with Britain declaring war in October 1899.

From the very beginning of the war, the interests outlined by the British were clear, with Conservatives and Liberal Unionists teaming up once again to protect British subjects abroad, defend Britain’s authority in its empire, and to strengthen the unity of that empire from those who wished to dismantle it. Leaflets began to be distributed by the Conservative Party to the electorate outlining their reasons for engaging in the war, with Salisbury, Chamberlain, Lord Selbourne and Arthur Balfour all contributing. Chamberlain made his case for the war on protecting the Uitlanders, but his tone, however, was far more imperialist claiming that the principles of the empire had to be upheld:

\begin{quote}
We are going to war in defence of the principles upon which this Empire has been funded, and upon which alone it can exist. The first principle is this – that if we are to retain our position in regard to other nations, we are bound to show that we are both willing and able to protect British subjects everywhere when they are made to suffer from oppression and injustice. The second principle is
\end{quote}

that, in the interests of South Africa, and in the interests of the British Empire,

Great Britain must remain the paramount power in South Africa.¹²⁸

Chamberlain’s principled case smacked of the language of one-empire by emphasising consistently that British subjects were granted the same rights under the imperial umbrella. By discriminating against the Uitlanders, the Boers were directly challenging the authority and legitimacy of Britain’s Empire, which ultimately undermined the idealism that one-empire conservatism provided. Other dominions bought into this ideal as well, with strong support in the war effort coming from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, to name a few.

Following the march to War, on Oct. 30th, 1899, a Canadian contingent of 1000 men from Quebec was sent to fight in the Boer War. Sir Wilfred Laurier, the Canadian Premier made an address outlining the imperial position and condemning those who opposed Britain’s position in South Africa as ‘Little Englanders’:

> It is inspiring to reflect that the cause for which you mean of Canada are going to fight is the cause of justice and the cause of humanity, of civil rights, and of religious liberty. This war is not a war of conquest or of subjugation. It is not to oppress a race whose courage we admire, but it is to put an end to oppression imposed on subjects of her majesty in South Africa by a tyrannical people. Its object is not to crush out Dutch nationality, but to establish, in a land over which Her Majesty is suzerain, British sovereign law to assure to all

men in that country an equal share of liberty… To cement the unity of the Empire… If you do your duty, your proud countrymen will share your glory.

The Canadian Premier’s intervention is thoroughly revealing, and manages to sum up the entire British position on the matter. It was for the sake of protecting British authority and prestige in its dominions, and denouncing any force that acted against this as ‘tyrannical’. Moreover, the war allowed the Canadians and other dominions’ armies to participate fervently in the imperial project, especially when using phrases such as ‘the cause of humanity, of civil rights, and of religious liberty.’ Laurier goes on to declare:

Fellow Countrymen, let it be known that we are at one with our loyal brethren across the sea; let there be no suspicion of agreement with the sentiments of the poor miserable Radical Little Englanders. At this critical time there is but one course to take, and that is to SUPPORT THE UNIONIST Government and to consolidate our glorious Empire.129

Noticeably, it became an aspect of political rhetoric at the time of the conflict to present the ideal of the ‘unity of empire,’ but it also became conventional for the Conservatives to brutally attack their Liberal opponents who remained divided on the issue, and had certain reservations about starting a conflict in South Africa. Phrases like ‘Radical’ and Little Englander,’ as used by Laurier, became common terms of abuse against those who differed from the conventional opinions of imperialism. It was easy for the Tories to take full advantage of the Liberal disarray by ‘splitting up

their opponents’ as Salisbury had achieved at the time of the Home Rule Crisis. This time, however, the Conservatives had increasing levels of media coverage, party membership, and political propaganda, which were used more widely than ever before.

The war had managed to damage the government under the Conservatives, but it had left the Liberals in a far worse position, dividing them into opposing fragments precisely because they could not produce a coherent message, like the ideal of one-empire, that would appeal to all sides of the party, and, crucially, the electorate. The party split into rival factions, once again, between radicals, moderates, and imperialists, with their leader Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman being powerless to prevent it. It was the perfect time for the Tories to call for an election when the opposition was heavily divided, and before the war was over. The Tory government, on the other hand, had the choice to opt for a double solution: to affirm that the war could not lead to a compromise with the Boers, and claim that South Africa should become a series of annexed states, governed as Crown colonies. The position of the Liberal opposition was a problematic dilemma. Either be a fervent supporter of the British war effort in South Africa, or they would find it difficult to propose new solutions, or even move away from the topic of war without being labelled as ‘pro-Boer’ or anti-British.

It was well known that an election would be looming at some point and prospective unionist Members of Parliament took full advantage over their Liberal counterparts. For instance, Geoffrey Drage, a Conservative Member of Parliament, made a speech in Derbyshire in December 1899, intended to highlight the weakness of the governing Liberal Party on the position of engagement in South Africa:

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At a time like this, when our troops are fighting in the face of the enemy, it seems to me that all such questions should be dealt with from a national, and not from a party standpoint…It is true that the Queen is on the throne, but behind the throne stands each and everyone of you – thinking members of this great people. If you do not inform yourselves whether you Government is doing right or wrong, you cannot carry out your duty to the great and vast empire which has been handed down to you by generation after generation of able, hard-working, fighting men… My only interest in South Africa is the interest of this country, the commonwealth of the empire, and it is that interest and that interest only which dictates my actions in public life…

Conventional party and local politics evidently became second rate to what was in the best interests of the one-nation and the empire. Drage even insinuates that empire is a tradition when he mentions it being handed down by previous generations, providing the empire with a particularly sacred zeal that should not be tampered with. He goes on to add:

To my mind they [Liberals] are misguided, but I firmly believe that these men are as jealous of the honour of Great Britain and the honour of the Queen as you or I are… Now the cardinal mistake the Little Englanders make, where a quarrel between an Englishmen and a foreigner is concerned, is that they begin by assuming that their own countrymen is in the wrong…
By their speeches the Little Englanders led Mr. Kruger to believe that nothing would induce this democracy or the Crown to go to war.\textsuperscript{133}

This is just one of many speeches made by Conservative MPs and candidates highlighting aspects of Liberal weakness, and what they considered to be national values. It is interesting to note Drage’s reference to the Liberals believing that their fellow countrymen are wrong, giving the impression that the Liberals are against the best interests of the people. Again, the term ‘Little Englanders’ is used, even implying that those who are critical of the war were somehow willing to discard all of Britain’s achievements, which would only play to the advantage of Paul Kruger. Furthermore, Liberal Unionists were just as willing to use these tactics. Lord Rosebury, as a Liberal had no trouble in attacking other members of his own party as little Englanders, and made a speech condemning them as such:

I believe that the party of a small England, of a shrunken England, of a degraded England, of a neutral England, of a submissive England, has died… WORKING MEN! The correspondence of Radical M.P.’s with the enemy, their speeches, actions, and votes show that alas! The party of a small England, of a shrunken England, of a degraded England IS NOT DEAD… But KILL IT NOW by your contempt, your loathing, your manly patriotism, and your votes FOR A UNITED EMPIRE.\textsuperscript{134}

\textsuperscript{133} Real Causes of the War, and some of the Elements of the Final Settlement. Speech by Mr. Drage, M.P., at the Drill Hall, Derby, 7\textsuperscript{th} December, 1899. Published by the Imperial South African Association. Courtesy of the British Library 8139.dd.

From these quotations, Lord Rosebury had a clear understanding of the English mind on these matters, which was that a strong, united empire bolstered English identity. By mentioning the Crown, the Commonwealth, the nation, and the empire, Conservative Party members, and Liberal Unionists, were using all of their energies to put forward a patriotic, imperial message about sustaining the unity of empire above everything else. Not only that, but other organisations were being set up in partnership with the Tories in order to spread propaganda and provide legitimacy to the imperial cause. The National Union, the Central Conservative Office, the Imperial South African Association (ISAA), and even the Navy League were all connected for spreading the message of imperial unity, and the Boer War gave them the chance to pour out endless pamphlets. In effect, government propaganda became outsourced. With a blatant disrespect for facts and a high degree of emphasis on emotional appeal, they carried on from 1899 through to the general election of 1900, a concentrated campaign of rotten journalism to associate in the public mind the terms “Liberal,” “little Englander,” “pro-Boer,” and “traitor.”135 Their press poured out tirades, assigning attacks against leading members of the Liberal party; and their leaflets became increasingly vicious as the general election of 1900 approached. The language being used against Liberals and Radicals was clearly a language of disgust, with an implication that those who questioned the war effort were harming imperial unity and being blasphemous. If Randolph Churchill had played the ‘Orange Card’ over Irish Home Rule, the unionist imperialists were now playing the imperial card over the Boer War.

The general election of 1900 soon came to be dubbed the ‘khaki election’; an election defined by a mud-coloured modern war, designed to for Tories and Liberal Unionists to brutally attack their opponents. Moreover, the tensions between Liberals

and their Conservative and Unionist counterparts were now creeping back into British political discourse, and cruelly attacking those who did not conform.

Journalists such as C.P. Scott for the *Manchester Guardian* had attacked the Conservative’s position on the war for attempting “to turn patriotic feeling to party purposes, to hide the shortcomings of politicians at home behind the hard-won successes of our soldiers abroad… and to ride into power for six years more on a vote taken amid the heat and excitement of a great conflict.”\textsuperscript{136} A pamphlet was issued anonymously, which Scott thought was most likely produced by the Conservatives, that spent its entire four pages campaigning against him, uniquely on his position on the war. Throughout the pamphlet Scott’s patriotism came under constant attack. For instance, the pamphlet purported that Scott failed to sympathise with the Uitlanders because they were merely Englishmen, and not the Boers, implying that Scott would rather see a South African victory in order to spite his own country. Scott was even accused of encouraging Kruger to resist British demands and agitate, a point that Scott rejected intensely.\textsuperscript{137}

Liberal Britain was being overshadowed by patriotic triumphalism that appealed to tribal political instincts, which asserted that the sustaining of the one-empire ideal undermined all other aspects of government policy. With all the backbiting politics and the lack of objective facts in favour of patriotic jingoism, it was only a matter of time before Tories and unionists began to draw comparisons between the debates over Home Rule in the 1880s and the current problems debating the Boer War at home. Joseph Chamberlain was one of the first to draw this comparison, and on 29 June, Chamberlain spoke at the at the Annual Banquet of the National Union of


Conservative and Constitutional Associations in London and compared the cases of the Home Rule Crisis and the South African conflict:

“We (the Unionist Party) were brought together by a common danger. How great that danger was we are only, perhaps, just now beginning to appreciate, when we reflect what our situation would have been to-day if we had a Parliament in Dublin, co-ordinate with our own, manned by the enemies of England. But I daresay that many of us on both sides thought at that time that our alliance was only temporary, and that it would naturally come to an end with the crisis which had brought it into existence… The fight for the Union, we can all see now, was only a chapter in the greater fight for the Empire… Those men who with a light heart would have brought about the disintegration of the United Kingdom are substantially the same men who did their utmost to prevent the expansion of the Empire. Those who would have thrown over their fellow subjects and co-religionists in Ulster are now ready to desert the loyalists in South Africa and the Uitlanders in the Transvaal…

By echoing the past problems of the Home Rule Crisis, Chamberlain was drawing comparisons between the Irish Nationalists and the Boers who he considered to be the ‘enemies of England.’ Moreover, Chamberlain points out that the Home Rule Crisis was a battle for the union and the empire. The Boer aggression was a direct attack on Britain and its empire’s legitimacy. Taking aim at radical Liberals, Chamberlain believed they were committing an act of treason and cowardice by allowing the Uitlanders to suffer at the rule of the Boers. Chamberlain went on to assert:
In this time Conservatives and Liberals, forgetting ancient animosities, laying aside personal prejudices which at the commencement of this great change were no doubt very strong, have worked together for the good of the Empire and for the material progress and welfare of the masses of the population in this country, especially of late... It is said now for the consumption of the electorate, that there is no difference between us, we are all patriots, and we are all Imperialists.138

Chamberlain wished to present himself as someone who was willing to put aside party politics in favour of a language of one-empire when he suggests that ‘there is no difference between us’ reiterating the ideal of imperial unity under one authority, which the electorate willingly bought into when the election came around in July. The Liberal Party was annihilated at the polls. The majority of the British electorate was hardly going to vote in big numbers for a party that was hopelessly divided. Over a third of all constituencies were uncontested, and the overwhelming majority of these seats returned Unionists that took a strong principled stance on the war.139 The final result gave the Conservative and Liberal Unionists a combined total of 402 seats, whilst the Liberals could barely manage half of that, with a total of 183 seats. It was the case that Unionist candidates who declared themselves as patriots of the empire won seats, or defended them successfully, whilst Liberals and Radicals were pushed aside due to their party’s splits and its wider image of incompetent governance.

Even in Scotland the Liberals were in serious trouble. The Conservatives achieved their first ever majority there since 1832, a clear sign that Scots were beginning to detach themselves from the Liberal movement. The open objectivities

over the Boer War between the Liberal Imperialists who supported Britain’s role in the conflict, and the radical wing under Campbell-Bannerman, who strongly opposed it, had done untold damage to the party’s standing among the Scottish electorate who had a strong inclination to support British imperialism, as a means of strengthening a wider Scottish nationality and purpose.\footnote{140} Overall, it appeared that the Liberal Party, with their intense dissections and squabbling over imperial matters, had lost the patriotic trust of not only the Scots, but also an overwhelming mass of the British electorate.

The Second Boer War was a profound turning point in British politics. Not only was it an incredibly costly war, in financial terms, loss of life, and Britain’s imperial reputation in Southern Africa, which was insurmountably damaged, by providing Kruger and the Boer movement with greater popularity, as a result of what the South Africans saw as British aggression. More importantly, however, the start of the war and the subsequent general election a year later confirmed that the ideal of one-empire conservatism still resonated among the British political elites and sections of the public. It was a strategy that the Conservative Party and Liberal Unionists passionately reinforced, leaving their Liberal and radical opponents hopelessly divided and facing open annihilation by the British electorate at the polls. It was even greater proof that the imperialist ideological concepts of one-nation and one-empire could be continually adjusted to suit the needs of present circumstances. Thereby, changing Britain’s political culture and the people’s national identity as a result.

Conclusion

This thesis has attempted to provide an analysis of the way the concepts of ‘one-nation’ and ‘one-empire’ came to play a prominent role in the national and imperial discourse in Britain. It has also endeavoured to demonstrate how political figures and political parties reinforced these concepts as a means of strengthening their authority in Britain’s imperial dominions, and achieving electoral success at home, by appealing to the patriotic elements of the British electorate that was ever increasing.

The imperialist ideology that Britain created and engrained in India did not collapse after the Revolt of 1857, but merely shifted into a new archetype. The liberals and utilitarians designed an imperial mantra that emphasised the importance of Britain helping India achieve a higher stage of enlightenment. This mantra went through a reformation that halted the series of alterations the liberals had made to Indian society. Liberal imperialism moved from an ideology of sentimentalism to one of authoritarianism, illustrated by the ideas of James Fitzjames Stephen, who appealed for a form of governance in India that was highly pessimistic of human nature. Stephen stressed the need for morally strong authoritative leaders providing happiness and protection for the Indian people, but not to liberate them or grant them a progressive series of rights. Stephen’s ideas, surprisingly, were not undertaken by most liberals, but in fact, most conservatives.

After the 1857 Revolt, conservatives like Benjamin Disraeli took their chance to criticise the liberal reformers, and Disraeli was able to carry out his one-nation conservative ideals at home and abroad in India. He believed the Indian people were relatable to their British subjects, and could be united under loyalty to the Crown, amicably demonstrated with the Royal Tiles Act of 1876, pronouncing Queen Victoria the Empress of India, and the subsequent 1877 Imperial Assemblage in Delhi. The one-
nation theory adapted itself to become a theory of one-empire. Furthermore, it was a successful strategy, as Britain managed to stave off further revolts and increase their authority and legitimacy under the symbolic influence of the Crown. It also precipitated a triumph of conservative politics over the progressively liberal imperial narrative that had occupied British politics for over a century.

Following on from these events, British politicians decided to implement the ideals of one-empire conservatism at home. With a large number of Irish Nationalists in Parliament, it soon became clear that a radical settlement would be necessary in order to stave off the threat to national and imperial unity. The Liberals under Gladstone decided opt in favour of Irish Home Rule, leading to a gaping split within the Liberal party itself. Liberal Unionists such as Joseph Chamberlain helped to lead a charge against proposals that could, as they saw it, lead to the break of the union and fragment Britain’s Empire. One-nation and one-empire were brought back into use and shaped the wider debate on the issue. The compromise across Parliament and the country was that these ideals had to be kept intact, and were turned into a sacred tradition that deserved the upmost protection. Irish Home Rule risked a disintegration of these proud perfectionistic principles, with the nation and the empire having to be opposed at all costs. The drum of support for holding these two beliefs together led to the crushing defeat of the Liberals at the 1886 election. The electoral victory was a triumph not just for Conservatives and Liberal Unionists, but a triumph for the one-nation and one-empire ideals.

With the threat of Irish Home Rule removed, new risks to Britain’s imperial unity occurred. After the disastrous Jameson Raid in 1895, which was an attempted coup, to unite the states within South Africa under a British territorial rule, the Boer-led Afrikaner movement began to become more popular and even oppress British
subjects working in the country who were discriminated against and called ‘Uitlanders’. After an Uitlander was shot dead by a Boer in 1899, the campaign against the Boers became overwhelming, especially with the help of party propaganda and the media outlets that were growing larger at the turn of the century. Unionist candidates used arguments of emotion and aggression at the time of the 1900 general election. So aggressive, in fact, that the election came to be dubbed the ‘khaki’ election referring to the election muddy and dirty tactics. Liberals who had their doubts about the conflict were referred to as “Radicals,” “traitors,” and causing the disunity of empire. The concept of one-empire was redeployed into British politics by politicians and the media as a means of strengthening the imperial cause, and helped the Conservative and other unionist parties achieve electoral success.

By the time the election came around, the divided Liberals lost badly at the polls, which confirmed that, the ideal of one-empire conservatism was still possessed a remarkable potency for Conservatives and other unionists, which they applied mercilessly. It garnered huge support among the British political elites and sections of the public, displaying that Britain’s political culture was predominantly led in the direction that it was of paramount importance to favour maintaining the unity of empire, and crushing Liberal dissention.

In an age of imperial unrest and increasing democracy, in order to stave off the threat of revolution, the British political chose to appeal to patriotic instincts, which provided Britain’s imperial identity with a sense of purpose, direction and destiny of uniting all imperial dominions under the umbrella power of the British state. This ideal of one-empire appealed to the conservative mind-set that gave importance to the authority and governance rather than a liberal, progressive series of rights over an extended period of time. Consequently, liberal imperialism collapsed, and liberal
alternatives of governance did not stand a chance in general elections against those who wished to attract the patriotic instincts of the electorate. The ideological narrative of one-nation and one-empire had a heavy influence on politicians, the media, other nations in the union, and other dominions in the empire. Ultimately, these concepts had the power to stimulate elections and government policy in the domestic and imperial sphere, shaping the political culture as a result.
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