



Edmund Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire (Berkeley Series in British Studies)

By Daniel O'Neill

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Edmund Burke, long considered modern conservatism's founding father, is also widely believed to be an opponent of empire. However, Daniel O'Neill turns that latter belief on its head. This fresh and innovative book shows that Burke was a passionate supporter and staunch defender of the British Empire in the eighteenth century, whether in the New World, India, or Ireland. Moreover—and against a growing body of contemporary scholarship that rejects the very notion that Burke was an exemplar of conservatism—O'Neill demonstrates that Burke's defense of empire was in fact ideologically consistent with his conservative opposition to the French Revolution. Burke's logic of empire relied on two opposing but complementary theoretical strategies: Ornamentalism, which stressed cultural similarities between "civilized" societies, as he understood them, and Orientalism, which stressed the putative cultural differences distinguishing "savage" societies from their "civilized" counterparts. This incisive book also shows that Burke's argument had lasting implications, as his development of these two justifications for empire prefigured later intellectual defenses of British imperialism.

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Editorial Review

Review

"O'Neill's analysis is a model of scholarship at its best: immersed in both original and secondary sources, cogently argued, and comprehensive in scope."

(E.J. Eisenach *Choice* 2016-08-16)

From the Inside Flap

"Edmund Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire is a book of great originality, intellectual power and lucid argument, and a major reappraisal of Burke. The Burke who emerges from these pages is no proto-liberal who later and paradoxically became a conservative in the aftermath of 1789. On the contrary, O'Neill insists he was always a conservative and always an imperialist and that, with very few exceptions, his thought was exceptionally coherent, consistent, and systematic. This is an impressive piece of revisionism."—David Cannadine, author of *Ornamentalism: How the British Saw Their Empire* and *The Undivided Past: Humanity Beyond Our Differences*

"Bold and original, *Edmund Burke and the Conservative Logic of Empire* is an important intervention in debates about the history of imperial ideology and their continuing legacy. Challenging recent scholarly trends, Daniel O'Neill presents a powerful case that Burke offered a consistent and distinctive justification of empire, one that resonated through the nineteenth century and beyond."—Duncan Bell, University of Cambridge

"Recent scholars have decided that Edmund Burke was neither a conservative nor an imperialist. Daniel O'Neill assails those views and illuminates the modern politics of empire. His book is impeccably researched, powerfully argued, elegantly written, and devastatingly persuasive. Don't miss it."—Don Herzog, author of *Poisoning the Minds of the Lower Orders*

About the Author

Daniel I. O'Neill is Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Florida. He is the author of *The Burke-Wollstonecraft Debate: Savagery, Civilization, and Democracy*.

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