

**The Nationalism of Irish Anti-Colonialism:  
Modern Ireland, Empire and Framing the Contested Past, c. 1873-1973.**

Recent years have witnessed an increased interest in Ireland and Empire, delivering many welcome additions to a field of enquiry that looks set to provide us with exciting new vantage points for some time to come. While the Republic of Ireland's anti-colonial credentials have been cited frequently but all too fleetingly, asserted rather than scrutinised, the complex reality was that Ireland continued to be far more involved in Britain's colonial outposts during the decolonisation period than what the hegemonic nationalist narrative has then or since acknowledged. This paper argues that this was a sign of continuity rather than change. In doing so, it explores some of the limitations of using such a term as anti-colonial to define Ireland's nationalist past in its relationship with the British Empire from the time of the establishment of Isaac Butt's Home Rule League until Ireland's entry into the EEC.

Using the examples of British Cyprus from the time of its occupation onwards, and later Emergency Kenya and Malaya, this paper questions the extent to which we can speak with confidence about a distinctive tradition of Irish anti-colonialism. The paper relays key findings from analysis of the actions and rhetoric of the Irish political establishment, and their respective press organs, to reveal concrete disparities between the multifaceted micro-realities of Irish complicity and cooperation in the imperial project and the homogenised master-narratives of Irish public history used for nation-building. It also examines mitigating domestic factors such as the continuance of Irish partition, the resurgence of republican paramilitary activity and the Catholic Church's own implacable anti-colonialism in 1950s Ireland. In light of this complicated Irish engagement with empire, it concludes by exploring the ways in which these master narratives were responsible for the contagion of 'anti-colonial' impressions and subsequently how its citizens thought collectively about themselves, Ireland's 'spiritual empire' and decolonisation.