



The Colonized Connection and International Irishness: How has Ireland utilized the Israel-Palestine conflict to transform its National Identity?

Author: Ryan McLaren

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Abstract

Throughout the summer of 2023, Ireland's citizens and political leaders alike were largely in agreement on the issue of Israel and Palestine, and specifically, that Ireland needed to do more to assist in reaching a solution to the conflict. As a traditionally isolationist, neutral state on Europe's periphery, Ireland has traditionally not concerned itself with the actions of other states so far away from its borders – fearful of appearing partial. Yet upon closer inspection, this recent round of debate (on this occasion sparked by Israel's incursion into Jenin Refugee Camp in July) represents simply the latest development of Ireland's historic sympathies and moral support with the people of Palestine. What makes this occasion unique, however, is that Ireland's political leaders are in agreement that the Emerald Isle must do more. As other European neutrals abandon their neutrality for NATO membership, Ireland's leaders may be correct. The current thesis aimed to explore how the Republic of Ireland's national identity is undergoing a transformation through foreign policy discourses. It is believed that Ireland's political leadership are utilising the Israel- Palestine conflict, one with which Ireland can identify with, to change its national identity away from a passive neutral state on Europe's periphery to an international moral superpower – that can truly demonstrate the power of active neutrality. The current thesis adopts a historicist-social constructivist lens and utilises Ruth Wodak's DHA variant of CDA to analyse the discourse of Ireland's top politicians surrounding two case study events roughly two decades apart. These events were the 2002 'Battle for Jenin' and the 2023 'Jenin Incursion.' It was believed that by examining the discourse surrounding these two events, one may understand how Ireland's political leadership is changing Ireland's neutral foreign policy, and thus national identity, from passive to active – and from isolated to moral superpower. To examine the extent that Ireland may be positioning itself to be the EU's moral superpower, a brief illustrative case study comparison with Austria is adopted. The adoption of this case study provided the author with the opportunity to discuss how Ireland's political leadership is contributing to this transformation. Though Ireland may be some time away from fully realising this identity, a difference was observed in the discourse of both sets of Irish politicians, twenty years apart. Ireland now realises its ability to influence the world on such matters, and has confidence in its ability to lead on foreign policy issues.