

# IRELAND AND UKRAINE

Studies in Comparative Imperial and National History



Edited by  
Stephen Velychenko, Joseph Ruane, Liudmyla Hrynevych

*ibidem*

Stephen Velychenko, Joseph Ruane, and Liudmyla Hrynevych  
(eds.)

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# PREFACE

**Stephen Howe**

**Oxford University**

This impressive volume will be both a major resource for, and a challenge to, all those interested in empires and colonialism, in European or Eurasian histories, in nationalism, state formation, frontiers and political violence, in the uses and abuses of history for contemporary political debate, or the promise and pitfalls of comparative historical method.

Two major global developments in the study of empires, highly relevant to the book's themes, have gathered force in recent years. One is that many scholars have been trying more than before to bring the study of seaborne and land-based empires together, whilst focusing on studying empires within Europe. Both Ireland and Ukraine have long been analysed by some – though always contentiously – as major cases of colonialism within Europe. Numerous contributors further that effort here. The other is that even more analysts have developed arguments for settler colonialism as not only different from but incompatible with (non-settler) colonialism. Again, there is much here to both advance and to question such claims. Who is a colonial settler, as opposed to a migrant – and when does a settler become a native? As several of our authors indicate, the collective identities involved are highly contested, have blurred boundaries and historically have been very changeable.

All comparative analysis offers difficulties, even dangers. The one between Ireland and Ukraine poses particular ones, which the editors and others here begin to explore. Several stress the differences rather than the parallels in historical experiences and circumstances. Not least of these is that whereas historical conflict in and between Britain and Ireland is generally seen as being mainly in the past – albeit not yet definitively so – conflict between Ukraine and Russia remains in 2021. The stimulating and

convivial conference in Kyiv from which the book develops was held under the shadow of a continuing undeclared war.

A further test lies in comparative historical complexity. Certainly, not many historians of Ireland would see their subject as uncomplicated: some might even find the suggestion insulting. Yet when one compares modern Irish history with Ukraine's, and especially how ideas about imperialism, colonialism and settler colonialism have been deployed in the two cases, one might nonetheless be struck by how comparatively simple the "Irish Story" is. Only one significant group in modern Irish history has widely been, or perhaps could plausibly be viewed as a settler-colonial community; only one state has played an imperial role, and only one major political tradition has often been regarded as anti-imperialist. In Ukraine, in contrast, there are multiple candidates for all of those roles. Even during the past century, the Germans, Russians, Austro-Hungarians, Poles, Romanians and Czechoslovaks all could be seen as empire-builders in Ukrainian lands. Some would also qualify people from almost all the foregoing places as "colonial settlers". Although some Irish historians, following Brendan Bradshaw, would focus on the traumatic dimension of Ireland's past, such historical trauma has been incomparably greater for Ukraine. Across the twentieth century, probably fewer than 10,000 people died in Ireland as a direct result of political violence, as opposed to several million in Ukraine.

Hopefully, the readers of this book, Russian as well as Ukrainian, British and Irish, indeed of all nationalities, will find much here that provokes discussion. Indeed the contributors are far from agreeing among themselves on many issues. That is surely a strength, not a weakness. It is in the interaction, often the clash, of ideas that we may advance towards greater understanding, and perhaps a greater peace.

## Стівен Гоу

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Ця вражаюча збірка буде як головним ресурсом, так і викликом для всіх, хто цікавиться проблематикою імперій і колоніалізму, європейською і східноєвропейською історією, націоналізмом, державотворенням, фронтами і політичним насильством, використанням і зловживанням історією в сучасних політичних дискусіях, або перспективами і пастками порівняльного методу в історії.

Дві важливі глобальні тенденції, дуже актуальні для теми цієї книжки, набрали обертів в останні роки. Перша полягає в тому, що багато дослідників стараються більше, ніж раніше, досліджувати морські і континентальні імперії разом, з новим наголосом на вивченні імперій в Європі. Ірландія й Україна мають вже довгу традицію дослідження як головних прикладів колоніалізму в Європі, хоча подібні висновки завжди були контрверсійними. Багато авторів цієї збірки поглиблюють дослідження у цьому напрямку. Інша тенденція полягає в тому, що все більше експертів вважають, що поселенський колоніалізм не лише відрізняється, але й є несумісним з (непоселенським) колоніалізмом. Знову ж таки, у книжці є багато прикладів як розвитку цієї тези, так і її підважування. Хто є колоніальним поселенцем на противагу до мігранта, і коли поселенець стає місцевим? Як зазначають деякі з наших авторів, колективні ідентичності у таких випадках є дуже оспорюваними, мають нечіткі кордони й є історично дуже змінними.

Будь-який порівняльний аналіз пов'язаний з труднощами і, навіть, небезпеками. Редактори і автори цієї книжки починають вивчати подібні труднощі і небезпеки у випадку порівняння України й Ірландії. Дехто наголошує радше на відмінностях, ніж паралелях в історичному досвіді та обставинах. Одна з найважливіших відмінностей полягає в тому, що історичний конфлікт всередині Британії і між Британією та Ірландією є радше в минулому, хоча і не зовсім остаточно. Натомість конфлікт між Україною і Росією у 2021

році залишається дуже актуальним. Стимулююча і дружня конференція в Києві, з якої народилась ця книга, проходила у тіні триваючої неоголошеної війни.

Ще один тест полягає у порівняльній історичній складності. Звісно, небагато з істориків Ірландії вважають об'єкт свого дослідження нескладним – деякі навіть можуть потрактувати подібне припущення образливим. Утім, коли ми порівнюємо модерну ірландську історію з українською, й особливо способи, в які ідеї про імперіалізм, колоніалізм, і поселенський колоніалізм використовувались в обох випадках, ми все ж можемо бути враженими тим, наскільки порівняно простою є «ірландська історія». У модерній ірландській історії тільки одна велика група вважалась багатма чи, радше, з великої долею ймовірності може трактуватись, як спільнота поселенських колоністів; тільки одна держава відігравала імперську роль; і тільки одна політична традиція вважалась антиімперіалістською. Натомість у випадку України є багато кандидатів на всі ці ролі. Якщо ми беремо тільки минуле століття, дехто скаже, що німці, росіяни, австро-угорці, поляки, румуни і чехословаки були будівничими імперії в Україні. Дехто також вважатиме людей з усіх вищезгаданих місць «колоніальними поселенцями». Хоча, дехто з ірландських істориків слідом за Бренденом Бредшоу буде наголошувати на травматичному вимірі ірландського минулого, подібна історична травма була непорівняльно більшою у випадку України. Протягом усього ХХ ст., правдоподібно, менше 10 000 загинуло в Ірландії в результаті політичного насильства, напротивагу до кількох мільйонів в Україні.

Усі читачі цієї книжки, які, як я сподіваюсь, будуть включати росіян, як й українців, британців, як й ірландців, а й людей всіх національностей, знайдуть у ній чимало провокативних і контрверсійних тез. Дійсно, автори далеко не завжди погоджуються один з одним щодо багатьох питань. І це, напевно, перевага, а не недолік, оскільки саме у взаємодії, якщо не у зіткненні ідей, ми можемо наблизитись до більшого розуміння, а можливо – й більшого миру .

## **Paul Robert Magocsi**

**University of Toronto**

Let us call him Johan. A native of the Netherlands, Johan was one of my most talented PhD students who eventually became an internationally renowned historian. Raised and educated as I was in North America, we were taught to believe that the Dutch were among the most tolerable people in Europe. Over the centuries The Netherlands became known as a place of refuge for religious dissenters and non-conformist secular intellectuals. Johan certainly embodied the Dutch stereotype characterised by sympathy and understanding for the socially and politically downtrodden.

And yet, appearances can be deceiving. In the course of a conversation with Johan over dinner at my home, we turned to one of my favourite topics, the often unenviable status of stateless peoples, or national minorities, in Europe. I asked Johan about his country and its attitude toward the Frisians, who I had always admired for their efforts to preserve their native language and culture. "What?" replied the otherwise tolerant Johan. "There is no such people as Frisians. They are nothing other than Dutch dialect speakers who live in Friesland."

To be sure, discrimination takes different forms, from the most brutal to the seemingly benign: expulsion, starvation, incarceration, national assimilation, social and linguistic humiliation. The Irish and the Ukrainians are no strangers to all these forms of discrimination to which they were subjected for centuries in their own homelands. The perpetrators fulfilling state policies may have varied, depending on whether they were imposed by Britain (the "English"), the Soviet Union (the "Russians"), or the Netherlands (the "Dutch"). The results, however, were the same: the systemic public denigration of the national minority victim, often resulting in a sense of inferiority about his or her own native language and ethnic identity.

The book you are about to read relates in great detail the past sufferings of the Irish and the Ukrainians. The parallel experiences

are sometimes frightening. Fortunately, both peoples have not only survived but have created their own sovereign states. Meanwhile, the Frisians and many other stateless peoples continue to inhabit homelands where they still are subject to overt or clandestine discrimination.

Just as modern-day Ireland has taken the lead in support for Europe's lesser-used languages, so too has Ukraine set out on a path of tolerance toward all peoples, not just ethnic Ukrainians, living within its borders. Let us hope that the path of inclusivity and tolerance toward "Others" will continue. That should be the legacy and lessons learned from the past sufferings of millions of Irish and Ukrainians.

### **Павло Роберт Магочій**

Університет Торонто

Назвімо його Йоган. Уродженець Нідерландів, Йоган був одним із найталановитіших аспірантів, який зрештою став міжнародно знаним істориком. У Сполучених Штатах нас виховували в тому дусі, що люди з Нідерландів – це одні з найбільш толерантних європейців. Протягом століть Голландія була знана як місце, куди втікали релігійні дисиденти та світські інтелектуали-нонконформісти. Йоган точно втілював цей стереотип голландця із типовою симпатією та розумінням щодо соціально та політично непривілейованих груп.

Однак, зовнішність може бути оманливою. Під час обідньої розмови з Йоганом у мене вдома, ми заговорили на одну з моїх улюблених тем – незavidний статус бездержавних народів чи національних меншин у Європі. Я запитав Йогана про його країну та ставлення до фризів, яких я завжди обожнював за їхні старання зберегти рідну мову та культуру. «Що? – запитав зазвичай толерантний Йоган, – фризів як народу не існує. Це не більш ніж діалектна група голландців, що живуть у Фризландії».

Звичайно, дискримінація приймає різні форми, від найбільш brutальних: вигнання, голодування, ув'язнення,

національної асиміляції, соціального та мовного знуцання – до позірно невинних. Ірландці та українці знайомі з усіма цими формами дискримінації, яким вони піддавалися протягом століть у їхніх власних землях. Злочинці, що проводили такі державні політики, могли відрізнятись, залежно від того, чи їх поставила керувати Британія («англійці»), Радянський Союз («росіяни»), чи Нідерланди («голландці»). Результати, однак, такі самі: системне публічне приниження жертви-національної меншини, що часто мало наслідком почуття неповноцінності власної рідної мови та етнічної ідентичності.

Книга, яку ви тримаєте у руках, детально висвітлює минулі страждання ірландців та українців. Паралелі між досвідами цих двох груп часом лякають. На щастя, обидва народи не тільки вижили, але й створили свої власні незалежні держави. Тоді як фризів та багато інших бездержавних народів і далі живуть у країнах, де вони й надалі є об'єктами відкритої чи прихованої дискримінації.

Так само як сучасна Ірландія очолила рух підтримки європейських менш уживаних мов, так само Україна стала на шлях толерантності щодо всіх народів, не тільки етнічних українців, що проживають у її кордонах. Будемо сподіватися, що шлях інклюзії і толерантності щодо Інших буде тривким. Це має стати спадком та уроком минулих страждань мільйонів ірландців та українців.





# INTRODUCTION

**Stephen Velychenko**

University of Toronto

**Joseph Ruane**

University College Cork

**Liudmyla Hrynevych**

National Academy of Sciences, Kyiv

During the past few decades, historians and social scientists have increasingly turned their attention to global and world history, and some have even dismissed national history as outdated and a hindrance to understanding. National histories continue, of course, and in large numbers, for the good reason that for centuries sovereign states have played a central role in world history and human affairs.<sup>1</sup> It does not, of course, mean treating them as isolated or as bounded entities, embodying natural or eternal forms within which past events must be contained, or that their populations were culturally and ethnically homogenous. On the contrary, awareness of wider contexts is critical to understanding both. Many national and transnational histories now figure prominently in imperial studies that place nations in a wider imperial perspective, without assuming that they existed in their present form prior to the empires out of which they emerged.<sup>2</sup> As Ernest Gellner noted in his *Language and Solitude* (1998), the relationship between empire and ethnic solidarity is an inescapable theme and unlikely to fade anytime soon.

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- 1 For a broader discussion: A. G. Hopkins, ed., *Globalization in World History* (London: Pimlico, 2002); M. Middell and I. Roura, eds., *Transnational Challenges to National History Writing* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); J. A. Hall and S. Malesevic, eds. *Nationalism and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).
  - 2 S. Berger and A. Miller, eds., *Nationalizing Empires* (Budapest and New York: Central European University Press, 2015).

Comparison has a vital role here. In 1892 Rudyard Kipling famously asked: “What do they know of England who only England know?” Although referring specifically to the English and their disregard for their empire and its achievements, the phrase is frequently used for academics who focus on their own country or a narrowly defined subject and ignore what happens elsewhere. The frequent result has been facile generalisation, dismissals, or exaggerated claims: “Any group of Ruritanians can be made to look ridiculous if one omits to make the necessary comparisons.”<sup>3</sup> A comparison must, of course, involve more than the study of the minutiae of political or economic details in different places, and include an examination of how different people in different places dealt with similar situations and contexts. The broader perspective ensures that national history does not become parochial history, and historians can better answer the bigger questions by studying particular countries contextually and comparatively.

Although Frederick Nietzsche, some 20 years before Kipling, had already called the 1870s “the age of comparison,” it was not until the 1960s that historians, conscious or not of Kipling’s dictum, began to devote real attention to comparative historical study.<sup>4</sup> In English language scholarship, academics have been looking at nationalism and nationalist movements from a comparative perspective since the 1970s, and at land and maritime empires from a comparative perspective since the 1990s.<sup>5</sup> The two countries compared in this book are Ireland and Ukraine. Both belonged for centuries to two of the world’s largest empires of the modern era – British and Russian – and questions of empire and nation are at the heart of the comparison. But while concentrating on the two cases and their particular contexts, the authors also

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3 N. Davies, *Vanished Kingdoms: The Rise and Fall of States and Nations* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), 633.

4 For a discussion of the challenges arising and examples of comparative research, see W. Steinmetz, ed., *The Force of Comparison: A New Perspective on Modern European History and the Contemporary World* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019). On Europe specifically: N. Davies, *Europe East and West* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2006).

5 Most recently: A. J. Rieber, *The Struggle for the Eurasian*

draw attention to the wider shared European context, not only the Europe of Bohemia, Slovakia, Poland, Serbia, or Croatia, or England, France or Spain, but of the Basque Country, Catalonia, Norway and Scotland.

At first sight, Ireland and Ukraine are not obvious cases for comparison. Ireland is an island off the northwest of mainland Europe with a population of 6½ million. Ukraine is a continental country at the other end of Europe with 45 million people (2014). They have very different landforms and climates. Their past and current geopolitical positioning is very different. Today the Republic of Ireland is part of the EU, with close ties to the US and post-Brexit UK; Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom and has had internal power-sharing and institutional links with the Republic of Ireland since 1998. Ukraine was a nominal republic within the USSR until 1991. When the government later tried to move towards the EU, it was blocked and partly undermined by a re-assertive Russia in 2014 that provoked a war by backing pro-Russian separatists on its eastern border. Alongside the differences are notable similarities. They include incorporation into larger empires, devastating famines and long struggles for independence. Today, both countries face many of the same kinds of economic and social challenges, including those resulting from dependence on foreign investment, foreign corporate ownership, vulnerability to uneven international capital flows and international economic crises.

Their most striking common feature is the centuries-long rule by a global empire. Modern Ireland was part of the British maritime empire and governed by a constitutional monarchy until 1921 when it was divided up and the greater part of the island secured independence. Modern Ukrainian lands belonged to land empires. The Russian-tsarist autocracy ruled its eastern parts from 1667, gradually restricting their autonomy until finally abolishing it in 1781. Austria-Hungary ruled its western parts from 1772. Those regions had no autonomy but the Habsburg empire was a constitutional monarchy between 1867 and 1918. Scholarly opinions differ widely, but some argue that whatever their official status after annexation, each was a *de facto* colony, with a ruling

class based on settler-colonists ruling as a dominant pro-empire minority over an ethnically distinct majority. Such mass settlement dated from the seventeenth century in Ireland and the late nineteenth century in tsarist Ukraine. In both cases, members of the colonised native population also participated in and contributed to the empire of which they were part. At once colonisers and colonised, they helped their imperial rulers to administer their own and other territories. In both cases, those involved differed over who could be considered a native, an immigrant, a coloniser, an imperialist or a resistance fighter.

Whatever their precise status within the empire, both countries saw the emergence in the nineteenth century of strong rural/peasant-based nationalist movements with interlocking political and cultural strands. Both struggled to make an impact on public attitudes and imperial power during the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, both radicalised around an ideological core of cultural nationalism and political separatism and then militarised. In both cases, violence was far from their predominant form of politics, which also involved constitutional action, propaganda, and efforts to mobilise the wider diaspora. Nationalists in both countries tried and failed to have the independence of their countries recognised in 1919 by the Treaty of Versailles, and the description of Ireland's representative in Paris that summer of the country as "tragically isolated" from other European nations, applied to Ukraine as well.<sup>6</sup>

They achieved some success in the post-WW1 period, even if the more radical viewed the outcome as a historic defeat. In 1921 Irish nationalists had to settle for dominion status within the empire, a continued link with the British Crown and the partition of the island into the 26-county Irish Free State (later the Republic

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6 Irish and Ukrainian nationalists knew of each other's activities. In July 1917 the First All-Ukrainian Workers Congress, organised by the Ukrainian Social Democratic and Socialist Revolutionary parties, passed a motion of support for Irish workers and a "Resolution on Solidarity with the working class of Ireland." *Narodna volia* (Kyiv), 13 July 1917.

of Ireland) and the 6-county Northern Ireland.<sup>7</sup> Ukrainian nationalists secured still less. Its east became a Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic in 1923, a legislative fiction, that was part of a larger political entity that was theoretically a union but had imperial characteristics, ruled by a centralised Russian-dominated political party and central ministries controlled overwhelmingly by Russians located in Moscow. After losing its war against Poland in 1919, Ukraine's western territory became part of a reconstituted multi-ethnic Poland.<sup>8</sup> In Ireland, divisions about the terms of the 1921 Treaty led to civil war between 1922–1923. In Ukraine between 1917–1923, Ukrainians fought Bolshevik and Polish armies, and at times, each other.

Stability was more or less restored in both countries in the 1920s, although for nationalists in both countries the matter was not settled. In Ireland, the immediate priority was to secure full independence. Reunification of the island was not thought possible as long as the British government supported partition. Most members of the anti-Treaty Sinn Féin left to form a new party and entered the Dáil (parliament) in 1926. The IRA remained in existence and carried out occasional murderous attacks, but Sinn Féin became a residual organisation with little public support. In western Ukraine, former army officers formed a conspiratorial party, the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), committed to the use of violence to attain political independence from both Polish and Russian-Bolshevik rule. During the 1930s and 1940s, the OUN enjoyed considerable support in western Ukraine.

The war years saw the biggest contrast between the two countries. Northern Ireland was part of the British war effort and

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7 The creation of a six-county Northern Irish state also involved the division of the historic nine-county province of Ulster to ensure Protestants/unionists a two-thirds majority in the new state.

8 On the imperial aspirations of reunited Poland, see A. Nowak, "Reborn Poland or Reconstructed Empire? Questions on the Course and Results of Polish Eastern Policy (1918–1921)," *Lithuanian Historical Studies* 13 (2008): 127–150; M. Grzechnik, "'Ad Maiorem Poloniae Gloriam!' Polish Inter-colonial Encounters in Africa in the Interwar Period," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 48, no. 5, (2020): 826–845.

subjected to German bombing between April and May 1941. Independent Ireland adopted a policy of neutrality and was largely untouched by the war. Attempts by the IRA to secure German arms to renew their campaign were dealt with harshly by the Irish government.<sup>9</sup> In Ukraine, in contrast, the war years were ones of almost total collapse. The war began with Stalin's take-over of Polish-ruled territories in the west, continued with the conquest of the entire country by Nazi Germany in 1941, followed by the Soviet reconquest of 1944. Millions died. The Jews were the victims of genocide. Ukrainians died not only as civilians but also in Polish, German, or Soviet uniforms or as partisans.<sup>10</sup> In the western region, Polish and Ukrainian partisans targeted both each other and civilians. After 1945, Stalin incorporated former Polish-ruled western Ukraine into the Ukrainian SSR, and imposed mass resettlement of Ukrainian and Polish populations, either to Poland or the Ukrainian SSR. War-time conflict and resettlement left a legacy of Polish-Ukrainian bitterness.<sup>11</sup>

Political stability in Ireland was unaffected by the IRA's small-scale border campaign of the late 1950s. The crisis came a

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9 See R. Fisk, *In Time of War: Ireland, Ulster and the Price of Neutrality 1939–45* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983).

10 Ukrainian war-time collaboration with Nazi Germany was not on the scale claimed in Kremlin propaganda. The fourteenth Galicia Waffen SS Division numbered 13,000 men. That was less than the Croatian, Serbian, Dutch, Belgian, French, Romanian, Serbian, Hungarian, Estonian and Latvian SS divisions. Non-German units of the Wehrmacht and Waffen-SS are listed at: Foreign Volunteers – Feldgrau. An estimated 450 000 Russians fought on the German side. This included approximately 100,000 in General Vlasov's Russian Liberation Army and the XV SS Cossack Cavalry Corps. Russian Volunteers in the German Wehrmacht in WWII – Feldgrau. C. McNab, *Hitler's Elite: The SS 1923–1945*. (London: Osprey, 2013); M. Mazower, *Hitler's Empire: How the Nazis Ruled Europe* (London: Penguin, 2008), 415; G. H. Stein, *The Waffen SS: Hitler's Elite Guard at War 1939–45* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984).

11 T. Snyder, *The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus 1569–1999* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003); V. Viatrovych, *The Gordian Knot: The Second Polish-Ukrainian War 1942–1947*, second ed. trans. K Maryniak (Toronto: Horner Press, 2020); G. Kasianov, "The Burden of the Past: The Ukrainian–Polish Conflict of 1943/44 in Contemporary Public, Academic and Political Debates in Ukraine and Poland," *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research* 19, nos. 3–4 (2006): 247–259.

decade later when the marches and demonstrations of the predominantly Catholic Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association provoked a harsh security response and led to further rioting. The Northern Ireland government requested the support of British troops, whose harsh treatment of working-class nationalist communities led to further escalation. As the death toll mounted, the British government imposed direct rule and began the search for an agreed settlement. Constitutional nationalists pressed for reform and power-sharing which unionists resisted. All sides used violence: republican paramilitaries attacked the security forces who responded in kind; loyalist paramilitaries attacked republicans who counter-attacked; both sets of paramilitaries and the security forces killed civilians, intentionally or otherwise. The numbers of civilian deaths exceeded those of the security forces and paramilitaries combined. The main paramilitary organisations declared a ceasefire in 1994. After multi-party talks presided over by the British and Irish governments, a comprehensive political settlement was reached in the form of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

The collapse of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1991 opened the way to the peaceful emergence of Ukraine as an independent nation-state. However, the Russian government still had to reconcile itself to Ukrainian independence and interfered in Ukrainian domestic affairs. From 2004, the Ukrainian government had to deal with a politically pro-Russia political movement in the east. In 2014 the Kremlin took advantage of instability in the wake of the mass Euromaidan protest movement against the pro-Russian president to annex the Crimean peninsula and establish two puppet regimes in the south-eastern Donetsk and Luhansk provinces.<sup>12</sup> In February 2022 Putin launched a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine.

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12 Alexander Gilder argues for using the term “proxy-occupation.” “Bringing Occupation into the twenty-first Century: The Effective Implementation of Occupation by Proxy,” *Utrecht Law Review* 13, no. 1, (2017): 60–81. [www.utrechtlawreview.org](http://www.utrechtlawreview.org). Since 2014 Kremlin-sympathizers label Ukraine an American puppet-state.



By drawing parallels between the recent political history of these two countries, it is important to stress the enormous difference in the scale of the conflict and violence involved in the two cases. In Ireland, the number of deaths due to the political conflict was approximately 4,500 during the 1912-1923 period, and more than 3,500 in the recent one.<sup>13</sup> These are extremely low figures compared to the millions who died in Ukraine during 1919-1923 and between 1939-1947. The explanation lies in part in Ireland's smaller total population, but much more in the form and context of the conflict. The Irish independence struggle was waged against a constitutional monarchy with a free press, that was anxious to minimise the scale of the violence and strong enough to impose partition. This meant that the two major contending forces on the island - nationalism and loyalist unionism - never confronted each other militarily. In the recent period also, the British state was concerned to minimise the scale of the violence. But the paramilitaries also worked within clear limits. All sides were aware that a fully armed confrontation would be disastrous, whether inside Northern Ireland or, still more, for the entire island. In Ukraine, the situation was completely different. None of the rival powers fighting to control Ukraine were democracies. There were periods of partial or full state collapse. There was state reconstitution and large-scale boundary changes. There were full-scale military invasions and total war, as well as periods where the contending governments encouraged civil and ethnic violence for their own purposes.

Viewed in a long-term context, both societies today are dealing with the challenges of the contemporary world while working through the demographic, economic, social, cultural and psychological legacies of centuries of imperial rule. In Ireland, the conquests and colonisations of the seventeenth century created lasting divisions that were particularly intense in Ulster. These were at the root of the partition of the island in 1920 and they show no sign of abating. There is a provision in the 1998 Good

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13 Figures for 1912-23 calculated by Andy Bielenberg. Figures for 1969-2001 from <https://cain.ulster.ac.uk/sutton/tables/Status.html>

Friday Agreement for the peaceful reunification of the island but a significant (and currently rising) minority of Northern loyalists say they will resist unification by any means. In Ukraine, centuries of Polish and Russian rule brought settlers from both imperial heartlands whose descendants later provided the main source of opponents to Ukrainian independence. This has also meant that Ukrainians, like the Irish, had to construct their nationhood in opposition to those among the ruling but minority ethnies who questioned, or simply denied, their claim to be a nation in their own right.

Ukrainian intellectuals compared their country to Ireland from the late nineteenth century. Mykhailo Drahomaniv in 1880 refused to cooperate politically with a Ukrainian radical who, instead of forming a Ukrainian group to struggle for national autonomy, became a leader in the centralist Russian terrorist group *Narodnaia Volia*. He reflected on why at the time Ukrainians joined imperial rather than Ukrainian organizations, and why there were no Ukrainian Fenians or moderates agitating for Ukrainian political autonomy:

This sceptical expectation of a time when the Ukraine might produce its Fenians and its Parnell comes from the pen of a man who was born in one of our Ukrainian provinces. Nothing prevented him from becoming, in his own way, a Fenian. Imagine that Irish leaders were to wait passively until home-rule advocates appeared in their land, and until that moment, conducted themselves as Englishmen and followers of British centralism. In such a case Ireland also would have to wait a long time for its Parnell!<sup>14</sup>

Historian Volodymyr Antonovych in 1895-96 compared Ireland and Ukraine in his lectures, published as part of his *Kozatski chasy na Vkraini* (1897), wherein he noted Ireland was an example of a national movement not based on language. In his *Pro Avtonomiia Ukrainy* (1908), economist Mykola Porsh wrote that the Ukrainian national movement was more similar to the Irish than the Czech because, like the former, it was not based on a middle class. A Ukrainian translation of Marx and Engels's writings on Ireland

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14 B. A. Kistiakovsky ed., *Sobranie politicheskikh sochinenii* M. P. Dragomanova, 2 vols. (Paris, 1905-6) 1: 213.

appeared in 1931. Scattered articles about Ireland appeared in the Ukrainian press up to 1939, and in the publications of the wartime Ukrainian underground.<sup>15</sup>

Only recently have Ukrainian and Irish specialists and historians begun to study the two countries in a systematic comparative way. Thus far the topics most studied have been the Irish and Ukrainian famines<sup>16</sup> and the intersections between politics and violence.<sup>17</sup> As yet, there has been no comparison made on the themes of empire and colonialism. Neither country features much in the general comparative scholarship on these topics, which continues to place oceanic distance and race at the heart of the colonial relationship.<sup>18</sup> Ukraine is now fully part of the comparative literature on colonialism and decolonisation in

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- 15 V. Adoratsky, ed. *K. Marks i F. Engels. Vybrani lysty* (Kharkiv: Proletar, 1931). See also: P. Potichnyj and Y. Shtendera, eds., *The Political Thought of the Ukrainian Underground, 1943-51* (Edmonton: Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta, 1986), 195.
- 16 J. G. Janmaat, "History and National Identity Construction: The Great Famine in Irish and Ukrainian History Textbooks," *History of Education* 35, no. 3 (2006): 345-68; C. Noack, L. Janssen, and V. Comerford eds., *Holodomor and Gorta Mór* (London: Anthem Press, 2012).
- 17 For European and wider comparisons of politics and violence, see R. Alonso, "Individual Motivations for Joining Terrorist Organizations: A Comparative Qualitative Study on Members of ETA and IRA," in J. Victoroff, ed., *Tangled Roots: Social and Psychological Factors in the Genesis of Terrorism* (Amsterdam: IOS Press, 2006), 187-202; P. Waldmann, "The Radical Community: A Comparative Analysis of the Social Background of ETA, IRA, and Hezbollah," *ibid*, 133-146; A. Guelke, "The Flexibility of Northern Ireland Unionists and Afrikaner Nationalists in Comparative Perspective," *University College Dublin Institute for British-Irish Studies*, Working Paper No. 99, 2010; J. Wolffe, ed., *Irish Religious Conflict in Comparative Perspective: Catholics, Protestants and Muslims* (London: Palgrave, 2014). See also: G. Franzinetti, "Irish and East European Questions," in *Beyond the Balkans: An Inclusive History of Southeastern Europe*, ed. S. Rutar (Berlin, Vienna: International Council for Central and East European Studies, 2014), 67-96; R. Healy, *Poland in the Irish Nationalist Imagination 1772-1922: AntiColonialism within Europe* (Basingstoke: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2017); S. Nagle, *Histories of Nationalism in Ireland and Germany: A Comparative Study from 1800 to 1932* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017); T. Kabdebo, *Ireland and Hungary: A Study in Parallels* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2001).
- 18 Notable exceptions are the journal *Ab Imperio*; J. Burbank and F. Cooper, *Empires in World History: Power and the Politics of Difference* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); R. Healy and E. Dal Lago, eds., *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe's Modern Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).

central and eastern Europe.<sup>19</sup> However, Irish scholars continue to look in a different direction for colonial comparisons – to seventeenth century Caribbean, nineteenth and twentieth century India and Africa.<sup>20</sup> The concern with questions of empire and colonialism in this volume is important, therefore, not just for comparative Irish-Ukrainian studies, but for comparative European research and empire studies more generally. In this context, it is to be noted that there are few publications in English or Ukrainian by Ukrainian historians about the pre-independence history of their country from a comparative perspective.<sup>21</sup>

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- 19 “Decolonisation” as a term was first used in English in the 1930s to establish parallels between the new states of central Europe and what was anticipated in Africa and Asia. This continued as an important theme in east European socialist debates throughout the Cold War period, but Ukraine, as part of the USSR, did not feature in them. See J. Mark and Q. Slobodian, “Eastern Europe in the Global History of Decolonisation,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Ends of Empire*, edited by M. Thomas and A. Thompson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 351–372.
- 20 A. Donnell, M. McGarrity and E. O’Callaghan, eds., *Caribbean Irish Connections: Interdisciplinary Perspectives* (Kingston: University of the West Indies, 2015); M. Holmes and D. Holmes, eds., *Ireland and India: Connections, Comparisons, Contrasts* (Dublin: Folens, 1997); T. Foley, M. O’Connor eds., *Ireland and India: Colonies, Culture and Empire*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006; K. O’Malley, *Ireland, India and Empire: Indo-Irish Radical Connections, 1919-1964* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008); M. Silvestri, *Ireland and India, Nationalism, Empire and Memory* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); S. Ilahi, *Imperial Violence and the Path to Independence: India, Ireland and the Crisis of Empire* (London: I.B.Tauris 2016). A major exception is R. Healy and E. Dal Lago, eds., *The Shadow of Colonialism on Europe’s Modern Past* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).
- 21 J. Remy, “The National Development of Finns and Ukrainians under the Russian Empire. Some Comparative Aspects,” *Etnichna istoriia narodiv Eoropy* (Kyiv), випуск 5, 2000: 31-38; A. Sliusarenko, S. Pyvovar, “Do problemy zarodzhennia natsionalnoi derzhavnosti v Ukraini ta Finladii,” *ibid* 43-47; J. Remy, “Suomi ja Ukrainian kysymys 1917-1921,” *Historiallinen Aikakauskirja* 3, 2004: 360-74. O. Zaitsev, “Fascism or ustashism: Ukrainian Integral nationalism of the 1920s-1930s in comparative perspective,” *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 48, nos. 2-3 (2015): 183-93; S. Velychenko, “Empire Loyalism and Minority Nationalism in Great Britain and Imperial Russia, 1707-1914,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 39, no. 3, 1997: 413-41; *idem*, “The Issue of Russian Colonialism in Ukrainian Thought,” *Ab Imperio* no.1 (2002): 323-66; *idem*, “The Size of the Imperial Russian Bureaucracy and Army in Comparative Perspective,” *Jahrbucher fur Geschichte Osteuropas* 3 (2001): 346-62; *idem*, “Post Colonialism and Ukrainian History,” *Ab Imperio* no. 1 (2004): 391-404; *idem*, “Postkolonializm, Evropa ta Ukrainska istoriia,”

A shared history of imperial rule, differing interpretations of that legacy, a common Christian tradition and a sometime borderland position in Europe, are not the only reasons Ukraine and Ireland might be compared. As Gustave De Beaumont observed: "Ireland is a little country, that raises all the great questions in politics, morals, and the humanities."<sup>22</sup> It is these great questions that the contributors to this volume try to address. They include: Where does the metropole end and colony begin? When does the settler colonist become native? Why did Ireland, but not Ukraine, attain independence after WWI? Why is political independence not always followed by economic prosperity? Without WWI, might the Ukrainian and Irish nationalist elites have accepted autonomy within their empires? How far will the imperial elites and loyalists go to maintain the status quo? How far will the nationalists go to change it? When should we forget the past? When should we remember it? How long, and why, do legacies and grievances linger?

The contributors to this volume address these questions in different ways and from a variety of disciplinary standpoints and come to different conclusions. Minimally, they show that the themes of empire, colony and national liberation movements can be addressed in a European continental, as much as in Asian, Latin American or African context. That does not mean they arise or can be understood in the same way. On this issue, as well as everything else, Europe has its own specificity. There is a further benefit from a within-Europe comparison: it calls into question the tendency to assume fundamental differences between "western" and "eastern" Europe, including the now largely abandoned distinction between a "western" nationalism, conceived as a civic nationalism, and an "eastern" one conceived as an ethnic one. It also answers the question of whether an intra-European

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*Ukraina Moderna* 9 (2003): 237-48; idem, "Pytannia Rosiiskoho kolonializmu v Ukrainskii dumtsi. Politychna zalezhnist, identychnist ta ekonomichnyi rozvytok," *Skhid/Zakhid* 13-14 (2009): 301-44.

22 G. De Beaumont, *L'Irlande sociale, politique, religieuse*, 3rd ed. (Paris: Charles Gosselin, 1839), vol I: ii De Beaumont was the close associate of Alexis DeToqueville who edited and published the first edition of his work.

comparison of this kind is possible in a context where the post-Soviet scholarship is often invisible in the Anglo-American scholarship.<sup>23</sup> As Norman Davies reminds us, low public awareness of Europe's smaller and, in west European minds, "more distant" nations, underlies the persistence of false generalisations about them, including assumptions like "the whole of the West was advanced while the whole of the East was backward," or, that more Ukrainians collaborated with the Nazis than did Danes, Dutch or Belgians.<sup>24</sup>

The past of both countries reminds us that evil was part of the European experience and, as Thomas Hobbes observed, the past is not a pleasant place. One of Ireland's and Ukraine's shared horrors is their mass famines. Another is recurring political violence. It is self-destructive to use the past simply for the purpose of claiming victim status today. But it is also necessary to engage with it if we are to understand the present, and that includes the mindless brutality, horrors, persecutions and bloodshed that were often involved.

Finally, the comparison provides perspective and a cause for reflection. The Indian nationalist Har Dayal wrote in 1919: "Imperialism is always an evil, but British and French imperialism in its worst forms is a thousand times preferable to German or Japanese imperialism."<sup>25</sup> We don't know how he judged tsarist or Bolshevik Russia. Nor do we know whether Irish nationalists seeking aid from Germany during WWI to help their armed-uprising would have agreed with him, or the Ukrainian landowner and activist, Ievhen Chykalenko, who in 1918 declared: "Better to be a German slave, than comrade to a Russian."

### **This Book**

The book is divided into six sections. Part One begins with an overview of the long history of both countries to 1800. It illustrates

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23 See M. Tlostanova, "Can the Post-Soviet Think? On Coloniality of Knowledge, External Imperial and Double Colonial Difference," *Intersections: East European Journal of Society and Politics* 1, no. 2 (2015): 38–58.

24 Davies, *Europe East and West*, 16, 43.

25 Cited in Ilahi, *Imperial Violence and the Path to Independence*, 170.

among other things that, despite geographical distance, the ancestors of both peoples were in contact with each other. This is followed by essays exploring a number of empire-related themes, before concluding with an examination of the very different histories of the national languages in the two countries. It shows why language played and continues to play such an important role in Ukraine, but much less so in Ireland.

Part Two continues with the theme of empire and colony and provides an overview of the contrasting positions. The debate is less developed for Ukraine than for Ireland, but even in Ireland, there is uncertainty and divergence about how best to deal with the question. It looks at how the two countries have been viewed in their respective historiographical literature, and at specific proposals about how they should be viewed: whether as periphery, borderland, colony or something else. The final essay deals with an issue that is common to both countries: the lingering persistence within former imperial metropolises and in other foreign countries, of past metrocentric perspectives on former dominated territories, particularly at moments of crisis.

Part Three focuses on the two great famines: the Great Irish Famine [*Gorta Mór*] in the nineteenth century which killed an estimated 1 million people, and the Ukrainian *Holodomor* in the 1930s which killed at least 4 million people. The essays deal with how the famines have been dealt with in English-language and French historiography, the question of genocide and/or governmental culpability, how they were reported in the British press, and how they were represented in their respective national literatures.

Part Four deals with politics and political violence in the two countries from the 1880s to the end of the 1940s. It looks at what Ukrainians knew about Irish moderates and radicals, the use and impact of political assassinations, the fate of the republics declared in both countries during and after WW1, and the scale of the violence in the two countries between 1916–1923. A final essay compares the Irish and Ukrainian nationalist organisations: OUN/UPA and Sinn Féin/IRA.

Part Five looks at the economic and political challenges of independence in the two countries. Two essays deal with the economy, and the problem of overcoming the economic dependence on the old empire in an international environment where today global neo-liberal capitalist organisations set limits to the exercise of political sovereignty. Two further essays bring out the contrasting political situations of the Republic of Ireland and Ukraine after independence. Independent Ireland was free of British interference in its domestic affairs, but at the price of accepting the division of the island. Independent Ukraine has faced a much more severe interference from its former imperial ruler that at the time writing had invaded the country in an attempt to reintegrate it into a renewed Russian empire.

Part Six compares the conflict in Northern Ireland with that in the Donbas region of eastern Ukraine. It deals with three interrelated questions: whether the two regions are broadly comparable in terms of their historic development and the origins of their divisions, whether today the two conflicts are similar in terms of their internal form and wider geopolitics, and whether the activities of their paramilitaries are comparable, in either their scale or their relationship with the former imperial powers. The conclusion provides a critical perspective on the essays that make up the volume.

This volume has gaps and omissions imposed upon the editors by a number of practical issues, not the least of which was the difficulty of finding sufficient Ukrainian and Irish scholars prepared to spend time researching the national history of a country of which they previously had little knowledge. The editors trust that the gaps and omissions will motivate others to deal with them.

The core of this book comprises 24 papers of 41 delivered at the conference “Ireland, Ukraine and Empire: Dependence, Conflict, Memory” held in Kyiv on 15–17 November 2019 organised by the editors. This project was sponsored by The Holodomor Research and Education Centre in Ukraine, The Institute of Ukrainian History and the Institute of Demographic and Social Research at the National Academy of Sciences (Kyiv),



The Ukrainian Institute of National Memory (Kyiv), The Geary Institute and The Institute of British-Irish Studies (University College Dublin), The Centre for the Investigation of Transnational Encounters (National University of Ireland, Galway) and the Chair of Ukrainian Studies Foundation (Toronto).

### **A Note on Terminology: Northern Ireland Ulster and Donbas**

“Northern Ireland” was the official name given to the new northern state formed by partition in 1920. It included six of the nine counties of the historic province of Ulster. The historic province remains a significant unit for cultural, sporting and religious purposes. “Ulster” was frequently used by unionists and British politicians and by some journalists to refer to the six-county state, and some continue to use it. It was also used in some official contexts, including the title of many public institutions. Nationalists and the Irish government have always contested its use as a term of reference for the six-county.

The Donbas (Russ. Donbass) is an acronym coined in the 1820s for the geographical area delineated by the Donets River Basin. It has never been an administrative unit. The basin includes territory that is today part of the Ukrainian provinces of Donetsk, Luhansk, and Dnipropetrovsk, and the Russian province of Rostov. The Donets basin became prominent in the late nineteenth century because of its vast mineral reserves. The area of heaviest Russian in-migration to Ukrainian cities, it became Ukraine’s most heavily urbanised and industrialised region. The Ukrainian part of the Basin accounts for roughly 9% of its territory. The Basin far larger than the Ukrainian part of it Putin siezed in 2014. Many use “Donbas” as a synonym for the Donetsk and Luhansk provinces, or for the parts of these provinces under Russian control. The Ukrainian government has pointed out that such usage is incorrect.



This tenth-century Kyivan-Rus coin found in Cork, Ireland, in 2020 shows the Trident, incorporated in 1917, and in 1991, into the Ukrainian coat of arms.

Source: Ed Whelan, *Rus Viking Coins Unearthed by Strong Rainstorms in Ireland*, Ancient Origins (<https://www.ancient-origins.net/news-history-archaeology/viking-coins-0014175>)



**I.**  
**CONTACTS, POLITICS,**  
**CULTURE AND LANGUAGE**



# 1. CLOSER THAN THEY APPEAR: UKRAINE AND IRELAND TO 1800

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## ABSTRACT

Despite physical distance and dissimilarities in their pasts, Ireland and Ukraine were rather closely tied in ancient and medieval minds. The Irish were thought to have originated from Scythia while the Vikings and Irish monks established contact between both countries in the tenth century. As both countries were later ruled by foreign powers, both shared phenomena such as dual loyalties, cultural and administrative assimilation and religious conflict that shaped the foreign alliances of their elites. This paper compares the Ukrainian and Irish historical experiences up to 1800. It notes the nonlinear historical development of each and early contact between Ireland and Ukraine that significantly influenced the formation of Irish and Ukrainian culture.

Попри фізичну відстань і відмінності, Ірландія та землі сучасної України мали чимало спільного у ментальній географії доби античності і середньовіччя. Зокрема, побутували концепції походження ірландців зі Скіфії. Варяги та ірландські монахи встановили перші контакти між обома країнами вже у 10-11 ст. Пізніше Ірландія та Україна були завойовані своїми сусідами. Історичні процеси в обох країнах визначалися такими чинниками, як-от: взаємна асиміляція, формування груп із подвійною лояльністю, а також релігійним конфліктом, що спонукав обидві еліти до пошуку союзників серед єдиновірців. Ця стаття порівнює український та ірландський історичний досвід до 1800 р. Зазначається, що нелінійний історичний розвиток та ранні контакти між Ірландією та Україною суттєво вплинули на формування ірландської й української культури.

At first glance, it seems there would be little in common between these two countries. One was an island with an oceanic climate,

part of Europe's "Atlantic façade."<sup>1</sup> The other, a continental country in eastern Europe without clearly defined limits for a long time.<sup>2</sup> Combining mountain ranges, endless forests and sprawling steppe, this territory included a mix of cultures and peoples. Ireland and Ukraine had frontier locations. For centuries, waves of conquerors rolled onto both countries from steppe and sea respectively. Despite being a frontier, Ukraine's steppe zone was the object of colonisation and intensive economic development. It attracted migration flows and gradually integrated the culture of steppe peoples into Ukraine's own cultural space. The Irish, having no such vast low-density populated area rich in natural resources, had no escape from difficult social and economic conditions until the mass long-distance migrations of the nineteenth century. The demographics of Ireland and Ukraine are also difficult to compare. In addition to the obvious difference in numbers, Ukrainians and Irish are fundamentally different in terms of language and culture. However, what they do share is similar historical experiences and traumas, which makes comparison possible, beyond the idea that both can be categorised as postcolonial nations. In Ukraine, since the late nineteenth-century comparison with Ireland has been popular and remains so today.

The first link, which connects the pasts of Ireland and Ukraine, consists of Iron Age communities which used Celtic dialects of the Indo-European languages. This century, historians have assumed that tribes known to classical authors as the *Κελτοι*, *Γαλαται* and *Galli*, created a *La Tène* archaeological culture in the basins of Marne and Moselle, as well as in the Upper Danube area. During the fifth-first centuries BCE, the Celts spread their culture from the Atlantic fringe to the Carpathians and created a unique "Celtic civilisation". This concept has been largely revised in recent years. In particular, it is now stressed that the Celts never

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1 Cunliffe, *Facing the Ocean*.

2 At the time, Europeans imagined there was a geographical unity of lands between the Carpathians, the Lower Danube, the coast of the Azov Sea and the River Don. At different times, these lands were called Scythia, European Sarmatia, Rus and, finally, Ukraine: Halushko, *Ukraine na karti levropy*, 25.

constituted a single ethnic group with an inherent holistic culture.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, “Celtic heritage” continues to play a significant role in the construction of identities Europe-wide.

In the territory of today’s Ukraine, the central European La Tène archaeological culture prevailed in Transcarpathia during the 3-2 centuries BCE. Some notable centres of political power and metalworking, such as Halych-Lovachka and Nove Klynove were established here by the Celts. East of the Carpathians, there was Celtic influence rather than the physical presence of Celtic migrants from central Europe. At the turn of the era in the basins of the Dnister and the Dnipro rivers, the Przeworsk and Zarubyntsi archaeological cultures emerged. Both are usually referred to as “latènized,” because they were heavily influenced by Celtic metalworking technologies and specific burial rites. The bearers of these cultures, most probably labelled as the *Bastarnae* by Greek and Roman historians, were a mixed population, including an eastern Germanic component and, possibly, ancestors of the Slavs. Some archaeological data, as well as geographical and ethnic names of the Celtic origin, mentioned by Ptolemy and other ancient authors in the Dnister basin and North Pontic littoral, suggest Celtic dialects spread here among local elites.<sup>4</sup>

Some of those who study Iron Age Celts who lived in present-day Ukraine, argue that this “Celtic heritage” demonstrates that Ukraine belongs to western European civilisation. They also argue that Galicia (western Ukraine) was a colony, or even the birthplace of, the Celts<sup>5</sup> and that the Celtic theory of the origin of Kyivan Rus from the ancient Gallic tribe of *Rutheni*<sup>6</sup> should be dealt with in the context of “Celtomania”.

In Ireland, the idea of Celticness played a powerful role in shaping national identity. This is not surprising, because today’s Ireland remains one of the very few countries in Europe where Celtic languages have survived since prehistoric times.

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3 Collis, *The Celts*.

4 Kazakevich, *Iron Age Celts*, 27-82.

5 Idzio, *Keltska tsyvilizatsiia*, 225-248.

6 Shelukhin, *Zvidkilia pokhodyt Rus*.



Paradoxically, the ancient population of Ireland did not identify itself as Celt and the central European La Tène style spread there to about the same extent as it did to eastern Europe.<sup>7</sup> It is now thought that Celtic languages spread among insular communities due to micro-migrations and trade contacts during the Bronze Age, rather than from a mass resettlement of Celtic invaders from the continent.<sup>8</sup>

As peripheries during the time in question, Ireland and Ukrainian lands were far from the centres of the classical world. Nonetheless, classical authors thought the island of *Ierne* (Ireland), mythical Hyperborea and Scythia (today, Ukraine and nearby lands), were part of the imaginary northern part of *Oekumene*.<sup>9</sup> Ireland, according to Strabo, was the most remote northern part of the known world (II. 1. 13), neighbouring Scythia (II. 5. 14). The latter was also considered the northernmost part of a world he imagined that stretched to the amber-rich islands in the Baltic Sea (Diod. Sic. V. 23). No matter how fantastic Greek and Roman concepts of the geographical proximity of Ireland to Scythia appears today, in the early Middle Ages both experienced similar Viking raids during the eighth–tenth centuries. Those raids, effectively linked the “Atlantic façade” of Europe, with its eastern periphery in a network of political, economic and cultural ties. Viking attacks on Ireland and surrounding islands began in the late eighth century. The pillage-trading model of the Viking economy transformed Ireland into one of the main sources of supply of luxury items to western Scandinavia.<sup>10</sup> From the tenth century, Scandinavian craftsmen massively reproduced Irish-type brooches and other personal ornaments,<sup>11</sup>

On the coast and along the main rivers of Ireland, newcomers from Scandinavia founded their settlements (Dublin,

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7 Raftery, “Les Celtes pré-chrétiens des îles”, 558–559.

8 Cunliffe, *The Ancient Celts*, 154–155.

9 See graphic representations of geographical descriptions by Hecataeus, Herodotus, Pytheas, and Cunliffe, *Europe between the Oceans*, 4–9.

10 Sheehan, “Viking Raiding Gift-exchange and insular metalwork in Norway,” 818–821.

11 Ó Floinn, “Irish and Scandinavian Art in the Early Mediaeval Period,” 87–89.

Cork, Limerick, etc.), which later turned into the first cities on the island. The nature of their relationships with the locals resembles a classic model of conquest and colonisation. Sources record the emergence of mixed populations, but this process did not have far-reaching consequences. The level of mutual assimilation remained relatively low, and the political and social structures of the Irish and Vikings had significant differences,<sup>12</sup> contributing to strained relations between Irish and Vikings until the early eleventh century.

Meanwhile, on the territory of today's Ukraine, there was a completely different model of relations between the Scandinavian newcomers and the autochthonous population. The Vikings viewed the lands along the Dnipro primarily as a transit route for silk from south to north and fur and slaves from north to south.<sup>13</sup> This "road from the Varangians/Vikings to the Greeks," which connected Byzantium and Scandinavia, functioned most actively from the mid-tenth to the second half of the eleventh century.<sup>14</sup> Regardless of the exact roles of Scandinavians and Slavs in the creation of the state of Rus, with its capital in Kyiv, that controlled this route, it is undeniable that both were interested in both the route and the profits it gave them.<sup>15</sup> This underlay rapid mutual assimilation and acculturation until the end of the tenth century. There is no doubt that the Scandinavians settled in existing centres of political power, integrated into the local social structures and modernised them.

While Ireland appeared within the sphere of Norwegian influence, the Dnipro basin attracted mostly Danes and Swedes. As a result, contact between the two regions was mostly indirect, although there is evidence of some population movement. For example, in August 2020, a treasure of silver coins belonging to Prince Volodymyr the Great of Kyiv (c. 960-1015) was found in

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12 Lydon, *The Making of Ireland*, 22, 30.

13 Vedeler, *Silk for the Vikings*, 104.

14 Shepard, "Small Worlds, the General Synopsis, and the British 'Way from the Varangians to the Greeks'," 19.

15 Tolochko, *Ocherki nachalnoi rusi*.

County Cork.<sup>16</sup> Earlier, in Dublin, archaeologists discovered fragments of Byzantine silk that almost certainly got there via “the Road from the Varangians to the Greek” and the Baltic.<sup>17</sup> Some written accounts, meanwhile attest to micro-migrations between the British Isles and Byzantium.

Ireland’s imagined proximity to the Dnipro basin and the North Pontic area at the time was more important than the real contacts between these regions. The issue here concerns the pseudohistorical tradition of the origin of some western European peoples from Scythia that was widespread in the Middle Ages. This legend was best exposed by Isidore of Seville (ca. 570–636). He originated from the Visigothic kingdom in Spain and enjoyed undeniable authority among western European Christians. In his *Historia de regibus Gothorum* (66), he suggested that the Goths, some of whom ended up in the Iberian Peninsula during the Migration period, were related to the Scythians and were descendants of Magog, the son of Japhet. According to Isidore, this explained the alleged similarity of the names “Getae” and “Scythae”.

Early Medieval Irish and British *literati* were familiar with both classical sources and the works of Isidore of Seville. They probably noticed the phonetic similarity of the ethnicon *Scotti*, the then customary designation of the Irish, and the historical name *Scythae*. At the turn of the seventh–eighth centuries, Bede the Venerable laid out his own version of the origin of the Picts from Scythia. Further development of this legend could be found in the *Arbroath Declaration*, which affirmed the independence of Scotland from the Kingdom of England in 1320. It stated that the ancestors of the Scots came out of Greater Scythia [*Maiori Schithia*], passed through the Pillars of Hercules and, after a long stay in Spain, moved to Scotland.<sup>18</sup>

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16 Ancient Ukrainian coins were found in Ireland, accessed 1 October 2020, <https://undercoil.com/coins/#more-1483>

17 Shepard, op. cit., 22–25.

18 “The Declaration of Arbroath.” *National records of Scotland*, accessed 1 October 2020, <https://www.nrscotland.gov.uk/research/learning/features/the-declaration-of-arbroath>.

These stories resemble the Irish writing tradition, according to which Féníus Farsaid, the legendary ancestor of the Irish, came from Scythia. He was allegedly involved in the construction of the Tower of Babel and later invented the Irish language. His son Néil married Scota, the daughter of an Egyptian Pharaoh. Their son Goidel later moved from Egypt to Scythia, where he lived for a long time with his tribe known as the Goidels (Irish). Subsequently, enemies expelled Goidel from Scythia. He travelled to Spain and then moved to Ireland. The idea of Scythia as a mythical ancestral homeland formed probably in the seventh century, allowed medieval Irish clerics to more closely tie Ireland to the events of biblical and classical history.<sup>19</sup> The impact of this concept was significant. In particular, the notion that the Gaels had invaded Ireland from Spain justified an Irish-Spanish alliance against England in the seventeenth century.<sup>20</sup> Irish propaganda celebrated the valour of the Scythians who fought for independence from the Persians and Macedonians:

The present was shaping the imagined past: if the Scythians were primordial Gaels, than one could hope that the overwhelming might of England might eventually succumb to the same fate which had overwhelmed the forces of Darius and Alexander.<sup>21</sup>

The idea of a distant Irish ancestral home in the east possibly influenced the Irish *peregrinatio* tradition which flourished from the ninth century. The first attempts of Irish missionaries to reach Slavic lands date back to the second half of the eighth century. In particular, the Abbot of St Peter's at Salzburg Vergilius (Feirgil) and his compatriots, played an important role in the Christianisation of the Pannonian and Moravian Slavs.<sup>22</sup> The Byzantines later tried to stop this western-based attempt to Christianise south-eastern Europe, but the Irish persisted. In particular, Irish monks visited medieval Kyiv and are thought to

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19 Lennon, *Irish Orientalism*, 26.

20 Carey, "Russia, Cradle of Gael," 149.

21 Ibid. 159.

22 Isachenko, "K voprosu ob irlandskoi missii u pannonskikh i moravskikh slavian," 51.

have founded a monastery in the capital.<sup>23</sup> *Vita Sancti Mariani Scoti* (circa 1185) mentions, in particular, that a certain Irishman Mauritius “alone, accompanied by a boy ... came to the Prince of Rus.” From this lord and other first persons of the “extremely rich city of Kyiv [*urbis ditissimae Chios*],” he received as a gift “precious fur priced at a hundred pounds of silver, which he took on carts and peacefully returned with merchants to Regensburg.”<sup>24</sup> St Marian (whose secular name was Muiredach Mac Robartaig) used the money to found the Abbey of St Jacob and St Gertrude in Regensburg. This Abbey later became the centre of all Irish monasteries in Europe.<sup>25</sup>

It is most likely that the Irish monks sought to establish contacts with Prince Iziaslav Yaroslavych (1024-1078) whose wife, the Polish Princess Gertrude, was from the imperial dynasty of Otto I on her mother’s side. Iziaslav relied on the help of her nephew King Boleslaw of Poland, as well as the support of Pope Gregory VII, who recognised him as the “King of Rus”. In this context, it is understandable why Irish Catholic monks could count on hospitality at the Orthodox Kyiv court. Perhaps not coincidentally, the name of the holy patron saint of Regensburg Abbey coincides with the name of the Princess of Kyiv. Several graceful miniatures preserved in her prayer book were most likely created by Irish illustrators.<sup>26</sup>

The question of whether Irish monks’ ties with Kyiv were regular remains open. Information about the existence of *Schottenkloster* in Kyiv is based on a letter contained in the *Chronica maiora* by Matthew of Paris. This document, which dates from January 1242, is focused primarily on the Mongol invasion. It mentions two monks returning from Rus [*Ruscia*] to Ireland through Hungary and Austria.<sup>27</sup> Polish sources of the fourteenth-fifteenth centuries mention a Dominican monastery that existed in Kyiv before the Mongol invasion. Archaeologists assume that this

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23 Lydon, op. cit., 44; Ó Riain, “Monachi peregrini,” 345.

24 Fomin, “I prestol ego utverdotsia pravdoi,” 57.

25 Bodnaruk, “Osoblyvosti khrystyianizatsii keltskikh plemen,” 22–23.

26 Gertsman, “All Roads lead to Rus,” 42–46.

27 Luard ed., *Matthaei Parisiensis, monachi sancti Albani*.

monastery was located at the foot of Mount Shchekavytsia in Kyiv's Podil district.<sup>28</sup> Eastern, in particular Byzantine and Coptic, Christianity influenced Irish monasticism, while Irish monks, knew the Greek language and preserved many of the cultural achievements of Antiquity.<sup>29</sup>

Kyivan Rus, unlike Ireland, adopted Christianity from Byzantium, and some parallels in church life and the written culture of Ireland and Rus can be traced to the same sources. For instance, the legend of the founding of a monastery by St. Anthony of Rome in Novgorod, and the *immrama* of Irish saints, resemble each other.<sup>30</sup> The text of Volodymyr Monomakh's *Homily* corresponds to some works of the Irish Insular tradition.<sup>31</sup> There is also a similarity between the Celtic cross, the symbol of the Irish church, and some stone crosses found in the Novgorod region and Ukraine.<sup>32</sup> Interestingly, the cast-iron cross installed in 1884 on the grave of Ukraine's national poet Taras Shevchenko was similar to the Celtic cross.

Ireland and Kyivan Rus at the beginning of the second millennia developed under similar circumstances. Both experienced some degree of internal integration. In Ireland, this was caused by the need to unite the efforts of local elites to fight the Vikings, which ended after the Battle of Clontarf in 1014. Strengthening the institution of a high king, which dates back to pre-Christian times, did not lead to the formation of a single Irish kingdom. However, the emergence of such historical figures as Toirdhealbhach Mór Ua Conchobhair (1088–1156), who held the status of a high king for about 37 years, shows the trend existed. The lack of clearly defined mechanisms for the succession, as well as the existence of powerful local "petty kingdoms" impeded this tendency.

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28 Hupaló, *Podol v Drevnem Kieve*, 109. It is not yet proven that the Irish were involved in the founding or functioning of this monastery.

29 Ritner, "Egyptians in Ireland: a Question of Coptic Peregrinations."

30 Kuzmin, *Padenie Peruna*, 170-171.

31 Fomin, op. cit. 55–60.

32 Malyna, *Kamiani khresty v Ukraïni*, 234-236, Tables X, XLI.

In Kyivan Rus, the elimination of tribal chiefdoms, as related in the *Primary Chronicle's* legend of Princess Olga's conquest of the Drevlians in the middle of the tenth century, secured the power of the Riurik dynasty within their Slavic environment and underlay their assimilation into it. However, the lack of clear mechanisms for the transfer of power undermined administrative centralisation as in Ireland. Attempts to introduce a collective rule, for example during the triumvirate of the sons of Yaroslav the Wise, were unsuccessful. As a result, at the end of the eleventh century, some branches of the ruling dynasty turned into regional elites with strong secessionist tendencies. The decline of Byzantium, and the reorientation of international trade routes that undermined the significance of the road "from the Varangians to the Greeks" dealt a devastating blow to the Rus principality.<sup>33</sup>

Ireland and Rus were incorporated by their more powerful neighbours. Taking advantage of internal conflicts in Ireland, the English Crown began the absorption of the island in 1169. Over the next few centuries, as England tried to integrate Ireland, the Irish resisted. The lands of the former Kyivan Rus, which by the 1230s had already disintegrated, were conquered by the Mongol Golden Horde in 1240. The Mongols could not effectively control this region, and in 1362 the recently Christianised Lithuanian princes conquered most of the territory that is now part of Ukraine. The principality of Halych (today's western Ukraine or Halychyna), meanwhile, had been annexed into the Kingdom of Poland in 1340. Polish kings introduced Catholicism, Polish law and allowed the Polish gentry to own land there.

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33 In the mid-twelfth century "Ukraine" appeared for the first time in historical sources. It denoted the lands of the middle Dnipro area historically known as "Rus." The latter name continued to be used until at least the nineteenth century alongside Ukraine. The political claims of the Muscovite tsars to all lands of the former Kyivan Rus led to the use of the Greek form "Rusia/Russia" as the official name of what we now call Russia. Halushko, Rus-Malorosiiia-Ukraina: nazva i terytoriiia. The situation resembles the "migration" of the historical ethnonym "Scotti" in the early Middle Ages (a common name for the Irish) to Scotland, as a result of the resettlement of the Irish there and the formation of the kingdom of Dál Riata.

Lithuanians, unlike the Mongols, adopted Rus culture, law and its political tradition. Grand Duke Gediminas called himself “the King of Lithuania and Rus,” while the Lithuanian kingdom’s official name was the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Rus and Samogitia. Orthodoxy was the Duchy’s official religion and Ruthenian its language.<sup>34</sup> The Rus lands retained considerable autonomy for some time. After Poland incorporated these Rus lands and the Grand Duchy into the Commonwealth [*RzeczPospolita*] in 1569, Roman Catholicism, Polish law, customs and language spread there as they had earlier in Halychyna.<sup>35</sup> As in Ireland, the Ukrainian lands at the time saw the emergence of a mixed elite with dual loyalties, and religion became central to the defining of loyalties and identities. Whereas many Poles settled in Galicia, few moved into the central and eastern territories annexed after 1569.

In the English medieval colonisation of Ireland, Norman barons played a significant role, using matrimonial strategies to consolidate their rule over the island. The beginning of this was marked by Richard de Clare, Earl of Pembroke, who married the daughter of the Irish exiled king, Diarmait Mac Murchada. As heir to the throne of Leinster, one of Ireland’s five historic provinces, Richard orchestrated the first English invasion of the island. Although within a few years, the king of England regained the initiative in the colonisation, the Norman aristocracy in Ireland continued to enjoy almost complete freedom of action. As Normans willingly married representatives of local elites, mutual assimilation and acculturation progressed and became extensive. Over the next few centuries, Clare, Fitzgerald, Butler and other families formed a community called the Hiberno-Norman aristocracy. London tried to hinder the assimilation of its elite in Ireland. In 1367, the Irish Parliament<sup>36</sup> passed the Kilkenny

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34 See: Bumblauskas, et al., *Istoriia Lytvy*, 83–84

35 Boiko, *Orhany vlady i pravo v Halychyni*, 126.

36 The English conquest of Ireland led to the formation of a number of political institutions based on English models. Conquered land in the Lordship of Ireland was directly managed by a royal governor. In 1542, the Lordship was reorganized into the Kingdom of Ireland, whose monarch was the King of



Statute, Article 3 of which prohibited English colonists from using Irish names, language, customs, clothing and even a way of riding under the threat of confiscation of property, fines and imprisonment.<sup>37</sup> Sixteenth-century documents constantly mention the problem of the cultural “degradation” of the “Old English” aristocracy of Ireland who adopted local customs and traditions.<sup>38</sup> Countermeasures included, in particular, legislative restrictions on the Irish (Gaelic) language in the public and legal spheres, introduced in 1537, 1541 and 1737.

The Polish government also pursued a policy aimed at integrating the Lithuanian-Ruthenian aristocracy into Polish social, political and religious, structures. The Orthodox nobility had to convert to Catholicism to obtain the considerable rights of the Polish gentry. The Union of Horodło (1413) prohibited “rejects or infidels” (Orthodox and Muslims) from occupying senior government positions and enjoying the rights of the Catholic nobility. However, there were no religious wars in the Commonwealth and local barons, called Magnates, held considerable power. The Lithuanian Statutes of 1529 and 1566, which formed the basis of the legal system in Ukrainian lands, established tolerance for Orthodoxy, confessional diversity, and an accepted dual loyalty for the gentry.<sup>39</sup> The latter was reflected in the phrase “Natione Polonus, gente Ruthenus.”<sup>40</sup>

The spread of Catholicism and serfdom into the Ukrainian territories of the Commonwealth, where it did not exist before 1569, led to violent resistance, led by Cossacks, and uprisings, that after decades of bloody wars resulted in the separation of today’s eastern and southern Ukraine from the Commonwealth. In their attempts to administer their holdings, the Polish gentry granted

England. The Parliament of Ireland was controlled by aristocratic Anglo-Norman families.

37 Hardiman, “A Statute of the Fortieth Year of King Edward III, enacted in a parliament held in Kilkenny, A.D. 1367, before Lionel Duke of Clarence, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland English translation” in: *Tracts Relating to Ireland*, 13–17.

38 Heffernan, “Robert Cowley’s ‘A Discourse of the Cause of the Evil State of Ireland and of the Remedies Thereof c. 1526’,” 7.

39 Krumalenko, “Pravovyi status ruskoi pravoslavnoi spilnoty,” 148–152.

40 Plokyh, *The Origins of the Slavic Nations*, 169.

privileges to Jewish, Armenian and German minorities, increasing tension and adding an ethnic dimension to existing religious and social tensions.<sup>41</sup> The Poles had even planned to resettle several thousand Irish Catholics in Ukraine.<sup>42</sup>

In Ireland from the sixteenth century, the line of religious confrontation between the dominant minority and the subordinate majority ran between colonists, who *en masse* were loyal to the Anglican Church of Ireland, and the indigenous population, almost all of whom were Catholic. Already in thirteenth-century English propaganda, in particular, the works of Giraldus Cambrensis, had portrayed the Irish as heretics who adhered to savage customs. The Tudor re-conquest of Ireland, during the Reformation, and the formation of the Church of Ireland added a religious chasm to the division between coloniser and colonised. The Desmond Rebellions of 1569–1573 and 1579–1583, as well as the Nine-Year War (1594–1603), were largely fueled by mutual hatred between Catholics and Protestants. The most serious uprisings were in the second half of the seventeenth century, during which time, English forces under Oliver Cromwell massacred Catholics in Drogheda and Wexford.<sup>43</sup> Between 1649–1651, an estimated 20% of Ireland's population died from military action, famine and epidemics.<sup>44</sup> Attempted alliances with Catholic Spain came to nought. The consequences of defeat after the 1688 Glorious Revolution in England, were disastrous, both legally and politically. These included massive confiscations of Catholic lands, resettlement of Catholics, colonisation by Protestants, and laws restricting Catholics. The Irish Catholic majority, who as of 1732 accounted for 73% of the population of the island, became tenants on lands owned by absent English owners.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, by the end of the seventeenth century, both countries found themselves in quite different political conditions. Neither

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41 Bilyk, *Etnopolitychna istoriia Ukraïny*, 407–422.

42 Fedoruk, "Nezdiisnenyi proiekt irlandskoi kolonizatsii Ukraïny 1655 r.."

43 Faul, "Cromwell in Ireland: the Massacres," 293–298.

44 Ó Siochrú, "Atrocity, Codes of Conduct and the Irish in the British Civil Wars 1641–1653," 80.

45 Duffy, ed., *Atlas of Irish History*, 76.

had independent states.<sup>46</sup> Despite all the restrictions imposed on Irish Catholics, because they belonged to a constitutional monarchy, they could form public associations and engage in legal political struggles to rescind restrictions. The result of this struggle was the abolition of most of the discriminatory laws by the end of the eighteenth century. Irish society, much more than the Ukrainian, was influenced by the Enlightenment, as well as the political ideas of the American and the French Revolutions that largely defined the agenda of the Irish uprising of 1798. Under Russian rule, Ukrainian elites assimilated into the Russian nobility were central to the creation of a westernised Russian elite culture. Enlightenment influences were marginal.<sup>47</sup> Eastern and southern Ukrainian peasants, *de facto* free landowners after 1648, were enserfed under Russian rule in 1783.

Although Ireland is surrounded by seas, and Ukraine has open land borders, both were subject to foreign invasion – keeping in mind that before the onset of paved roads and the railways, the fastest route between the two destinations was by water. Ukraine and Ireland both developed under more or less similar conditions and influences. These include the Iron Age Celtic culture of central and western Europe, contacts with Scandinavia during the Viking migration era and Christianity. In the early modern era, Ukraine and Ireland were both ruled by their more powerful neighbours. Local elites sought allies among their co-religionists during the period in question, and in both cases, those allies, in historical perspective, now appear as the backward nations of their time – Spain and Muscovite Russia. A ruling constitutional monarchy in the case of the Irish, and a ruling autocracy in the case of Ukraine profoundly influenced how each nation developed after annexation into their respective empires.

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46 The Kingdom of Ireland, formed by England in 1542, was not an Irish state. This nominal autonomy was eliminated by the Act of Union in 1800. The tsars progressively restricted Cossack Hetmanate autonomy, finally abolishing it in 1781.

47 Khmara, “Rol ukraintsiv u mystetstvi ta osviti u Rosiiskii imperii XVIII stolittia.”

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## 2. RULERS AND VICTIMS OF EMPIRE

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### ABSTRACT

The British and Russian Empires were very different in their nature. The British one depended on credit (provided through its financial institutions), racism, and slavery, the Russian one on military force and on the subversion of its neighbours. However, both empires caused a devastating famine in a similar manner in one of their subordinate dominions, Ireland and Ukraine. The English and the Russians, as the leading ethnies of a major empire, have not managed to adjust to the end of that role, and have tried to perpetuate their imperial methods in new circumstances. That failure has misled them into steps intended to strengthen their great power status, but which actually weaken them:

Британська і Російська імперії були дуже різними за своєю природою. Британський залежав від кредиту, наданого через його фінансові установи, расизм і рабство; російського залежав від військової сили і підрив сусідів. Проте обидві імперії спричинили руйнівний голод подібним чином в одному зі своїх підпорядкованих країн, Ірландії та Україні. Англійці і росіяни, як провідні етноси великої імперії, не зуміли пристосуватися до кінця цієї ролі і намагалися увічнити свої імперські методи за нових обставин. Ця невдача ввів їх в оману в кроки, спрямовані на зміцнення їхнього статусу великої влади, але які фактично послабили їх.

Until fairly recently, it was normal to consider empires and nations as separate and different kinds of a polity. Today, however, the consensus would probably be that large nations tend to try and achieve the status of empire. This can happen in several ways: sometimes, to defend vulnerable borders, it is simpler to annex the threatening neighbour or the territorial base from which it might invade; sometimes, the nation feels it has a universal mission that justifies spreading its dominion more widely. The British, for example, in the nineteenth century, felt a calling to bring Protestant Christianity, parliamentary democracy and free trade to the rest of the world. Russians in the nineteenth century



believed they should inculcate Orthodox Christianity more widely and bring civilisation to their Asiatic dominions; in the twentieth century, they felt the same about Communism. France offers perhaps the clearest example of an empire that was consciously designed as an extension of the nation – an empire in which all the colonised people were, in principle, to become part of the metropolitan citizenship. The French saw as their imperial task the *mission civilisatrice* which was to consist of the spreading of republicanism, secularism, liberty, fraternity and equality to its colonies. In 1946, it conferred French citizenship on all the population of its colonies.<sup>1</sup>

Today, England and Russia have very similar problems: each was the principal ethnîe of a major empire and neither can get used to living without that empire. That failure is leading both peoples into self-damaging behaviour. The English consequence is Brexit, the self-inflicted severance of a close trading and security arrangement with its nearest neighbour and largest market; the Russian consequence is the annexation of Crimea and unacknowledged war in eastern Ukraine, which places Russia in self-isolation in international affairs. As a result of such behaviour, the English are in danger of losing Scotland and Northern Ireland; the Russians are in danger of uniting the Ukrainians into a permanent anti-Russian stance. That is why it is important to distinguish between England and Britain, and also between *Russkii* and *Rossiiskii*.

The British and Russian empires were very different kinds of empires, and their distinct imperial experiences continue to mould the behaviour of their citizens today. The British had, what historians Cain and Hopkins called, a “gentlemanly empire,” whose strongest sinews were those of finance and credit – backed up, of course, by the Royal Navy whose aim was to keep the seas open for British trade. As they have argued, the British, especially since the late seventeenth century, created an extensive overseas empire by offering settlers the credit and legal cover necessary to exploit local lands, and the possibility of engaging in profitable

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1 Cooper, *Citizenship between Nation and Empire*.

trade with and through the home country.<sup>2</sup> They did this by either exploiting the earlier dwellers (e.g. the aborigines in Australia) or by driving them off their lands, especially if the natives' economy did not fit readily into British commercial networks. Hence, the British Empire tended to be racist in its outlook, treating native peoples as inferior, even expendable. Much of the empire's wealth derived from a particularly vicious form of slavery, which provided the basis for many of the fortunes which sustain the City of London to the present day. The dominance of international finance in Britain has long survived the empire's demise and is one of the root causes of Brexit, a major motive for which is to elude the European Union's attempts to restrict the operation of "shell companies" and tax havens.

The Russian Empire [*Rossia*] was run on very different principles. It was, in one sense, a continuation of the great Eurasian steppe empires. It achieved territorial overland expansion by setting up early a tightly centralised and well-organised army. It also gave priority to obtaining first-rate intelligence on the affairs of its neighbours, and it used that intelligence to weaken from within any potential enemy or rival by gaining support from one faction among them. It perpetuates these methods today in the former Soviet Union, and that is how it has attempted to destabilise Ukraine. Russia was also an empire whose principles and practices were, to a considerable extent, determined by the methods needed to govern its *okrainy*. As Al Rieber has shown, Russia has more "shatter zones" on its borders than any other empire – that is, areas of contention between great powers, usually borderland territories populated by diverse ethnic, religious and socio-economic communities, each with their own interests, which cannot be ignored by the empire because of their sensitive strategic location. It had to develop highly centralised military and bureaucratic structures to deal with those peoples, while at the same time remaining sensitive to their needs and demands, especially those of their indigenous elites. While it was doing that, it tended to take the Russian people themselves –

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2 Cain and Hopkins, *British Imperialism*; Belich, *Replenishing the Earth*.

the core of the empire – for granted and to allow their interests to be overshadowed by the demands of the empire. For example, the Orthodox Church had to allow its needs to be subordinated to those of other faiths which the imperial government had to take seriously. A number of Russian historians, beginning with Vasiliï Kliuchevskii (1841–1911), have spoken of self-colonisation or “internal colonisation.”<sup>3</sup> The British Empire was overseas, the Russian one was overland (or, as I often say, Britain *had* an empire, Russia *was* an empire). But it is often forgotten that the first British empire, an English empire, began as an overland one. The Normans established themselves in England as a modern state (by the standards of the time), characterised by a settled law, rule by the King’s military forces and by his bureaucratic agents, a centralised taxation system, and the establishment of internal peace for trade. They felt threatened by the Scots, Welsh and Irish, who had small-scale principalities, blood feuds, and frequent petty wars, and financed themselves by tribute levied on the recently conquered. From the late eleventh century the English set about conquering the rest of the British isles, so as to end threats from the Scots, Welsh and Irish, and to introduce their own more orderly system of rule. Their success was only partial, and efforts had to be repeated right up to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.<sup>4</sup>

This meant that the integration of Scotland, Wales and Ireland remained imperfect. Until the early eighteenth century, Scotland was a separate kingdom, and may again become a separate country after Brexit. Wales became administratively part of England in the sixteenth century but kept its own robust Welsh-language culture. As for Ireland, it was the only part of the British Empire that was *not* overseas, which is one reason its fate sometimes resembles that of Russian overland dependencies. There has been continual ambiguity about Ireland’s status; the British government always had at the back of its mind the possibility that it might be used by a foreign power as a base for

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3 Etkind, *Internal Colonization: Russia’s Imperial Experience*.

4 Davies, *The First English Empire*.

invading the British mainland. Hence, in some respects, it was a separate country; in some respects, it was in a union with Britain; in other respects, it was a colony ruled from Westminster. Initially, Ireland had its own parliament in Dublin; later, there was a joint parliament and Irish MPs sat in London, where the British government could keep a closer eye on them. There was a Lord Lieutenant of Ireland in Dublin Castle, sent from London as if to govern a colony, but also (contradictorily) a Chief Secretary for Ireland in London, as for a constituent part of the British realm.

The gulf which separated the English and Irish societies in the nineteenth century was starkly revealed by the great famine of the 1840s. The features surrounding it were similar in some ways to the Ukrainian *Holodomor* of the 1930s. In neither case was full-scale genocide intended, but the dominance of an imperial ideology, combined with a total lack of feeling for the needs of the subordinate nation, led to a calamity that had marked features of genocide.

The Irish famine was originally caused by bad weather and the resultant spread of potato blight. The poorer Irish peasants depended on the potato as a crop which provided more nourishment per sown area than any other crop. If food aid had been sent from England quickly enough at the outset, casualties could have been minimised, but that did not happen. As a Young Ireland activist said, "God sent the blight, but the British sent the famine." Sir Charles Trevelyan, assistant secretary to the Treasury, was an evangelical Protestant, deeply hostile to Catholicism, and a fervent adherent of the then-dominant political economy, which taught that Irish agriculture should be modernised – for which purpose the tiny holdings of most Irish peasants were an obstruction. Trevelyan considered that the population needed to be reduced so that the remainder could grow grain on much larger holdings. Encouraging emigration of the surplus population was his preferred method, but when the blight arrived he deliberately discouraged "the random recklessness of government benevolence" and stated frankly "We regard the potato blight as a blessing. When the Celts cease to be potatophagi [sic, i.e. avid potato-eaters] they must become carnivorous. With

the taste of meats will grow the appetite for them. With this will come steadiness, regularity and perseverance" – the qualities admired by the devotees of economic development.<sup>5</sup> (It is worth adding that the same doctrine motivated the expropriation of indigenous peoples in North America and other parts of the British Empire.)

Many landlords evicted tenants who could no longer pay their rent. Police or troops were sent to their huts, ejected them and their property and dismantled the roof so that they could not return – and this often in the middle of winter. As a Poor Law Report said, "the wretched, helpless, homeless wander the countryside scattering disease, destitution and dismay in all directions...When the houses are torn down, people live in banks and ditches like animals, until starvation or weather drive them to the workhouse." Overall, about a million people died and at least as many again emigrated so that the famine reduced the Irish population by about a quarter.<sup>6</sup>

Let us now compare the Irish famine with the Ukrainian one nearly a century later. Stalin's economic motives in the 1930s were similar to Trevelyan's, although couched in a Marxist language. The Soviet authorities aimed to modernise agriculture by the method they considered best suited to it, the creation of collective farms. While doing so, they also had to feed the towns and the armed forces while continuing to export grain. The policy proved disastrous and led to famine in 1932–1934. Stalin, who could not admit failure and change policy, claimed instead that "kulaks" were waging war against the Soviet state and must be defeated. His policy was applied in other grain-growing regions of the Soviet Union, not only in Ukraine. But he became especially concerned about Ukrainian nationalism, remembering the civil war and the Polish attempts to exploit Ukrainian nationalism. He feared that Ukraine might break away and join Poland. He, therefore, applied the policy with greater harshness in Ukraine

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5 Coogan, *The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy*.

6 *ibid*, 177.

than elsewhere in order to weaken the Ukrainian population's capacity to resist.<sup>7</sup>

The Holodomor does not fit the UN definition of genocide of 1948, but that is because that definition was formulated partly under Soviet influence: the Soviets wanted to confine the term to an attempt to eliminate an entire population under racist ideology. It does, however, fit the lawyer Raphael Lemkin's original definition, with its emphasis on eliminating the conditions for the continuing existence of a distinct ethnic group, especially by action against its political, cultural and economic elites. The hunger policy was not at first conceived with a deliberately anti-Ukrainian bias, but it acquired one when Stalin considered the danger from Poland.<sup>8</sup>

The two famines offer a terrible but illuminating perspective on England's failure to integrate Ireland into a shared state and on Russia's analogous failure with Ukraine. Like Ireland in the British Empire, Ukraine remained an anomaly in Russia. Their tense relationship results partly from the fact that both countries claim their origin to be in the same city: Kyiv. Kyivan Rus was a major European state, like its west European equivalent, the empire of Charlemagne. It fell apart for the same reasons as Charlemagne's – it was impossible within the means of the time to sustain a large federal state – but also for the additional reason that it was vulnerable to assaults by steppe nomads.

In the south-western principalities separated from Muscovite Rus by the nomadic invasions, the introduction of Magdeburg Law for the cities and the Lithuanian Statute for the countryside established a certain legal consciousness, which was inherited by Ukraine's Cossack Hetmanate.<sup>9</sup> These basic legal provisions provided the potential framework for a sovereign state; they had the drawback, though, that they offered few defensible rights to

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7 Martin, *The Affirmative Action Empire*.

8 In my account of the Ukrainian famine I have relied greatly on Applebaum, *Red Famine*.

9 Ed. Note. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania and, later, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth incorporated these lands after 1345. The Hetmanate existed from 1648 to 1781 in what is today central and southern Ukraine.

the peasants, and in effect excluded them from citizenship, as in Europe east of the Elbe generally. On the vulnerable borders of the Polish-Lithuanian kingdom, grew an alternative focus for such a state – the Cossack communities who acted as frontier troops for the kingdom. They negotiated their own rights and freedoms within it, which, though much contested, supplied the basic material for a constitution. The memory of those rights was revived in 1917 as Ukraine declared autonomy, then full independence. Its first decrees adopted the Cossack term: *Universals*.

Hence, while the northeastern part of the Rus state was becoming Muscovy, and then the Russian Empire, the historical foundations of the Ukrainian state were vaguer, less consolidated and more dispersed. Nevertheless, they certainly did exist. To those already mentioned must be added a distinctive church, the Greek Catholic Church, founded by the Union of Brest in 1596, Orthodox in liturgy and self-governing, but in communion with the Pope and Roman Catholic churches. Many Ruthenian-Ukrainian nobles and Cossacks did not support it, but its establishment helped to generate a revival of Ukrainian Orthodoxy itself in the seventeenth century.

Ukraine's close connection with Rome, Poland and the west, made its culture and legal consciousness distinct and in many ways more advanced than Muscovite Rus. Ukrainian elites actually helped to consolidate the Russian imperial state after the uprising led by Bohdan Khmelnytsky in 1648 and the Treaty of Pereiaslav, which had the effect of subordinating the Hetmanate to Muscovy. The Ukrainian nobles and leading Cossacks thus became members of the Russian imperial *dvorianstvo*, and some of them played a prominent role in the governance and expansion of the Russian Empire in the eighteenth century. A notable example was Kyril Razumovsky, the last Hetman of the Zaporozhian Cossack Host, who became a field marshal in the Russian army. Ukrainian scholars, clergymen, musicians and artists devoted themselves to Russian cultural and intellectual life, and moved it in a western European direction, having benefited from a Jesuit education. Feofan Prokopovych, who studied in Kyiv and Rome,

became the leading ideologist of the emperor's absolute power and of the subordination of the church to state.

In spite of this lasting Western influence, during the nineteenth century, Ukraine became provincialised, a region of the Russian Empire, known as "Little Russia". Paradoxically, it became a victim of the relatively late and weak development of Russian [*Russkii*] national (as distinct from imperial) consciousness. The Ukrainian national project was a permanent rival to the Russian national one; one might even speak of two belated nations trying to define themselves in competition with each other, while both competed with a third, cross-cutting, national project, that of the Poles.<sup>10</sup> But whereas the Russian national project was essentially supra-national, imperial, and therefore diffuse, the Ukrainian one was concentrated on a region and hence, localised and focused. If the Ukrainian national identity could become fully developed, it offered a serious challenge to the integrity of the Russian project. Russia, like England in relation to Ireland, was unable to absorb Ukraine and make it part of Russian culture. That is why Alexander II, in the Ems decree of 1876, took the exceptional step of banning the Ukrainian printed language. This, though, provoked Ukrainian intellectuals and writers to seek refuge in Austrian-ruled Galicia, which thus became an alternative focus and potential base for the Ruthenian-Ukrainian project.

Hence, although a Ukrainian literary language was formed during the nineteenth century, by the early twentieth century Ukraine seemed to have little chance of becoming a separate nation. Not only were the speakers of Ruthenian-Ukrainian dialects living in two separate states (Russia and the Habsburg Monarchy), but within Russia, the elites in the towns of Little Russia were mostly not Ukrainian they were Russian, Jewish, Polish, German, and even Armenian and Greek. The Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church in tsarist-ruled lands had been forcibly incorporated into the Russian Orthodox Church during the

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10 Miller, *The Ukrainian Question: the Russian Empire and Nationalism*; Kappeler, *Ungleiche Brüder: Russen und Ukrainer vom Mittelalter bis zum Gegenwart*.



nineteenth century. Ukrainian professional people had one bastion, though, the *zemstvos*, whose focus on the local economy, health and education, gave a social welfare colouring to Ukrainian nationalism at this stage. The agricultural cooperative movements also provided a forum where educated Ukrainians met for their own regional economic purposes and linked up with the peasants who offered a huge potential reserve of participants for the Ukrainian national project. This was in some ways similar to Irish national identity at this stage, which was strongly linked to the peasantry and the Catholic faith.<sup>11</sup>

The 1917 revolution transformed Ukraine's prospects. The experience of creating an independent state, however fragmented and embattled, galvanised Ukraine's national project. As mentioned earlier, the Ukrainian state's decrees were called *Universals* in a conscious evocation of the seventeenth century Cossack Hosts' authority. This first modern Ukrainian state was destroyed by 1920. However, it was partly revived in the minimised guise of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic. The Soviet Union intended to implement an even more radical version of France's imperial ideal of citizenship for everyone. Soviet nationality policy aimed to modernise peoples who had not yet reached the threshold of the national consciousness - although only as the first stage on the road to proletarian internationalism. The flowering [*rassvet*] of national consciousness was to be followed by their mutual *rapprochement* [*sbliuzhenie*] and eventual amalgamation [*sliianie*], as full citizens of a proletarian international state. The first stage of the policy was to be promoted by "indigenisation [*korenizatsiia*]" in which the non-Russian republics were encouraged and helped to generate their own administrative and economic cadres and to develop their own languages and cultures.

This policy implied the relative downplaying of Russian national consciousness: The Russian Republic, the RSFSR, although it contained 90% of the territory and 72% of the

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11 Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness in Twentieth Century Ukraine*.

population of the USSR, had weaker powers than any of the 14 other republics. It had no government of its own, no capital city of its own, and above all no republican Communist Party. Russian national identity was subsumed in Soviet institutions. Yurii Slezkine has likened this situation to that of a communal apartment in which each nationality had its own separate room – except the Russians. They lived in the kitchen, hallway and bathroom and got in everyone else’s way, but had no definite space of their own. The Russians were the rulers of the Soviet Union, but they were also its victims.<sup>12</sup>

*Korenizatsiia* aimed to bring Ukrainian peasants into the modern world. Soviet agents ardently pursued Ukrainisation in the 1920s. It was intended to be only a pathway to Russian and proletarian internationalism – although in practice it did not work out that way. Primary school tuition was in Ukrainian, even for most non-Ukrainians. By 1933, 88% of primary schools in Ukraine taught in Ukrainian (not necessarily well, but still they did), even for Russians, Jews, Poles and other ethnic groups living there, some of whom bitterly resented seeing their children learn what they considered a farmyard dialect.<sup>13</sup> Ukrainian national consciousness was given new impetus by its use in education, and also by the deliberate standardisation of the Ukrainian literary language. By the 1930s, peasants moving into towns had become nationally conscious Ukrainians, having been educated in their own language rather than Russian. This was unprecedented: the towns were gradually becoming Ukrainian in culture.<sup>14</sup> However, the army, the Communist Party and the security police remained Moscow-centred and Russian, while the framework of the 5-year economic plans was also all-Soviet. *Korenizatsiia* stood out as an anomaly in contrast to the centralised nature of the Soviet Union.

This is presumably why in 1931–1933 an abrupt change of policy took place: Stalin dubbed Ukrainisation “bourgeois nationalism” and accused it of being responsible for the crisis over

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12 Slezkine, “The USSR as Communal Apartment.”

13 Applebaum, *Red Famine*, 77–8

14 Krawchenko, *Social Change and National Consciousness*.

both food and the potential fragmentation of the Soviet Union. As we have seen, he was especially worried about Polish intentions in Ukraine – after all, the Polish-Soviet war was only a decade in the past: hence the unique double purge, 1932–1933 and 1937–1938, of the Ukrainian Communist leadership and of all Ukrainian institutions. The Ukrainian language was “cleansed” of Polish elements, but was not banned and was still widely used.

In 1944, as the Germans were driven out, all Ruthenians (Ukrainians and Belorussians), whatever their pre-1939 national status, were for the first time united on their own territories. But what they gained was nothing like independence. On the contrary, they were submitted to full-scale Sovietisation of their economic, educational cultural and political life. However, industrialisation brought millions of rural Ukrainians, educated under *korenizatsiia*, into the cities, which thereby became partly Ukrainised in language and culture.

In the later stages of the Soviet Union, Ukraine became a vital pivot. Ukrainians formed 15% of the Soviet population, Belorussians about 4%. If one added them to the 50% or so of Russians, the East Slavs formed a 2/3 majority. Without Ukraine, that demographic domination was far less secure. The Ukrainian declaration of sovereignty in 1990 and the citizens’ rejection of the Soviet state in the referendum of December 1991 was decisive in causing the break up of the Soviet Union – and essentially of the Russian empire.

Soviet nationality policy, in general, stimulated mass national consciousness and then suppressed it – a uniquely explosive mixture. It can be argued that the most significant long-term achievement of the Soviet Union was not “proletarian internationalism,” but the creation of nations and nation-states where none had previously existed or had existed only in elite embryo. Unquestionably one of them was Ukraine.

What is the situation today? Earlier I argued that the Russians and the English have much in common, the result of being the principal ethnos in an empire whose residual memory neither succeeded in exorcising. Most of the Irish people have escaped it, but the British Empire survived, even after the end of

its formal existence, in the attenuated but still powerful form of the City of London's international financial role, which continues to provide investment for many countries in the world and to draw considerable income from them. Since the "Big Bang" of 1986, which opened London's financial institutions to foreign competition, that role has expanded even more dramatically, even though British ownership of British banks has yielded in most cases to ownership by international conglomerates. Up until recently, the City of London has been one of the two most important financial centres in the world (the other being New York), though it is now essentially international rather than British.

For most of the British population, however, this world financial dominance has proved a mixed blessing, to say the least. International financial markets function best when there is free trade between nations – or something as close to it as practical. Since the 1980s many traditional British industries have been closed down in the face of foreign competition, with minimal plans for redevelopment and retraining, throwing millions of workers into long-term unemployment or, at best, into intermittent, unstable and poorly paid, jobs. Many international firms take their profits, and either pay tax on them in other countries where tax rates are lower or hide them in tax havens – many of which, ironically, are British dependencies. Deprived of substantial tax income, British governments have privatised many of the organisations providing social services such as health care and education, and have drastically cut back expenditure on social care and social security benefits.<sup>15</sup>

In both Britain and the EU, a substantial minority, and in some countries a majority, of the population feels that the economy no longer works for them, since they no longer have secure jobs and the social safety net has been rendered threadbare. They connect this perception with the intrusive operation of remote international firms and institutions, and also with recently increased immigration, resulting partly from the domination of

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<sup>15</sup> Hosking, *Trust: A History*, 160–70.

international financial institutions, and partly from the enlargement of the EU. They can no longer have confidence in their economic future, nor can they trust the human solidarity embodied in the symbolism of national identity and the fiscal covenant guaranteed by the nation-state.<sup>16</sup> The yearning for a lost nation-state able to provide them with jobs and social security, along with lingering great power nostalgia, has been the principal impetus behind the Brexit referendum result of 2016, which has damaged Britain's standing in the world and is likely to weaken its economy. Ironically, the Irish Republic, having become independent of Britain a century ago, has, relatively speaking, flourished since the 1990s, thanks not least to its membership of the EU.

Among Russians too, the loss of empire, together with the devastating impact of integration into international financial markets in the 1990s, has generated a sense of being betrayed and exploited by foreigners, and nostalgia for lost great power status. This has been the driving motive behind Vladimir Putin's reassertion of Russia's world role and his incomplete revival of empire and explains his relative popularity during the 2000s and 2010s.

In both countries great power nostalgia has led to extremely damaging policies: in the British case, Brexit isolates and weakens Britain and even threatens to break it up; in the Russian case, the annexation of Crimea and the attempt to annex parts of Ukraine have isolated Russia internationally and consolidated the national identity of Ukraine, thus, paradoxically, actually *undermining* Russia's great power role in the world. Ukrainian oligarchs are hangovers from the later stages of the Soviet Union when the nomenklatura elite was busy transforming its political power into economic power by taking over the lion's share of the Union's resources.<sup>17</sup> Their dominance in many vital economic fields like

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16 *ibid.* 188-9.

17 Ed. Note. Nomenklatura refers to two lists. One was a list of key government positions. Another was a list of people party officials considered eligible to hold those positions. Those who held the posts received status and privileges according to the position they held.

energy, industry, transport, and the media, has gifted them with great political power, which they have exploited to annex a considerable proportion of the Ukrainian nation's resources for the enrichment of their patron-client cliques.

In both Ukraine and Britain, Russia has been trying to subvert democratic political structures. There is one especially insidious way in which Putin's Russia subverts British democracy, and it is possible only because of the complicity of some of Britain's financial elites. Britain has become the accomplice of Russian oligarchs in the laundering of corrupt or criminal money through the City of London and the Overseas Dependencies. As the Parliamentary Foreign Affairs Committee reported in May 2018, "the assets stored and laundered in London both directly and indirectly support President Putin's campaign to subvert the international rules-based system, undermine our allies and erode the mutually-reinforcing international networks that support UK foreign policy."<sup>18</sup> Such practices also exacerbate the inequalities in British society and obstruct the government's declared policy of registering the ownership of overseas assets held in Britain in order to tax them properly. Glaring inequalities, and a tax regime that is irresolute in enforcing its own rules, both weaken the liberal democracy.

Ukraine's democracy is much newer and more fragile than Britain's. But democratic institutions certainly exist, and they are effective, as is revealed by the diversity of its media and by the successful conduct of parliamentary and presidential elections. Moreover, Ukraine is tackling corruption much more consciously and seriously than Britain. It has a variety of official institutions whose *raison d'être* is combating corruption: a national agency to formulate policy, an investigatory bureau, a special prosecutor's office to prepare and issue indictments and a special court to judge alleged offences. No one can pretend that these institutions have failed to act effectively. There are numerous instances where

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18 House of Commons Foreign Affairs Select Committee report, 21 May 2018, article 20.

politicians and oligarchs have impeded their progress, but they have survived and continue to operate.<sup>19</sup>

In Britain, there are official government institutions that perform equivalent functions, but they have been largely inactive in recent years, especially in dealing with Russian financial and cybercrime. Early in 2019, the parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee warned that “Russia’s cyber capability, when combined with its willingness to deploy it in a malicious capacity, is a matter of grave concern, and poses an immediate and urgent threat to our national security.”<sup>20</sup> Yet, the British government chose to delay the publication of their report for a whole year for reasons which have not been explained, but which look highly suspicious.

When the Soviet Union collapsed, we in the West dreamed of a “convergence” in which Russia would become more like us. It now seems possible that the convergence is taking place the other way round: with the help of financial malpractice, Britain is becoming more like Russia!

I am aware that this paper has become a comparison between England and Russia, and even between Britain and Ukraine, while Ireland has almost disappeared from the comparison. I make no apology for this, for that is where the logic of my investigations has led me. Both England and Russia have been impelled by great power nostalgia into self-damaging actions which drew in Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and Ukraine from the seventeenth to the early twenty-first centuries. Ireland’s future may yet be destabilised by the damaging consequences of Brexit. Ukraine’s self-defence against Russian military incursion and financial corruption, much of which originates in Russia, is one of the decisive struggles of our contemporary world.

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19 Makarenko, “Why Post-Euromaidan Anti-Corruption Reform in Ukraine Is Still a Success.”

20 Parliamentary Intelligence and Security Committee Report on Russia, 2019, article 13.

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### 3. INTERSECTIONS OF MODERN IRISH AND UKRAINIAN HISTORY

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#### ABSTRACT

Although geographically on the opposite sides of Europe, Ireland and Ukraine have much in common. The histories of both countries have been dominated by the interference of larger powers in their affairs. For centuries, neither Ireland nor Ukraine was on the world map, but rather were provinces or sub-units within the imperial structures that had conquered them militarily. Both countries experienced famine, forced population displacement, language bans, and secessionism, but not necessarily simultaneously. Britain and Russia feared Ireland and Ukraine would be used as a base for foreign attack and this provided one of the motivations for invasion and occupation. The formal end of the empire did not extinguish imperial modes of thinking. Ukraine and Ireland were considered to be in Russia and Britain's respective spheres of interest, and official thinking in Moscow and London suggested that their former colonies could not be treated as equals, or, indeed, as fully sovereign states with divergent interests.

Великобританія і Росія побоювалися, що Ірландія і Україна будуть використані як база для іноземного вторгнення, що забезпечило одну з мотивацій для навали й окупації. Протягом століть ні Ірландія, ні Україна не були представлені на мапі світу, а радше були провінціями чи частинами в імперських структурах, які завоювали їх військовою силою. Обидві країни пережили голод, вимушене переміщення населення, мовні утиски, і відділення, але не завжди одночасно. Формальний кінець імперії не затушкував імперські способи мислення. Україна та Ірландія вимальовувалися у відповідних сферах інтересів й офіційного мислення Росії та Британії, позаяк у Москві і Лондоні вважали, що до їх колишніх колоній не можна ставитися як до рівних, або, справді, як до цілком суверенних держав із відмінними інтересами.

#### **When hope and history rhymed**

Arguably, the time when the histories of Ireland and Ukraine most closely aligned was between 1914 and 1923 when the tumult of World War I collapsed empires and facilitated the (re)birth of new states. In 1915, the front page of *Nationality*, an Irish

nationalist newspaper edited by Sinn Féin's founder, Arthur Griffith, argued that "If England in Ireland has learned much from her Russian ally, Russia on her part, has been taught true Imperial lessons by her British exemplar."<sup>1</sup> The paper noted that British imperial rule in Ireland was more refined than that employed by Russia in Ukraine for the simple reason that the former had greater experience over a longer period of time: "of course England's government of small nationalities has had a long start of Russia ... you cannot bridge two centuries in 12 months." *Nationality* emphasised that, during its recent and short-lived occupation of Austrian Ukraine (eastern Galicia), Russia had used:

imperial methods in the raw undeveloped stage - religious and political persecution, prescription of language and press destruction of schools, libraries, and museums, and the whole paraphernalia common to all conquests in Ireland. Russia adopted exactly the same methods as prevailed in Ireland in the great and glorious days of the Tudors. Among these was the wholesale and forcible export of Ukrainian children from Galicia. These children, speaking only their own language and practising their own religion, were placed in homes in Moscow, Petrograd doubtless being too close to the front. There they will in time become 'happy little Russian children.' speaking Russian, worshipping in the orthodox churches, and fated some day to become traitors to their country - unless, as occasionally happened in Ireland, they produce a Hugh O'Neill.<sup>2</sup>

As World War I drew to a close, both Ireland and Ukraine struggled for self-determination. With the overthrow of the tsar in Russia, Ukraine's strides towards independence attracted interest and admiration in Ireland. On 16 February 1918, *Nationality* commented:

Many people when they read of the conclusion of peace between the Central Powers and the Ukrainian Republic wondered what the Ukraine was - the very name of Ukrainia [sic] had disappeared from the maps and gazetteers of the world; and the nation ... was disguised under the names of half a dozen Russian provinces, such as "Podolia" and "Kieff" ... The Ukrainians have been described by an English writer as "the Irishmen of Russia" - their virtues being depicted as intelligence, courtesy, love of

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1 "News of the Nationalities," *Nationality*, 18 September 1915. See also "The Wealth of Ukraine," *The Irishman*, 28 April 1917.

2 Ibid. Although educated in London, Hugh O'Neill proved to be the most dangerous rebel England faced at the turn of the seventeenth century.