



ІРЛАНДІЯ, УКРАЇНА ТА ІМПЕРІЇ:

ЗАЛЕЖНІСТЬ. КОНФЛІКТ. ПАМ'ЯТЬ

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The influence of former imperial powers on Ukraine and Ireland

by Ostap Kushnir

Delivered on November 15, 2019
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in Kyiv

Introduction

This research aims to assess the relations of Ireland and Ukraine towards their former colonial powers and uncover whether these relations have already reached the point of “normality”.

I will scrutinise the nature and depth of transformations in the three sectors of Ireland’s and Ukraine’s identity and political life: **(i) institutionalism, (ii) education and (iii) media.**

Through addressing these three sectors, I plan to assess the continuous impact of the foreign rule on the indigenous way of **(i) order-making, (ii) identity-building and (iii) identity-retaining.**



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Colonialism and de-colonisation

I intend to apply the framework developed by Lorenzo Veracini to explain the British impact on Ireland. He specifically elaborated on the issue of the settler colonialism.

Settler colonialism generally entails **a sharp, continuous and long-lasting increase of foreign population in otherwise ethnically homogeneous space.**

I am inclined to connect the successful de-colonisation with the time **when the descendants of settlers abandon the “imperial bound” of their predecessors.** This requires their free-will alignment to – or acceptance of – the indigenous identity and order.



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Tackling colonial legacy: political institutions

Ireland

The administrative and legislative backbone: the Westminster model + the European laws + local laws.

Since the mid-1990s, governed by the coalition governments (i.e. no dominant political parties).

The existence of the Constitution and the Constitutional process (1922, 1937). National elites at the dawn of independence. Stability of the Constitution since 1937.

The 1922-1937 political processes targeted to wipe-out the British presence. However, the ruling Conservative party relied on the inherited institutions and bureaucracy.

From the mid-1990s to 2012: a healthy and indigenous institutions-building.



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Tackling colonial legacy: political institutions

Ukraine

Legal tradition mainly draws from the Russian and Soviet tradition.

The Constitution was adopted in 1996 (five years after the independence). Underwent amendments and annulations in 2004, 2010 and 2014. The Constitution is “unstable”.

Ukraine’s independence was negotiated by the Soviet-bred leaders in the 1990s.

The earliest sovereign policy- and law-making did not aim to eradicate the Russian influence. Not only the bureaucratic post-colonial system remained in Ukraine, but the bureaucrats themselves.



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Tackling colonial legacy: media

Ireland

15th position in the “Press Freedom Index” in 2019.

The British media policies allowed for the growth of political diversity.

The government invested a lot of resources into the creation of a controlled media-space after 1922. RTÉ was the radio monopolist up to 1989. This had some logic behind it.

Firstly, targeted media-messages helped to cope with the outcomes of the War of Independence and the Civil war in the 1920s. Secondly, the government perceived the radio and television as tools for language revival. Thirdly, the government used the media to curb the support of the British and Irish radicals.

The British authorities tolerated the RTÉ broadcasts to Northern Ireland during the Troubles. The British believed that the RTÉ would help in resolving the conflict.



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Tackling colonial legacy: media

Ireland

As for today:

- (i) the British media can run their business in a comparatively transparent environment;
- (ii) the government of the Republic eased its grip on the media and stopped utilising it as a political tool;
- (iii) the presence of the British media is not perceived by all strata of the Irish population as a colonial pressure;
- (iv) a large number of the joint Irish-British media corporations and international businesses emerged.



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Tackling colonial legacy: media

Ireland

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Tackling colonial legacy: media

Ukraine

102nd position in the “Press Freedom Index” in 2019. This has much to do with the post-Soviet legacy.

Political establishment and oligarchs exercise control over the media. Historically, Russian media have always been rigorously supervised, even censored.

Ukrainian government never clearly regarded the media as a tool for national revival.

The government never consistently regulated the media-space what allowed the Russian-based media to be licensed in Ukraine right after the independence.

Ukrainian media are jammed when broadcasting onto the Donbas and Crimea. Not to mention broadcasting onto the Kuban’ or Green / Grey Klyns.

Unlike the UK, Russia as a former colonial power is interested in strengthening its media presence in Ukraine, but prevents Ukraine from any interference into its media-space.



Tackling colonial legacy: education

Ireland

British 19th century education (1830-1880ss) contributed nothing to the indigenous identity.

Catholic church consistently withstood the Irish interests. In 1884 the government in London agreed to finance denominational training colleges, known as the Catholic schools today.

On gaining independence, the government introduced minor reforms. Structures and institutions remained. The content of subjects underwent nationalisation. The so-called “policy insulation” started.

The major reform in Irish education took place in 1965-75. The influence of the state and clergy crumbled and the educational institutions became more independent.

The contemporary education in the Republic looks more like the European and American, not the British. According to OECD, it is one of the most innovative in Europe.

The high enrolments to the Catholic schools in Northern Ireland demonstrate that the existing British policies allow the Irish students to preserve their identities.



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Tackling colonial legacy: education

Ukraine

Ukrainian system of education experienced a much more destructive impact of the Russian colonial rule if to compare with the British impact on Ireland.

The Russian imperial government regularly imposed new bans on the Ukrainian education: the Valuev Circular of 1863 (banning Ukrainian books and language at schools) and the Ems Ukaz of 1876 (banning the Ukrainian language in print).

Training colleges of the Irish type were impossible to emerge in Ukraine.

The Soviet reforms came even harsher. It became impossible to gain any Ukrainian education in the USSR.

On gaining independence, the government decided to keep the colonial educational institutions. However, no “policy insulation” was implemented.



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Tackling colonial legacy: education

Ukraine

As for the mid-2010s, the Ukrainian system of education is inward-looking and irrelevant. Graduate students lacked professional skills and knowledge to be successful in the market.

The notable educational reforms and turn towards the European standards took place after the Euromaidan.

As of the mid-2018, there were no full-time schools in Russia with the Ukrainian language of instruction. Moreover, the public libraries which contain books in Ukrainian are regularly shut down for the alleged “extremism”.



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Conclusions

Having assessed the ingenuity of institutions (order-making), media (identity-retaining) and education (identity-building), it is reasonable to conclude that **the Republic of Ireland should no longer be perceived as the post-colonial state**. It resembles a well-rounded European entity, open for trade, exchange of ideas and investments.

In its turn, **the UK also seems to reach the point of “normality” in relations with Ireland**. At least, this can be deduced from the British acceptance of and support to the Irish identity in Northern Ireland.

Unlike Ireland, **Ukraine is yet to heal its colonial traumas, which are often underestimated**.

Russia is far from accepting the “normality” in its relations with Ukraine. No Ukrainian schools are functioning within its borders. Ukrainian media are either not licensed to broadcast on the Russian territories, or jammed. Ukrainian political elites are not recognized unless they align to the Russian colonial expectations.





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**Thank you for
attention**