



Ukraine's Place in the Comparative History of Empires

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При використанні матеріалів статті обов'язковим є посилання на її автора з повним бібліографічним описом видання, у якому опубліковано статтю. Дана електронна копія статті може бути скопійована, роздрукована і передана будь-якій особі без обмежень права користування за обов'язкової наявності першої (даної) сторінки з повним бібліографічним описом статті. При повторному розміщенні статті у мережі Інтернет обов'язковим є посилання на сайт Східного інституту українознавства імені Ковальських.

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UKRAINE'S PLACE IN THE COMPARATIVE HISTORY OF EMPIRES

Since 1991 it has become common to see the Soviet Union as an empire, and its non-Russian republics as a species of colony. Use of these terms is important because it bears on the legitimacy of the Soviet Union and its successors, on the inevitability or otherwise of the Union's collapse, and on the foundation myths of the new and still insecure post-Soviet states. The aim of this article is to see how accurate and how illuminating it is to think in these imperial and colonial terms, in particular when they are applied to Ukraine, and to Ukraine's relationship with the tsarist and Soviet states, and with the Russian nation. I try to do this partly by comparing Ukraine's role within the tsarist and Soviet empires with that of other empires' colonies and provinces.

Care is required when discussing colonies, imperialism and empires. The dominant definition of the term empire sees it as a relationship between dominant core territory and subordinate periphery. This relationship usually entails economic exploitation. In addition, the ruling metropolitan nation enjoys political rights which are denied to its colonised peoples. This definition is derived from the experience of modern West European maritime empires. Not merely were core and periphery divided by oceans and usually of different race and colour. Not merely was the metropolitan people generally much richer than the non-European one. In addition, by 1900 Britain, France and the Netherlands were nations, in other words polities in which the government was in principle responsible to a sovereign citizenry.

Europe and its American descendants dominate the globe, so it is not surprising that it is their experience of empire that has given birth to the most common definition of the term. In addition, the twentieth-century Marxist concept of imperialism was derived from the European maritime model: this concept was at the core of the ideological struggle that was itself a key part of the Cold War. Though the Cold War is over, the enormous gap in wealth and power between First and Third Worlds remains one of the most important elements in contemporary global politics. Since the emergence of this disparity had much to do with the history of the West European maritime

empires, it is not surprising that it is these empires which still hold most peoples' attention.

It is, however, important to remember that there have been other types of empire in history. Great land empires, dominated by warrior castes, ruled over by supposedly autocratic monarchs, and sometimes embodying a great religion and high civilisation have existed since antiquity. In many of these empires the aristocratic ruling elites identified with men of their own class, not with plebeians: ethnicity mattered little. Empires which embodied a great religion such as Islam might also be quite different to the European national empires of 1900. Common religion was a basis for a single imperial community, in which true believers of many ethnic backgrounds might enter the ruling elites. In many pre-modern empires both political prudence and logistics ensured that the core population was exploited more ruthlessly than the inhabitants of the periphery. Once the core people became a sovereign citizenry this option was ruled out.

Russia and the Soviet Union were hybrid empires, fitting precisely into no type of empire but spanning a number of them. Their links to the tradition of autocratic, land-based, military empire are obvious. The Russian people were never citizens and were never truly sovereign in tsarist or Soviet times. For most of its existence the tsarist empire was more a dynastic and aristocratic polity than a Russian, national one. Like most empires, however, the tsarist one evolved over time. By 1914 its rulers were attempting to steer their empire in a Russian, national direction. The tsars' communist successors tried to create a polity that would embody and sustain a universal religion of salvation. In principle at least, that set them far apart from the rulers of late imperial Russia. Yet under Stalin and his successors the Soviet empire also evolved, taking on some aspects of traditional tsarist imperialism while continuing to reject others. Nevertheless, in many fundamental ways both the tsarist and Soviet empires were part of the expansion of Europe. They derived their ideologies and their technologies largely from Europe. The last gasp of Europe's territorial expansion at Asia's expense was Khrushchev's Virgin Lands scheme in the 1950s.

There were in fact always many empires in Russia simultaneously. Expansion into Siberia, for instance, evokes comparisons with French fur-based imperialism, the colonisation of the steppe is part of the history of European farmers' defeat of nomadism. But the acute Russian sense of inferiority and threat in the face of German, Polish and Jewish minorities in the nineteenth-century Western Borderlands is closer to Malay, African or

Indonesian attitudes to Indian or Chinese minorities than it is to typical European colonial perspectives at that time. Moreover there have been many empires not just in Russia but also in Ukraine. Odessa before 1914 was a New World city, created from nothing by nineteenth-century colonists and linking the global economy to a newly opened up Ukrainian region of wheat-fields in a manner which had obvious parallels in the Americas and Australasia. Habsburg Galicia or ancient Ukrainian-Russian-Polish-Jewish Kiev have very different imperial parallels.

In my view it is useful to compare Ukraine's history under empire and the impact of empire on Ukraine to the history of other empires' colonies. Parallels do exist and comparison in any case helps clear-thinking. In the Ukrainian case, however, such comparisons above all bring out Ukraine's uniqueness. In this article I will stress four points: Ukraine's enormous geopolitical importance to the Russian and Soviet empires; the close and ambiguous relationship between Russian and Ukrainian ethnicity; the historical division of Ukraine between different imperial polities; the untypical nature of tsarist and Soviet empire, and the specific impact this had on its non-Russian provinces. In each of these four cases one can to varying degrees find parallels to Ukraine in the experience of other empires. Taken together, however, these four points go far towards explaining Ukraine's uniqueness.

Let us take the last point first, in other words the specific nature of the Russian and Soviet empires. The tsarist polity into which Ukraine was incorporated in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was an aristocratic empire. A key aspect of incorporation was the granting to Ukrainian elites of all the privileges of the Russian nobility. This meant not just the enfranchisement of the peasants and full noble property rights as regards land, but also the possibility of careers even at the very top of the imperial court and its military and administrative services. In this sense Ukraine's experience was totally different to that of European overseas colonies, whose native elites (e.g. Indian princes under Britain) sometimes enjoyed great power and status in a colony but almost never at the imperial centre.

The Ukrainian experience was far more familiar within Europe, almost all of whose polities in those centuries were based on some variant of the royal-noble compromise. The Ukrainian case differed significantly, however, even from the somewhat analogous Scottish or Habsburg ones. Hungary and Bohemia came to the Habsburgs by dynastic succession and with all their constitutional rights and their separate identity intact. Subsequently the

Habsburg crown tried but never fully succeeded in whittling these rights and this identity away, especially in Hungary. In the Scottish case too, the dynastic union of 1603 was consolidated in 1707 by a merger between the two states, which enjoyed the support of much of the Scottish political nation. In time this union was legitimised not just by the fact that Scotland retained most of its traditional laws and institutions, but also by the immense wealth, power and status that the United Kingdom acquired in the eyes both of its own peoples and foreigners.

The Russo-Ukrainian union was to a much greater extent simply imposed by tsarist power, it uprooted local laws and institutions, and it denied civil and political rights even to members of the elite, both in Russia and elsewhere in the empire. This latter point is one reason for the emergence of anti-tsarist Ukrainian nationalism in the mid-nineteenth century, at just the moment when Scots appeared most reconciled to the union with England. It was in any case easier to sustain the legitimacy of a Britain which was the world's richest and most powerful state than to evoke pride in a tsarist Russia which was not merely a despotism but also between 1854 and 1914 a relatively backward and unsuccessful great power.

In these decades tsarist Russia faced the great dilemma of modern empire. Power required continental scale but the latter implied multi-ethnicity and therefore vulnerability in the era of nationalism. The lesson of modern European history seemed to be that homogeneous national communities were more stable in peace and more formidable in war than polyglot empires. In an era of growing literacy, urbanisation and mass political activity, the state and social order could not be sustained by the old alliance of crown and aristocracy.

Tsarism's answer to this dilemma was to attempt to legitimise itself in Russian nationalist terms and to create as large as possible a homogeneous Russian nation at the empire's core, though this policy was never pursued unequivocally and was restrained not merely by prudence but also by the regime's limited resources. Ukrainians were inevitable targets of these imperial policies. If Ukrainian and Belorussian peasants acquired a Russian or East Slav consciousness during the process of education and urbanisation then the empire's population would be more than two-thirds Russian. If on the other hand they acquired a strong sense of Ukrainian (and Belorussian) identity then the empire's survival would be at risk. The stakes were therefore very high. The best way to sum up the effects of tsarist policy in Ukraine was that they further alienated the emerging Ukrainian middle and

lower-middle classes, without turning the Ukrainian masses into Russians. On the other hand, they did retard the growth of Ukrainian consciousness in the peasantry, thus playing an important role in the failure of a Ukrainian nation-state to survive in 1918-21.

The Soviet attempt to create a universal socialist civilisation and polity had more in common with Islamic empire or the Habsburgs in the Counter-Reformation era than with nineteenth-century European empires. This socialist civilisation was to form a modern, Soviet citizen, on whose support the regime's legitimacy and survival would depend in the long run. The Soviet regime's handling of minority nationalities differed crucially from Ottoman and Habsburg practices. It is true that before the liberalising reforms of Maria Theresa and Joseph II the Habsburg Counter-Reformation state demanded religious uniformity from its subjects, in a way that was never true of the Ottomans. At the core of the Ottoman treatment both of Muslims and of minority communities was a belief in the very circumscribed sphere of politics and the state. The family, culture, education, most of everyday life and much of economic activity lay largely beyond the state's remit in the realms of religion, custom and private activity. Increasingly from the mid-eighteenth century, and definitively after 1867, the Austrian state accepted the liberal principle of a modern, civil society and capitalist economy autonomous from the state. Unlike the Ottomans, the Soviet regime did not emerge seven centuries after its would-be universal religion was established, and its kingdom was definitely in this world, in the spheres of economics, politics and culture. It could recognise no truly autonomous spheres of activity, and least of all a sphere dominated by the capitalist economic enemy. Because of its totalitarian aspirations, the Soviet regime stunted the autonomous development of all its peoples in a way that was untrue of the Ottomans and later Habsburgs.

In the Austrian Empire, the historic provinces seldom coincided with ethnic frontiers. Tsarist Russia had less concern than the Habsburgs for history and the Bolsheviks none at all. Unlike the Austro-Marxists, the Soviet regime explicitly linked ethnicity to territoriality, and established a federal, constitutional structure which was only viable so long as true power remained in the hands of the non-federal, non-democratic and highly centralised party apparatus. As in the Soviet case, from the 1950s India accepted the reorganisation of historic provinces into (as far as possible) ethno-territorial units. From its inception, however, the Indian Republic was based on genuine popular sovereignty, and on compromises between the centre and elected local elites. The language of

the ethnic majority was not defined as the language of state. Indian nationalism from its origins under British rule had usually tried to be anti-colonial and modernising, rather than ethnic. India is a multi-ethnic federation much more than it is an empire. The Austrian side of the Habsburg Empire was evolving in this direction before 1914.

Gorbachev was probably hoping for a similar evolution in the Soviet Union by 1990 but memory of the tsarist and Soviet imperial past told against him. In any case such momentous evolution is never easy, does not occur overnight, and is especially difficult to achieve in the midst of an economic and political crisis which is devastating the regime's legitimacy. Both the tsarist and Soviet regimes greatly exploited the core, Russian population in the cause of imperial power. Both regimes imploded at the centre partly as a result of the Russian people's revolt against empire's burdens, and autocratic regimes designed to impose these burdens on the Russian people without asking their consent. . In the process independence was almost thrust upon many non-Russian peoples who in most cases had not developed powerful independence movements and whom the nature of the imperial regime had deprived of any experience of self-government or constitutional politics.

Ukraine was anything but unique in being divided historically between a number of empires. The same was true of most of the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe. Few of Europe's overseas colonies were ethnically homogeneous or possessed great historical legitimacy. Empires often create large territorial units: they possess great resources drawn from outside the region and they often play divide and rule between its many princes and centres of power. When empire falls, therefore, there can be great difficulties in consolidating and legitimising effective state power with local resources alone. This is particularly true nowadays since only democratic regimes are viewed as fully legitimate in today's world. Building effective power through compromise and consent in large, multi-ethnic, post-colonial polities with no experience of democracy is never easy.

It has not proved easy in Ukraine and the specific Soviet political and economic legacy of empire has not usually helped matters. On the other hand, at least Soviet rule did unite Ukrainians within a single territorial unit with clearly recognised borders. In addition, standards of living and levels of education in 1991 were much higher than in East-Central Europe in 1918 or in most European overseas colonies on the eve of independence. In one sense independence came too quickly to Ukraine: the new state lacked the

legitimacy that a long-drawn-out struggle for independence gave to India's Congress Party or that anti-colonial armed revolts provided to nationalist movements elsewhere. On the other hand, Ukraine avoided the long-term hatreds and the enforced expulsion of ethnic and other minorities that wars of independence often entail. Moreover, the absence of competitive, democratic politics in the Soviet era meant that ethnic communities and the country's different regions were not mobilised against each other when independence came. By the standards of other empires' collapse, Ukraine's fate has been benign. There has been remarkably little bloodshed thus far. Unlike for instance in Ireland, settlers from the dominant imperial people have not seceded, uniting their border province with the former, imperial core. When compared to the difficulties of creating states and nations in post-colonial Africa, or even most of Asia, the problems of post-imperial, Ukrainian state and nation-building should not be insurmountable.

Where historical division between more than one polity is concerned, however, perhaps the most interesting parallels with Ukraine concern irredentism. In the nineteenth century the role of Piedmont in undermining Austrian rule in Italy was seen as a lesson for all later Austrian statesmen. The determination to punish Serbia in 1914 was partly owed to determination not to let her play a similar role. The question then arose what to do with a Serbia that had been punished. Annexation was unacceptable to the Hungarian government, which feared that Serbs would be even more dangerous inside the empire than outside. On the other hand, indirect control of a supposedly independent Serbian client-state would never be easy in the long run, unless total German-Austrian hegemony in Europe had been firmly established by victory in a European war.

In some ways Stalin faced a similar dilemma as regards Western Ukraine, the heartland of Ukrainian nationalism, in 1945. Not surprisingly, he chose annexation: apart from other reasons, the Soviet security police was vastly more ruthless than the Habsburg state (even in Hungary) when it came to crushing nationalist movements. No doubt, Stalin could never have envisaged a moment when a Communist General Secretary would attempt to democratise the Soviet Union, therefore allowing free rein to (among others) Ukrainian nationalists. In a sense the Ukrainian case was similar to the effects of British policy in South Africa. By the 1890s the independent Boer republics were set to become the economic core of southern Africa, in the process drawing the Dutch majority in Britain's Cape Colony into their orbit. Partly for this reason, Britain fought and annexed the two republics in 1899-1902.

Subsequently, however, the next Liberal government granted full self-government to the whole of the newly united South African Federation, thereby ultimately turning over the whole of South Africa to Boer nationalism for forty-five years. The basic rule, confirmed by Ukraine's experience, is that imperial regimes that annex potential irredenta must not then democratise.

The parallel matters because the annexation of Western Ukraine proved so crucial in 1988-91. Many factors destroyed the Soviet Union but territorial overstretch was an important one. It is a fair generalisation that Soviet rule was least legitimate and accepted in the regions annexed by Stalin in the 1940s. The Baltic republics provided leadership and example to all the Soviet nationalist movements. But the Soviet Union could survive the secession of the three Baltic peoples: it could never survive the loss of Ukraine. There were many reasons why Ukraine seceded in 1991. They include economic collapse, the calculations of the Communist nomenklatura elite and a whole range of contingent factors. Nevertheless, the nationalist movement, in which the region annexed in 1945 played a huge role, was very important in exploiting the Soviet crisis, pushing the nomenklatura forward, and providing Ukraine's embattled party leaders with an alternative nationalist strategy and legitimacy.

The close and ambiguous relationship between Russia and Ukraine is a well-trodden subject. I will therefore only discuss it briefly. At the root of the problem is the fact that many key elements in ethno-national identity are shared by the two peoples. These include (usually) a common religion, centuries of shared tsarist and Soviet rule, a common myth about political origins in Kievan Rus, and similar languages. The fact that the two peoples for centuries were surrounded by common enemies of superior power and alien faith helped to cement their union. The Russians and Ukrainians could have become one people. A millennium ago, probably the ancestors of today's Russians and Ukrainians were closer to each other than the Anglo-Saxons, Vikings, Cornishmen and others who came to merge in time into an English nation. Many other modern nations have also been forged out of initially more distinct material.

A number of rather obvious factors created separate Russian and Ukrainian identities over time. Cornishmen, Anglo-Saxons and Danes have lived continuously in a single polity for much longer than Russians and Ukrainians. More important, England is a small country in which dense communications, a commercial and industrial economy, and a large consolidated national elite and middle class have existed for centuries. In the

mid-eighteenth century Russia was already far the biggest state in Europe but its population was smaller than France's and the number of government officials only slightly greater than in Prussia, a kingdom which was one percent of Russia's size. The obstacles to integration of a scattered peasant population into a single national community were immense and remained so down to 1917. In any case it was not until the last decades of its existence that the aristocratic, imperial polity saw much need to create such an integrated national community.

After Russia's defeat in the Crimean War, the imperatives of modernisation and military power, together with considerations of political stability and legitimacy, did make it necessary to cultivate a sense of national community. Not merely, however, did there remain great technical obstacles but politics also intruded. The Russian educated classes were bitterly divided as regards the institutions, symbols, values and historical narratives with which the Russian people should identify. The tsarist state could not afford a dense and well-staffed school network, but it also (from its perspective rightly) distrusted teachers' willingness to inculcate patriotic values into their charges. In 1914 even a Russian nation existed only in embryo. There was little consensus about this nation's identity, little sense of citizenship, and Russian high culture was inaccessible to the still semi-literate masses. In these circumstances there was of course no chance to use education and culture to forge a common Russo-Ukrainian mass identity. By 1914 much of the Ukrainian intelligentsia did have a separate identity, though this was not usually anti-Russian and shared many common elements with the Russian intelligentsia, not least a thoroughgoing dislike for tsarism.

The Soviet regime could to some extent build on a common intelligentsia socialist tradition. Under NEP, in a manner unique among empires, the regime not just tolerated separate communal identities (as many other empires had done) but actually created them and gave them the form of modern ethno-territorial nations. Right down to its demise in 1991, the Soviet regime never abandoned this experiment entirely, though it not merely put growing emphasis on the creation of a common Soviet identity but also increasingly infused it with ethnic Russian components.

At least on paper the overlapping of Russian, Ukrainian and Soviet identities has obvious parallels with English, Scottish and British ones. Inter-marriage and migration created a common East Slav, Soviet identity in some cases, just as similar processes could make early generations of English, Scots and Welsh colonists more British than the metropolitan

population of the United Kingdom. Perhaps the end of the British Empire and its mythology has weakened British identity in a way not wholly dissimilar to the impact on Soviet identity of the collapse of faith in socialist modernity. Nevertheless, the differences are striking. Soviet identity was much more directly and explicitly linked to the regime's ideology. British (let alone English) identity evolved and had deep roots. Soviet identity entailed the uprooting of much of traditional Russian identity, and the very rapid imposition by the state of new values and narratives. In addition, though in some ways autarchy, socialism and isolation from the world community helped to consolidate a Soviet distinct identity, they also contributed to growing Soviet backwardness and inability to compete as a great power. Finally, an obvious but important point: in most cases it was far more painful to be a Soviet subject than a British one.

In geopolitical terms there are clear parallels between the British and Russo-Soviet empires. These states lie on Europe's periphery and much of their history is related to this basic historical fact. The English, Russians and Spaniards created Europe's greatest empires partly because geography helped them to do so. Countries placed on Europe's periphery were far better placed to project Europe's power overseas against weaker non-European polities than was the case with states near the continent's core. Expansion within the continent had to be achieved against neighbouring states of roughly equal power, which could also easily bring this power to bear within Europe's relatively small area. The attempt to expand within Europe usually created coalitions of hostile states, since defence of the European balance of power was a cause to which all but the potential hegemon could subscribe. It was less essential and more difficult to stop Britain expanding in India or Russia in Siberia. Geopolitical logic made Britain and Russia allies against attempts to dominate Europe from a Franco-German base. The two peripheral empires defeated Napoleon, Wilhelm II and Hitler. In the century after 1815, when no potential continental hegemon existed, Britain and Russia competed in the Great Game for the domination of Asia.

Peripherality also goes some way towards explaining Scotland and Ukraine's roles within the British and Russian empires. England and Russia consolidated their fusion with their smaller neighbours partly because geography made it difficult for any other power to stop them. In both cases the crucial period of consolidation was the first decade of the eighteenth century, when the Act of Union was signed and Peter I defeated the Swedes at Poltava. Thereafter the Royal Navy could usually keep all but small French forces out

of Scotland and sheer distance was a major factor in defending Russia's hold on Ukraine. The Habsburgs' difficulties with Hungary provide an interesting contrast. No doubt in the long run there were deep cultural reasons why Habsburg absorption of Hungary was more difficult than the Anglo-Scottish and Russo-Ukrainian mergers. But in the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries there were also much more down-to-earth reasons why Vienna's attempt to impose a centralised, bureaucratic state on the Hungarians failed. One key reason was Ottoman intervention in the seventeenth century and the Prussian threat thereafter. It was actual or potential external support for Hungarian rebels that forced Vienna to abandon centralisation under Leopold I in the 1670s and 1680s, after Joseph II's reforms of the 1780s, and again in 1867.

From 1700 to the mid-twentieth century neither Ukraine nor Scotland had the power to set itself up as an independent state against English and Russian opposition, even had Scottish or Ukrainian elites wished to do so. In the Ukrainian case the first possibility of independence came with the Russian revolution, the disintegration of the Russian Empire, and potential German hegemony in Europe in 1917-18. It is a value judgement whether independence at such a price would have been worthwhile but it is inconceivable that it could have been achieved and sustained without German protection. To do the Germans' justice, the protectorate they offered to a Ukrainian nation state in 1918 was easier to justify in terms of Wilsonian principles of self-determination than the British and French protectorates in the ethnically and historically artificial states which the allies carved out of the Ottoman Empire after the First World War. Ukrainian national identity was still in the process of formation: it was nevertheless far more real than a Syrian, Transjordanian, Lebanese or Iraqi identity.

During the last century only Germany and Russia have had the resources to be Europe's hegemon. The rise of one has usually entailed the fall of the other. Ukraine has been a plaything in their struggle for pre-eminence. In 1945 German defeat consigned Ukraine to Soviet rule. The collapse of the Soviet Union under Gorbachev brought German unification and independence to Ukraine, this time in a geopolitical context in which American power was dominant, and Germany was the core of a new and benign European empire, in other words the European Union. Scotland's geopolitical fate has been much less cruel than Ukraine's, its association with England much more voluntary. But for it too, the emergence of a new Europe and a new global economy has been important. The European Union offers an alternative to the security and the wide market for goods and jobs that the United Kingdom

and the British Empire once provided. Neither the English nor the Russians have found it easy to come to terms with these new geopolitical realities.

For all the similarities, however, it is important to note a key difference between Scotland and Ukraine: Ukraine was on the whole of greater geopolitical significance. This is an imprecise judgement and one whose truth differs over time. Probably it is least true of the early eighteenth century when Ukraine was still undeveloped and Scotland was crucial to England's power because of the economic and demographic resources it brought to the Union, and to England's long-drawn-out struggle with France for imperial and maritime dominance. The Union was also very important in securing (definitively after 1746) England's northern frontier against French intervention, thus allowing resources to be concentrated on continental and imperial ventures.

In the case of the Russian Empire, Ukraine's significance also waxed and waned. In the eighteenth century and again after 1960 Siberia rather than Ukraine was the centre of Russian heavy and military industry. From the 1880s to 1941 Ukrainian industry and mining was of immense importance to the imperial economy, however. For an even longer period Ukraine was the empire's breadbasket, not just feeding much of the agriculturally poor and increasingly urbanised Great Russian heartland, but also providing the bulk of Russian exports. So important was Ukraine in the early twentieth century, that her survival as an independent state under German protection after Brest-Litovsk would probably have guaranteed Russia's demotion from the ranks of the great powers. By the 1980s Ukraine's economic weight within the empire had declined but in demographic and political terms the Ukrainian republic was crucial to the Soviet Union's existence. Not merely was Ukraine the Union's second-most populous republic, it also formed part of the empire's East Slav and Orthodox core. Without Ukraine the Russians' main partners would be the culturally alien, poor but rapidly growing a Muslim peoples of the Soviet Union. Maintaining such a union might well in anything but the short run be contrary to Russia's interests and inclinations.

In itself, Ukraine's geopolitical importance to Russian and Soviet empire does not make it unique. All empires have some territories that, for a variety of reasons, are crucial to their survival. The relative significance of territories can often change in the course of an empire's existence. Some of these territories may be inhabited by the empire's core people, others may not. Without Bohemia's industrial wealth and strategic

frontiers the Habsburg Empire probably could not survive, and certainly could not remain a great power. The Balkan provinces, never more than one-third Muslim, were the demographic and fiscal foundation of the Ottoman Empire for most of its existence, as well as the empire's key strategic frontier. South-eastern England was always the geopolitical core of the British Empire, though the commercial and industrial revolutions did have the effect of switching wealth and population northwards and westwards in comparison to the eras which preceded and followed empire. Lord Curzon, however, believed that without India Britain would cease to be a world power. Many of his contemporaries felt, on the contrary, that England's future lay in creating a Greater Britain which would unite the White dominions and create a world power capable of matching the United States and Russia in the twentieth century.

The British Empire Federalists are an interesting source of comparison because they confronted both the question of power and the dilemmas of identity, in other words key issues in Ukraine's history. Were overseas British truly British? If so, the White empire might avoid the dangers of disintegration inevitable for any empire in the era of nationalism and democracy. It might itself become a nation, a Greater Britain. But if there are similarities between the British and the Russo-Soviet cases there are also major differences that go to the heart of this article. These differences revolve around geopolitics; for instance, the distinction between land and sea empire. They include too the very different political and constitutional structure of the Russian and British polities, not to mention their radically different positions in the global economy. When one shifts ones focus from tsarist to Soviet empire the distinctions become even more clear. This is, however, in no way to invalidate comparison as a methodology, either in general or with reference to Ukraine. Showing what Ukraine was not is a good way of clarifying what it was. Moreover, empire is too important and dangerous a word to leave un-debated and open to misuse.

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This article is based on some aspects of my book, *Empire. The Russian Empire and its Rivals* (2000). For a full bibliography readers should consult the notes and, above all, the extensive bibliographical essay. I will list below only ten key works, putting my emphasis on empire and comparison rather than Ukraine and Russia, since the latter will probably be well-covered by

other authors in this collection.

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РЕЗЮМЕ

Домінік Лівен / Місце України в порівняльній історії імперій /

Автор статті прагне зрозуміти український досвід перебування в імперії шляхом порівняльного аналізу. Автор досліджує спочатку двозначність концепції імперії та причини, через які царська і Радянська імперії не підпадають повною мірою під звичні в таких випадках категорії та дефініції. Стаття поділяється на чотири частини. У першій з них розглядаються специфічні риси царської та Радянської імперії та її вплив на неросійські народи(передусім український). Далі мова йде про українське націотворення та іредентизм у порівняльній перспективі. У третій частині автор робить зауваження щодо російської, радянської та української ідентичності. Нарешті, в останній частині статті йдеться про геополітичний вимір імперського ставлення до України. Усі зазначені вище частини статті базуються на порівняльному аналізі. Чимало з цих порівнянь, хоч і не всі, стосуються Сполученого Королівства та колишньої Британської імперії. Подекуди вони включають у себе факти з історії інших імперій, в першу чергу Габсбурзької та Оттоманської. Наприкінці статті робиться висновок про те, що український досвід перебування в імперії в багатьох відношеннях є унікальним, проте цікаві паралелі між нею та іншими країнами дійсно існують і в даному разі компаративна методика цілком придатна для того, щоб дослідити та зрозуміти унікальність України.