The Habsburg Empire acquired most of its Ukrainian populated territories as a result of the first partition of Poland in 1772, organising them within the newly established Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. Ukrainians also resided in Bukovina, annexed from the Ottoman Empire in 1775, as well as in a region of North-eastern Hungary known as Transcarpathian or Ugric Rus’. The majority of Ukrainians nevertheless lived in the Russian Empire, some twenty-two and a half million according to the census of 1897 and perhaps as many as thirty million by 1914. The Ukrainian Question gradually emerged as an issue in Habsburg politics as the challenge of nationalism came to East-Central Europe in the wake of the French Revolution. Over the course of the long nineteenth century, the partitioning powers of Austria, Russia, and Prussia-Germany largely refrained from playing the nationalist card in order to maintain stability in the region. This began to change as the Great Powers aligned in two hostile camps, with Austria-Hungary and Russia on opposite sides. In a geopolitical atmosphere of growing antagonism, especially manifest in East-Central Europe in the wake of the Bosnian Annexation Crisis of 1908–1909, East Galicia or Red Ruthenia (Chervonnaia Rus’) became something of an obsession for Russian nationalists and also caught the eye of the Romanov establishment. In 1913 alone, the Russian Foreign Ministry funnelled 200,000 rubles to the Russophile faction in Galicia.¹

Prior to the outbreak of the Great War, however, these Imperial and nationalist challenges to Austria-Hungary bore little fruit.

This was to change dramatically once Ukrainian populated territories became one of the main combat zones on the Eastern Front. With Ukrainians fighting on both sides, the empires had to introduce innovative ways of securing the political loyalties of ‘their’ Ukrainians while simultaneously undermining their rival’s home front. Furthermore, the war introduced the travails of foreign occupation

as well as escalating levels of violence to what had previously been primarily peaceful cultural activities on both sides of the Zbruch River, while challenging the territorial integrity of Austria-Hungary and Russia. Ultimately, it facilitated a process of accelerated nation- and state-building which culminated in the emergence of two independent Ukrainian states by January 1919.

This essay aims to examine this process by applying the concept of mobilisation of ethnicity, first developed by Mark von Hagen in a path-breaking article, to Austria-Hungary’s Ukrainian policy during the Great War. This view shifts the main focus away from the actions of émigré nationalist leaders to state and Imperial policies, suggesting that Imperial establishments became actively involved in nationalising processes which contributed, inadvertently, to their own demise. Such an approach may seem counterintuitive to the study of Austria-Hungary’s involvement in the Great War, given the Habsburg aversion to nationalist politics and distrust of nationalism in general. However, the Great War witnessed a radical rethinking of nationality policy in all four dynastic empires along the entangled Eastern Front, and Austria-Hungary was no exception. By looking at how the Habsburg mobilisation of ethnicity impacted the nationality question in the multi-ethnic, multi-confessional borderlands of East-Central Europe in relation to similar policies enacted by the Hohenzollern and Romanov Empires, we can improve our understanding not just of the creation of nation-states but also, as von Hagen points out, of the reasons behind the proliferation of interethnic conflict and violence during the second half of the decade long East-Central European continuum of violence between 1914 and 1923.

In applying the concept of mobilisation of ethnicity to the Habsburg Empire, it is important to take into account the more decentralised structure of the Dual Monarchy in comparison with the Russian and, to a somewhat lesser extent, German Empire. This essay will focus on policies initiated or actively supported by the joint Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office and the Austrian Government in Vienna as well as regional elites and individual actors. The Ukrainian policy of the Hungarian Government in Budapest was distinctive and does not fit easily within this framework, which is why it deserves separate treatment.

The Habsburg mobilisation of ethnicity was a two-stage process. During the first phase, between August 1914 and the February 1917 revolution in Russia, Austria-Hungary supported actively, if somewhat ambiguously, both domestic and émigré-Ukrainian organisations committed to the revolutionising of Dnieper Ukraine and its eventual separation from the Romanov Empire. Even though Germany quickly became the champion of this policy, Habsburg expe-

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riece in Ukrainian affairs meant that the Dual Monarchy played a leading part, especially early on. This involved positive as well as negative mobilisation of ethnicity in the empire’s Ukrainian populated territories, the latter manifesting itself in the suppression of ‘undesirable’, especially Russophile, forms of national identity. In contrast, during the second phase, between February 1917 and November 1918, the Habsburg establishment became increasingly reluctant to mobilise Ukrainian nationalism, as it realised that Imperial collapse in the east might have grave repercussions at home. Nonetheless, this phase witnessed unprecedented Habsburg involvement in all-Ukrainian affairs, as the quarter-million strong Austro-Hungarian Ostarmee swept through Southern Ukraine and Archduke Wilhelm von Habsburg initiated a policy of Ukrainisation which made the popular young prince a claimant to the throne of what was by then a Ukrainian monarchy (Hetmanate). By the time of the late autumn collapse of the Central Powers, the Ukrainian Legion formerly under the archduke’s command became actively involved in the creation of a West-Ukrainian People’s Republic fighting bitterly with Polish forces over Lemberg.

Phase I: Mobilisation through Militarisation and Propaganda, August 1914–February 1917

The Ukrainian Legion

The one indispensable factor affecting war nationalism, Eric Lohr suggests, is the role of the army.3 Traditionally, the Habsburg army had eschewed the formation of military units on a purely national basis, relying instead on a multi-lingual Habsburgtreu officer corps which aimed to transcend the very notion of nationality.4 In a reversal of this policy, the Habsburg authorities established a precedent by allowing the creation of a Polish Legion under Józef Piłsudski in August 1914. Having conferred with Ukrainian political leaders in Lemberg, Count Emanuel Urbas, the local representative of the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office, raised the possibility of a Ukrainian Legion as early as 6 August in conjunction with the potential future establishment of a Ukrainian state on territories conquered from Russia. While some of his sources suggested that the initiative would attract perhaps as many as 15,000 volunteers, Urbas reckoned a

figure of 5,000 more accurate. The proposed banner of the new national unit would combine the Ukrainian national colours (blue and yellow) with the Austrian double-eagle alongside the Ukrainian lion and a black-gold campaign streamer hoisted on a black-gold flagpole.\(^5\)

After the Army High Command approved the measure, a Ukrainian military detachment, which subsequently incorporated the so-called ‘Ukrainian Sich Sharpshooters’ (*Ukrainski Sichovi Striltsi*, USSR) was duly created in early September 1914. The legion served in the Austrian Landwehr (territorials), attached to the 55\(^{th}\) Infantry Division and the 129\(^{th}\) and 130\(^{th}\) Brigades. The USSR also formed part of the 131\(^{st}\) Brigade of the 8\(^{th}\) Cavalry Division.\(^6\) In 1915 it came under the command of Wilhelm von Habsburg, a self-fashioned Ukrainianophile whose penchant for wearing a blue-yellow embroidered shirt won him the alias Vasył Vyshyvanyi and the heartfelt affection of his Ukrainian troops. The Ukrainian Legion engaged in heavy fighting throughout 1915 and 1916, suffering casualties of over 1,500 men during this period. By 30 September 1916, with only nine officers and 444 infantrymen remaining, the depleted USS was sent to the rear in order to reform.\(^7\) Far from sliding into obscurity, however, the legion would recover and play a leading role in the Habsburg involvement in Dnieper Ukraine in 1918.

The Union for the Liberation of Ukraine

The creation of the Ukrainian Legion had its parallel in the creation of a Ukrainian political organisation, the ‘Union for the Liberation of Ukraine’ (*Soiuz vizvolennia Ukraini*, ULU), by Ukrainian émigrés from Russia in cooperation with Galician Ukrainians in Lemberg on 4 August 1914. Albeit an independent Ukrainian institution, the ULU received financial support from the Austro-Hungarian (around 200,000 kronen in 1914) and, increasingly, the German Foreign Office. The Union described its main immediate objective as bringing together Russian Ukrainian émigrés for political and cultural work. In the autumn of 1914, it published a Manifesto on the Ukrainian Question in multiple


\(^7\) Dudko, Sich Riflemen (see note 6).
European languages whose aim was to promote and popularise its intention to establish a Ukrainian state independent from Russia. These appeals paved the way for further propaganda work, carried out through the German-language newspaper *Ukrainische Nachrichten* (Ukrainian News), brochures in German and other languages, and special emissaries in neutral countries. In addition to popularising the Ukrainian cause abroad, the ULU also released an appeal ‘To the Ukrainian People’ in Lemberg and began publishing the Ukrainian-language *Vistnyk Soiuza vizvolennia Ukraini* (The Herald of the Union for the Liberation of Ukraine) twice monthly. Part of the 5,000 copies of each issue were to be smuggled into Russia by émigré Ukrainians making their way back via neutral countries, especially Bulgaria and Romania; the rest were distributed among Russian prisoners of war.8

As the Russian army approached Lemberg in late August 1914, the ULU relocated its headquarters to Vienna. Although the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office continued to provide limited financial support to the Union and use its activists in POW camps, it gradually grew wary of offering it full-blown support. As long as the Russians occupied almost all of Galicia and Habsburg forces were on the defensive, there were few immediate prospects of fomenting revolution in Dnieper Ukraine. In the meantime, the Habsburg endorsement and mobilisation of Ukrainian nationalism had the potential to destabilise the intricate system of interethnic relations in the Dual Monarchy and, most alarmingly, antagonise the Poles. Consequently, Vienna began to press the ULU to move its headquarters to the capital of a neutral state or to Constantinople. Fearing marginalisation, the Union leadership resisted and chose instead to relocate to Berlin in the spring of 1915.9

The move of the ULU headquarters from Vienna to Berlin marked the growing ascendance of German policy on the Ukrainian Question. Unlike Austria-Hungary and Russia, Germany did not have a Ukrainian population, which gave it a free hand in mobilising Ukrainian nationalism. It did so by becoming the primary sponsor of the ULU in 1915 and by setting up the Helsinki-based, émigré-run *Liga der Fremdvölker Russlands* (League of Russia’s Minorities) in 1916, whose aim was to publicise Russia’s alleged mistreatment of its subject nation-

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8 Der Bund zur Befreiung der Ukraine an Urbas: Bericht über die organisatorische, literarisch-informati

alities, including Ukrainians. The German mobilisation of ethnicity was part of a larger strategy, championed by Undersecretary (Secretary from November 1916) of State for Foreign Affairs Arthur Zimmerman, of globalising the war by fomenting revolution in the British and Russian empires. “Was es gab”, writes Frank Golczewski, “war eine Option im Rahmen der Revolutionierungspolitik, die sich interessierte Beamte und Politiker offenhielten”. It was also accompanied by a lengthy discussion on Ukraine in the German public sphere. This policy thus contributed to the further entangling of the Ukrainian Question, as Ukrainian nationalist leaders quickly realised they could play Berlin against Vienna in order to gain further concessions.

Internment, Refugee, and POW Camps

The Habsburg authorities used the opportunity provided by the war to crack down hard on Russophile Ukrainian activities. As they retreated westwards through Galicia in the autumn of 1914, Habsburg troops perpetrated atrocities against Ukrainians suspected of harbouring pro-Russian sympathies, anticipating the general descent into violence in the province. The sight of large numbers of people hanged for spying as a warning example became common on many a market square across Galician towns and villages. Often these executions were based on individual stories of dubious provenance, such as that of the Sokal Uniate priest’s communication with Russian troops through a system of flags. As Christoph Mick has argued persuasively, such stories often shaped the perceptions and interpretations of Austrian military units, many of which were unfamiliar with the complicated interethnic relations in East Galicia.

Ukrainians considered Russophile who were not hanged on the spot were interned in a concentration camp at Thalerhof near Graz, one of the first such camps on European soil, whose construction began on 9 September 1914. On 11 November, the camp housed 6,680 prisoners; overall, more than 16,000 people

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12 Golczewski, Deutsche und Ukrainer (see note 11), p. 218–239.
passed through Thalerhof between 1914 and 1917. A second camp at Theresienstadt was also built. Some inmates were executed, while others were offered improved conditions if they signed up as Ukrainians and agreed to attend Ukrainian language courses. Those who refused to do so suffered daily privations in increasingly harsh conditions – 1,767 deaths were recorded between September 1914 and August 1917. The diary of one Lemko, Feofil Kurillo, described the trials of everyday life at Thalerhof in great detail over the course of almost a whole year. In a typical entry from 16 May 1915, he wrote: “They bake bread in Thalerhof, but it’s not the same [thing] any more, since potato peals and other impurities are added to the flour. Understandably many of us get seriously ill after consuming such indigestible food…..”. This case of negative mobilisation of ethnicity took a heavy toll which continued to affect the course of interethnic relations in the region long after the end of the war.

The impending Russian occupation of Galicia between the autumn of 1914 and May 1915 promised to reverse this hierarchy of national identities, promoting Russophile Galicians while persecuting Ukranophile activists. Aware of their harsh fate under Russian occupation, many of the latter fled the region along with the retreating Habsburg troops. In order to accommodate the large number of Galician refugees, the Austrian Government set up three refugee camps in 1914–1916. The first one, at Wolfsberg in Carinthia, was intended to hold as many as 10,000 refugees in the autumn of 1914, although the highest number reached was actually 7,635 on 7 January 1915. In the second camp, at Gmünd in Lower Austria, the Austrian Ministry of Education set up a six-year school for 850 girls and another one for 800 boys. The schools had twenty-six teachers. In 1915 330 Ukrainian activists organised literacy courses and built a Ukrainian church capable of accommodating 2,500 people. A third camp, at Grödig near Salzburg, opened in early 1916. Through these cultural activities in the refugee camps, located in non-Ukrainian populated territories, the Austrian Government helped create a sense of Ukrainian national identity in much the same way the self-help organisations set up by Lithuanian and Latvian refugees in Russia did.

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17 Dnevnik lemka iz Talergofa (s 14–go sentiabria 1914 g. po 22–oea avgusta 1915 g.), in: Talergofskii al’manakh, URL: <http://www.zaistinu.ru/old/ukraine/church/almanah3-x.htm#almanah3_dnewnik> (last access January 26, 2018).
The separation of POWs by nationality accompanied by preferential treatment was common practice along the Eastern Front. Russian authorities singled out Habsburg Slav and Italian POWs, and German Alsatian POWs for favourable treatment. In turn, the Central Powers endeavoured to recruit some of the 400,000 Ukrainian POWs held in special camps with better living conditions at Rastatt and Salzwedel in Germany and Freistadt in Upper Austria. Galician teachers and ULU activists were brought in to offer courses in Ukrainian language, culture, and history. Libraries containing a large number of books in Ukrainian were set up. In an early activity report to the Foreign Office in Vienna from December 1914, the ULU noted that it had already found a few POWs who could “prove very useful for our action in Ukraine,” adding reassuringly that once cultural work was in full swing there were likely to be hundreds and even thousands. Eventually, 40,000 or so POWs who were considered particularly receptive to cultural propaganda formed units of a future Ukrainian army and received additional military training from German and Austro-Hungarian officers. A Russian envoy who managed to visit the two German camps remarked that the results were “highly satisfactory” from the perspective of the Central Powers.

In this manner, the policies and practices in internment, refugee, and POW camps pursued both positive and negative mobilisation of ethnicity. The Austrian Government attempted to regulate and promote a form of Ukrainian national identity loyal to the Habsburg throne while violently suppressing even the slightest hint of pro-Russian sympathies with harsh incarceration and, occasionally, executions. The Russian occupation of East Galicia presented a mirror image of this policy in a number of ways.

Mobilisation through Religion and the Russian Occupation of Galicia

Occupation played a key role in the making, unmaking, and remaking of national identities along the Eastern Front during the Great War and its immediate aftermath. This included the northern section, where the German Ober Ost administration prohibited the public use of Russian while promoting the development of a distinct Belarusian nationality and the use of the Belarusian, Lithuanian, and Latvian languages. Further south, the subsequent Austro-German occupation of parts of Dnieper Ukraine made similar arrangements, so much so that Alexei Miller has recently suggested that we have to ask ourselves whether we can “claim that the Ukrainian and Belarusian nations are to a large extent the product of imperial competition during the Great War”. The Russian occupation of East Galicia between September 1914 and May 1915 was an attempt to nip this dangerous development in the bud by rooting out Ukrainian nationalist activity in the region increasingly seen as Ukraine’s Piedmont and incorporating it into the Russian Empire. Russian occupation authorities in Galicia “supported the unconditional Russification of the region’s Ukrainian population,” argues one Russian specialist on the subject. Accordingly, after some initial hesitation, the administration under Count Georgii Bobrinskii introduced the use of the Russian language in courts and in all levels of education, a measure which received the wide support of local Russophile circles. Count Bobrinskii allowed the publication of newspapers in four local dialects in addition to Russian and Polish but categorically forbade the use of Ukrainian, denouncing it as a language that was “bureaucratic, Austrian, and an invention of the Mazepists” (that is to say Ukrainian nationalist activists).

Another important policy of the occupation authorities was the active suppression of the dominant Greek Catholic or Uniate Church in Galicia and the forced conversion to Orthodoxy of many of its followers. The church was at the heart of the Galician Piedmont project and an important regional player in the Habsburg mobilisation of ethnicity at the outbreak of the war, highlighting the role of provincial elites. Metropolitan Andriy Sheptyts’kyi, its long-serving leader between 1901 and 1944, composed a detailed memorandum to the Austro-

24 Alexei I. Miller, The Role of the First World War in the Competition between Ukrainian and All-Russian Nationalism, in: Lohr/Tolz/Semyonov/von Hagen (ed.), The Empire and Nationalism at War (see note 3), p. 73–89, here p. 89.
25 Bakhturina, Okrainy Rossiiskoi imperii (see note 1), p. 129.
26 Aleksandra Iur’evna Bakhturina, Politika Rossiiskoi imperii v Vostochnoi Galitsii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (Serija Pervaja monografija), Moscow 2000, p. 95.
Hungarian Foreign Office in August 1914 on the organisation of military, socio-
legal, and ecclesiastical matters in a future Ukrainian state separate from the
Russian Empire and associated with Austria-Hungary. Military relations ought
to be set-up along the lines of the traditions of the Zaporozhian Cossacks, which,
the metropolitan claimed, were inherently Ukrainian and still alive; in contrast,
the Russian institution of the Don Cossacks was a ‘degeneracy’ (Entartung) of
true Cossackdom. The proclamation of the most distinguished Habsburg
commander as ‘Hetman of Ukraine’ would represent a major victory for the Dual
Monarchy. A Habsburg field marshal could be in charge of a military admin-
istration enjoying a broad degree of autonomy, which would begin assembling
the officer corps of a future Ukrainian army. The Hetman would rule through the
promulgation of a series of Universals to the army and population at large.
Following the proclamation of basic laws including freedom and tolerance, the
Austrian civil code (in as authentic a Ukrainian translation as possible) would
replace Russian law. The ecclesiastical organisation ought to have the goal of
separating the church in Ukraine from the Russian Orthodox Church. The
Metropolitan of Halych (‘and all of Ukraine’) – presumably Sheptyts’kyi him-
self – would introduce a series of decrees on the separation of the church in
Ukraine from the Holy Synod in Petrograd, the prohibition of prayers for the
tsar, and the introduction of prayers for the Habsburg Kaiser. Ukrainian and
Austrian bishops might also be brought in to replace recalcitrant Russian ones in
certain places. The Orthodoxy of the church would not have to be tampered with,
concluded the metropolitan, so long as it was purged of ‘Muscovite influences’.27
In effect, this would have amounted to the extension of the jurisdiction of the
Greek Catholic Church to all Ukrainian populated territories and its trans-
formation from a regional to a Ukrainian national institution that would become
the bedrock of Ukrainian national identity.

Sheptyts’kyi’s remarkable memorandum thus envisioned the war as an his-
toric opportunity to resolve the Ukrainian Question through the separation of
Dnieper Ukraine from the Russian Empire and the replacement of all artificial
Russian political and cultural influences with allegedly authentic Ukrainian
traditions and institutions like the Hetmanate and the Uniate Church. The re-
resulting new state would be closely aligned with Austria-Hungary. While the
heavy Austrian defeats and the loss of almost all of Galicia in the autumn of 1914
made the realisation of this project all but impossible in the short term, it would

27 Erzbischof Szeptycki an Urbas: Pro memoria über die Organisierung der Ukraine in mili-
tärischer, sozial-rechtlicher und kirchlicher Hinsicht mit dem Ziel ihrer Loslösung von
Russland, 15.08.1914, in: Hornykiewicz (ed.), Ereignisse in der Ukraine (see note 5), vol. 1,
p. 8–11.
briefly resurface in a somewhat modified form in the summer of 1918 under the auspices of Archduke Wilhelm von Habsburg.

The Russian authorities had kept an eye on the metropolitan’s subversive activities for some time, and shortly after the outbreak of the war Chief of General Staff General Nikolai Ianushkevich pledged to deliver Sheptyts’kyi to the Ministry of Interior in Petrograd ‘dead or alive’. Sheptyts’kyi refused to leave Lemberg with the Austrian administration, consciously preparing himself for a martyr’s ordeal. Initially placed under house arrest by the Russian occupation authorities, he was later exiled in a monastery in Central Russia which was essentially a penal colony for heretics. Extraordinary appeals by Vienna and the Vatican failed to secure the metropolitan’s release; it was only in March 1917 that the new Provisional Government allowed Sheptyts’kyi to make his way to Kiev. The metropolitan’s absence from Galicia appeared to give his bitter adversary, the Orthodox Bishop Evlogii, a distinct advantage once the latter arrived in Lemberg in December 1914. However, far from eliminating the Greek Catholic Church as a powerful source of Ukrainian national identity, the bishop’s forced conversions and heavy-handed measures quickly fanned anti-Russian sentiments among the East Slavic population of Galicia, while also alarming the Russian Foreign Ministry in Petrograd. His eager protestations notwithstanding, Evlogii was eventually recalled to Russia in a belated attempt at damage limitation.28

The first Russian occupation of Galicia lasted just short of nine months. Following the breakthrough in the Battle of Gorlice-Tarnów, which began on 2 May 1915, the armies of the Central Powers liberated the region. Gratuitous violence often accompanied the recovery of Habsburg Ukrainian-populated territories. Fearing random retribution as well as more systematic institutionalised Austro-Hungarian persecution, many Russophile activists left the province alongside the departing Russian troops. By August 1915, there were perhaps as many as 100,000 Galician refugees in Central Russia, including males of military age who were forcibly evacuated as well as ‘unreliable’ elements (that is to say Ukrainian activists) taken as hostages.29

Reflecting on their experience from home base, the leaders of the Russian occupation authorities considered their policy to have been a failure, as it had alienated the moderate Ukranian majority with heavy-handed Russification efforts while further inflaming the anti-Russian sentiment of Ukrainian national activists. Following the success of the Brusilov Offensive in the summer of 1916,

the Russians once again occupied parts of East Galicia and tried not to repeat their previous mistakes. Consequently, in October 1916, the new Russian authorities removed the limitations on the use of Polish and Ukrainian in education while upholding the ban on the use of German or Yiddish, overruling the objections of the Foreign Ministry in Petrograd. In spite of these concessions, which were upheld and extended by the Provisional Government in the wake of the February Revolution, the second Russian occupation of parts of East Galicia failed to make any appreciable progress in the quest to win the hearts and minds of the local East Slavic population.

Phase II: Between Mobilisation and Retrenchment: The Dilemmas of Imperial Collapse, February 1917–November 1918

From the February Revolution to the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk

The February Revolution in Russia shattered the seemingly impregnable system of Imperial dynasticism and released powerful centrifugal forces which produced a ripple effect across East-Central Europe. Signing a separate peace with the new Provisional Government in Petrograd, which would take Russia out of the war and eliminate the Eastern Front, once again became top of the Central Powers’ priority list. Since a more competent pursuit of the war effort had been a main factor behind liberal support for the overthrow of the monarchy, however, the Provisional Government did not have the slightest interest in peace talks. On 9 April 1917, the new foreign minister, Kadet (Constitutional Democrat) Pavel Miliukov, reaffirmed Russia’s commitment to the war, highlighting national self-determination as Petrograd’s main war aim. This gave the Special Political Section (Osobyi Politicheskii Otdel) of the Russian Foreign Ministry, set up in 1916 to study the problems of the East Slavic population of Austria-Hungary (among other things), a chance to re-interpret Russian policy on the Ukrainian Question along democratic lines while preserving the unity of the All-Russian idea in a meeting with Galician refugees in May 1917. The meeting’s resolution, soon forwarded to the Chairman of the Provisional Government, Prince L’vov, emphasised that the unification of Galicia, Bukovina, and Transcarpathian Rus’ with the new Russian revolutionary republic would be an act of national self-

30 Bakhturina, Politika Rossiiskoi imperii (see note 26), p. 223.
determination rather than annexation. “As we can see,” writes Alexei Miller, “the concepts of self-determination and democracy replaced those of religious unity and loyalty to the tsars…” 33

Ukrainian political organisations welcomed the February Revolution and pledged allegiance to the new Provisional Government, emphasising the need to organise interethnic relations in the new Russian Republic on a new, equal footing. In a telegram from 3/16 March, the Union of Ukrainian Organisations in Kiev declared itself “convinced that the just requirements of the Ukrainian people and its democratic intelligentsia will be fulfilled in their entirety”. On the same day, the Ukrainians of Katerinodar/Ekaterinodar in the Kuban telegraphed Petrograd they were “confident that the Ukrainian nation, liberated from the oppression (hnitu) of the old regime along with the others, has earned a new right to a new free, autonomous existence alongside the other nations of Russia”. 34 Even as they reaffirmed their support for the new democratic order in Russia, Ukrainians consolidated their political maturation by creating a Central Rada (council) intended to serve as a local governing body on 5/18 March 1917. Over the next few months, the Rada grew increasingly independent of central control, proclaiming autonomy in the First Universal on 10 June, and establishing an autonomous Ukrainian People’s Republic within a hypothetical Russian Federative Republic in the Third Universal on 20 November.

The Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office followed closely the unfolding of events east of the Zbruch River. Reports from the summer of 1917 highlighted the emergence of a still somewhat loosely defined Ukrainian national space within the former Russian Empire, dominated by ethno-national developments often tied to the agrarian question. 35 During this period, Habsburg authorities became increasingly reluctant to play the nationalist card, fearing that ethnic tensions might spill over from Russia and imperil the delicate balance of nationalities in the Dual Monarchy. To make matters worse, there was growing evidence that the nationalist agitation in Dnieper Ukraine and the Habsburg mobilisation of ethnicity had whetted the appetite of Austria’s Ukrainians, who now began to clamour for greater autonomy within the Dual Monarchy. On 22 December 1917,

33 Miller, The Romanov Empire and Nationalism (see note 21), p. 194.
35 Széchenyi an Czermin, Übersendung eines Berichtes über die Machtbefugnisse der ukrain. Zentralrada und über die Agrarfraje, 21. 08. 1917, in: Hornykiewicz (ed.), Ereignisse in der Ukraine (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 262–265, here p. 264–265. The peasant commune was not a prominent feature of Ukrainian agriculture, unlike in European Russia. On the other hand, most landlords in the area were either Polish or Russian, which reinforced the overlapping ethnic and class cleavages.
the Ukrainian Parliamentary Club in the Reichsrat sent a resolution for publication in the Swedish newspaper *Svenska Dagbladet*, which insisted that the successful implementation of the Austro-Polish Solution depended on the unification East Galicia, Bukovina, and, ideally, Transcarpathian Rus’ in a Ukrainian crownland recreating the medieval Principality of Halych and Volyn.\(^{36}\) The partitioning of Galicia was anathema to the Poles, who considered the province key to their own Piedmont project. It would prove impossible for Habsburg authorities to reconcile the competing claims of the Polish and Ukrainian national movements, which they courted simultaneously.

In contrast to its beleaguered partner, Germany became increasingly assertive in its engagement with nationalist mobilisation, aiming to detach Russia’s western borderlands and set up a number of ‘border states’ (*Randstaaten*) dependent on Berlin for their long-term existence. Even among German governing circles, however, there were lingering doubts about the desirability of such an aggressive policy. As late as December 1917, on the eve of the Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference, the German Foreign Office cautioned against full-blown support for national revolution during what appeared to be a fluid transitional stage (*Zwischenstadium*) of the “new order of relations on the Russian western border.” Immediate recognition of Ukrainian independence in particular would be premature and bring few if any benefits.\(^{37}\)

In the circumstances, events largely beyond their control forced the hand of the Central Powers into recognising Ukrainian independence during the Brest-Litovsk Peace Conference, which opened on 22 December 1917, and compelled them to prioritise their separate negotiations with the Ukrainian representatives. The Ukrainian delegation attempted to resolve the Ukrainian Question definitively by demanding the annexation of East Galicia. While the Central Powers rejected this outright, Austria-Hungary was eventually forced to acquiesce with the creation of a Ukrainian crownland combining all Ukrainian-populated territories in Austria (but not in Hungary) in a secret addendum to the first Treaty of

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Brest-Litovsk, signed by the Central Powers and the Ukrainian People’s Republic in the night of 9–10 February 1918.38

The first Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was the high-water mark of the Imperial mobilisation of ethnicity during the Great War. The Habsburgs and the Romanovs (as well as the latter’s immediate successors, the Provisional Government) had offered their Ukrainian populations a steadily increasing number of concessions, paired with the often violent suppression of undesirable forms of national identity, in order to consolidate domestic support for the war while destabilising the rival empire. Germany had contributed to this cumulative radicalisation through the pursuit of a policy geared towards revolutionising Russia. The emergence of an independent Ukrainian state followed almost inexorably from the collapse of the Imperial Russian centre in February 1917. The question was how viable this new Ukrainian state would be at a time of ongoing total war, revolutionary transformation, and societal collapse.

From the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk to the Autumn Collapse

From the early days of its existence in late November 1917, the Ukrainian People’s Republic faced the rising hostility of Bolshevik Russia to the north. By the time of the signing of the peace in early February 1918, the Bolsheviks had dislodged the Central Rada from most of Central and Eastern Ukraine, confining it to a precarious shadow existence in the western city of Zhitomir. If the Central Powers wanted to receive the Ukrainian foodstuffs the Brest-Litovsk treaty had promised them, they would have to intervene militarily on behalf of the faltering Central Rada, thereby bolstering Ukrainian statehood in another aspect of the general pattern of the mobilisation of ethnicity. Although Emperor Karl was initially loath to join the German intervention, his resistance to military action quickly gave way once he realised that only the presence of Habsburg troops on the ground could guarantee much needed Ukrainian grain. By late March, the German army and the quarter-million strong Habsburg Ostarmee had cleared

the territories claimed by the Ukrainian People’s Republic from Bolshevik forces. For the next eight months, a virtual Austro-German condominium of Ukraine existed, wherein Austrian forces were responsible for the Podolia, Kherson, Ekaterinoslav, and southwestern Volynia provinces, with Odessa as general headquarters.

The Austro-German occupation of Ukraine in 1918 has been the subject of some excellent recent research focusing primarily on military and economic developments. These studies emphasise the haphazard and improvised nature of the occupation policy of the two powers, characterised by the absence of clearly defined goals. In the final analysis, argues Wolfram Dornik, the occupation was a fiasco for everyone involved. However, the occupation’s impact on national identity formation, especially in the countryside, remains less clear. While the Germans had the upper hand for the duration of the occupation, it is worth pointing out that Austria-Hungary either initiated or anticipated certain policies relevant to the mobilisation of ethnicity which Germany later actively pursued. The first of these was the forced requisitioning of foodstuffs, which Habsburg troops began to carry out as early as mid-March in the face of the passive resistance offered by local Ukrainian functionaries; in contrast, German military authorities had strictly forbidden such behaviour in their zone. Since Ukrainian national identity was closely tied to the agrarian question during this period, this helped de-legitimise among the peasantry a Ukrainian People’s Republic allied to the Central Powers. The second was the replacement of the socialist Rada with a more reliable, conservative government, mooted by Baron Mykola Vasyl’ko, deputy in the Viennese Reichsrat and influential Ukrainian politician from Bukovina, in conversation with the Austro-Hungarian ambassador in Kiev (who endorsed it) in late March. Infantry General Alfred Krauss, the Habsburg commander in Odessa, expressed a similar view when he described the Ukrainian People’s Republic in a report to Army High Command around the same time as a ‘phantom’, a republic no one in the important Black Sea port recognised.

42 Forgách to the Foreign Office, no. 78, 28.03.1918. HHStA, PA X, K 152.
43 Arz to Czernin, no.1329, 30.04.1918. HHStA, PA X, K 152.
April, Hetman Pavlo Skoropads’kyi would promote a conservative Ukrainian national identity which rejected the agrarian socialism championed by the Rada, triggering a number of large-scale peasant uprisings that would have to be put down by German and Habsburg troops. The Dual Monarchy’s greater experience with nationalist politics in general and the Ukrainian national movement in particular thus enabled it to continue playing an important role in Dnieper Ukraine, even though it was clearly the junior partner in the occupation.

The remarkable activities of Archduke Wilhelm von Habsburg in Dnieper Ukraine in 1918 further demonstrate how Habsburg elites continued to engage in the mobilisation of ethnicity well into the final year of the war. Vasyl Vyshyvanyi, as he quickly became known in Ukrainian circles, was dispatched beyond the Zbruch in March 1918 at the head of Battle Group Archduke Wilhelm, which included the Ukrainian Legion. He was under strict instructions from Emperor Karl to become his eyes and ears in Ukraine. First at Zaporizhia/Oleksandrivsk/Aleksandrovsk on the Dnieper and then at Kropyvnytskyi/Elizavethrad following his relocation by the Austro-Hungarian High Command, Wilhelm engaged in a series of Ukrainisation efforts which involved the opening of Ukrainian theatres and schools and the subsidising of Ukrainian newspapers and magazines. These cultural activities were intended to spread literacy and Ukrainian national consciousness among the local, often nationally-indifferent peasantry. The ultimate goal of this project – the creation of a Ukrainian state closely aligned with Austria-Hungary, with Wilhelm as Hetman – was not dissimilar from Metropolitan Sheptyts’kyi’s plan for the reorganisation of Dnieper Ukraine (with himself as religious leader) in August 1914.

Wilhelm’s Ukrainophile activities did not receive the support of the Foreign Ministry in Vienna or the Army High Command, which were wary of upsetting the apple cart and antagonising Berlin. The higher military authorities ultimately succeeded in sending the archduke and the USS back to Bukovina at the beginning of October. The Austro-Hungarian diplomatic corps in particular remained ambivalent about Habsburg support for independent nation-states in the western borderlands of the defunct Russian Empire until the very end, never tiring of pointing out the dangerous repercussions this policy had for the future territorial integrity of the Dual Monarchy. “I ask myself whether we have an interest in shoring up perpetually a Ukrainian state which has ‘unredeemed brothers’ in Austria,” remarked Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in Berlin Prince

44 The following discussion is largely based on my article Ukrainization and Its Contradictions in the Context of the Brest-Litovsk System, in: Lohr/Tolz/Semyonov/von Hagen (ed.), The Empire and Nationalism at War (see note 3), p. 163–188; see also the two in-depth political biographies of Wilhelm: Timothy Snyder, The Red Prince. The Secret Lives of a Habsburg Archduke, New York 2008; Iurii Tereshchenko/Tetiana Ostashko, Ukrains’kyi patriot z dy-

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Gottfried zu Hohenlohe-Schilingsfürst in a telegram to Vienna on 25 March 1918.\textsuperscript{45} In the event, such warnings came too late to help Habsburg authorities stall the sudden crystallisation of nation-ness engendered by the Imperial mobilisation of ethnicity and war nationalism across East-Central Europe. Emperor Karl’s manifesto of 16 October, which proposed to reorganise the Austrian half of the empire into a federation of equal nationalities (including Ukrainians), merely precipitated the unilateral declarations of independence of nascent nation-states.

Conclusion

Like Imperial collapse in Russia in February 1917, the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire in October-November 1918 facilitated an explosion of interethnic violence. Free from the restraining influence of the Imperial state, the mobilised and militarised Polish and Ukrainian national movements embarked on a series of wars over the ownership of Galicia. Ukrainian forces, among which the Ukrainian Sich Sharpshooters played a prominent part, forced the issue by proclaiming the creation of a second Ukrainian state, the West Ukrainian People’s Republic, in Lemberg on 19 October 1918. Polish forces, reinforced by additional military detachments from Kraków/Krakau and Przemyśl/Premissel, soon got the upper hand and expelled the Ukrainians. The former Galician capital became the stage of countless attacks and counterattacks over the next few years, as the two sides sought to regain the upper hand. The escalation of the latent Polish-Ukrainian conflict symbolised the transformation of the Great War from a clash of empires to a clash of competing nation-building projects that left little room for accommodating national and religious minorities.\textsuperscript{46} The bacchanalia of interethnic violence, which the Imperial mobilisation of ethnicity had unwittingly facilitated, would go on to define the second half of the continuum of violence in East-Central Europe, until the dust finally settled and more or less stable borders emerged in 1922–1923.

\textsuperscript{45} Hohenlohe an Czernin, Österreichische Interessen in Bezug die Ukraine und die deutsche Politik gegenüber den östlichen Randstaaten, 02.03.1918, in: Hornykiewicz (ed.), Ereignisse in der Ukraine (see note 5), vol. 1, p. 328.