

Language and Political Culture: Preservation, Power and Political Legitimacy in Ukraine, Ireland, Vietnam and Germany

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Abstract: This article asks: To what extent does language impact political culture? It addresses the question through a paired comparative-historical analysis of Ukraine–Ireland and Vietnam–Germany. Rather than treating language as a deterministic cause of political behaviour, the study understands language and political culture as reciprocally constituted. Language can shape collective identity, educational systems, political communication, institutional legitimacy and relations between governments and societies; political culture, in turn, affects whether languages are preserved, displaced, revived, depoliticized or converted into instruments of sovereignty. Ireland achieved political independence after a profound shift from Irish to English, leaving Irish with high symbolic value but limited everyday reproduction. Ukraine experienced imperial and Soviet linguistic asymmetry followed by increasingly assertive institutionalization of Ukrainian after independence, especially after 2014. Vietnam retained and modernized a vigorous national language despite long Chinese influence, French colonialism and later American military intervention. Germany supplies a counter-case: a broadly common language coexisted for four decades with two states and markedly different political cultures. The article uses comparative historical analysis and later embeds the transition from Petro Poroshenko to Volodymyr Zelensky as a contemporary case. It argues that language influences political culture most strongly when connected to institutions that distribute belonging, knowledge, opportunity and legitimacy—particularly education, religion, public administration, media, civil society and labour markets. Language can therefore become an infrastructure of political culture without mechanically determining political allegiance. The Irish evidence also introduces a societal mechanism: nationalism can endure because shared communication helps sustain belonging, trust, solidarity and collective action. This insight strengthens the article's reciprocal model by showing that language is not only regulated by states but can be preserved, valued or abandoned through community practices.

Companion research instrument: De Angelis (2026), Language and Political Culture — Comparative Research Questionnaire, FormHug (<https://formhug.ai/f/EFpD8j>). The newly reconstructed questionnaire is provided for prospective data collection; no questionnaire responses are analysed in this historical-comparative article.

Keywords: language; political culture; language preservation; nationalism; Ukraine; Ireland; Vietnam; Germany; political legitimacy; education

I. Introduction

Language and culture are among the oldest mechanisms through which human communities recognize themselves, transmit experience and organize collective life. Language is more than a technical vehicle for exchanging information: it stores inherited categories, memories, symbols and ways of naming authority, conflict, belonging and change. Culture is not a fixed inventory of traditions but an evolving field of meanings and practices through which people interpret social life. Their relationship is reciprocal. Culture gives prestige, stigma and social value to forms of speech, while language transmits, stabilizes and sometimes transforms culture across generations. This reciprocity becomes politically consequential when linguistic choices affect access to education, public administration, religious institutions, employment, media and citizenship.

A companion questionnaire addressing language, national identity, education, institutional trust and political legitimacy is available in De Angelis (2026): <https://formhug.ai/f/EFpD8j>. Its role is to support future empirical testing, not to substitute for the historical evidence and published research used below.

Political culture is understood here in the classic sense of patterned orientations through which people understand political institutions, participation and legitimacy. Almond and Verba (1963) treated political culture as the political system internalized in citizens' cognitions, feelings and evaluations, while later debate emphasized the concept's value in connecting individual orientations with system-level characteristics (Chilton, 1988). The present study does not assume linguistic determinism. Its central proposition is narrower: language influences political culture by shaping collective identity, educational systems, political communication, institutional legitimacy and the relationship between governments and societies. Political cultures, in turn, affect

whether a language is preserved, abandoned, revived or politicized. The research question is therefore: To what extent does language impact political culture?

The question has renewed relevance in a period marked by pandemics, wars, displacement, digital communication and geopolitical polarization. During COVID-19, governments and media mobilized vocabularies of war, emergency, freedom, responsibility, solidarity and threat. Such language did not simply describe policy; it helped define legitimate behaviour and legitimate authority. Disputes over the origin of the virus likewise became political narratives, demonstrating why scientific evidence must be distinguished from geopolitical attribution. War magnifies the same process. Liberation, occupation, security, resistance, sovereignty and peace can organize incompatible interpretations of the same events. Under conditions of insecurity, linguistic framing becomes part of the struggle over legitimacy itself.

Ukraine and Ireland constitute the first paired comparison. Both developed national projects in the shadow of larger neighbouring powers, and in both language, religion, education and national identity became entangled with sovereignty. Yet the outcomes diverged. Ireland achieved political independence while English became overwhelmingly dominant in ordinary life; Irish retained exceptional symbolic prestige but struggled to recover intergenerational everyday use. Ukraine entered independence with extensive Russian–Ukrainian bilingualism and strong regional variation, then progressively strengthened Ukrainian in public institutions. After 2014, language increasingly became associated not only with culture but with sovereignty and security. The comparison therefore asks why political independence can coexist with linguistic displacement in one case and active linguistic re-nationalization in another. Richard English's account of Irish nationalism is useful here because it shifts attention from nationalism as ideology alone to the social mechanisms that make national community durable: belonging, security, shared communication, trust and collective action (English, 2006). This provides an important bridge between language and political culture: preservation depends not only on legal status but on whether a language remains embedded in the institutions and relationships through which a community reproduces itself.

Vietnam and Germany form the second paired comparison. Vietnam experienced long Chinese influence, French colonial rule, revolutionary nationalism, partition and war while retaining Vietnamese as a vigorous national language. Germany provides an inverse test: a broadly common German language coexisted after 1945 with two states organized around opposing political systems. Stevenson (2002) shows that linguistic practices and public vocabularies participated in constructing eastern and western identities, yet language alone did not create those political cultures. Vietnam helps separate military domination from linguistic domination, while Germany demonstrates that common language is not sufficient to produce common political culture. Methodologically, the article combines comparative historical analysis with an embedded contemporary case study rather than creating another interview or web-survey dataset. The later case examines the transition from Petro Poroshenko to Volodymyr Zelensky. Poroshenko explicitly connected army, language and faith with sovereignty, whereas Zelensky's predominantly Russian-speaking biography complicates any simple equation between home language and national political loyalty. The interruption of the ordinary presidential electoral cycle under wartime martial law adds a question of institutional legitimacy that must be analysed in its constitutional and wartime context rather than attributed to language alone. Religion and intelligence institutions enter only where they illuminate the central language–political culture relationship, including the post-Soviet Orthodox rupture of 1990–1992 and the reorganization of linguistic, religious and political authority after the Soviet collapse.

Survey research extension. A separate, reconstructed questionnaire (De Angelis, 2026) operationalizes perceptions of language use, political legitimacy and preservation across the four cases. It has not been validated as identical to the original Google Forms instrument; no responses or findings from it are reported here. Questionnaire URL: <https://formhug.ai/f/EFpD8j>

The article follows one thread throughout: language and political culture develop synchronically and reciprocally. Political culture assigns opportunity and legitimacy to languages; language supplies communities with shared resources for transmitting identity and interpreting authority. Section 1 reconstructs language formation, displacement and preservation in Ukraine–Ireland and Vietnam–Germany. Section 2 examines political culture in practice. Section 3 turns to historical, economic, commercial and military relationships. Section 4 compares preservation through civil society, schools, universities, churches and media. Section 5 examines language in government–society relations and political leadership. Section 6 develops the Ukrainian case from the 1992 post-Soviet ecclesiastical rupture through Poroshenko, Zelensky and wartime legitimacy. Section 7 integrates the paired comparisons, and Section 8 concludes by assessing how far language shapes—without mechanically determining—political culture.

II. Language Formation, Displacement and Preservation: Ukraine–Ireland and Vietnam–Germany

A comparison of language and political culture must begin before contemporary elections, parties or wars. The political significance of a language accumulates historically through institutions that determine where it may be spoken, written, taught and rewarded. Schools decide which language becomes literate knowledge; administrations determine which language provides access to public authority; churches and universities preserve or replace intellectual vocabularies; markets reward some linguistic competencies more than others; and families decide, often under these pressures, which language is worth transmitting to children. The four cases considered here reveal not a single model of linguistic domination but four distinct pathways. Ireland experienced a long shift toward English accompanied by the survival of Irish as a powerful symbol of nationhood. Ukraine experienced recurring restriction, Ukrainization, Russification and post-independence re-Ukrainization. Vietnam transformed a writing system promoted partly through missionary and colonial institutions into a vehicle of mass national integration. Germany retained broad linguistic continuity while undergoing radical political discontinuity.

2.1 Ukraine: From Imperial Restriction to a Language of Sovereignty

The history of Ukrainian illustrates why the political meaning of a language cannot be inferred simply from the number of people who speak it. Ukrainian developed within an East Slavic continuum, but its modern political position was shaped by incorporation of much Ukrainian territory into imperial structures in which Russian possessed greater administrative, educational and cultural power. Nineteenth-century measures such as the Valuev Circular of 1863 and the Ems Ukaz of 1876 became emblematic of a wider environment restricting Ukrainian publication, performance and education. Their importance lies not only in prohibition but in the hierarchy of linguistic functions they helped reproduce. Russian was associated with imperial authority, urban mobility and high-status institutions; Ukrainian was pushed more strongly toward family, locality, literature and cultural identification. Language policy thus affected the social architecture in which political identity later developed.

The Soviet period did not simply continue imperial policy in a straight line. Early korenizatsiia and Ukrainization in the 1920s expanded Ukrainian in schools, publishing and administration, demonstrating how rapidly institutions can alter the public status of a language. The direction later changed. By the late 1930s, Soviet state-building increasingly promoted Russian as a common language of inter-republic mobility and political integration. Blitstein (2001) shows how the 1938 decree making Russian obligatory in non-Russian schools belonged to a broader turn toward cultural and political integration. Pavlenko (2006) likewise emphasizes that Russian became a lingua franca across the Soviet space through historically specific policies and practices rather than demographic inevitability. The outcome in Ukraine was neither complete assimilation nor stable bilingual equality: Russian accumulated advantages in many urban, scientific, administrative and professional domains while Ukrainian remained central to national cultural production.

This history created a distinction essential to the present article: Russian language use and Russian political identity could overlap without being equivalent. Bilingualism became ordinary in many Ukrainian cities, and self-reported native language did not necessarily correspond to the language used most often or to ethnic self-identification. The significance for political culture is considerable. If everyday Russian use does not automatically indicate Russian political loyalty, language can influence identity without determining allegiance. Volodymyr Kravchenko's *Kharkov/Kharkiv: A Borderland Capital* is particularly useful because Kharkiv exposes the weakness of binary categories. The city developed from a frontier settlement into a major university, industrial and administrative centre whose elites repeatedly interpreted imperial, Soviet and Ukrainian projects through local interests. The double naming Kharkov/Kharkiv is analytically suggestive: language can signal historical orientation, social milieu and political memory without mechanically predicting political allegiance.

Independence in 1991 converted language from a cultural question into a state-building question. Ukrainian became the principal language through which the new state sought to establish administrative continuity, national education and symbolic sovereignty. Yet policy remained contested because bilingual practices did not map neatly onto political boundaries. The 2012 language law expanded possibilities for regional use of Russian, while the 2019 state-language law marked a more assertive phase of Ukrainianization in public domains. Recent scholarship characterizes the post-2014 shift as movement from a hesitant nationalizing state with porous language boundaries toward a more assertive language-security framework (Kulyk et al., 2025).

The rupture after 2014 intensified this transformation. Russia's annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas changed the political associations attached to Russian and Ukrainian without erasing the social complexity of bilingualism. Language increasingly became connected to ontological security: the question was no longer

simply which language citizens preferred, but whether the state possessed a distinct cultural-linguistic identity outside the idea of a broader Russian World. Civil society further complicates any claim that preservation was imposed solely from above. Prosvita and later language-protection initiatives linked Ukrainian with education, historical memory and national consciousness. Under Petro Poroshenko, societal and state preservation increasingly converged. His formula 'Army, Language, Faith' joined military security, linguistic sovereignty and ecclesiastical independence, while the 2019 law expanded Ukrainian across public domains. Yet Poroshenko's decisive electoral defeat demonstrates why language cannot be treated as a deterministic electoral variable. Ukrainian could become an infrastructure of statehood without requiring citizens to support the politician most visibly associated with its promotion.

2.2 Ireland: Language Shift, Community and the Social Life of Nationalism

Ireland offers a different route from political subordination to linguistic change. Irish was historically the dominant vernacular across most of the island, but English gradually acquired decisive advantages in administration, law, commerce, urban life and education. Crowley's (2005) historical account shows that the process cannot be reduced to a single ban or moment of conquest. As English expanded in public and civil life and Gaelic culture receded from many public domains, debates over the language of education became increasingly important. The asymmetry was self-reinforcing: English provided access to institutions with greater material power, while Irish increasingly carried local, cultural and symbolic meanings. Language shift was therefore not simply linguistic decline; it was embedded in a redistribution of opportunity.

Families transmit languages within opportunity structures. When employment, migration, schooling and administration reward one language, abandonment of another can become individually rational even when the declining language retains collective value. This helps explain why political independence did not automatically reverse the shift. Crowley (2005) distinguishes political from cultural nationalism in the nineteenth century: major political nationalists could regard Irish as secondary to the struggle for independence, whereas cultural nationalists treated language as central to establishing a distinct Irish identity. The Gaelic Revival later made language central to the ideological and cultural struggle, but it encompassed positions ranging from Catholic conservatism to revolutionary socialism and from rejection of English to acceptance of Hiberno-English. Linguistic nationalism was politically powerful precisely because different political projects could appropriate it.

The material from Richard English's *Irish Freedom* supplied for this project adds a societal mechanism that sharpens the comparison. English does not explain nationalism merely as ideology or as the automatic consequence of political events. He links its persistence to the capacity of national community to answer needs for belonging, identity, security, self-esteem and purpose, and he organizes his broader explanation around community, struggle and power (English, 2006). Especially important for a study of language, he argues that durable community requires shared means of communication capable of producing coherence, trust, solidarity and interaction. Language is not the only such mechanism, and English does not present linguistic homogeneity as a prerequisite for nationalism. The point is subtler: when a language becomes associated with a community's historical continuity, its preservation can function as a practical form of maintaining the social bonds through which national identity is reproduced. This helps explain the Irish paradox. Irish could decline dramatically as an everyday language while remaining politically and emotionally significant because it continued to signify a distinct historical community.

English also rejects a simple Ireland-versus-Britain account. Nationalism structured internal disputes among different conceptions of Irish identity and community, and people in similar social circumstances could support rival national projects or reject nationalism altogether. This is important because it prevents the article from treating language preservation as an automatic popular response to foreign rule. A society may value national independence while choosing the economically dominant language; conversely, linguistic revival can be driven by organized minorities, schools, churches, universities and associations before it becomes state policy. In Ireland, the political force of Irish therefore lies partly in this gap between demographic use and societal meaning. The language can be weak as a routine medium yet strong as a symbol around which organizations mobilize cultural legitimacy. This is the dimension later examined through Galway, Gaeltacht institutions and language NGOs.

Political independence did not solve the linguistic problem. Education became a principal instrument of revival, but schooling could preserve knowledge of Irish more easily than it could recreate an Irish-speaking economy. The wider social environment continued to reward English in employment, migration and much everyday communication. This distinction between symbolic legitimacy and social reproduction is central to the article. Irish survived as a national marker more successfully than it recovered as an ordinary language of economic life. Contemporary preservation consequently operates through an ecology of institutions: Gaeltacht communities, families, Irish-medium schools, universities, media and advocacy organizations. Galway is

analytically useful because Gaeltacht territories, a major university, Irish-language media and community organizations coexist within one regional environment. The question is not whether Galway alone preserves Irish, nor whether Catholicism alone explains revival, but why dense local institutions can sustain linguistic practice more effectively than symbolic national recognition alone.

2.3 Vietnam: Linguistic Appropriation, Colonialism and National Integration

Vietnam presents a third mechanism: linguistic resilience through appropriation and transformation. Long periods of Chinese political and cultural influence shaped elite writing, vocabulary and institutions while Vietnamese vernacular speech persisted. French colonialism later introduced a different hierarchy of language and education. The modern outcome is striking because the Romanized quốc ngữ script, whose early codification was connected to European missionaries and whose expansion was promoted by colonial institutions, ultimately became a central instrument of Vietnamese national communication rather than a vehicle for replacing Vietnamese with French.

Lê Minh-Hằng and O'Harrow (2007) place language at the centre of Vietnam's vigorous national identity after extended foreign influence and internal upheaval. Their analysis emphasizes competition among Chinese-character writing, chữ Nôm, French and quốc ngữ. The eventual triumph of quốc ngữ reflected not only colonial policy but also nationalism and struggles against both French power and older Confucian institutions and elites. This makes Vietnam especially valuable for the article's argument: an externally promoted linguistic technology can be politically reappropriated by the society that receives it. Language policy can have unintended consequences because institutions cannot fully control the meanings users attach to the linguistic tools they disseminate.

Recent comparative scholarship strengthens this interpretation. Lee (2020) argues that the nationalization of language in East Asia should be understood as an integrationist process that remade society rather than merely diffused elite language downward. In Vietnam, quốc ngữ moved from missionary tool to colonial administrative instrument and then to a means of spreading literacy, new political concepts and nationalist ideas. Dutton (2014) shows how early twentieth-century Vietnamese intellectuals simultaneously confronted colonial rule and imported new political concepts through language. The emergence of a modern vocabulary of society, struggle and reform demonstrates that language modernization was itself part of political modernization.

This contrasts sharply with Ireland. English acquired material and institutional advantages that displaced Irish from much ordinary social life. In Vietnam, French did not replace Vietnamese as the vernacular of the national community, and the Romanized script expanded the functional reach of Vietnamese itself. The American intervention later adds a further contrast. The United States pursued geopolitical and ideological outcomes through military power, support for South Vietnamese institutions, economic resources and Cold War political communication. It did not exercise the centuries-long control over everyday linguistic reproduction characteristic of English expansion in Ireland. English later gained value in commerce, higher education and international integration, but it did not displace Vietnamese from the core domains of national life. Vietnam therefore helps separate military domination from linguistic domination: superior coercive capacity does not automatically produce language shift.

2.4 Germany: One Language, Divergent Political Cultures

Germany supplies the counter-case that prevents the argument from becoming linguistically deterministic. German linguistic identity long preceded the unified nation-state of 1871, and nineteenth-century debates connected the national language and mother tongue to changing conceptions of social and political identity. Stevenson (2002) emphasizes this historical continuity: language repeatedly became a site through which Germans debated nation, state and belonging. Yet the most analytically important period for this article begins after 1945, when a broadly common language coexisted with two states organized around opposing political and economic systems.

The Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic did not develop separate languages in the ordinary linguistic sense. They developed different communicative environments. Stevenson (2002) shows that the official discourse of the Socialist Unity Party formed a public language of authority and political orthodoxy that citizens inevitably encountered, even when it differed from everyday conversation. Ritualized speech events, institutional vocabulary and political naming embedded familiar German words in a socialist political order. The significance for political culture is direct: language did not create the GDR's political institutions, but public linguistic practices helped reproduce the categories through which those institutions represented themselves and expected citizens to interpret political life.

The German case therefore reverses the logic of Ireland and Ukraine. In those cases, different languages or linguistic hierarchies became associated with competing political projects. In Germany, largely the

same language was used to construct competing political realities. The ideological force of naming and key political words could matter more than large quantitative lexical differences. This demonstrates why the research question must concern the impact of language on political culture rather than assume that each language corresponds to one culture. A common linguistic system can provide the material through which very different political vocabularies are built.

Reunification after 1990 provides an equally important reverse test. Political unity and linguistic commonality did not immediately produce social or cultural unity. Stevenson describes the post-unification period as a new speech ecology in which eastern and western repertoires, evaluations and stereotypes encountered one another. Narratives of collective memory and representations of 'eastern' and 'western' talk participated in negotiating identities after the state boundary disappeared. Research on Berlin similarly found that reunification brought together people who had lived for a generation in adjacent but increasingly distinct communicative worlds. Language could facilitate communication across the former border while simultaneously carrying traces of institutional socialization.

Germany therefore establishes the limit condition for the article's thesis. Language can influence political culture through discourse, naming, education and institutional communication, but common language does not guarantee common political culture. Institutions matter because they determine the meanings repeatedly attached to words and the practices through which citizens encounter authority. The German experience also prepares the later economic and political comparison with Vietnam: both countries experienced division and reunification, but the relationship among language, state institutions and external powers followed very different trajectories.

2.5 Paired Comparison: What the Four Histories Establish

The four histories produce different combinations of language and power. Ireland demonstrates extensive linguistic displacement without disappearance of national identity. Ukraine demonstrates prolonged bilingual asymmetry followed by increasingly explicit linguistic re-nationalization. Vietnam demonstrates the capacity to appropriate externally promoted linguistic technologies without surrendering the national vernacular. Germany demonstrates linguistic continuity across political discontinuity. None of these outcomes can be explained by language alone, but none can be understood without language either.

The paired comparison clarifies why institutional duration matters. Military superiority can transform borders rapidly, but deep language shift normally requires repeated influence over the institutions of social reproduction: schools, administration, labour markets, religion, media and family expectations. Ireland's history shows how long-term institutional and economic advantages can make the language of the stronger power socially rational even after political resistance develops. Ukraine shows how a state can later attempt to reverse inherited linguistic asymmetries by reconnecting language to education, administration and sovereignty. Vietnam shows that external control can generate unintended linguistic outcomes when a society appropriates the tools introduced by the external power. Germany shows that political institutions can produce divergent cultures even without linguistic replacement.

These results also introduce the reciprocal direction of causality that guides the remainder of the article. Language affects political culture when it organizes access to institutions, supplies vocabularies of belonging and authority, and marks the boundaries of national community. Political culture affects language when citizens, movements and governments decide whether linguistic preservation deserves sacrifice, public expenditure, legal protection or everyday use. The next section therefore moves from formation and displacement to political culture in practice: how citizens and institutions in the four countries converted these inherited linguistic conditions into participation, legitimacy, education, religion and political communication.

The societal perspective also improves the Ukraine comparison. If nationalism depends partly on shared communication, trust and collective action, the relevant empirical question is not simply whether Irish or Ukrainian survived external pressure. It is whether institutions converted linguistic attachment into durable social practice. Ireland shows a long separation between symbolic national value and everyday linguistic reproduction; Ukraine increasingly reconnected state language, education, public administration and sovereignty after independence, especially after 2014. Vietnam shows that a national community can appropriate an externally introduced script and use it to expand vernacular communication, while Germany shows that shared communication alone cannot erase political cultures produced by different institutions. The four cases therefore suggest that language affects political culture most strongly when shared communication is reinforced by institutions capable of turning linguistic identity into repeated social interaction.

Political culture becomes analytically useful only when it is connected to observable practices. In this article it does not denote a fixed national personality. It refers to historically formed expectations about authority, participation, legitimacy, social trust and the proper relationship between citizens and institutions. Language enters this field in two directions. It can determine access to education, administration, media and

public recognition, thereby influencing the way citizens experience the state; political culture can also determine whether a language is reproduced within families, defended by civil society or transformed into an instrument of state policy. The societal interpretation of nationalism developed by Richard English is especially useful at this point. In the material reviewed for this study, nationalism is powerful because it can connect belonging, identity, security and purpose to a stable community and provide shared references for communication, trust, solidarity and collective action (English, 2006). The empirical question is consequently not whether language “causes” nationalism, but when shared communication becomes part of the institutional and social infrastructure through which political culture is reproduced.

The four cases reveal markedly different answers. Ireland demonstrates that national political identity can remain strong even when the historic national language loses much of its everyday communicative function. Ukraine shows a movement from socially complex bilingualism toward the increasing institutionalization and securitization of Ukrainian, particularly after 2014. Vietnam illustrates how a strong national language can coexist with centralized one-party political culture and extensive dependence on external economic and technological networks. Germany offers the strongest counter-example to linguistic determinism: the same national language existed for four decades within two political systems that produced different patterns of political socialization, public discourse and expectations of the state.

3.1 Ireland: National Identity Beyond Everyday Language

Ireland presents a political-cultural paradox. The independence movement helped produce a state in which Irish possessed exceptional constitutional and symbolic status, yet the daily language of most citizens remained English. This outcome separates political identification from ordinary linguistic behaviour. Crowley (2005) shows that political and cultural nationalism did not always assign the same importance to Irish: political actors could pursue Irish sovereignty in English, while cultural nationalists treated linguistic revival as a necessary reconstruction of the nation. English (2006) likewise rejects an account of nationalism based on ideological uniformity. Nationalism could mobilize community and collective action even while different Irish actors disagreed over religion, class, political strategy and the role of language itself. Political culture therefore preserved a strong idea of Irish distinctiveness without requiring the historic language to become the dominant medium of daily life.

The education system demonstrates both the strength and limits of state-led cultural policy. After independence, Irish was placed at the centre of schooling and state symbolism. Yet Ó Riagáin (1997) argues that language policy must be understood in relation to social reproduction: a language survives not because citizens encounter it in a classroom alone, but because families, labour markets and communities create reasons to use it repeatedly. English retained powerful advantages in employment, migration, higher education and international mobility. The result was not the disappearance of Irish but a division between symbolic legitimacy and routine utility. In political-cultural terms, the state could communicate an Irish national identity while being much less successful in reorganizing the economic incentives governing linguistic behaviour.

Civil society partially compensates for this gap. Conradh na Gaeilge, Gaeloideachas, Glór na nGael, Irish-medium schools, Gaeltacht organizations and Irish-language media make preservation an activity performed by citizens rather than merely a legal obligation. Galway is particularly useful because Gaeltacht communities, University of Galway, TG4, Raidió na Gaeltachta and local language organizations create a dense institutional ecology in which Irish can function beyond ceremonial nationalism. This is a practical example of English's societal mechanism: shared communication becomes politically durable when organizations repeatedly convert identity into participation. The preservation movement also reveals a feature of Irish political culture central to this article—pressure on the state can coexist with attachment to the state. Language activism does not necessarily reject Irish institutions; it often demands that those institutions live up to commitments already embedded in the constitutional and cultural order.

The Northern Irish experience adds another layer. Language there is more visibly connected to competing national identities and to the historical division between predominantly nationalist/Catholic and unionist/Protestant communities. Yet it would be inaccurate to reduce the Troubles to a religious war or to treat Irish-language activism as an automatic expression of Catholicism. Research on Irish-medium education and contemporary language activism shows that community priorities, local organization and political recognition interact in more complex ways (McManus, 2016; Nic Roibeaird & Haughey, 2026). Language acquires political force when it becomes a practical marker through which communities negotiate recognition, rights and belonging. Ireland thus shows both sides of the central relationship: political culture can sustain the symbolic value of a language after demographic decline, while organized language preservation can influence political agendas and institutional commitments.

2.2 Ukraine: From Bilingual Political Culture to Linguistic Securitization

Ukraine offers a nearly inverse trajectory. Independence in 1991 did not create a linguistically homogeneous polity. Ukrainian and Russian were embedded in overlapping regional, urban, familial and professional practices, and language choice could not be treated as a direct measure of political loyalty. The persistence of Russian in eastern and southern cities reflected long imperial and Soviet histories, but Russian-speaking citizens could simultaneously identify with Ukrainian statehood. Recent scholarship therefore frames Ukrainian language policy as a difficult balance among postcolonial nation-building, linguistic justice and liberal pluralism rather than as a simple conflict between two monolingual populations (Place & Everett, 2024). Political culture developed within bilingual social realities while the state attempted to strengthen a historically disadvantaged national language.

The events beginning in 2014 altered that context. Russia's annexation of Crimea and the conflict in Donbas increased the association between Ukrainian-language institutionalization and state sovereignty. Public language increasingly became a security issue, but the change did not originate solely in presidential policy. Prosvita and other cultural movements had long linked Ukrainian with education, historical memory and civic consciousness, while Maidan-era mobilization demonstrated the capacity of civil society to transform words, symbols and public spaces into political resources. "Maidan" itself illustrates the mechanism: a word designating a square became internationally intelligible as shorthand for civic mobilization and resistance. Language therefore participated in political culture not only through official status, but through the creation of shared political meanings.

Poroshenko's formula "Army, Language, Faith" condensed this post-2014 convergence of sovereignty, security and cultural institutions. The 2019 state-language law expanded the mandatory public use of Ukrainian, and the pursuit of Orthodox autocephaly similarly sought to reduce institutional dependence on Moscow. Yet Poroshenko's decisive electoral defeat in 2019 is precisely why the case is analytically valuable. Language policy could be institutionally consequential without determining electoral choice. Zelensky, whose public biography emerged from a predominantly Russian-speaking environment, could defeat the politician most closely identified with state-led linguistic consolidation and still represent Ukrainian sovereignty. The case demonstrates that home language, national identity and partisan preference must be analytically separated.

After the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022, language acquired still greater symbolic weight, while Russian-speaking Ukrainians continued to participate extensively in resistance to Russia. Research on Ukrainian media discourse finds that war became a dominant frame for reconsidering language policy between 2014 and 2022 (Dvoryanyn & Teliachyi, 2024). This does not prove that language itself caused political realignment. It shows how external conflict can alter the social meaning of a language: practices once treated as ordinary bilingualism can be reinterpreted through sovereignty, security and historical memory. Ukrainian becomes more politically salient when institutions and citizens perceive it as connected to the survival of the state.

The Ukrainian case also reveals a difference from Ireland in the balance between civil society and government. Ireland's preservation infrastructure remains strongly associated with voluntary organizations, local communities and educational networks operating within a stable state. In Ukraine, civil society is important, but after 2014 linguistic preservation increasingly converged with legislation, administration, national security and religious independence. The same societal demand can therefore acquire a different political form depending on the institutional environment. This difference prepares the later Poroshenko–Zelensky case study, where the article examines whether stronger language policy increases political legitimacy or whether citizens distinguish between support for the national language and support for the government implementing it.

2.3 Vietnam: Linguistic Unity, Political Centralization and External Influence

Vietnam demonstrates that linguistic continuity can coexist with radical changes in political organization and external alignment. Modern Vietnamese became a national medium capable of operating across administration, schooling, media and everyday social life. This distinguishes Vietnam from Ireland, where the language historically associated with national identity lost most routine functions, and from Ukraine, where two major languages remained socially embedded. Vietnamese linguistic unity does not, however, imply political pluralism. The Socialist Republic of Vietnam remains a one-party state in which political communication and organized opposition are institutionally constrained. The case therefore provides another limit to linguistic determinism: a shared national language can facilitate communication across society without determining whether political culture is liberal, socialist, authoritarian or democratic.

The political importance of Vietnamese lies instead in its relationship to national autonomy. The adoption and national appropriation of quốc ngữ broadened literacy and mass communication, allowing Vietnamese to become a modern political language. During anticolonial and revolutionary mobilization, language helped connect political ideas with a national audience, but its significance should not be confused with a single

ideology. The same language survived monarchy, colonialism, revolutionary socialism, partition, reunification and market-oriented reforms. Political regimes changed the vocabulary and institutional uses of Vietnamese more readily than they changed the underlying language of the national community.

The comparison with the United States is revealing. American intervention in Vietnam was overwhelmingly military, geopolitical and ideological rather than a long-duration program designed to replace Vietnamese with English across generations of schooling and administration. Consequently, American military superiority did not translate into linguistic displacement. English later became increasingly valuable in international business, science, tourism and technology, but Vietnamese remained the language through which the state and most citizens conduct ordinary national life. This distinction supports a broader hypothesis: cultural and linguistic displacement tends to be deeper when external power controls everyday institutions and social mobility over long periods than when influence is principally military.

Contemporary relations with China introduce a different problem. Vietnam has a long history of cultural borrowing from China and remains economically integrated with Chinese and regional production networks, yet linguistic and national identity remain strongly Vietnamese. Economic dependence, technological dependence and linguistic dependence should therefore not be treated as interchangeable. A society can maintain a strong national language while confronting asymmetries in trade, investment or technology. Linguistic sovereignty may support a strong sense of national autonomy even when policymakers must manage substantial economic dependence on larger powers.

2.4 Germany: One Language, Two Political Socializations

Germany provides the clearest empirical demonstration that a common language is not sufficient to create a common political culture. After 1945, East and West Germans continued to speak German but lived within political systems that organized authority, participation, education, media and economic life in fundamentally different ways. Stevenson (2002) shows that public language in the GDR was not a separate German language; rather, political authority created distinctive vocabularies, naming practices and ritualized forms of speech. Citizens developed at least passive competence in this official discourse because it was encountered in schools, workplaces, political organizations and public ceremonies. Language therefore served as a carrier of institutional ideology without independently producing it.

Rohrschneider's (1999) analysis of institutional learning helps explain the consequence. East and West Germany offered different opportunities for citizens to advance interests, develop self-reliance and form expectations about the state. Political socialization thus occurred through institutions operating in a common language. Sack (2017) later found that people socialized in East Germany remained more attached to a socialist model of democracy, whereas western socialization produced stronger attachment to a liberal model; younger cohorts socialized entirely after reunification showed greater convergence. Institutions shape the political meanings citizens attach to shared language, while language provides the common medium through which new institutional expectations can diffuse.

Reunification did not instantly eliminate these differences. Dalton and Weldon (2010) found convergence in support for democratic principles but persistent differences in evaluations of democratic performance. Pickel and Pickel (2022), using representative survey data three decades after reunification, likewise found no general eastern rejection of democracy but continuing East–West differences in satisfaction with democracy, linked to perceived disadvantage and lack of recognition. These findings prevent the article from attributing political culture too readily to national language. Germans possessed a common linguistic system, yet institutional histories generated different political expectations that persisted long after formal division ended.

At the same time, reunification demonstrates why language still matters. A shared language facilitated institutional integration, national media, political debate and everyday communication across the former border. Stevenson (2002) emphasizes that the sudden creation of a single speech community also produced conflicting representations of easterners and westerners in interaction, media and advertising. Germany therefore provides both a negative and positive test: common language cannot erase political socialization, but it can lower the communicative barriers through which institutional convergence is negotiated.

2.5 Comparative Result: Language as Infrastructure, Not Destiny

Taken together, the four cases provide a more precise answer to the research question than either linguistic determinism or the claim that language is politically irrelevant. Ireland shows that national political identity can survive extensive language shift and that civil society can preserve a language's symbolic and practical spaces even when the economy favours another language. Ukraine shows that bilingual practice can coexist with national loyalty and that external conflict can transform language from a cultural issue into an institution of sovereignty. Vietnam shows that military intervention and economic dependence do not

automatically produce linguistic displacement when the national language remains embedded in education, administration and family life. Germany shows that a common language can coexist with different political cultures when citizens are socialized through different institutions.

The common mechanism is institutional reinforcement. Language influences political culture most strongly when it structures repeated encounters with authority, opportunity and belonging: the school language through which history is learned, the administrative language through which rights are exercised, the religious language through which community is ritualized, the media language through which events are framed, and the economic language through which mobility is obtained. Political culture, in turn, determines whether citizens accept those hierarchies or organize to change them. Preservation movements reveal where citizens invest time, resources and organizational capacity in keeping a language socially useful rather than merely symbolically respected. Section 3 extends this analysis beyond domestic institutions to ask how historical, economic, commercial and military relationships between the paired countries alter the political value attached to language and culture.

Section 2 demonstrated that language acquires political force through institutions. Section 3 moves outward from domestic political culture to the relationships linking the paired cases. The objective is not to compile a conventional foreign-policy chronology. It is to examine how historical and cultural connections become educational, economic, commercial and military relationships, and how these relationships alter the political meanings of language. Ukraine–Ireland and Vietnam–Germany are very different pairs. Ukraine and Ireland did not develop a deep bilateral relationship until relatively recently, but their histories create a strong comparative dialogue around sovereignty, larger neighbours, language preservation and European integration. Vietnam and Germany possess a much denser direct history extending from Cold War division through migration, development cooperation, reunification and contemporary trade. The difference between the pairs is analytically useful because it allows the study to distinguish cultural analogy from direct institutional linkage.

III. Ukraine–Ireland: From Historical Analogy to Strategic Partnership

Ukraine and Ireland established diplomatic relations in 1992, immediately after the collapse of the Soviet Union and Ukrainian independence. For much of the following three decades the relationship remained politically friendly but relatively limited in strategic weight. Its importance increased dramatically after 2022. Ireland's own historical experience of independence from a larger neighbouring power, linguistic displacement and contested sovereignty does not make the Irish and Ukrainian histories equivalent, but it provides a vocabulary through which Irish political actors and civil society can interpret Ukrainian claims to sovereignty. This is precisely where political culture becomes relevant: historical memory supplies analogies that make distant conflicts intelligible, even when the institutional circumstances differ.

The relationship also demonstrates how language can connect sovereignty with European integration rather than isolation. Ukrainian language policy after 2014 was frequently presented domestically as a recovery of national public space, while Ukrainian governments simultaneously pursued deeper economic and political integration with the European Union. Ireland represents a state that achieved independence yet built prosperity through European integration and an English-dominant economy. The contrast is revealing. Linguistic preservation does not require economic autarky, and the adoption of a globally dominant language for commerce does not necessarily eliminate national political identity. Ireland can therefore function for Ukraine less as a linguistic model to copy than as evidence that national sovereignty, European integration and transnational economic dependence can coexist in complicated combinations.

The Ryanair episode illustrates this tension in concrete form. In 2017, while Poroshenko was promoting visa-free travel and closer European mobility, an official presidential petition called on the Ukrainian authorities to take political responsibility for bringing Ryanair, Europe's largest low-cost carrier, to Ukraine and noted a presidential decree directing the government to increase flights to EU airports, including through low-cost airlines. The issue was economic, but it also carried cultural and political meaning. Cheap air travel reduces the social distance between Ukraine and the European Union by expanding tourism, labour mobility, study and family connections. An Irish company therefore became a small but visible institution of Ukraine's westward social integration. The significance for this article is not that Ryanair changed Ukrainian language policy. It is that cultural and political orientation is reproduced through everyday infrastructures of mobility as well as through speeches and laws.

After the full-scale Russian invasion, the bilateral relationship became substantially more strategic. Ireland provided humanitarian assistance, accepted large numbers of displaced Ukrainians and gradually expanded security support while maintaining its policy of military neutrality. In March 2025, the Irish government announced €100 million in non-lethal military support to Ukraine, including de-mining and information-and-communications-technology cooperation. By March 2026, official Irish statements described more than €200 million in bilateral military support during 2025, focused particularly on air defence, alongside

humanitarian and energy assistance. These measures show how a political culture historically associated with neutrality can adapt under pressure without simply abandoning its self-understanding. Support is framed through international law, self-defence, humanitarianism and European solidarity rather than through a transformation of Ireland into a conventional military power.

The relationship was institutionalized further through the Agreement on Support for Ukraine and Cooperation signed in Kyiv in September 2024 and the 2030 Roadmap on Ukraine–Ireland Partnership signed in December 2025. The roadmap extends cooperation across political and security policy, reconstruction, innovation, education, economic relations and cultural cooperation. The pairing therefore evolves from historical analogy toward practical institutional linkage. Language remains relevant because education, cultural cooperation and the integration of displaced Ukrainians in Ireland create new bilingual and multilingual social spaces. The presence of Ukrainian citizens in Ireland also changes the relationship from diplomacy between governments to contact between societies.

This recent partnership should not obscure differences between the two political cultures. Ireland's linguistic struggle is largely a preservation problem within a secure state: civil-society organizations seek to increase the everyday use of Irish despite the overwhelming utility of English. Ukraine's linguistic struggle since 2014 has increasingly been interpreted through state survival, territorial integrity and security. Ireland can debate language revival without questioning the continued existence of the Irish state. Ukraine has pursued language policy while territory is occupied and the legitimacy of political institutions is contested by war. The same concept—preservation—therefore acquires different political intensity.

The comparison becomes particularly important when considering the suspension of ordinary electoral cycles in wartime Ukraine. Ireland's support for Ukraine is simultaneously support for Ukrainian sovereignty and for its European democratic trajectory. This makes institutional legitimacy unavoidable. The later Poroshenko–Zelensky case study will examine how language, religion, war and the interruption of presidential elections interact. Here the bilateral relationship provides the external context: Ukraine's domestic political choices are increasingly evaluated within a European network of states that support its sovereignty while also defining themselves through democratic institutions and rule-based legitimacy.

3.2 Vietnam–Germany: Cold War Division, Migration and Institutional Learning

Vietnam–Germany provides a much deeper direct relationship. The Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic interacted differently with divided Vietnam, reproducing Cold War alignments within bilateral relations. The GDR established relations with North Vietnam in 1950, while the Federal Republic developed relations with South Vietnam. The contemporary German Foreign Office records these separate diplomatic histories and notes that the Federal Republic established relations with unified Vietnam in September 1975. The relationship therefore mirrors the central comparative logic of the article: two divided societies, each shaped by competing political systems, encountered one another through ideological alliances, education, labour and development.

East German support for North Vietnam went far beyond diplomatic symbolism. The GDR trained Vietnamese students and workers in factories, party organizations and universities. Research on Vietnamese incorporation in Germany estimates that tens of thousands of North Vietnamese studied in the GDR over its forty-year existence, while a bilateral labour agreement signed in 1980 eventually brought large numbers of Vietnamese workers to East German industry. Dennis (2007) reports that more than 59,000 Vietnamese were employed in GDR factories by the end of the 1980s. Schwenkel (2014) interprets these mobilities as part of socialist transnational networks of people, goods, technology and expertise that contributed to postwar Vietnamese reconstruction.

This history is directly relevant to language and political culture because migration was organized by states that sought economic cooperation without full social integration. Vietnamese contract workers received limited language preparation focused on employment, lived in segregated accommodation and were subject to extensive restrictions. Comparative research finds that the East German system often prevented integration because both governments expected workers eventually to return to Vietnam. The absence of a shared language was itself a practical barrier, particularly because East Germans were more likely to have learned Russian than English or French. Language thus marked the boundary between proclaimed socialist solidarity and controlled everyday contact.

The relationship also extended into security institutions. Grossheim (2021) documents East German Stasi assistance to socialist Vietnam as a transfer of intelligence knowledge within the Cold War socialist bloc. This is important for the present article because it demonstrates that political culture was transferred not only through ideological vocabulary but through organizational practices. Intelligence cooperation, party education and administrative training helped circulate models of authority across national borders. Yet such transfer did

not make Vietnam culturally German or linguistically German-speaking. Institutional knowledge can travel without linguistic assimilation, reinforcing the distinction between political influence and language replacement. Economic cooperation likewise had durable material effects. Schwenkel's study of coffee cooperation shows how the GDR participated in postwar Vietnamese modernization projects through the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance. Such projects were officially framed as socialist solidarity but were also shaped by economic necessity. Dennis similarly finds that the expansion of Vietnamese contract labour in the GDR was driven substantially by labour shortages and inefficiencies in the East German command economy rather than by ideology alone. This gap between official language and institutional incentives is central to political culture: states often describe cooperation through moral vocabularies that coexist with more pragmatic economic motivations.

German reunification transformed these relationships rather than ending them. Vietnamese contract workers who remained in Germany encountered unemployment, legal uncertainty and xenophobic violence, while Vietnamese refugees who had entered West Germany had experienced a very different institutional environment. Research comparing Vietnamese incorporation in East and West Germany demonstrates how two German political cultures created different migrant experiences despite a shared German language after reunification. The Vietnamese diaspora consequently became a living bridge between the two histories of Germany and the multiple histories of Vietnam.

Contemporary bilateral relations are now primarily economic, educational and diplomatic rather than ideological. Germany and Vietnam have maintained a strategic partnership since 2011. According to the German Federal Foreign Office, bilateral trade exceeded €21 billion in 2025; Germany was Vietnam's most important trading partner within the European Union, more than 500 German companies were represented in Vietnam, more than 4,000 German companies exported to the country, and German investment supported roughly 50,000 jobs. The EU–Vietnam Free Trade Agreement, in force since 2020, further intensified economic relations. This is a dramatic transformation from socialist solidarity between North Vietnam and East Germany to market-based integration between unified Vietnam and unified Germany.

Yet historical culture continues to shape the relationship. Germany remains associated in Vietnam with engineering, vocational education, industrial organization and scientific training. Vietnam, meanwhile, is increasingly important to Germany as a manufacturing and commercial partner in Southeast Asia. Language mediates these relations pragmatically: German has cultural and educational value in specific institutions, while English increasingly functions as an international business language, but Vietnamese remains dominant within Vietnamese political and social life. Economic integration therefore expands multilingual competence without requiring national linguistic displacement.

3.3 Military Relations and the Limits of Comparison

The military dimension differs sharply across the pairs. Ireland's support to Ukraine since 2022 is explicitly framed as non-lethal military assistance and support for self-defence, reflecting the constraints and traditions of Irish neutrality. Germany's relationship with Vietnam is not organized around an equivalent contemporary war. Its military significance is more historical: the division of Germany and Vietnam placed the two pairs of states within opposing Cold War blocs, and East German cooperation with North Vietnam included security and institutional assistance. The comparison should therefore not manufacture symmetry where none exists. What can be compared is the way political cultures determine which forms of international support become legitimate and how governments describe them.

The distinction also clarifies the role of the United States, Russia, China and the United Kingdom in the broader article. External power operates through different combinations of coercion, language, education, religion, economic incentives, technology and military institutions. British rule in Ireland produced deep linguistic displacement over centuries. Russian and Soviet power created durable Russian-language institutional advantages in Ukraine, while post-2014 conflict strengthened Ukrainian linguistic sovereignty. American intervention in Vietnam was extraordinarily destructive militarily but did not produce comparable English-language replacement. Chinese influence on Vietnam has been historically profound and contemporary economic links are dense, yet Vietnamese linguistic identity remains strong. Germany's experience demonstrates that even where language is shared, political institutions can generate divergent cultures.

This comparison suggests that military force and cultural power should not be treated as interchangeable. Military power can alter borders and institutions rapidly; linguistic-cultural influence usually depends on repeated control over education, administration, religious or ideological institutions, labour markets and intergenerational opportunity. The persistence of English in Ireland and Russian in parts of Ukraine reflects long institutional histories rather than battlefield outcomes alone. Conversely, the failure of American power to replace Vietnamese linguistically demonstrates that military dominance does not necessarily reorganize the everyday cultural infrastructure of a society.

3.4 From Paired Relations to the Whole Picture

The paired relationships reveal two different pathways through which language and political culture interact internationally. Ukraine–Ireland is a relatively new strategic relationship built upon European integration, solidarity, migration and a powerful historical analogy concerning sovereignty and larger neighbours. Vietnam–Germany is a layered relationship produced by Cold War division, socialist cooperation, labour migration, reunification and contemporary trade. One pair moves from analogy toward institutional partnership; the other moves from direct ideological partnership toward market and knowledge cooperation.

The whole picture is therefore not a geopolitical bloc of four similar countries. It is a comparative map of mechanisms. Ireland shows how political independence can coexist with language displacement and how civil society attempts to repair that separation. Ukraine shows how language can become progressively connected to sovereignty, religion and security. Vietnam shows how a national language can survive repeated external interventions while the state adopts and adapts foreign institutional and economic knowledge. Germany shows how common language can coexist with different political cultures and how institutional reunification does not immediately erase political socialization.

These relationships also expose the limits of interpreting contemporary politics through the language of “East” and “West” alone. Ireland is culturally and economically integrated into an English-dominant global environment while maintaining a distinct national identity and supporting Ukraine. Vietnam is governed by a communist party while pursuing extensive trade with Germany, the European Union and the United States and simultaneously managing a dense relationship with China. Germany emerged from both capitalist and socialist state traditions and today functions as a central European economic power. Ukraine seeks deeper European integration while its linguistic and religious institutions remain historically entangled with Russia. Political culture therefore cannot be inferred from a single geopolitical label.

The comparative implication is that language becomes most politically consequential when international relationships alter the institutions through which citizens encounter opportunity and authority. Migration changes which languages families need; trade changes the economic value of linguistic competence; education and university cooperation change the languages through which knowledge circulates; military conflict can transform a language into a security symbol; and cultural cooperation can turn language preservation into an international rather than purely domestic project. Section 4 therefore returns from interstate relations to the organizations that operationalize preservation—NGOs, universities, schools, churches, media and community associations—before the later Ukrainian case study tests these mechanisms against political leadership and wartime legitimacy.

IV. Language Preservation in Practice: Civil Society, Education and Religion

Language preservation depends on institutions capable of converting symbolic attachment into repeated social practice. In Ireland, Conrad na Gaeilge, Gaeloideachas, Irish-medium schools, Gaeltacht organizations, University of Galway, TG4 and Raidió na Gaeltachta create domains in which Irish can remain socially useful. This institutional density illustrates the societal dimension of nationalism emphasized by English (2006): belonging becomes durable when shared communication is reinforced by trust, participation and organized community. The central Irish difficulty is that English continues to offer stronger economic incentives in most domains, so constitutional recognition alone cannot guarantee intergenerational reproduction.

Ukraine possesses a different tradition of organized linguistic civil society. Prosvita linked literacy, publishing, education and national consciousness, while post-independence language movements continued to press governments over the public position of Ukrainian. Maidan-era mobilization added a civic infrastructure in which language, historical memory, European orientation and political accountability interacted. Russian-speaking and Ukrainian-speaking citizens nevertheless participated in common mobilizations, demonstrating again that habitual language and geopolitical loyalty are not equivalent.

After 2014, Ukrainian preservation became more directly connected to education, broadcasting, administration and national security. The 2019 state-language law institutionalized this shift. The pursuit of Orthodox autocephaly simultaneously linked cultural sovereignty to religious jurisdiction. The sequence from the post-Soviet ecclesiastical rupture of 1992 to the 2018-2019 recognition of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine matters because churches are networks of clergy, schools, rituals, historical narratives and community authority. When jurisdiction is perceived as externally controlled, religion can become part of a wider struggle over legitimacy.

Religion should therefore be treated institutionally rather than confessionally. Catholic institutions contributed to a distinct Irish social identity under British rule, but the Irish-language revival cannot be reduced to Catholicism. Likewise, Orthodoxy is central to Ukrainian history, but contemporary Ukrainian political culture cannot be divided simply into Ukrainian and Russian churches. Vietnam and Germany clarify the limit of the preservation concept: Vietnamese remains dominant because it is embedded in family, school and state

reproduction, while German required no preservation struggle even though the same language carried different political cultures in East and West.

V. Language, Government and Political Leadership

Political leaders select labels, metaphors, registers and audiences that position citizens in relation to the state. In Ireland, most political competition occurs in English while Irish retains exceptional constitutional and symbolic legitimacy. This gap explains why activism frequently targets implementation: the issue is whether symbolic commitments become usable public services, education and community life.

Ukraine makes the relationship more visible because language became a partisan and security issue. Poroshenko's post-2014 formula 'Army, Language, Faith' joined military defence, Ukrainian-language consolidation and ecclesiastical independence in a narrative of national survival. Zelensky's 2019 victory exposed the limits of that strategy. His Russian-speaking background and career in Russian-language entertainment did not prevent voters from interpreting him as a Ukrainian political alternative.

The contrast separates habitual language, national identity and partisan preference. A Russian-speaking citizen can reject Russian geopolitical authority; a Ukrainian-speaking citizen can oppose a Ukrainian president; and a government can strengthen the state language without receiving electoral legitimacy from that policy alone. Vietnam provides a centralized model in which political vocabulary is more institutionally controlled, while Germany demonstrates that East and West could use the same German language to construct contrasting meanings of democracy, peace, capitalism and social justice.

Across the cases, leaders inherit linguistic hierarchies but can intensify, soften or redirect their political meanings. Language becomes most consequential when citizens interpret it as evidence that government represents them, excludes them, protects sovereignty or reproduces external domination.

VI. Ukraine as an Embedded Case Study: 1992, Poroshenko, Zelensky and Wartime Legitimacy

Ukraine provides the embedded case because the article's mechanisms can be observed within one contemporary sequence. Independence in 1991 raised the question of whether ecclesiastical authority should remain subordinate to Moscow. The 1992 conflict around Metropolitan Filaret and Ukrainian Orthodox leadership illustrates how institutions formed within a common Soviet order fragmented when political sovereignty changed.

Soviet religious institutions had operated under extensive surveillance and security-service control. This legacy should not be simplified into the claim that every cleric was a KGB agent or that post-Soviet church politics were centrally directed by the former KGB. The defensible argument is institutional: elites, administrative practices and networks formed under Soviet conditions survived the dissolution of the Soviet state and became objects of competition after independence.

The events of 2014 transformed these inherited disputes. Crimea's annexation and war in Donbas made Russian influence a territorial-security question, while language and church jurisdiction acquired stronger geopolitical meanings. Poroshenko attempted to institutionalize this interpretation through support for the armed forces, Ukrainian language and ecclesiastical autocephaly. The 2019 language law and the autocephaly process were therefore linked in political communication even though they arose from different legal histories.

The 2019 election provides the decisive test. Zelensky won by a large margin despite Poroshenko's attempt to make language, church and security central to legitimacy. The outcome cannot be interpreted as rejection of Ukrainian language preservation. Economic dissatisfaction, corruption, political fatigue, expectations of peace and anti-establishment communication interacted with language policy. Zelensky's Russian-speaking biography further demonstrates that language of habitual communication does not mechanically determine national loyalty. After the full-scale invasion, Russian military aggression and the Russian Orthodox Church's public support for the war intensified Ukrainian concern about institutional connections to Moscow. Ukrainian authorities increasingly framed 'spiritual independence' as a security issue. The analytical task remains to distinguish evidence of specific institutional connections from collective suspicion of believers.

Ukraine has not held the presidential election that would ordinarily have followed the 2019 cycle while martial law remains in force. This should not be described simply as Zelensky cancelling elections. Martial-law rules, occupied territories, displaced citizens, soldiers at the front and security risks complicate national elections. Nevertheless, prolonged emergency government creates a legitimate question about how authority will be electorally renewed after wartime conditions.

The case therefore answers the research question conditionally: language can become an institution of sovereignty and a powerful symbol of political community, but it does not determine electoral choice. Political culture determines how citizens interpret language policy, and war can radically change those interpretations.

VII. Comparative Discussion: Ukraine-Ireland, Vietnam-Germany and the Whole Picture

Ireland and Ukraine reveal different forms of preservation after long periods of external linguistic dominance. Ireland achieved sovereignty after English had become deeply embedded in economic and social life; revival therefore operates largely through education, civil society and Gaeltacht institutions. Ukraine inherited extensive bilingualism and, particularly after 2014, increasingly used the state to expand Ukrainian across public domains.

Vietnam and Germany reveal the opposite limits. Vietnam retained its national vernacular despite colonialism and war, demonstrating that military intervention does not necessarily produce language replacement. Germany retained a common national language while two political systems created different cultures of authority, participation and legitimacy. Language is therefore neither sufficient nor irrelevant: its political effect depends on the institutions through which it is used.

Education is the most consistent mediator. Ireland shows the limits of schooling when wider economic life favours another language; Ukraine shows how education can become part of national consolidation; Vietnam shows how mass literacy in a national language can support political integration; Germany shows how the same language can carry different political curricula and institutional expectations.

The whole picture supports a reciprocal model: language influences identity, education, communication and legitimacy, which shape political culture; political culture influences institutional priorities, incentives and collective action, which shape preservation, displacement or politicization. British rule in Ireland produced deep language shift through long institutional control. Russian and Soviet influence produced durable Russian-language advantages in Ukraine without eliminating Ukrainian identity. American military intervention in Vietnam did not produce comparable English-language replacement. Cultural domination appears more durable when external power controls everyday institutions across generations than when it relies principally on military force.

VIII. Conclusion, Implications and Future Research

This study asked: To what extent does language impact political culture? The comparison indicates a substantial but conditional impact. Language does not determine political loyalty or regime type. It shapes the spaces in which identity, power and legitimacy are constructed, especially when embedded in family transmission, education, administration, religion, media, labour markets and political communication.

Ireland demonstrates that political independence can coexist with profound linguistic displacement. Ukraine demonstrates that linguistic practice and geopolitical loyalty are not equivalent and that external conflict can transform language from a cultural question into an institution of sovereignty. Vietnam demonstrates that military intervention and foreign economic influence need not produce language replacement when the national language remains embedded in social reproduction. Germany demonstrates that a common language can coexist with divergent political cultures when institutions socialize citizens differently.

The Ukrainian case provides the clearest contemporary test. Poroshenko connected army, language and faith to a narrative of sovereignty but lost decisively to Zelensky. Citizens can support the national language while rejecting the politician most associated with its promotion. Zelensky's Russian-speaking background further demonstrates that habitual language does not mechanically determine national loyalty.

The practical implication is that language preservation cannot rely on symbolic recognition or coercive regulation alone. Sustainable preservation requires social domains in which the language remains useful and desirable. Future research should use comparable longitudinal data on home language, education, media consumption, institutional trust and political participation, and should distinguish language competence from actual language use and political identification.

The central conclusion is therefore simple: language does not determine politics, but it shapes the institutional and social spaces in which collective identity, political authority and legitimacy are negotiated. Political culture, in turn, determines whether societies preserve, displace or politicize their languages.

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