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Book Review

## FROM PAST TO PRESENT: UKRAINIANS AND UKRAINE

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**Yılmaz, Salih, et.all (Ed.).** From Past to Present: Ukrainians and Ukraine. Nobel Press, 2024. pp.312.

On the international stage, Ukraine remains a prominent subject, particularly in the aftermath of the Ukraine-Russia crisis, retaining its position as a key topic on the agenda. Numerous recent studies have concentrated on Ukraine, garnering attention from experts worldwide. Among these works is the book titled “From Past to Present: Ukrainians and Ukraine”, edited by Prof. Dr. Salih Yılmaz and others, which was published in February 2024. The objective of this book is to furnish a comprehensive account of Ukrainians and Ukraine spanning from historical origins to contemporary times, with a particular focus on the emergence and foundational aspects of Ukrainians and Ukraine. The book is structured into three sections, comprising a total of 14 chapters.

The inaugural section of the book comprises four chapters under the title “The Political History of Ukraine and the Dynamics of Religion, Language, and Culture”. These chapters delve extensively into various subjects, from the foundational history of Ukraine, tracing its origins from the Kyiv Principality to the era of the Crimean Khanate. Additionally, the historical trajectory of the Ukrainian region from its inception to the Mongol invasion, shed light on the influence wielded by the Ottoman Empire in the formation of the Ukrainian nation-state. Furthermore, the chapters examine the intricate dynamics characterizing the relationship between Ukraine and the Russian Empire within the historical evolution of the Ukrainian language.

In this section, it is noted that the earliest historical reference to Ukraine dates back to the 12th century. Initially, the Kiev Principality was characterized as a joint state comprising both Russians and Ukrainians. However, this unity gradually disintegrated, particularly with the advent of the Mongol invasion in the early 13th century, which impacted the entire Slavic region. As the Moscow Principality ascended towards the end of the Golden Horde period, Russians consolidated power, while Ukraine, engaging with Poland and Hungary, under-

went a distinct developmental trajectory. Notably, the divergence between Russian and Ukrainian identities heightened, especially in Western Ukraine, with the proliferation of Catholicism, marking a pronounced schism between the two. Despite Russia's establishment of a vast empire encompassing Ukraine, it is underscored that Ukrainian identity endured. Moreover, the cohesion between Turkish and Ukrainian histories endured until the 19th century, fostering robust cooperation between the two nations. However, in the 20th century, this unity waned due to Russian influence. Additionally, it is observed that Cossacks have played a pivotal role in Ukrainian history since the 16th century, laying the groundwork for the formation of the Ukrainian nation.

In this section, the evolution and connotations of terms such as “Ukraine”, “Moskof”, “Little Russia”, and “Great Russia” have been elucidated. Additionally, the advancement of the old Ukrainian language and literature within both the Russian state and the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth has been outlined. Furthermore, the emergence of new Ukrainian literature and the evolution of the modern literary Ukrainian language during the late 18th and 19th centuries have been delineated. Moreover, a critical examination has been conducted on the prohibitions imposed on the Ukrainian language and culture within the Russian Empire, with particular attention to the ramifications of these restrictions.

In the second part, titled “Identity and Nationalism in Ukraine”, a comprehensive exploration of various themes is undertaken. This includes an analysis of the portrayal of Ukraine and Ukrainians within Russian nationalism, as well as an examination of the Russification policies implemented in Ukraine during the Soviet era. The pivotal role played by figures such as Taras Shevchenko and the “Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood” in shaping Ukrainian nationalism is also investigated. Furthermore, the section delves into the spiritual dimension of the Russia-Ukraine War, contextualizing it within the framework of the concept of homeland. It is highlighted that contemporary Russian nationalists encounter difficulty in acknowledging the existence of Ukraine and Ukrainians as a distinct country and nation. Importantly, it is noted that this reluctance to accept Ukrainian sovereignty existed even before the crises in Crimea and Donbas.

It is observed that the persistent implementation of Russification policies, evident in both the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, aimed at assimilating non-Russian ethnic groups, stands out as a notable example of continuity between Russian Empire and Soviet Russia. Moreover, the Cyril and Methodius Brotherhood, which counted among its members the renowned Ukrainian thinker and writer Taras Shevchenko, is recognized for its significant role in laying the intellectual groundwork for the Ukrainian national struggle. Shevchenko's literary works, which made substantial contributions to the advancement of modern Ukrainian literature and language, are highlighted as instrumental in this process. Consequently, Shevchenko emerges as one of the foremost figures of 19th-century Ukrainian nationalism.

In the third and concluding part, titled “Law, Diplomacy, and War in Ukraine”, a wide array of topics is examined. These include an in-depth analysis of the Russia-Ukraine War, focusing on aspects such as trade in the Black Sea, trade law, and international legal practices. Additionally, the repercussions of the naval blockade on humanitarian law within the context of the Russia-Ukraine War are explored. The section also delves into the realm of digital and social diplo-

macy, investigating the evolving landscape of diplomacy in the New Ukraine. Furthermore, attention is directed towards the aviation industry and its development in Ukraine, shedding light on its significance within the country's broader socio-economic framework. Moreover, the dynamics of Ukraine-Kazakhstan relations are scrutinized within the backdrop of the ongoing war, considering external factors and the prevailing circumstances. Finally, a comprehensive examination of Ukraine's experience with the Russian hybrid war is undertaken, offering insights into the multifaceted nature of contemporary conflict in the region.

In this section, a critical analysis is conducted on the erosion of international law, trade law, and the role of international organizations in the conflicts unfolding in Ukraine and Palestine. This erosion is attributed to the influence wielded by dominant powers in these conflicts and the architects of the global system. Furthermore, attention is drawn to the emergence of new dynamics in the Black Sea region as a consequence of the ongoing war in Ukraine. The significance of agreements such as the Grain Corridor Agreement and the energy corridor in the Black Sea is emphasized, underscoring their pivotal role in regional stability and economic development.

The book "From Past to Present: Ukrainians and Ukraine" constitutes a significant scholarly endeavor, offering nuanced insights into the emergence, conceptual elucidation, and delineation of Ukrainians and Ukraine. Particularly pertinent amid the Russia-Ukraine conflict, it stands as a formidable resource countering Russia's Russification policies and propaganda. The book provides a comprehensive examination of the formation of Ukrainian identity, encompassing aspects such as language, religion, and territoriality. Furthermore, it delves into pertinent war-related topics, including Ukraine's weapons programs, diplomatic relations with Kazakhstan, and the intricate intersections of international law and diplomacy. In its thorough exploration, the book furnishes a wealth of information that contributes to a deeper understanding of Ukrainian history, identity, and contemporary geopolitical dynamics.

It's worth noting that the book lacks coverage of topics such as Ukraine's political structure, economy, relations with other international actors, and its position in the international arena. However, its historical research and thorough analysis of Ukraine and Ukrainians render it a valuable resource for comprehending these subjects. It offers insights into Ukraine's emergence and contributes to a deeper understanding of its people. Therefore, I recommend it to anyone curious about Ukraine and Ukrainians, as it provides valuable insights into their history and identity.