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## NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT POLICIES IN THE FACE OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES: THE IRISH “PENDULUM”

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**Abstract.** Divided societies project new cleavages into the contemporary divided world. Assessing cleavages as drivers of social change and evaluating their positive potential versus evident negative impacts is a key element in forecasting prospects of social development. The paper addresses social and economic statistical data, opinion polls and academic research input of the past decade to prove the need to balance tradition and innovation and combine tangible and intangible assets to support the progress of national and local communities. The trend to reduce social inequalities is an important criterion for evaluating the strategic consistency of such policies, whereas the main contextual factor important for their success is the dynamics of support for these policies and the engagement of citizens and communities in their implementation. The example of Ireland as a society that has managed to integrate divisions of the nation and of its historic territory into its development strategies and to promote past cultural traumas as drivers of social cohesion with a long-lasting effect is a representative case in this sense. This case is relevant for explaining the pendulum effects of economic development that can be compensated by consistent social policies, and by recurring to intangible cultural resources and diaspora support to promote an inclusive national identity. Ongoing deep transformations of the existing world order are creating new political spaces, and recourse to intangible resources of development may stimulate a reevaluation of the current conflictual political agenda.

**Keywords:** divided societies, social inequalities, cultural traditions, policy innovations, immigration, diaspora, politics of memory, inclusive national identity, development policy, Ireland.

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## НАЦИОНАЛЬНАЯ ПОЛИТИКА РАЗВИТИЯ ПЕРЕД ЛИЦОМ ГЛОБАЛЬНЫХ ВЫЗОВОВ: ИРЛАНДСКИЙ “МАЯТНИК”

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**Аннотация.** Вопрос о путях оптимизации ресурсов развития современных разделенных социумов — ключевой для прогнозирования перспектив общественной динамики. В статье по итогам анализа экономической статистики, данных социологических опросов и обзора поля современной научной дискуссии обоснована потребность в соблюдении баланса между внедрением новаций и опорой на традиционные практики, использованием материальных и нематериальных ресурсов для обеспечения поступательного развития национальных и локальных сообществ. На примере Ирландии — страны, сумевшей использовать фактор разделенности нации и территории в интересах развития и превратить травматическое прошлое в инструмент социального сплочения с долговременными позитивными последствиями, определены критерии стратегической состоятельности такой политики. Анализ ирландского опыта показателен также для оценки возможностей компенсации маятникового эффекта

в экономическом развитии за счет адресной социальной политики и целенаправленного использования нематериальных ресурсов, в том числе путем обращения к политике памяти, символической и языковой политике, возможностям образования для продвижения приоритетов политики развития на основе формирования инклюзивной идентичности. В условиях происходящих глубинных сдвигов в структуре мироустройства и формирования в ходе конфликтных противостояний новых политических пространств обращенный к возобновляемым нематериальным источникам развития опыт может стимулировать пересмотр конфликтной политической повестки.

**Ключевые слова:** разделенные общества, социальное неравенство, культурные традиции, социальные и управленческие новации, политика развития, Ирландия, иммиграция, диаспора, политика памяти, инклюзивная идентичность.

In the conditions of growing political conflict, the progressive dynamics of social divisions are perceived as a generic characteristic of a divided world, immanently inherent in the modern world order. Anxieties shared by people in different corners of the globe are becoming more acute, this is fueled by the confrontational attitude of representatives of the world political elite and the media, and the discourse of the expert community analyzing social processes is dominated by “challenges”, “risks”, and “threats”. It is no coincidence that such concepts as “polarization”, “fragmentation”, “cleavages” and “divisions”, “contradictions” and “conflicts” are now an integral part of the expert lexicon, and social inequality in its various manifestations has become the focus of current discussion in the social sciences [1, 2].

Noticeably less research attention is paid to assessing the possibilities of using the potential of social divisions for development. This is easily explained: when generalizing positive social experience, researchers face the dangers of introducing a normative approach or unjustifiably idealizing managerial practices that bring visible results, and so the temptation to introduce such models into an alien political and cultural environment is high. Broad generalizations have limited effects, this, among other things, is due to the unique conditions that form the subjective policy space of a particular community. The characteristics of such a space (the culture of political communications, the specific traits of collective memory, and the salience of political, civic, and national identity) largely determine the success or failure in the implementation of certain development strategies.

The answer to the question of why “some societies unite, while others disintegrate” [3] in the process of nation-building may be sought in different dimensions – from objective indicators of economic inequality to the nature of its subjective perception, from the level of trust in the state, social and interpersonal trust to the rootedness of egalitarian culture values in society [4]. The growth of cultural heterogeneity based on linguistic, religious, and value differences and their institutional consolidation in communities united by

common political and legal norms or civil obligations, be it the state, region, local community, or, for example, a professional team, puts the very possibility of maintaining a common cultural and social space into question. In the current leadership crisis in Europe, common ethical guidelines could serve as a bond; in a broader socio-political context, “the priority is the assertion of moral motivation for development in interactions in the public sphere of carriers of different ideas and identities around a common agenda” [5, p. 84]. However, in a situation of rapid growth of economic and political instability and deepening of internal political and international conflicts, the prospects for such an “ethical turn” remain beyond the horizons of the boldest predictions about the future of the world order (see [6, pp. 37–41]).

Drivers and incentives for development were key issues in the discussion on modernization and democratization that the research community pursued a decade ago. Lately, preference was given to “development with adjectives”. Sustainable development, a landmark endorsed in UN program documents as the main path of the human community, currently dominates the agenda. At the same time, there is no shortage of criticism of the attitudes tending to absolutize the indicators of “stability” promoted in these documents (see, for example, [7]), and the “internal inconsistency” of the “dialectical pair ‘stability-development’ itself” is an object of critical evaluation [8, p. 34]. In the conditions of growing inequality, it is worth considering other analytical optics. These may include assessing resources of development, seeking situational optimal combinations of material and non-material resources in the context of *responsible development*. Finding and asserting a balance between innovative thinking and practices and traditions rooted in the political culture of society and its spiritual heritage is a key challenge in this field [9, p. 16]. This is a strategic priority for identity politics and a non-trivial managerial task. The answers are not limited to public policy measures. They can be found in the interaction of state and non-state actors around the promotion of an attractive image of the future based

on the use of development resources in the present that can promote such a future. Ultimately, based on the confidence that *there is a future*, and there is a personal responsibility for an existentially meaningful choice of common goals, for ensuring *responsible development*.

This paper seeks to address these issues. That is, in what forms can a combination of managerial innovations and cultural traditions be implemented and how fruitful can it be to sustain the development of the national community and to implement the priorities of a national development policy? It is also important to assess on what grounds new cross-border and transnational political spaces are being formed and where such experience may be in future demand. In this sense, the example of a country like Ireland, which in recent years has demonstrated impressive success in economic and social development, speaks for itself. The new landmarks Ireland has reached today encourage the discussion about a new “Irish breakthrough”, as was the case at the beginning of this century. Indeed, “the Irish problem as a whole is extremely relevant. Using the example of this small country with a very complex history, it is possible to model many world events in the past and present” [10, p. 381]. The study of the causes of the Irish “pendulum” sharp fluctuations during the lifetime of the 1960s generation, now leaving the political and economic scene, provides rich material for understanding the antinomies of the development of divided societies in a contemporary divided world.

### TRAILS OF THE “CELTIC TIGER”

The slow run-up began with the entry of this poorest state of the European periphery into the European Economic Community in 1973. As a member country in dire need, Ireland became a recipient of targeted assistance from various European funds and programs. Twenty years later, the birth of the “Celtic tiger” was already a hot issue. The country became an attractive place for foreign direct investment and host to the most dynamic technoparks. The number of students grew exponentially, so that by the beginning of the millennium, more than a third of Irish youth held university diplomas, and national universities became magnets for foreign English-speaking students. The favorable social and ecological environment of the “Emerald Isle” has created centers of attraction in the capital and university cities for professionals engaged in the field of high technology. The budget airline Ryanair, which only entered the market in 1984, became by the beginning of this century a mirror of the “Irish

economic miracle”. This latter was seen as the rapid advancement of a country restricted in its own natural resources to the most advanced economic achievements.

The financial and economic crisis of 2008 overturned this trend. The notorious “miracle” seemed to have come to a quick end. There was, evidently, an obvious oxymoron in the very naming of Ireland’s economic success at the turn of the 2000s as a “Celtic tiger leap” by analogy with the “Asian tigers”. Even then it gave rise to doubts about the longevity of the success achieved due to its high social price. In the Irish expert community, this issue arose even earlier, on the threshold of the 21st century, when the limitations and social risks of the neoliberal model became clearly visible [11].

Dependence on foreign capital and the export orientation of the economy was a “time bomb”, and this was largely considered to be the reason of the deep recession that occurred in the wake of the 2008 crisis. Moreover, “the fruits of the economic recovery were not used to stimulate domestic industry, to maintain and increase effective demand”; on the contrary, the share of personal consumption in GDP steadily declined during the years of recovery, social spending was actually frozen, while the mechanisms of social partnership between the state and trade unions helped to downplay protest sentiments [12, p. 185; 13, p. 80].

Simon Anholt, creator of the country brands concept (Anholt Ipsos Nation Brands Index) [source 1] and the developer of the popular “Good Country Index” [source 2], put Ireland first in the first rating of “good countries” published in 2014 in the leadership position. This ranking was based on the results of the 2010s development; Ireland was seen as “the country making the most positive contribution to world development”. Anholt was flooded by letters from angry Irishmen who considered that first position in the world in terms of “prosperity and equality”, fourth – in terms of contribution to maintaining peace, seventh – in terms of cultural contribution (export of cultural products), and ninth – in health and social well-being of citizens did not correlate with the real state of affairs in Irish society [14]<sup>1</sup>. There were

<sup>1</sup> The category of “prosperity and equality”, like any other categories of this rating, takes into account purely market indicators; “contribution to the maintenance of peace” is assessed on the basis of participation in aid programs and bearing in mind the country’s military neutrality and its non-involvement in military operations. Later, the data were adjusted; currently, Ireland ranks 8th in the list of “good countries” [source 3], and 19th in the rating of “country brands”, according to data for 2021 [source 4].

obvious discrepancies between the indicators of market economy development and the social well-being Irish citizens, between the neoliberal guidelines of the course of economic growth promoted on behalf of the state and the frustrated demand for development and social solidarity, penetrating the age-old fractures of Irish history.

The by-product of market neoliberalism were disruptions in the social fabric of Irish society [15]. Financial support from the EU, the ECB, and the IMF (“the triad”) contributed to the gradual stabilization of the public debt, but this was acquired at a high social price. Severe austerity policy led to a sharp reduction in the social obligations of the state and raised a wave of mass protests throughout the country. Parliamentary elections in February 2011 marked a historic defeat of the ruling Fianna Fáil party, resulting from the citizens’ rejection of the dictate of the financial “triad”. A noticeable increase in poverty was considered as its direct consequence. After the creation of a new Fine Gael – Labor coalition government, parties which on the contrary, scored their best electoral results, the austerity policy was curtailed.

Since the middle 2010s, the economy began to recover after several very difficult crisis years. The crisis primarily affected the financial and construction sectors, while in other sectors, the situation was not so critical; as a result, the recession was overcome in a relatively short time. By the beginning of the 2020s, Ireland had firmly established itself in the second position in the EU in terms of GDP per capita: according to the World Bank, in 2020 it exceeded 90 thousand US dollars (PPP, at current prices) with an annual growth of 4.5%. According to the Human Development Index (HDI), the country was second in the UN list, with an indicator of 0.955 with clearly visible annual progressive dynamics; at the same time, taking into account adjustments for inequality indicators, the figures decreased to 0.855 (the level of the top ten leaders in HDI indicators – Denmark and New Zealand) [source 5].

In terms of real individual consumption, the positions are also not so impressive – 90% of the average European as of 2020 [source 6]. The high dynamics, but also the gap in the level of GDP and per capita consumption are directly related to the conditions most favorable for foreign capital: due to low corporate tax rates of 12.5%, corporate giants – world leaders in the field of IT technologies and Internet communications – have chosen this country to host their head offices. The European headquarters of *Microsoft*,

*Google*, *Facebook*<sup>2</sup>, *Twitter*<sup>3</sup>, *LinkedIn*<sup>3</sup>, and *Intel* are located in the Silicon Docks – a fashionable metropolitan area located around the Grand Canal in Dublin. High-tech startups and leading platform online services aggregators – *Tripadvisor*, *Airbnb*, *Amazon*, and *Accenture* – work here in a comfortable English-speaking business environment. The consequence of such a massive presence of wealthy consumers has been a rapid increase in prices for housing and consumer goods – indicators for which the country also occupies a “leading” position.

#### MODERN REALITIES OF SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF SOCIAL TRANSFORMATIONS

It seems that the political class has learned some lessons from the crisis. In recent years, Ireland has demonstrated not only progressive dynamics of GDP but also a downward trend in income inequality indicators: for example, the Gini index has been slowly but steadily declining; according to the World Bank data for 2018, it amounted to 30.6, which is close to the level of Sweden (30.0) [source 7]. Ireland today is one of the rare examples of a correlation between the growth rate of household income and the reduction of income inequality. Experts see the reasons for this correlation in the demographic situation, which makes it possible to reduce the pressure on the budget of pension payments and unemployment benefits and increase support for families with children, as well as in the progressive scale of taxation, which remains the core of the income redistribution policy against the background of smaller gaps in market incomes than the European average [16].

Therefore, 12.8% of the population lives on the verge of poverty, and 5.5% live in a state of deprivation (on less than 60% of median annual income) (2019 data); this said, in recent years, the number of poorest households has been declining [source 8]. In public discussion, high levels of inequality are acute issues; but it is worth taking into account that, according to the latest research on the problems of inequality, the heightened perception of this problem as socially significant and as a manifestation of social injustice is characteristic primarily of more egalitarian societies [1], whose values the Irish share [17]. It is also clear that the problem of inequality is not reduced to income disparities; it is more difficult to take into account the effects of social elevators or the possibilities

<sup>2</sup> Company banned in the Russian Federation.

<sup>3</sup> Company is blocked in Russian Federation.

of professional self-realization of people from different population groups. Noticeable gaps are observed in the economic and social well-being of men and women; in gender equality indicators, the country lags behind European leaders.

In terms of fertility, Ireland, on the contrary, is in a leading position among EU members, although birth rates are falling from year to year: for example, in 2018 there were 13.4 newborns per 1000 inhabitants, and according to data for 2021 – about 11.5; more than 40% of households had children. Mortality was the lowest among the EU member states: 6.4 people per 1000 population [source 9]. In general, the picture reflects trends characteristic of the demographic situation in Europe: the age of child-bearing is increasing and the number of children in the family is decreasing due to the entry of women into the labor market. According to Irish sociologists, in family planning this is linked to changes in the social norm and includes young peoples' "ability to make choices and decisions because some constraints have been removed" [source 10]. At the same time, a close-knit family remains the most important value, and marriage is the foundation of the family: in terms of the number of divorces, Ireland is consistently in the last place among EU countries. The family still plays a key role in shaping the worldview of young people, but this role has changed significantly in the lifetime of the young generation: the emphasis is now placed on the possibility of independent choice of adolescents and on the ethical motivation of such a choice [18]. This position correlates with the dynamics of value orientations embedded in Irish society: according to the World Values Survey, Ireland shows a high (but gradually decreasing) level of traditional values with a high level of values of self-expression [source 11].

The importance of religiosity as the basis of the family life is also decreasing. Thus, regular attendance at Sunday services has fallen – about a third of families participate in it, according to data from the middle 2010s (half as many as 30 years ago); however, this is noticeably higher than in the Catholic countries of the European South. Ninety-three percent of infants are baptized, and only 3% of parents with children under the age of 13 believe that religion does not play any role in their upbringing. At the same time, parents strive to leave children the right to make their own choice in matters of faith, and common family prayer is practiced only in every third family [19].

The Catholic Church as an institution has lost its former authority and influence in society, large-

ly due to a series of scandals around child abuse in Catholic orphanages and schools in previous generations. In a broader context of the individualization of people's perceptions and worldviews, the gap between the institution of the Church and the public demand of its flock has gradually deepened since the 1970s. Renowned Irish researchers confirm that the Church as an institution has lost the monopoly on the moral and spiritual guidance of believers and on the regulation of daily life it held over previous generations. At the same time, the spread of forms of religiosity outside or in addition to activities within the Church is seen as a potential opportunity to achieve "social reconciliation". This means overcoming divisions between Catholics and Protestants both within these confessional groups, and between local and migrant communities [20]. In any case, it is obvious that one can see the emergence of new and diverse forms of religious experience in Ireland, while Catholicism and, more broadly, religiosity and religious consciousness remain significant landmarks of Irish identity.

The distancing of the state from the Church based on Constitutional revisions adopted in 1972 contributed to the formation of a more proactive state family policy, especially in the field of education [21]. In public policy, the family is considered today as a key reference group of the welfare state.

Ireland remains one of the youngest countries in Europe (the average age of the population barely exceeds 38 years) and one of the world leaders in terms of education level: by 2020, about half (49.9%) of citizens aged 25–64 years held a third-degree diploma [source 12].

Population growth is due to immigration, these flows are largely fueled by Irish diaspora members returning to the country. According to expert estimates, today about 70 million people declare their Irish origins, half of them live in the USA [22, source 13], while the population of Ireland itself is at 5.01 million. In 2021, the 5-million mark was exceeded for the first time since 1851, when the Great Famine caused a mass exodus from an island where mortality rates were sky high.

The five-millionth milestone is a symbolic landmark in Ireland's progressive development. The return migration was 30.2 thousand people in the same year (46.3% of the total influx of immigrants of 62.5 thousand people) with a migration outflow of 54 thousand (42% were Irish citizens) [source 14]. The positive balance in immigration is a steady trend in recent years. Return flows come from the USA and

Canada, and the Australian component is also noticeable. Migration exchange with the UK remains consistently high, and after Brexit, there is an understandable increase in return migration and in the relocation of British citizens to a permanent place of residence in neighboring Ireland.

Difficulties for ordinary “returnees” are associated with high housing prices and restrictions in the provision of social services: it is a challenge for welfare state institutions to cope with rapid population growth. It is no coincidence that the stream of “double reverse migration” is also noticeable in the migration flow – the re-emigration of migrants who tried to settle down in their historical homeland and decided once again to leave. This is not only due to economic and psychological difficulties; in some cases, secondary emigration is associated with disillusionment with the possibility of a different way of life, one not affected by the “global civilization”, with discrepancies between the expectations of a comfortable and unhurried everyday existence and the reality of contemporary Ireland with a high pace of life and other attributes of inclusion in the global world (see [23, p. 15]).

In general, immigration is mainly of a labor nature. It takes on the role of a mechanism for adapting to economic turbulence: the flows increase during periods of economic recovery and decrease in crisis conditions when the supply in the labor market exceeds demand; this said, “the government is actively pursuing... a migration policy” in the interests of the national economy [24, pp. 73, 77]. The total number of immigrants living in the country as of April 2021 was 12.9% of the population [source 14].

## DIASPORA AND IDENTITY

The Irish diaspora is one of the key sources of the country’s economic development. The largest diaspora is concentrated in the United States, where one in ten citizens acknowledges his or her Irish roots. The Kennedy family, and John F. Kennedy, remain a historic reference point. Kennedy was the first Irish Catholic president of the United States. The presence of Irish ancestors was claimed (with some degree of justification) by 22 American presidents. Representatives of the diaspora, who for a long time were implicitly considered “second-class” citizens in America, have considerable political weight today. The Irish lobby holds powerful positions in the American economy [25]. An important development factor for Ireland itself is the Irish presence in the American head-

quarters of high-tech companies which have chosen Dublin as their European location.

In the USA, the Irish diaspora played a significant role in the peace settlement process in Ulster<sup>4</sup>. At the initiative of politicians of Irish descent in support of the peace process in 1981, an influential group taking the name of “Friends of Ireland” was created in Congress; its members (more than 50 people, according to 2020 data) meet annually with the President of the United States and the Prime Minister of Ireland on St Patrick’s Day. The Irish lobby has repeatedly consolidated, despite ideological and political differences, in support of common positions both in Congress and the Senate [26]. This was also the case with the Brexit negotiations agenda, where Ireland was vitally interested in defending the EU position. President Barack Obama actively opposed the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. His successor, Donald Trump, on the contrary, was a staunch supporter of Brexit.

During the Trump presidency, which included negotiations and the exit process itself, influential representatives of the diaspora relied on the support of the Democrats, highlighting the potential risks of Brexit to preserve political stability in Northern Ireland [27]. The propaganda offensive launched by the Irish lobby, coupled with the success of Irish diplomacy, created additional obstacles to signing a bilateral trade agreement with the UK, promised to Brexiters at one time by Trump and not yet concluded. The Irish diaspora received additional symbolic support after the election of Joe Biden, who does not miss an opportunity to declare his Irish roots [source 15].

There are similar influential interest groups in all countries of the Anglosphere. The economic activity of Irish diaspora representatives is backed by cultural initiatives. Ireland’s top leadership promotes culture as the “core” of its public policy [28]. A network platform aiming to secure an attractive international image of the “Republic of Creativity” – *Ireland.ie* – was recently launched. The program “Global Ireland – Ireland’s Global Footprint 2025” seeks to strengthen its presence in regions of the world which are of prior importance for national interests, primarily in North America. The key addressee of such projects is the diaspora, and they provide “support for global Irish communities” through goal-oriented projects, a system of presidential awards to outstand-

<sup>4</sup> This was historically the name of one of the 4 provinces on the island of Ireland, today the entire country that is part of the United Kingdom is often called “Ulster”. Officially, the state of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland includes four Home Nations – England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the latter three have limited (and different) levels of autonomy rights.

ing people of Irish descent living abroad, and various cultural and educational initiatives involving the diaspora [source 13]. A small country in terms of territory and population with a historical migration outflow creates and promotes a recognizable image of ancient Irish (Gaelic) culture into the world's cultural space. This is coupled with the image of a dynamic and attractive "country of great opportunities" for creative people.

The image of Irish culture in the world is based not only and not so much on the legacy of the world-famous luminaries of literature of Irish origin (such as the poet William Butler Yeats, writer James Joyce, playwrights Bernard Shaw and Samuel Beckett) but on the use of tools, which are labelled "banal nationalism" [29] i.e. the transformation of understandable national symbols into elements of mass culture. The celebration of St. Patrick's Day<sup>5</sup> on March 17 has become an international tradition that the Irish diaspora supports in all the countries of its presence, and festivities are not limited to compatriots. Irish dancing is a well-known brand, it is not less widely acclaimed than Irish whiskey and the Irish pub. The popularity of these cultural symbols is based on the inclusive nature of Irish identity, its openness to other cultures. The ability to promote national heritage beyond national territory unobtrusively, to be present in the global cultural space in the form of attractive combinations of traditions, innovative thinking, and effective management practices that encompass modern technological capabilities and social demand is an invaluable asset. At the same time, it is obvious that traditions themselves are being "reinvented" in the process, and that emerging new approaches are more often than not tailored to fit consumer demands.

These assets are upheld by the special position in the Anglosphere of an officially bilingual country. Ireland is now the only native speaker of English as a national language in the European Union today (along with Malta). The Irish Gaelic language (*Gaeilge*) is not, as is well known, a crucial pillar of Irish national identity, it declined in the colonial era

<sup>5</sup> St. Patrick's Day is the national holiday of the Republic (National Day). Today, the religious content of the celebration of Ireland's patron saint is outshone by secular traditions of carnival processions and demonstrations of inclusive all-Irish identity. At the same time, the veneration of the saint has gone far beyond the Irish world and the Anglosphere. In the calendar of the Russian Orthodox Church, the memory of St. Patrick, Enlightener and Apostle of Ireland, is celebrated on March 30 (March 17, according to the old calendar), his name was included in the Russian Orthodox Church calendar in 2017. St. Patrick's Orthodox parishes operate in Ireland and the USA [30].

under the influence of emigration to English-speaking countries. According to the 2016 census, 1.76 million people (that is, about a third of the population) could speak Gaelic, while only about 200 thousand people used it in everyday life, daily or at least weekly [source 16]. However, the interest in Gaelic as a component of cultural heritage is growing, and language policy is an integral part of the education system, within which the study of Gaelic is mandatory. Along with historical memory and natural landscape, language is considered in public political discourse as a symbolic bond of the divided Irish nation.

### ECHOS OF A DIVIDED SOCIETY

About two-thirds of the population of the Republic of Ireland (*Gael. – Eire*) support the unification of the two Irelands into a single state. According to a representative survey of the end of 2021, organized by the leading national periodical – *The Irish Times* – and the Ipsos MRBI agency to mark the centenary of the division of the Emerald Isle territory (1921), at least 62% would vote in support of such a step in the event of a referendum. The desire to unite is supported by the majority of young people aged 25–34 years and by elderly citizens. At the same time, unification is an important political priority only for every fifth Irishman, and only 15% support the idea of a referendum in the near future; 52% consider the problem "not very important", although in the future, they would like to live in a single state [source 17].

The survey data reflects the worldview of citizens of a dynamic country: Ireland is perceived as a national community split by external forces, with prospects for unification in the future. However, the new generation is not ready to fight for this; rather, there is an understanding of the attractiveness of the national development model and uncertainty about moving ahead towards unification, although such prospects are kept in mind.

Northern Ireland has once again found itself in the focus of political confrontations in connection with Brexit. The so-called backstop (lit. check valve), – the possibility discussed during the Brexit negotiations of preserving the territory of Northern Ireland as part of the EU customs union after the UK leaves (and before a solution is found to ensure transparency of the border on the island) – was the most difficult position for reaching a compromise. Signed in December 2020, the Protocol stipulated special conditions for ensuring a transparent land border, effectively transferring customs control to the Irish Sea. Such a concession

caused dissatisfaction among unionists – unconditional supporters of preserving the current status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom. It generated an acute negative reaction from their representatives – the Democratic Unionist Party – in Westminster. However, when implementation of the agreed measures to maintain a transparent border began, the positive attitude of the population of Northern Ireland towards these decisions began to grow, according to opinion polls [source 18].

However, in May 2022 at elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly (Stormont), the highest legislative body of Northern Ireland, Sinn Féin, the former political wing of the Irish Republican Army and a staunch supporter of a united Irish nation, took a majority of the votes for the first time in history (29%). The nationalists were given the right to appoint the First Minister, which until now had remained with the Unionists. Prospects for a common future for Ireland may become part of the political agenda. Behind this historical shift are changes in the demographic composition of the population, the growth of its Catholic component, and dissatisfaction with leaving the EU. The Brexit agenda is by no means exhausted here; the Unionists link their constructive participation in the current system of government in Northern Ireland to the revision of the notorious Protocol, which the nationalists, on the contrary, support.

The majority of the population of Northern Ireland (56%, mostly Catholics) opted during the 2016 referendum against leaving the EU. This has created and continues to create problems for London in obtaining public support for Brexit and neutralizing separatist sentiments in Northern Ireland. It is no coincidence that the British “Brexit party”, in an attempt to achieve a post-factum revision of the agreements reached with the EU, uses the same hypothetical possibility of undermining the foundations of a peaceful settlement in Northern Ireland as the key argument.

In 1998, within the framework of the Belfast Agreement signed on April 10 on the day when Western Christian churches commemorated the Death of the Savior on the Cross (so also known as the “Good Friday Agreement”), consensus was finally reached on the settlement of the conflict in Ulster. This was to be on the basis of power-sharing i.e. joint participation in governing bodies of representatives of the leading political forces from the two communities, and included commitment to terminate armed resistance. As a result, the political situation in Northern Ireland has stabilized. However, although the conflict between advocates of reunification with Eire

and supporters of the preservation of Ulster as part of the United Kingdom is now in a latent state, divisions remain, and they are felt both in political and in everyday life. Religious intolerance between Protestants and Catholics is losing its former acuteness, but the potential for politicization of the conflict of identities (both confessional and political) remains, and both nationalists and unionists can recur to the identity agenda. Efforts to overcome divisions are being made within the framework of language policy and education, but the long-standing “red lines” have not disappeared, and walls between neighborhoods with compactly living groups of British citizens of Catholic and Protestant faiths are symbolic in this sense.

Interestingly, according to the above-mentioned survey, even the hypothetical possibility of changing the flag and the Eire anthem provokes a negative reaction in the Republic: 77 and 72% of its citizens unequivocally “opposed” the idea [source 17]. The symbols of Irish independence remain a stark reminder of the heroic struggle against British rule. For the recently independent nation they are significant symbolic evidence of the inviolability of the countries’ current independent political stance.

At the political level, a coalition government of the leading parties – traditional irreconcilable opponents – Fianna Fáil and Fine Gael, with the participation of the Green Party (*Green Party; Gael. Comhaontas Glas* – “Green Union”) was formed for the first time in Irish history in 2020. This alliance was designed to reduce the level of radicalization of the political landscape and stop the advance of Sinn Féin, which showed its best historical result in the last election (24.5% of the vote). Sinn Féin is present in the political life of both Irelands; the history of this political force is inextricably linked with the tragic events of a common difficult past.

These pages of the past are still at the center of artistic creativity, most visible in cinema; films such as *In the Name of the Father*, directed by Jim Sheridan, 1993; *Some Mother's Son*, directed by Terry George, 1996; *Hunger*, directed by Steve McQueen, 2008; *Belfast*, directed by Kenneth Branagh, 2021, have received wide recognition. The trauma has not been eliminated in relation to the territorial division of the Irish nation, and essential differences remain in the assessment of ideological and political confrontations during the struggle for independence. A vivid testimony is *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* directed by Ken Loach and released in 2006. It was perceived by the general public as a true historical testimony, while the director was criticized for exaggerated attention to the topic of social reforms, which in the 1920s was



not so visible on the political agenda, but rose to its full height during the years of the “economic miracle” when the film was released.

The narrative about the history of Ireland has evolved from promoting the image of a “Catholic nation” to a more versatile vision of the history of the struggle for independence. The strengthening of the European vector in Irish politics stimulated Irish historians to engage in discussions about postcolonialism and the imperial legacy. As the confrontation level was decreasing, and Ulster and the Troubles disappeared from the front pages of the British media, Irish historians turned their attention to the European continent, to the colonial past and the experience of interaction with their own diaspora [31, p. 10]. A new historical meta-narrative about Ireland in the world and about the Irish dispersion as an important factor of influence that can be used for the benefit of national development has gradually emerged. In this transnational turn, projective visions and the desire to outline new horizons of development are clearly visible. At the same time, there is a real boom in research on local history, family and ancestral genealogy, and the history of the pre-colonial (Gaelic) period.

The Irish, like few other nations, are concerned about their own history. This “obsession with the past” characteristic of Irish culture [32, p. 3] is reflected in the competition of memory narratives promoted today by different mnemonic actors. Both social studies and cultural initiatives are mainly focused “on the idea of a common Irish culture and identity” [33, p. 10]. The current decade (2012–2022) is an “era of anniversaries”, the most significant ones are the centenary of the Easter Rising (April 1916), the subsequent recognition by Great Britain of the independence of Ireland (December 6, 1921) and the establishment of the Irish Free State in the status of a British dominion (a year later). Earlier, in 2009, the National Famine Commemoration Day (1845–1852) was established. The tragedy of the Famine and its commemoration a century and a half later has become the unifying narrative of the Irish nation, “the constitutive moment, the point that collects us as a society... The Great Hunger lies at the heart of modern Ireland”, it stands at the cradle of the “Celtic tiger” in its quest for change and development [34, pp. 125–126].

Up until the 2000s, in essence, the dominant approach was to consider the past as a series of traumatic events of British colonial rule and the confrontation in Ulster – as its legacy. A new approach is the transcultural vision of memory shaping Irish identity above national borders and religious antagonisms. New inclusive landmarks of national identity are now

in demand. This trend is an integral part of the current agenda for EU countries, and Ireland occupies a leading position here largely due to Irish State policies aimed at turning the Irish diaspora into a resource for development.

### “SECRETS” AND RISKS OF SUCCESS

A decade ago, on the crest of the crisis, the Irish modernization testified, according to scholars engaged in Irish studies, to the susceptibility of “political culture burdened with traditional ballast” to correction and modification based on current experience [13, p. 75]. In the present situation, what we witness is a different vector – the search for a situational balance between new social practices and political and cultural tradition, between economic growth due to a combination of material and non-material resources and to the correlation of growth with social development, reduction of inequalities and the overcoming of deep social cleavages. The goal-oriented strategy of state support for socially disadvantaged nomadic ethnic and cultural groups such as Roma and Irish travelers is a significant example [source 19]. Management practices were focused on the development of a dialogue culture and on the widest possible involvement of stakeholders in the implementation of development policies.

An important tool is the transfer of maximum management functions to the local level with the involvement of state operators, local authorities, NGOs, and volunteers to promote social partnership and the formation of inclusive identities at local community level [source 20]. Rural communities are still very conspicuous in the social, cultural, and natural landscape of a former agrarian country. Environmental priorities are a key consolidating element, this includes the appeal to a unique natural heritage in combination with “best practices” from international experience. The fringe between tradition and innovation in the environmental sphere is indeed very thin, and turning to local identity as an enduring resource of development may help to maintain a delicate balance.

Ireland’s case is unlikely to provide universal answers to challenges of inequality or threats of social divisions facing modern societies. The Irish experience and the solutions that have emerged during the sharp fluctuations of the Irish “pendulum” in recent decades are largely due to its specific characteristics – its’ island position, the presence of a relatively small population, an economy focused primarily on foreign markets, and an active diaspora. However, they are

largely predetermined by the post-imperial political and cultural heritage of a divided nation, its difficult past and enduring historical memory. This said, studying the Irish experience can contribute to establishing general guidelines in national development policies, assessing the strategic viability of the state's social policy and the effectiveness of its implementation mechanisms.

This experience testifies to the importance of finding a situational balance between innovative social and governance practices and traditional value orientations: such a dynamic correlation is a significant criterion for the strategic viability of development policies implemented at the national level. The preservation and maintenance of such foundations of identity as family and religious experience, and an engaging public discussion of the impact of a difficult past on contemporary development and its long-term consequences, can help to avoid painful breaks with the experience of previous generations. This concerns education, of prior importance for the younger generation, but also the recognition and maintenance of the Irish transnational cultural community as a value in its own right, one that emerged during the years of struggle for political independence and in the wake of migrations. The content of cultural and political tradition is changing, it is mobile. The willingness to develop one's own cultural resources under the pressure of aggressive consumerism and social anomie is therefore of crucial importance. The danger of losing the "national face" and the unique historical experience of collecting the Irish diaspora is an imminent challenge in this respect.

Memory politics can contribute either to deepening cleavages or promoting social cohesion in the community. The experience of being part of the British Empire on its near periphery stimulates the search for optimal forms of organization of the nation state and encourages inclusive identity politics supported by an active diaspora. The formation of an inclusive identity can partially compensate for the tragedy of a divided nation by further promoting the image of a country attractive to all those who want to be part of it. A global diaspora community forming over national borders can offer additional incentives and resources for national development.

A national economy dominated by foreign capital and investments and a language and social environment comfortable for high-tech business create risks of pendulum development, massive inflows and sharp outflows of resources. For a small island country, an additional development factor is a selective migration policy focused on the needs of a high-tech economy. At the same time, a high degree of integration into the global and regional economy remains the most important supporting element. Gradual reduction of social inequality can compensate for the risks of the pendulum effect, while identity politics aimed at promoting a culture of dialogue in society and supporting the "Irish world" over national borders are no less important.

This can contribute to ensuring broad public support for the national development agenda. Hopefully the practices based on non-confrontational thinking, which have shown their effectiveness in the context of the Irish experience of recent years, will be widely in demand in the emerging new world order.

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