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The clash of civilizations in Ukraine

Zderzenie cywilizacji na Ukrainie

Abstract: This article analyses the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine in the light of Huntington's theory of the clash of civilisations. In his text, Huntington stated, "If civilization is what counts, however, the likelihood of violence between Ukrainians and Russians should be low". After the full-scale aggression of Russia against Ukraine, it is clearly visible that Huntington was completely wrong. This does not, however, falsify Huntington's entire concept, which nevertheless requires modification in the form of a new de-limitation and naming of civilisations – there is no "Slavic-Orthodox civilisa-tion", but rather a "Eurasian civilisation". These corrections, based on Oskar Halecki's research, lead to the conclusion that Huntington's theory is applicable in the case of the Russia-Ukraine war, with Ukraine being a Huntingtonian "torn country" that has decided to finally leave the Eurasian civilisation, while Russia is trying to prevent it.
Keywords: Russian-Ukrainian war, civilisations, Russia, Ukraine, Ruthenia (Rus)
Streszczenie: Niniejszy artykuł analizuje wojnę pomiędzy Federacją Rosyjską a Ukrainą w świetle teorii zderzenia cywilizacji Huntingtona. W swoim tekście Huntington stwierdził: „Jeśli jednak liczy się cywilizacja, to prawdopodobień-stwo przemocy między Ukraińcami a Rosjanami powinno być niskie". Po pełno-skalowej agresji Rosji na Ukrainę widać wyraźnie, że Huntington w tej kwestii całkowicie się pomylił. Nie falsyfikuje to jednak całej koncepcji Huntingtona, która wymaga modyfikacji w postaci nowego wytyczenia granic i nazewnictwie cywilizacji – nie występuje „cywilizacja słowiańsko-prawosławna", ale raczej „eu-roazjatycka". Korekty te, oparte na badaniach Oskara Haleckiego, prowadzą do wniosku, że teoria Huntingtona znajduje zastosowanie w przypadku wojny Rosji i Ukrainy, zaś Ukraina jest Huntingtonowskim „krajem rozdartym", który zdecydował się na ostateczne opuszczenie cywilizacji euroazjatyckiej, zaś Ro-sja stara się temu zapobiec.
Słowa kluczowe: wojna rosyjsko-ukraińska, cywilizacje, Rosja, Ukraina, Ruś

Introduction

The collapse of the Soviet totalitarian system in Europe from 1989-1991 marked the end of the world's bipolar system. The West won the

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global "cold war" confrontation, causing universal euphoria. In such an atmosphere, Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 triggered an unprecedented global reaction – for the first time in the history of the United Nations (and the only time so far), all permanent members of the Security Council unanimously condemned the aggressor and voted in favour of military intervention against it, under the auspices of the UN.

Global changes provoked American analyst and scholar, Francis Fukuyama to formulate a theory about the ultimate victory of liberal democracy as a system of power and social organisation. Fukuyama stated:

> What we may be witnessing is not just the end of the Cold War or the passing of a particular period of postwar history, but the end of history as such: that is, the end point of mankind's ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government[1].

Those words were written in mid-1989 when the changes in the Eastern Bloc were just starting. Fukuyama's text resounded widely all over the world and brought numerous polemics. His statement about "the end of history" was simplified and taken into popular vocabulary, becoming widely used to describe the atmosphere of post-Cold War euphoria.

Four years later, Samuel Huntington presented another theory about the then-current global system. He claimed that the world was entering a new phase of politics, which would be dominated by the clash of civilizations. According to his model, conflicts between civilizations would replace the wars of ideologies, which in turn had replaced wars of nations preceded by the wars of kings and princes[2].

When Huntington published his article, it was already after the first Gulf War and in the middle of the Yugoslav War. The Soviet Union had already dissolved, which could have been perceived not only as the ultimate victory of the West in the Cold War but also as proof of the ultimate victory of the liberal democracy – as Fukuyama claimed. The atmosphere was, therefore, still very optimistic, and the above-

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1   F. Fukuyama, *The end of history?*, "The National Interest", Summer 1989, p. 4.
2   S.P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations?*, "Foreign Affairs", Summer 1993, pp. 22-23.

mentioned wars were unable to undermine it. Huntington's text raised huge interest, numerous polemics, disputes, comments, and criticism, all of which led him to extend his article to the size of a book, where the analysis was deepened and some formulations were softened but the title was deprived of a question mark[3].

The next quarter of a century brought a number of events that are useful to corroborate Huntington's theory. Genocide in Ruanda, Islamist terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001, the interventions that followed in Iraq and Afghanistan, Russian invasions in Georgia (2008) and Ukraine (2014), and the growing Sino-American conflict are only the major examples. Yet, the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation of Ukraine, which started on 24 February 2022, might be considered a turning point in global history. Not only did it result in military conflict on a massive scale as well as bringing mass crime back into Europe but it also openly involved a former superpower (that still remains a regional and nuclear power) using all its resources (apart from nuclear). Moreover, the invasion united the West in supporting Ukraine militarily on an unprecedented scale.

The aim of this article is to analyse the war between the Russian Federation and Ukraine in light of Huntington's theory. It will be confronted with other theories defining the borders of regions and civilisations, with particular attention given to Oskar Halecki's "limits and divisions" in Europe[4]. Does Huntington's theory prove its validity in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war? Where are the strengths and weaknesses of the theory in its application to the current situation?

1. Huntington's "the clash of civilizations"?

In his article published in "Foreign Affairs", Huntington presented a theory of the evolution of the nature of conflicts in the world[5]. According to the model, after the Peace of Westphalia (1648) conflicts

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3   S.P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order*, New York 1996; in my paper, I refer to the Simon & Schuster edition: S.P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking of the world order*, London 2002.
4   O. Halecki, *The limits and divisions of European history*, New York 1950.
5   In this text, I will refer to the article which presents major theses in a synthetic way, sufficient for that purpose. The book is referred to only if it differs significantly from the article.

were held between "princes-emperors, absolute monarchs, and constitutional monarchs". Since the French Revolution, "the principal lines of conflict were between nations rather than princes" and after World War I and the Bolshevik Revolution "the conflict of nations yielded to the conflict of ideologies". All three stages had the nature of "Western civil wars"; conflicts within Western civilization[6].

After the Cold War, however, according to Huntington, all those types of conflicts ceased to be relevant and would be replaced by conflicts of civilizations. Civilization is understood as the "highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity". Members of individual civilizations do not belong to any broader cultural entity[7].

Huntington defines several reasons for the clash of civilizations:

- "Differences between civilizations are not only real; they are basic. (…) They are far more fundamental than differences among political ideologies and political regimes".
- "The world is becoming a smaller place. The interaction between peoples of different civilizations is increasing".
- "The processes of economic modernization and social change throughout the world are separating people from longstanding local identities. They also weaken the nation-state as a source of identity".
- "The dual role of the West. On the one hand, the West is at peak power. At the same time, however, and perhaps as a result, a return to the roots phenomenon is occurring among non-Western civilizations".
- "Cultural characteristics and differences are less mutable and hence less easily compromised and resolved than political and economic ones".
- "Economic regionalism is increasing. (…) On the one hand, successful economic regionalism will reinforce civilization-consciousness. On the other hand, economic regionalism may succeed only when it is rooted in a common civilization"[8].

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6   S.P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations?…*, pp. 22-23.
7   Ibid., p. 24.
8   Ibid., pp. 25-27.

The model presented by Huntington includes eight major civilizations: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin American, and African[9]. In the extended version of the text, he writes about "seven or eight major civilisations", however, on the map presented in the book he includes also a ninth – Buddhist[10].

As for Europe, he states that "as the ideological division of Europe has disappeared, the cultural division of Europe, between Western Christianity on the one hand, and Orthodox Christianity and Islam on the other, has reemerged"[11]. Then, he draws a wide line that divides Western Christianity from "the rest" in Europe. In some cases, the line goes across individual countries – as is the case for Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Serbia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Montenegro[12]. Huntington summarizes it aptly: "The Velvet Curtain of culture has replaced the Iron Curtain of ideology as the most significant dividing line in Europe"[13]. It is significant that, in the more detailed analysis, he defined the East-European civilization as "Orthodox" only, not "Slavic-Orthodox" as labelled before.

Even though the line was drawn between the West on the one side and Orthodoxy together with Islam on the other, Huntington described in detail only the conflict between Western Christianity and the Muslim world. Furthermore, Huntington even defines Russia as a "torn country" – "divided over whether their society belongs to one civilization or another"[14]. He claims that Russia is globally the most important torn country: "The question of whether Russia is part of the West or the leader of a distinct Slavic-Orthodox civilization has been a recurring one in Russian history. (…) President Yeltsin is adopting Western principles and goals and seeking to make Russia a 'normal'

9   Ibid., p. 25.
10   S.P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking*…, pp. 21, 26-27.
11   S.P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations?*…, pp. 29-30.
12   As Huntington stated: "This line runs along what are now boundaries between Finland and Russia and between the Baltic states and Russia, cuts through Belarus and Ukraine separating the more Catholic western Ukraine from Orthodox eastern Ukraine, swings westward separating Transylvania from the rest of Romania, and then goes through Yugoslavia almost exactly along the line now separating Croatia and Slovenia from the rest of Yugoslavia". Ibid., p. 30.
13   Ibid., p. 31.
14   Ibid., p. 42.

country and a part of the West. Yet both the Russian elite and the Russian public are divided on this issue"[15].

Huntington, however, doubted whether Russia was indeed deviating from the redefinition of its identity towards the Western civilization. He claimed that three requirements needed to be met to fulfil the process: "First, its political and economic elite has to be generally supportive of and enthusiastic about this move. Second, its public has to be willing to acquiesce in the redefinition. Third, the dominant groups in the recipient civilization have to be willing to embrace the convert. (…) It is not clear that any of them exist with respect to Russia's joining the West"[16]. It is more than obvious that today, the answer is simple – they do not.

The most controversial statement by Huntington from today's perspective is, however, an issue of potential Russian-Ukrainian conflict. In the article he clearly states "If civilization is what counts, however, the likelihood of violence between Ukrainians and Russians should be low. They are two Slavic, primarily Orthodox peoples who have had close relationships with each other for centuries"[17]. In the extended version of the text, published three years later, Huntington deepens his analysis of Russian-Ukrainian relations, presenting two more options:

a split of Ukraine along its fault line into two separate entities, the eastern of which would merge with Russia;

united, cleft, and independent Ukraine, closely cooperating with Russia[18].

In neither case did Huntington predict the full-scale war between a united Ukraine and the Russian Federation which occurred on 24 February 2022. Does this provide the final proof of this fallacy in Huntington's theory?

2. Where are the borders of civilizations?

Huntington's theory of world civilizations is not particularly new or innovative. He himself cites numerous scholars who dealt

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15 Ibid., p. 43.
16 Ibid., p. 44.
17 Ibid., p. 38.
18 S.P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations and the remaking*…, pp. 167-168.

previously with the nature of civilizations, and the list presented by Huntington could, of course, be extended. According to him, while they agree in general, they differ in the details; specifically, there is no unanimous consent on the existence of an Orthodox civilization, in particular, in the shape proposed by Huntington, where Greece, Romania, and Serbia are located together with Russia. In my opinion, it requires deeper reflection. Oskar Halecki's theory is of great value in this context, as he devotes a lot of his work and interest to the question of internal borders in Europe.

Halecki was working on questions of frontiers and divisions in Europe for almost his entire career. The most comprehensive and synthetic presentation of his model was published in 1950 in the book "The Limits and Divisions of European History"[19]. Taking into consideration numerous arguments, Halecki claims that there are four regions on the Old Continent, moreover, he strongly underlines that it does not cover Russia, which does not belong to the European civilization (later transformed into the Atlantic civilization, as he defined it in the mid-20th century). In another fundamental work, "The Borderlands of Western Civilization. A History of East Central Europe", Halecki clearly presented this vision; even in the title of the book[20].

According to Halecki's model, all four regions of Europe constitute one civilization, to which Russia does not belong. They are Western Europe, West Central Europe, East Central Europe, and Eastern Europe. His idea to distinguish two central parts of the continent – the western and the eastern, was both fresh and innovative.

A short presentation of Halecki's idea should begin with Western Europe, which:

> Territorially it would be almost identical to the ancient, original part of Western Europe: the European section of the ancient, truly Roman, Empire plus the small area of the British Isles unconquered by the Romans and minus the small area of Germany really controlled by the Romans. Ethnically, it would be the domain of the Roman and Celtic nations, including only those Germanic elements which were completely absorbed and assimilated by the Latin world

19 O. Halecki, *The limits…*
20 O. Halecki, *The borderlands of Western civilization. A history of East Central Europe*, New York 1952.

and those which contributed to the formation of the Anglo-Saxon world, far away from their Central European homeland.

Included in that Western Europe proper must also be those small nations along the controversial, fluctuating, western border of Germany, which were constituted through the separation of their respective territories from the German Empire[21].

Thus, Halecki includes Benelux, Switzerland, and Scandinavia (without Finland) in this Western Europe and is hesitant about Austria, which could be recognized as a part of purely Western Europe or West Central Europe. The latter is constituted by Germany, which, according to Halecki, was "within the European community, a world in itself"[22].

Going further east, there is East Central Europe:

As to the other successor-states of the Habsburg monarchy, it is obvious that they all belong to the eastern, non-German part of Central Europe, in spite of the German influence which penetrated them under Habsburg rule. But they are not the only members of East-Central Europe. That name was and frequently is given, in contemporary political discussions, to the whole dozen countries, in addition to Austria, which, between the last two wars, existed as independent states between Scandinavia, Germany and Italy in the West and the Soviet Union in the East[23].

Halecki is fully aware of the internal differences of such a broadly drawn region, especially between the Balkans and the territories north of the Danube, however, he decided to recognize it as one region, including Finland and Greece.

The greatest problem is with Eastern Europe, particularly given that the book was published at the climax of a Stalinist era and under the full power of the Soviet Union. He stated, therefore:

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21 O. Halecki, *The limits…*, pp. 130-131.
22 Ibid., p. 132.
23 Ibid., p. 135.

The Russian Revolution recognized both of these [Belarus and Ukraine – PU] as separate nations, but soon after their declarations of independence forced upon them Communist governments which made them join the Soviet Union as constituent republics together with the Russian Federated Soviet Republic. Practically dominated by the latter, they found themselves, together with it, outside Europe which, distinct from Soviet Eurasia, consists of three parts only: Western Europe in the proper sense, the German centre, and the countries between Germany and the Soviet Union. The present control of all these countries by Soviet Russia would eventually reduce Europe to two parts: the West and Germany. If, on the contrary, Ukraine and Byelorussia should be free from Soviet Russia, these two nations could be considered Eastern Europe proper, although their historical ties with East-Central Europe would favour their inclusion in that group[24].

Those predictions became particularly timely after the years 1989-1991, when both external (East Central Europe according to Halecki) and internal (the Soviet Union itself) Soviet empires collapsed. In the following years, countries belonging to East Central Europe joined the European Union and NATO (with the minor exception of some Balkan states), thus gaining good anchoring in the Western (or Atlantic) civilization. The Baltic states, as the only former Soviet republics, due to their exceptional nature (independence in the interwar period, deep historical roots in the West), were in that group.

With the formal dissolution of the USSR, former Soviet republics, namely Belarus, Ukraine, and Moldova gained independence[25]. The *sine qua non* condition for Halecki's Eastern Europe to emerge was thus fulfilled.

3. Why Russia is not Europe?

Halecki took the view that Russia is not a part of Europe. As he explicitly stated:

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24 Ibid., pp. 136-137.
25 Of course, not only those republics but also all other Soviet republics became independent; however, from the point of view of this text, those are of vital significance (maybe with some focus on the Caucasus with Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia as well).

(…) it ought to be remembered that, like Turkey, new Muscovite Russia had started, not as an Eastern European, but as an extra-European state, outside the "Christian Republic" of a vanishing past. If Muscovite Russia became part of the modern state system, it was not so much because of a rather slow and superficial cultural Europeanization as because, in contradistinction to the declining Ottoman Empire, it became militarily so strong that all of Europe had now to reckon with it[26].

In his reasoning, Halecki deeply criticizes the theory (later repeated by Huntington) of the unity of the Orthodox world and its fundamental opposition to the Western world. He claims that between Catholicism and Orthodoxy, there are fewer differences than between Catholicism and Protestantism. What is more, according to Halecki "religious differences, important as they are, especially when they are differences between Christians and non-Christians, must not be considered the sole basis for tracing the historic divisions within the Christian community of Europe"[27]. On the other hand, he does not intend to exclude the whole of Orthodoxy from the European civilization, underlining the differences within Orthodoxy, in particular between Greece (and broader, South-East Europe) and Russia.

Moreover, to support his theory, he refers to the Russian concepts presented by Slavophiles and Eurasians. Only one out of three Russian schools of thought, the Westerners, would place the whole of Russia as part of the historical European community. The Eurasians represent "exactly the opposite point of view" with a "strong belief in Russia, or the Soviet Union, or the federal Eurasian Empire of the future, as a world in itself, a sub-continent which belongs neither to Europe nor to Asia, although it might be considered a link between the two"[28].

The most complicated is the case of Slavophiles, who evolved "from a well-justified interest in, or even enthusiasm for, Russia's cultural background, to a political, aggressive nationalism on ethnic grounds". While "the former could find its place in a general European tradition, common in spite of its diversity, the latter opposed Russia to the

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26 O. Halecki, *The limits*…, p. 171.
27 Ibid., pp. 106-107.
28 Ibid., p. 89.

"rotten" West in a feeling of superiority which excluded any real community with the rest of Europe"[29]. Halecki's recognition of the development from Slavophilia to aggressive Panslavism correctly describes the evolution of those two ideas[30].

Initially, Slavophilia was a broader concept and less oriented towards current politics, going back to the past and fostering a sense of Slavic unity. These concepts date back to the 17th century, while in the 18th century, they were primarily focused on the South Slavic peoples. At the beginning of the 19th century, strong Slavophile movements developed among the Czechs, who were experiencing a national rebirth, but gained popularity also among other Slavic peoples, even the Poles (especially before the November Uprising of 1830). Over time, however, Panslavism – a much more aggressive and expansive ideology, subordinated to the Russian imperialist *raison d'état* – took over as Russia's first geopolitical doctrine, assuming domination of the area between the Adriatic, Baltic, and Black Seas[31].

A coherent doctrine of Panslavism is laid out in Nikolai Danilevsky's book "Russia and Europe", published for the first time in 1869. Danilevsky claims that Europe is the enemy of Russia, which should liberate the Slavs from Turkish and Germanic enslavement and establish a Slavic Federation with its capital in Constantinople (under the name of Tsarograd). He carried out a division of the world into ten "historical-cultural types" (quasi-civilisations) constantly competing with each other[32]. The most important, according to him, is the struggle between the Roman-Germanic world and the Slavic world, representing the Greco-Byzantine heritage.

The concept is not so distant from Huntington's division between Western and Slavic-Orthodox civilisations. Danilevsky presents the

29 Ibid., pp. 89-90.
30 More about Panslavism: P. Ukielski, *Europa Środkowa jako pole starcia Mitteleuropy i panslawizmu*, "Teologia Polityczna" 2021-2022, no. 13, pp. 151-164.
31 P. Eberhardt, *Rosyjski panslawizm jako koncepcja geopolityczna*, [in:] idem, *Słowiańska geopolityka. Twórcy rosyjskiej, ukraińskiej i czechosłowackiej geopolityki oraz ich koncepcje ideologiczno-terytorialne*, Cracow 2017, pp. 164-166.
32 These are Chaldean, Hebrew, Arab, Indian, Persian, Greek, Roman or ancient Italian, Germanic, Hamitic or Egyptian, or Chinese. See Н. Данилевский, *Россия и Европа. Взгляд на культурные и политические отношения славянского мира к германо-романскому* [N. Danilevsky, *Russia and Europe. A look at the cultural and political relations of the Slavic world to the Germanic-Romanic world*], Fifth ed., St. Petersburg 1895, pp. 96-97.

doctrine which serves Russian imperialism, therefore, the Panslavic idea is not limited to Orthodoxy – it covers also the Catholic and Protestant nations of East Central Europe, some even not Slavic (like Hungarians). This also meant that this "unification of the Slavs" had to take place through conquest, not voluntarily, as the southern and western Slavs lived in a different, western world of values. A special role in the Manichean clash between good and evil defined in this way was played by the Poles, who were treated as "traitors to Slavism"[33].

4. Ruthenia and Russia

Going back to the crucial question of a European border in the concept of Halecki, differences between Russia and Ruthenia (Rus) have to be underlined. The Polish scholar devoted a lot of effort to analysing this and presented fundamental ethnic and cultural divisions between those two territories.

Kyivan Rus is a much older state entity than Russia[34] (and its predecessor, namely the Grand Duchy of Moscow), and it entered its European stage of history in parallel with Poland – its baptism is dated 988, just 22 years after the baptism of Poland and 66 years before the Great Schism[35]. Halecki pointed out that Slavic settlements moved from Kyiv to the Volga basin later on, where they mixed with nomadic Finnish tribes. Since the 12th century, the Grand Duchy of Vladimir (later transformed into the Grand Duchy of Moscow) which emerged there, started to challenge Kyiv. In 1169, Andrey Bogolyubsky invaded and destroyed Kyiv, which – according to Halecki's interpretation – meant the final rupture between the old and the new Rus, between Moscow and Kyiv. He stressed that Bogolyubsky, as the first prince, did not seize Kyiv to reach political influence, but simply to rob it[36].

In the subsequent years, Kyivan Rus became fragmented, Kyiv was losing its position (with the growing influence of Halych), and

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33 P. Eberhardt, op. cit., p. 163.
34 The name Russia officially appeared after crowning Ivan The Terrible the Tsar of Russia (1547), but even after the Tsardom of Russia had been established it was still often named "the Muscovy".
35 The vital importance of the fact is that Kyivan Rus was baptised before the Great Schism and became a part of the Christian world, a part of the *Occidens*.
36 K. Błachowska, *Ruś a Moskwa w koncepcji Oskara Haleckiego*, [in:] M. Dąbrowska (ed.), *Oskar Halecki i jego wizja Europy*, vol. 3, Warsaw–Łódź 2014, pp. 115-116.

the whole region was invaded by the Mongols (1237-1242). All those factors enhanced the still-growing division between the old and the new Rus, which was finally sealed with the fall of the Halych-Volody-myr Duchy (1340). Lithuania seized power over the old Rus, while the Great Rus became subordinated to Moscow[37].

According to Halecki, the Mongol legacy becomes an extremely important element that differentiates Moscow from the old Rus, both ethnically and politically, which caused Moscow to succumb to Mongol socio-political patterns[38]. The Polish scholar also claims that at the time of the invasion, Kyivan Rus had already been part of the European community for a quarter of a millennium, while "the new, colonial Russia of the Volga region" – had not been integrating at all at that time. Moreover, Mongol influence in Moscow was crucial for the next 250 years, whereas in the old Rus, it was rather insignificant from the very beginning and much shorter[39].

Halecki underlines the meaning of the incorporation of Ruthenian territories into the Polish-Lithuanian federation created in 1386 in Kreva, which:

> (…) connected them more intimately than ever before with the historic European community. Since the Lithuanians also, finally converted in 1387, were now Catholics, the federation as a whole was under Catholic leadership, and new plans for reuniting the Ruthenians with Rome were considered before and after the Union of Florence. But even those of them who remained Greek Orthodox after the Union of Brest (1596) were undoubtedly included in the European community of the Renaissance, Reformation and Counter-Reformation periods, so that the eastern limits of that community certainly extended as far as the borders of the Jagiellonian Federation (so called from the name of its first ruler and his dynasty), organized as a Commonwealth in 1569[40].

Russian pressure towards the West, starting from the 17th century, resulted in the incorporation of European territories with Kyiv (1667),

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37 Ibid., pp. 120-123.
38 K. Baczkowski, *Oskara Haleckiego jagiellońska wizja dziejów*, [in:] M. Dąbrowska (ed.), *Oskar Halecki i jego wizja* Europy, vol. 1, Warsaw–Łódź 2012, pp. 62-63.
39 O. Halecki, *The limits…*, p. 94.
40 Ibid., p. 95.

the Baltic provinces, and Finland as well as most of Poland in the 18th century. Halecki admits that "it is obvious that from the eighteenth-century European history cannot be written without including the whole foreign policy of Russia", he claims, however, that the process of "Westernization" was rather superficial in purely Great Russian territories. In his opinion, the incorporated territories did not "Europeanize" the Russia proper, rather they were the subject of attempts at Russification[41].

According to Halecki, the Soviet Union was not only non-European but even anti-European. He rejects the idea of the "Europeanization" of Russia with Marxist thinking which came from Germany. In his concept, the Soviet Union posed a threat of "Eurasiatination" to European nations – after World War I, only Belarusians and Ukrainians did not succeed in gaining independence, but after World War II, the border moved from the Petsamo-Cetatea Alba line to the famous, "Churchill's" Szczecin-Trieste line[42].

5. Ukraine – a torn country?

Returning to Huntington's theory, amended with Halecki's work, it becomes visible that a civilisational border based on religious grounds only is unreliable. It is evident that there is no "Slavic-Orthodox" civilisation, but rather a "Euroasiatic" one. Western civilisation had been shaped in the Middle Ages, with several state entities joining subsequently and constituting, according to Oskar Halecki, a distinctive region called East Central Europe[43].

Even though it does not falsify the main thesis of Huntington's paper, it falsifies his conviction that Ukraine and Russia belong to the

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41 Ibid., pp. 97-99.
42 Ibid., pp. 99-101.
43 Shaping of the region's borders is well-described by the Hungarian historian, Jenő Szűcs, who defined two *limes* in Europe. The first "runs southwards across Europe from the lower course of the Elbe-Saale, along the Leitha and the western border of ancient Pannonia: the eastern border of the Carolingian Empire around AD 800". The second "stretched from the region of the Lower Danube up to the eastern Carpathians and further north along the forests that separated the West Slavs from the East Slavs, reaching the Baltic regions in the 13th century". The territories between those two borders never fully caught up to the West and constitute East Central Europe according to Szűcs. J. Szűcs, *The three historical regions of Europe*, "Acta Historica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae" 1983, vol. 29, p. 132.

same civilisation. In fact, going deeper into the analysis, Huntington himself hinted that the Ukrainian case is more complicated. It should be noted that on the map illustrating his article in "Foreign Affairs", the frontier splits Ukraine into two parts, with the western part on the Western civilisation's side[44].

The above-presented analysis leads to the conclusion that it was not Russia that was a torn country after 1991, but Ukraine. The state, as Huntington pointed out, was divided into a Russian-speaking, more pro-Moscow-oriented, east and a visibly more westernized west. Thus, it has been balancing between the West and the Russian Federation, however, slowly moving westwards. Two decisive milestones on that path can be noted – the Orange Revolution (2004) and the Revolution of Dignity (2013-2014), both of which were clear pro-Western declarations by Ukrainian society. But the process was continuous, ignited by the declaration of independence – the pro-Western shift can be seen both in political (pro-Western candidates were gaining ever-growing support in subsequent elections)[45] and social changes (a growing sector of services that shaped the young, dynamic, middle class)[46].

In parallel, after the collapse of its cold war empire, Russia started to consolidate. In the 1990s, the suppression of two Chechen wars prevented the dissolution of the Russian Federation itself[47]. After Putin's seizure of power, Russia has been making an attempt to rebuild its influence on the territories of the former Soviet Union, which, as the Russian dictator believes, belong to the same civilisation and should be subordinated to Moscow[48].

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44 S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations?…*, p. 30.
45 See electoral results since 1991: *Elections in Ukraine*, https://www.electoralgeography.com/new/en/category/countries/u/ukraine [19.04.2023].
46 *Nadchodzi trzecia Ukraina. Z prof. Jarosławem Hrycakiem rozmawia Wojciech Wojtasiewicz*, https://holistic.news/nadchodzi-trzecia-ukraina/ [19.04.2023].
47 According to Alexei Salmin's model, the Soviet empire consisted of five rings: 1. Soviet Russia, 2. Soviet republics, 3. Communist countries under direct Soviet domination, 4. Other communist states (like Cuba or Vietnam), 5. Communist parties in the West. See P. Kowal, *Five Rings of Empire*, "New Eastern Europe" 2017, no. 2, pp. 51-53. Until the end of 1991, four rings were lost, however, the bloody suppression of Chechnya was to prevent a collapse of the first ring of the empire – the Russian Federation itself.
48 V. Putin, *On the historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians*, http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/66181 [19.04.2023].

Two vectors of Ukrainian and Russian politics went on a clear collision course when Kyiv made its final pro-Western decision. The Kremlin wanted to prevent this by the annexation of Crimea and a limited-scale conflict in the Donbas in 2014. In 2022, the Russian Federation decided to begin a full-scale war in order to prevent Ukrainian aspirations to join the West. As of spring 2023, i.e., more than a year from its beginning, we know that the war is everything but a "less intense conflict", and only such conflicts were possible within the same civilisation according to Huntington[49].

It is not the case as it is not merely a conflict within the "Slavic-Orthodox" civilisation but rather a conflict between the Western (or Euro-Atlantic) and Eurasiatic civilisations, where the status of a torn country is at stake. For centuries, Russia tried to incorporate Ruthenia (or Rus) into the Eurasiatic civilisation, however, it never fully succeeded. In 1991, Ukraine gained its independence and its politics in the subsequent decades slowly moved the country towards the West, so Russia decided to use all available means in order to avoid losing Ukraine from its civilisation. On the other hand, Western civilisation gives all the support (excluding strictly military) it can to Ukraine, to help it to return to the Euro-Atlantic civilisational circle.

Conclusions

For centuries, Ukraine was perceived by Russia as a part of its civilisation, and so it was perceived by Huntington when he constructed his model of civilisations that clash in the contemporary world. After 1991, the situation became more complicated, and Ukraine has been a rather "torn country" from the perspective of Huntington's theory, or a "borderland" between two civilisations.

In 2004 and 2013-2014, with two revolutions, Ukrainians declared their clear will to become a fully-fledged part of the Western civilisation, which Russia recognized as a threat. At first, it decided to wage a limited war, however, on 24 February 2022, Putin decided to start a full-scale, open conflict, aiming to prevent Ukrainian aspirations and keep it within the Eurasiatic sphere of influence, as a part of that civi-

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49   S.P. Huntington, *The clash of civilizations?...*, p. 38.

lisation. The Western civilisation in turn decided to support Ukraine, and not allow Russia to solve the conflict between civilisations unilaterally by force. Both civilisations realise the meaning of the war, underlining that it exceeds the Russian-Ukrainian conflict's framework; "This is not about Ukraine at all, but the world order. The current crisis is a fateful, epoch-making moment in modern history. It reflects the battle over what the world order will look like" Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov announced one month after the invasion[50]. On the other hand, a year after the Russian attack on Ukraine, US President Joe Biden said: "When Russia invaded, it wasn't just Ukraine being tested. The whole world faced a test for the ages"[51]. The Russian-Ukrainian war thus became a strictly Huntingtonian clash of civilisations.

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