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***The Concept of a Boundary Between the Latin and the  
Byzantine Civilizations in Europe***

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**Abstract**

The article reviews, first, the essentials of the literature devoted to the origins and spatial reaches of the particular civilizations. Then, the boundary dividing Europe into two parts is outlined. This boundary runs from the Barents Sea in the north to the Adriatic Sea in the south. On its western side nations are associated with the Latin legacy, while on the eastern side are those that relate to the Byzantine tradition and later on, to Moscow. Views as to the course of this boundary are discussed.

Keywords: boundaries, civilizations, conflicts, Europe

**Introduction**

Debate over the emergence of particular civilizations, as seen in historical-geographical perspective, is very popular, both in scientific literature and in journalism. Broad investigations are being conducted, and quite elaborate classifications as well as typologies are being developed. Knowledge of the spatial reaches of different civilizations and of their mutual relations is supposed to constitute the starting point for the analysis of the actual or potential threats, which might – and in the opinion of some scholars inevitably do – lead to the inter-civilizational conflicts.

This kind of reasoning is based on the assumption that cultural or ideological differences between civilizations must bring about enmity and wars. Such confrontations are usually held to be determined by the essential differences of religious systems, worldviews or philosophy.

There has been a recent surge of interest in this topic associated with the book by Samuel P. Huntington, published in 1996 in the United States, entitled *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of the World Order*, a worldwide bestseller. This book, translated into numerous languages, has stirred a vivid scholarly and journalistic discussion.

It is generally thought that this book not only tries to explain a lot of historical events but also proposes a rational basis for political evolution. According to many, it may also constitute the foundation for the development of geopolitical projections into the future. Initial opinions of its correctness and universality turned soon afterwards into attacks concerning its scientific value. The intellectual stir caused by this book has proven to be creative, since numerous studies and reports have appeared; these relate to the philosophy of history, geography, political science and sociology.

## **Civilizations as a subject of historical studies**

Huntington's book, despite its popularity and influence, was by no means a pioneering work. The work concerned the types, spatial reaches, and influence of various civilizations on the political history of the world. Huntington himself clearly stated that he was continuing the work of his great predecessors, scholars whose writings formed the basis of his views on the civilizational diversity of the world's population.

He mentioned and praised the works of Arnold Toynbee (1946), Philip Bagby (1958), Carroll Quigley (1961), Fernand Braudel (1980), and Johan Galtung (1992). On the other hand, though, Huntington referred only slightly to the concepts and work of the German scholars Oswald Spengler (1926-1928), Alfred Weber (1951), and his brother, Max Weber (1968).

On the top of this, he did not mention at all two significant pioneers in the study of the origins of different civilizations and their development.

- The first of these two was the Russian geographer Nikolay Danilevskiy<sup>1</sup>, who proposed back in 1871 a list of essential civilizations of the world.
- The second great scholar unmentioned by Huntington was the Polish historian Feliks Koneczny; he developed the idea of the superior role of civilizations in the advance and social transformations of societies, states and empires (Koneczny, 1935).

Danilevskiy was undoubtedly the true pioneer in the study of the multiplicity of civilizations and their influence on the course of world history. Although his views do not form a coherent theoretical structure, he was the first to indicate that world history is associated with a succession of emerging and disappearing civilizations.

According to Danilevskiy, these civilizations differed significantly as to their spiritual and material cultures, as well as the ways in which reality was perceived within them. He classified civilizations on the basis of well defined criteria and pointed out that differences among civilizations may lead to conflicts. Differences lead to rivalry, which may turn into a struggle for superiority and domination. The drive to enforce one's own civilization while holding a negative attitude towards the alien one is inalienably linked with relations between civilizations.

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<sup>1</sup> The very first edition of the book by Danilevskiy, "Russia and Europe" ("Rossiya i Evropa") appeared in 1871 (Danilevskiy, 1871) in Russian. It was re-edited many times over, and then translated into German (1920) and English (1955).

Danilevskiy dealt mainly with the antagonism between the Russian and the Western European (“Germano-Roman”) civilizations. Based on their relations over time he was able to draw certain generalizing conclusions of a universal character. Danilevskiy assumed that this type of struggle conforms to the laws of nature, governing the development of states and nations.

Even if one asserts that the content and the form of the discourse presented by Danilevskiy had a superficial and partisan character, with subjective assumptions and emotions taking the upper hand over pragmatism, and argumentation being tendentiously selected, we must recognize his originality and broad historical and geographical knowledge.<sup>2</sup>

The somewhat simplified but nonetheless pioneering concepts of Danilevskiy were creatively developed by the Polish scholar Feliks Koneczny. In his first major study, which was devoted to the issue of civilizations, Koneczny developed a method for the classification and typology of civilizations (Koneczny, 1926). In the study he showed, using the example of the Slavic nations, the usefulness of the concept of civilization in terms of science and politics. He laid the foundation for his synthetic approach in 1934 and published his work a year later (Koneczny, 1935)<sup>3</sup>. This original – indeed, breakthrough – study presented the variety and the multiplicity of civilizations and cultures of the world population. The author tried to determine the influence exerted by civilizations on the course of historical and political events. The book was published in Polish and it remained unknown for a long time to the broader scholarly world. It was published in English well after the World War II, in London, with a foreword written by Arnold J. Toynbee, who made a positive recommendation of the study (Koneczny, 1962). Thus, the English language version of the book by Koneczny appeared 35 years ahead of the one by Huntington. The work of Koneczny was not mentioned in the Huntington book even though the Polish scholar was by that time cited in the relevant American literature on the subject, and even earlier within the German literature (see, e.g., Hilckman, 1952).

Koneczny considered, in particular, the important issue of whether race, language, or religion implies membership in a definite civilization. He stated unambiguously that there is no distinct causal relation between race and civilization, nor between language and civilization.

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<sup>2</sup> The Russian-language literature on Danilevskiy is very ample. He is not only treated in Russia as the founder of the science of civilizations, but also is seen as a pioneer of Russian geopolitics (see, e.g., A. Makayunov, 1993, B. Gubman, 1997, B. Baluyev, 1999). From the international literature one should mention the classical work by R. MacMaster (1967), who categorised Danilevskiy among the philosophers representing extreme views, characterized by a typical Russian mentality.

<sup>3</sup> Koneczny dealt until his death in 1949 with the civilization-wise diversity of the world. During the period of the Nazi occupation he remained in Poland and wrote – in particular – ample texts on Byzantine, Latin and Jewish civilizations. These texts could not be published after the war insofar as they were inconsistent with Communist orthodoxy. They were published only in London late in the 1970s and 1980s, and that solely in Polish, so that, again, their reception was very limited (Koneczny, 1973, 1974, 1981).

In his opinion, though, the relation between civilization and religion turned out to be more difficult to assess. Koneczny distinguished sacral, semi-sacral and non-sacral civilizations. He argued that religion forms a civilization only when religious laws encompass all the norms of social life, including ethics, arts, knowledge, customs, economy, etc. Koneczny classifies, for instance, Jewish civilization as sacral, while stating that for Christianity in general there is no convergence of religion and civilization.

In this context, the Byzantine world, dogmatically very close to Roman Catholicism, differs from it in terms of civilization. On the other hand, Protestantism, which rejects a large part of the Catholic dogmas, is still, in terms of civilization, closer to Catholicism. As to the criteria related to the legal and systemic aspects, Koneczny concluded that an essential difference separates, civilization-wise, the Eastern and Western Christianity.

He wrote a lot about Russia, classifying this country, despite her having received Christianity from Byzantium, as belonging to the Turanian civilization<sup>4</sup>. That is why the boundary between Poland, belonging to Latin civilization, and Russia, being a part of the Turanian world, is so important for Koneczny. An essential feature of the Turanian civilization is to underestimate spirituality, and even morality, to the advantage of politics, or power plays, to which everything must be subordinated.

The Western European civilization differs deeply from the Turan civilization, he thought, in terms of its perspective on the dignity of the individual. In Eastern Europe an individual is just an element of the state organization<sup>5</sup>. In the Turanian civilization, and especially in its Muscovite-Russian variety, the civil society has not developed – a citizen is fully subordinated to the omnipotent state. The feeling of freedom and of a citizen's dignity developed in Western Europe. It is characterised by the fact that its law refers to ethics, and its legal development consists in application of moral principles to law.

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<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding the issue of whether or not Koneczny's concept of "Turanian civilization" had negative undertones, the separate character of that civilization which arose on Euro-Asian territory subordinated to the Russians has been accepted by numerous Russian intellectuals. This is very clearly expressed in the article by Lev Gumilev (1973).

<sup>5</sup> In this view, the Turanian civilization's society and state are organised as a military camp. The state is the army, and the state institutions serve the purposes of the army. This is because that civilization sees the true essence of social life as struggle. It is struggle that determines the sense of political activities, and the entire state is organized to conduct war. The state, similarly, is but the property of the leader, while the primary social virtues are obedience and bravery. These two virtues determine one's place in the structures of the state. Since struggle is the primary objective of the state, its activity is concentrated upon preparations for and the conduct of war. Hence, the state does not build a civil culture, the institutions needed for civil life, or infrastructure that is different from the military one. That is why the sole skills deployed in such a structure are linked with fighting the enemy.

In such a structure, intellectual independence or holding of own convictions is seen as a potential source of disloyalty. One can, of course, have some convictions, but they cannot be binding. They may turn out to be useful, if effectively employed to manipulate the enemy, but never as obligations conditioning one's conduct. The Soviet Union, geared towards the conquest of the world, was a typical archetype of such a civilization, almost a perfect rendition.

On the other hand, according to Koneczny, Byzantine civilization stands at the border between the Latin and Turanian civilizations. Byzantium adopted the notion of private law, as separate from public law, but, at the same time, it was centralist, formalized and inimical to individualism. With the omnipresence of its etiquette and the rich court ceremonial, Byzantium dominated for centuries over the medieval West. The formal element overshadowed the content, while widespread universalism and standardization limited the free development of society. Consequently, the Byzantine bureaucratic state developed, and in order to maintain the unity and coherence of this state, autocratic methods of rule were applied.

Even though he was not the first author to write of the diversity of cultures and civilizations, undoubtedly F. Koneczny was the first to provide a consistent explanation for the emergence and development of the great civilizations of modern world.<sup>6</sup> And though his ideas were published about half a century before Huntington's, the latter does not even mention the work of Koneczny, whose pioneering ideas should not have gone unnoticed by English-speaking authors concerned with comparative civilizational studies.

What scholars were the inspiration for the book by S. P. Huntington? What assumptions adopted by them may be helpful in the determination of the boundary between the Western and the Eastern civilizations in Europe?

Based on a definite set of criteria, P. Bagby classifies nations as belonging to various "cultures" or "civilizations." The latter are also classified as to their hierarchy – the most important ones are the so-called "major civilizations." Bagby proposes that the Western European civilization dominates the world. He is decidedly against the concept of a homogeneous "Christian civilization" that includes Eastern Christianity. The latter, in his opinion, belongs as an integral part of what he calls the "Near East civilization."

The views of Bagby are characteristic of many in that they neglect the spatial aspect – typically, anyway, for many scholars dealing with the development of civilizations. This is, namely due to the fact that historians and philosophers dealt with this subject first, rather than the geographers, and so the spatial aspect was usually perceived as secondary (Bagby, 1958).

Among the few who have taken into account the geographical dimensions of the emergence, development and fall of civilizations has been the French scholar F. Braudel (1980). His concepts were elaborated with geographical sciences constantly in mind. He referred very clearly to the French geographical school of Vidal de la Blache, and so accounted explicitly for the role of the natural environment, treating natural conditions as one of the formative factors in the emergence of cultures and civilizations. In his essay on problems in the history of civilizations, Braudel emphasized that studies concerning

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<sup>6</sup> Koneczny had an intellectual predecessor, Polish philosopher Erazm Majewski, who argued that studies of the development of civilizations do in fact constitute a separate domain of knowledge (E. Majewski, 1911).

civilization must have an interdisciplinary character and should encompass the entirety of the political, religious, ethnographic and economic life.

The most significant influence on the basic ideas of Huntington, and on the more recent work of other Western scholars, was exerted by Arnold Joseph Toynbee. The work of Toynbee appeared from 1946 until his death (1975) and indeed marked a deep imprint on several domains -- including history, sociology and political science<sup>7</sup>. All of the followers of Huntington's concepts have referred to Toynbee. In the book by Huntington, the marked influence of the great predecessor is frequently encountered.

Toynbee distinguishes 23 "full" civilizations, adds to them three "aborted" ones and five that are "undeveloped." In terms of time, he distinguishes phases – the civilizations of the first two phases no longer exist.

On the European continent the Hellenist civilization arose, followed by those which have persisted until today, namely the Western Christian civilization and the Eastern Christian (Orthodox) civilization, with a distinct Russian branching. A definite similarity thus can be seen with the classification proposed by Koneczny.

Yet, Koneczny distinguished also the Jewish civilization. Until the Second World War, this civilization played a specific culture-forming role. Shockingly, all of the prominent scholars dealing with civilizations neglect the Jewish civilization, yet it played a very important role in Central and Eastern Europe up until the war.

Toynbee considers relations between civilizations on several levels, but his analyses are devoid of territorial precision. Toynbee is, thus, little interested in the geographical lines of separation of the European nations and states that belong to different civilizations. On the other hand, he presents interesting analyses of the similarities and differences between the Russian Orthodox civilization and the Bolshevik order which was installed after the Communists came to power.

Toynbee notes also the ideological opposition between Russia and the Eastern Orthodox countries of the Southeastern Europe, lands that were liberated from Turkish domination owing to Russian interventions.

This anti-Russian feeling in non-Russian Orthodox Christian countries might seem at first sight surprising at a time when Orthodox Christianity was still the established religion of the Russian state and when the 'Old Slavonic' dialect still provided a common liturgical language for the Russian, Romanian, Bulgarian, and Serbian Orthodox Churches. Why did Pan-Slavism and Pan-Orthodoxy prove of so little avail to Russia in her dealings with these peoples, to whom she had also given such

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<sup>7</sup> The philosophical and historical concepts of Toynbee became the object of wide interest, and then of sharp criticism. Among the most known opponents were J. Ortega y Gasset (1964) and J. Roberts (1985).

effective help in their struggles to extricate themselves from Ottoman toils?  
(Toynbee, 1960, pp.716-717).

While Toynbee writes a lot on the contacts and conflicts between civilizations in the spatial-temporal setting, he omits the question of the territorial division on the European continent between the Orthodox Russian civilization and the Western civilization. Polish-Russian antagonism and confrontations of the Polish and Russian cultures on the Ukrainian and Belarusian territories have been completely marginalized by him. Thus, Toynbee has neglected entirely the centuries of confrontation between Roman Catholic Poland, belonging to the Latin civilization, and the Eastern Orthodox, and thereafter Bolshevik, but always despotic and imperial Russia. Yet, he emphasizes the Polish-Ukrainian and Polish-Lithuanian conflicts, which appeared much later, were of local reach, and did not influence in a significant manner the course of history.

It is often held that Huntington's ideas and concepts constitute a breakthrough in the perception of the role played by civilizations in history. Still, even if we omit the work of Koneczny, there have been numerous publications before Huntington concerning main civilizations and confrontations between them in the struggle for power and domination. The best known publications, referred to here just as examples, contain rich bibliographies, witnesses to the popularity of the subject. Before the book by Huntington had appeared, knowledge of the rise and fall of the great civilizations of the world had been common and did not cause any significant controversies.<sup>8</sup> Yet, in spite of this, the book by Huntington gained widespread fame and brought about broad scholarly discussions (see H. Köchler and G. Grabher, 1999; L. Harris, 2004; A. Tusicisny, 2004; C. Venn, 2008).

Let us note that the majority of opinions since Huntington published his work have been highly critical; some have classified it as mythology (see, e.g., Çağlar, 2002, or Wheen, 2004). On the other hand, there have also been critics who have held high the inspiring significance of the book and have forwarded counter-proposals.

We can mention in this group the German scholar Harald Müller (1998, 2001). He has argued that in global political developments we deal not so much with the "clash of civilizations" as with a more universal historical process, consisting in the "cohabitation of civilizations" (*das Zusammenleben der Kulturen*). Simultaneously, Müller shows – like many of Huntington's opponents – that throughout history military conflicts within and not between different civilizations have dominated. Despite all these analyses and opinions, the concepts formulated by Huntington have many followers. There are numerous reasons for this fact.

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<sup>8</sup> The book by Danilevskiy, with its proposal for the typology of the world civilizations, preceded the work of Arnold Toynbee by 75 years and that of Samuel Huntington by 110 years, while Koneczny outlined in his studies the causes and the consequences of confrontations between the great civilizations ten years ahead of Toynbee and more than 50 years before the book by Huntington attracted global attention.



First of all, the book was written in a witty and attractive style, easily read. On the other hand, it appeared at a time when political events took place making apparent the importance of the issues discussed in the book. The ideological confrontation between the “communist” and the “capitalist” blocks ended with the victory of the West. At the same time, conflicts surfaced, having essential ethnic backgrounds. Sharpening of the Israeli-Palestinian antagonism, the war in Chechnya, as well as fighting between Catholic Croats, Eastern Orthodox Serbs and Muslim Bosnians showed that the differences of civilizations and cultures may be put in motion by political forces and provoke military conflicts.

The rise of the orthodox Islamic movement in Asia, fighting against the model of life shaped after the Western European model (such as seen today in Iran and in Iraq), have demonstrated that the problems Huntington discussed are not only of purely academic, but also of political importance<sup>9</sup>.

### **Boundaries between Civilizations in Europe**

Huntington and Koneczny both believed that history consists of the succession of civilizations, which, over centuries, have constituted for humanity the framework for defining the identity of people. Civilizations undergo evolution, are dynamic, have rises and falls, join together and separate, but do persist and determine the evolution of the world as a whole. According to Huntington, the future of humanity depends upon the interactions that take place between the civilizations.

After the termination of the confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, the differences between civilizations led to new political constellations, depending upon culture and civilization-based identities. That is why, in place of the bi-polar world, the setting of the main civilizations of the world is postulated, involving the Western civilization, the Latin American, the Eastern Orthodox, the African, the Islamic, the Hindu, the Buddhist, the Chinese and the Japanese ones.

In his book, Huntington comments on the particular great civilizations of the world from a spatial perspective. Of interest from the point of view of the present study are his thoughts concerning the territorial boundary between the Western and the Byzantine civilizations. These divide Europe into two parts: Western and Eastern.

How does Huntington examine this issue? The following excerpt helps explain his vision of Europe today.

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<sup>9</sup> A more recent case is that of the “Arab Spring”, and the ensuing internal conflicts in Egypt and in Turkey have a distinct character of “local” clashes of civilizations.

Establishing that line in Europe has been one of the principal challenges confronting the West in the post-Cold War world. During the Cold War Europe as a whole did not exist. With the collapse of communism, however, it became necessary to confront and answer the question: What is Europe?

Europe's boundaries on the north, west and south are delimited by substantial bodies of water, which to the south coincide with clear differences in culture. But where is Europe's eastern boundary? Who should be thought of as a European and hence as a potential member of the European Union, NATO, and comparable organizations?

The most compelling and pervasive answer to these questions is provided by the great historical line that has existed for centuries separating Western Christian peoples from Muslim and Orthodox peoples. This line dates back to the division of the Roman Empire in the fourth century and to the creation of the Holy Roman Empire in the tenth century. It has been roughly in its current place for at least five hundred years.

Beginning in the north, it runs along what are now the borders between Finland and Russia and the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and Russia, through western Belarus, through Ukraine separating the Uniate west from the Orthodox east, through Romania between Transylvania with its Catholic Hungarian population and the rest of the country, and through the former Yugoslavia along the border separating Slovenia and Croatia from the other republics. In the Balkans, of course, this line coincides with the historical division between the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires. It is the cultural border of Europe, and in the post-Cold War world it is also the political and economic border of Europe and the West.

The civilizational paradigm thus provides a clear-cut and compelling answer to the question confronting West Europeans: Where does Europe end? Europe ends where Western Christianity ends and Islam and Orthodoxy begin." (Huntington, 1996, p. 158).

This description was complemented by a map (Figure 1) showing the boundary separating Western Christendom from the Eastern Orthodox and Islamic areas. According to the information appended, this map refers to the year 1500.



The concept of boundary between Latin and Byzantine civilisations in Europe (after S.P. Huntington)

Fig. 1. Eastern boundary of western civilization in Europe, following S. P. Huntington  
Source: S. P. Huntington (1996), p. 231

Both the map and the fragment quoted call for a response. The text says that the division “has been roughly in its current place for at least five hundred years”, but one can hardly agree to this statement.

Around the year 1500 the division, then running largely across the territory of Poland, was considerably more to the West than shown on the map. The area dominated by Orthodox Christianity, in terms of the numbers of the faithful, reached in Poland the towns of Rzeszów, Zamość and Białystok. After the Union of Brest (1596) and the establishment of the Uniate (Greek-Catholic) Church, for two successive centuries the area stretching up to the Dnieper River in the east was -- in denominational terms -- subordinate to the Vatican, while the political administration of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had an enormous influence on the cultural identity of this area.

It can therefore be assumed that between 1596 and 1772/1795 the boundary between Western and Eastern European civilization ran along the Dnieper River, with all of Belarus and a large part of Ukraine belonging to the Western civilization. Over these vast territories, the Eastern Orthodox Church gradually disappeared in favor of the Uniate (Eastern-rite) and Roman Catholic churches; the upper layers of society underwent “Polonization” and lived in a universe dominated by Western values.

After the downfall of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the situation changed radically. Liquidation of the Uniate, i.e., Greek Catholic, Church and a fight against Polish culture gave rise to an extensive zone of confrontation between the western and eastern European cultures. The expansion of the Eastern Orthodox Church became a fact, though, along with the associated gradual retreat to the West of the Polish cultural influences and Roman Catholicism. The subsequent 20<sup>th</sup> century was also marked by a consecutive wave of the political confrontations, which brought about major cultural and civilizational consequences.

During the inter-war period (1920-1939) the Polish-Soviet boundary, established through the Treaty of Riga, constituted a division, which, as it turned out, was merely temporary. It can therefore be said that it was only the year 1945 that brought a true historical shift, as it introduced the division that has been in force until today<sup>10</sup>.

In Southeastern Europe there have been similarly significant movements of the boundaries during the last 500 years involving Catholicism, Orthodoxy and Islam. Islamic expansion had a distinct phase-like character, and the ethnic boundaries within the Romanian-Hungarian borderland have also been undergoing changes owing to colonization and wars.

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<sup>10</sup> Division of Europe into the western and eastern parts is still a subject of debate in the literature. The opinions of Western authors are quite diversified and three main stances are usually taken. The first of these, very simplified, identifies the dividing line with the western boundary of the former Soviet Union, the second with the reach of usage of the Latin alphabet, and the third considers, in addition to the alphabet, also the denominational criterion.

The map, presented by Huntington does not, in fact, show the current dividing line of the civilizations, and it is excessively simplified. This is particularly evident when we consider the segment between Dvina river in the North and the Carpathians in the South, where it is constituted by a straight line cutting across Ukraine and Belarus. This simplification calls for verification and a more precise delimitation, based on well defined criteria, taking into account the actual ethnic and cultural reality of this part of Europe<sup>11</sup>.

It is assumed here that the European continent is divided in terms of culture and civilization into two parts. The western part refers to the philosophy and the vision of the Latin Christendom. The political and social order in the West developed from the mutual influence of Roman law and the Christian religion. A distinct separation took shape between the spiritual life and the political system. This distinction resulted, ultimately, in the Enlightenment and the appearance of liberal democracy. Eastern Christianity, associated with Byzantium, having afterwards, due to a succession of political events, found its main protector in Russia, was subordinated there to the despotic state authority<sup>12</sup>.

The issue of the differences and similarities in ideology and values between these two, produced over centuries, in the material and the spiritual spheres is not the subject of the analysis here presented. Here we are looking at the territorial boundary dividing Christianity, one based on Roman tradition and one based on Byzantium.

The fundamental prerequisite for the delineation of the boundary dividing Europe into that living in the world of Western values and the one that clings to the so-called legacy of the East, is simple: to determine the denominational character of the population inhabiting the territories at the interface of Catholicism – or Protestantism – and Orthodoxy<sup>13</sup>.

It is commonly known that the line in question passes approximately between the Barents Sea and the Adriatic Sea, but its precise course gives rise to numerous controversies<sup>14</sup>. This great cultural divide, even though most important, is not the only one. It is, for instance,

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<sup>11</sup> Geographical definition of the Central-Eastern Europe and the variability of its boundaries have not been the object of great interest among English-speaking scholars. That is why it was important that two Polish specialists, living in the United States and writing in English, published informative studies on the subject. See O. Halecki (1952) and P. Wandycz (1992). Likewise, two atlases deserve attention from this point of view: *Historical...* (1995), and *Atlas...* (1997).

<sup>12</sup> Numerous scholars still neglect cultural criteria when considering the division of Europe, treating the economic criteria as the primary ones. With these criteria, the continent of Europe is split along the Elbe river, meaning that the territories to the East of this divide constituted for centuries an undeveloped area of agrarian character, with numerous feudal relics. Note that this criterion leads to a gross simplification, with numerous and important exceptions left out on both sides of the divide (provincial Portugal and Spain, southern Italy, Bohemia and Silesia, etc.).

<sup>13</sup> The denominational divisions in Europe have been recently the subject of interest of the newly developing geography of religion. Similarly, human geography might be of assistance in this respect, as it emphasises the role and place of people and of their relation to the various ideas they developed.

<sup>14</sup> The present author analysed the ethnic diversity of the Central-Eastern Europe in an extensive study, see Eberhardt (2003a).

possible, and perhaps even advisable, to mention the boundary separating the Eastern Slavonic Orthodox population from the Orthodox but Romanian-speaking population.<sup>15</sup>

The great divide, stretching from Lapland to the Dalmatian coast is roughly four thousand kilometres long. In the north it starts with the Norwegian-Russian borderline, to then follow the boundary separating Protestant Finland from Orthodox Karelia, the latter being a part of the Russian Federation.

The areas to the East of this boundary, which was established in 1945, are mainly inhabited by the Russian population. The ancient inhabitants of these lands – including natives of Karelia – gradually adopted Orthodox Christianity and underwent Russification. Nowadays there are only a few of them, living in dispersion. The Finnish-Russian boundary, therefore, is today simultaneously a political, ethnic and economic barrier. The line separating Orthodox Christianity from Protestantism reaches the Finnish Bay of the Baltic Sea to the West of the town of Vyborg.

The vicinity of Vyborg, which is placed on the map of Huntington's to the west of the boundary, after inclusion in the Soviet Union, following World War II and the resettlement of the Finnish population – both Protestant and Orthodox – took on a purely Russian character. It differs only marginally in ethnic and cultural terms from the remaining Russian territories situated near St. Petersburg.

The subsequent course of the divide is relatively easily determined. It can be assumed, in a simplified manner, that the line runs between Estonia and Latvia on the one side, and the Russian Federation on the other. On the western side of the line the traditionally Protestant countries are situated, associated with Latin civilization, while on the eastern side – the Orthodox Russian population lives.

Yet, owing to the long-lasting inclusion of the Estonian and Latvian lands in the Russian (and Soviet) Empire, essential demographic and ethnic changes took place in these areas. Both of these countries, sovereign again for about two decades, host quite important Russian minorities, which actually dominate within some border-adjacent regions (such as in the vicinity of Narva). Moreover, the south-eastern part of Latvia, Latgale, is a peripheral area, within which five ethnic territories come together: Latvian, Polish, Lithuanian, Belarusian and Russian. This area is inhabited by the Roman Catholic Latvians, Poles and Lithuanians, who form a slight majority, but also by numerous Protestant Latvians, as well as by the Orthodox Russians and Belarusians. One should add to that the Ancient Orthodox Russians. The capital of the region, historical Dyneburg (Daugavpils), had been inhabited before the World War II by Jews, Russians, Poles, Latvians, Germans and Belarusians. Nowadays, the city is populated by Latvians and Russians, with a relatively numerous Polish minority.

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<sup>15</sup> It would be much easier to say that we in fact deal with a broad borderland, forming a North-South belt of variable width, but this would also amount to overlooking quite important local differentiation.

It can be expected that owing to the fact that Latgale belongs to Latvia, it shall get over time more tightly integrated with the core of the country. Thus, after the collapse of the Soviet Union, and the emergence of independent Estonia and Latvia, conditions arose for the strengthening of the Estonian-Russian and Latvian-Russian boundaries, not just in political and economic terms, but also in the ethnic and cultural domains, as a part of the divide between Western and Eastern Europe. Roman Catholic Lithuania belongs beyond any doubt to the Western European culture.

The situation is more ambiguous and complex on the territory of Western Belarus. The Belarusian areas adjacent to the border with Lithuania, constitute a part of the historical region of Vilna. These areas are dominated by the Catholic population, still largely of Polish nationality. Even though they speak in everyday life the dialects of Belarusian, or, perhaps, have undergone during the Soviet era language Russification, yet, they are traditionally attached emotionally to Polish culture, and to the Latin Christianity. The course of the boundary between Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman Catholicism, associated with the difference of civilizations, is more complicated than shown on the map, and then commented by Huntington. In the vicinity of Vilna, namely, we deal with a distinct shift of the ethnic boundary to the East.

As a result of World War II, significant ethnic changes took place on the territory of historical East Prussia. Until 1945, this province belonged to Germany. It was inhabited primarily by Germans (with ethnic minorities speaking Polish and Lithuanian). The population was mainly Protestant (except for the Catholic province of Warmia and partly the areas along Vistula river). Thus, beyond any doubt this whole area belonged to the Western European civilization.

After World War II, East Prussia was divided into a northern part, which was incorporated into the Soviet Union, and a southern part, which was incorporated into Poland. As the German population was resettled, the southern part was filled with Poles, of the Catholic religion; meanwhile, the northern part received Russians of Orthodox traditions, subject, though, like everywhere in the Soviet Union, to the official atheism.

Consequently, the whole area of the former East Prussia took on a dichotomous character: the southern part belongs still to the western Latin Christianity, while the northern part (the District of Kaliningrad) has ties to the Eastern European culture, not just politically, but in the civilizational sense as well. An enclave took shape, therefore, differing as to denomination, customs and culture, from the surrounding area. Nowadays, this relatively small territory should be considered as belonging to the Eastern Slavonic Orthodox civilization<sup>16</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> A symbolic fact is constituted by the new construction of a great Orthodox temple in Kaliningrad. This is closely associated with the subordination of this area, until quite recently almost totally lay, to the authority of the Moscow patriarchate.

Ukraine, as is the case with Belarus, has been over centuries more an object than a subject of international politics. It was an area of military rivalry between Catholic Poland and Orthodox Russia. Ukrainian lands became, due to the Union of Lublin (1569), an integral part of the Polish Kingdom. This brought basic ethnic, cultural and civilizational consequences. The apex of the dynamics of these transformations was marked by the religious Union of Brest (1596), which gave rise to the Greek Catholic Uniate Church<sup>17</sup>. After the eastern territories of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth were incorporated into Russia at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the tsarist authorities formally liquidated the Uniate Church in Russia through a decree in 1839. It persisted, though, and maintained its influence and significance in the Austrian part, Galicia. Consequently, a distinct religious boundary arose between the Orthodox Volhynia, belonging to Russia, and the Uniate Galicia.

At the same time, another divide took shape, separating the Roman Catholic region of Lublin from Orthodox Volhynia<sup>18</sup>. This allows for the drawing of the boundary between Catholicism and Orthodoxy from Drohiczyn along the Bug River down to Hrubieszów, then away from the contemporary Polish-Ukrainian border towards the Zbrucz River, following the line of the boundary that separated the empires of the Habsburgs from that of the Romanovs<sup>19</sup> in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Quite a complicated ethnic and cultural situation exists within the Transcarpathian Ukraine (called until World War II “Subcarpathian Ruthenia”). Ukrainians, inhabiting this area, were called Ruthenians at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and are mostly Uniates. This province had belonged for close to 1000 years (until 1918) to Hungary, and then, during the inter-war period, to Czechoslovakia. In 1945 it was incorporated into the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic.

The geographical and economic conditions existing there caused the appearance of a certain separate cultural identity. This area had been for centuries subject to Hungarian influence,

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<sup>17</sup> In view of the usage of the Cyrillic, or Greek, and not the Latin alphabet, and preservation of the Byzantine liturgy and rites, the Uniate (Greek-Catholic) Church is usually not classified as part of the so-called Latin civilization. Yet, the strong antagonism between the Uniate and the Orthodox churches, the administrative subordination of the former to the Vatican, as well as the very pronounced doctrinal affinity of this Church with the Roman Catholic one, justify the inclusion of the territories inhabited by the Uniate faithful into the Western (Latin) civilization. This is particularly appropriate given that the actual centre of the Eastern Orthodox world moved from Byzantium to Moscow (the so-called third Rome).

<sup>18</sup> Formation of the Catholic-Orthodox boundary along the middle stretch of the Bug River resulted from quite a complex series of political events, bringing complete Polonization of the eastern part of Lublin Province. The process took place in several phases, with the turning points being (1) 1875 (inclusion of the Uniate faithful into the Orthodox Church), (2) the decree on religious tolerance of 1905 (possibility of converting to Catholicism), and (3) the years 1945-47 (resettlement of the Ukrainian Orthodox population).

<sup>19</sup> The historical region of Galicia had a dichotomous ethnic and language setting; the western part had a Polish and Roman Catholic character, while in the eastern part the Ukrainians dominated, primarily belonging to the Greek-Catholic Church. Until the end of the World War II Orthodoxy had not played much of a role, and even now its reach is not very important. This province had a generally Catholic character and remained under the influence of Western values (Eberhardt, 2002).



with the southern, lowland part inhabited by Hungarians who live there still today. The Greek Catholic Ukrainian population preserved the traditional Byzantine liturgy<sup>20</sup>. They belonged to the Uniate diocese in Uzhgorod, formally subordinated to the Holy See<sup>21</sup>. After the collapse of communism and the re-establishment of religious freedom, the Catholic Church of the Greek rite could recreate its organizational structures.

To the East of the Transcarpathian Ukraine lies the region of Bukovina. During the 19<sup>th</sup> century it constituted, as a whole, a Crown Land of the Austrian Empire. In the inter-war period it belonged to the Kingdom of Romania. It was split in 1940, and then, ultimately, after the Second World War, into two parts. The northern part, in which Ukrainians dominated, was incorporated into the Ukrainian SSR, while the southern part, with its dominant population being Romanian, remained a part of Romania.

Bukovina was traditionally dominated by a population of the Orthodox faith. Yet, this peripheral region was also home to descendants of numerous Central European nations: Ukrainians, Romanians, Jews, Germans, and Poles. The capital of the province – Chernivtsi – was in the 19<sup>th</sup> century a town of Jewish, German and Polish population. A well-known university functioned in the city; until World War I the language of instruction was German, then in the inter-war period it was Romanian-speaking; and after the city was incorporated into the Soviet Union, the languages of instruction became Ukrainian and Russian.

It is obvious that Bukovina always constituted a crossroad of various cultural influences. The majority of scholars pay closest attention, though, to the dominating role of Orthodoxy among the native Ukrainian and Romanian populations. The capital was the seat of the independent Orthodox metropolitan diocese in 1875. This church, which played a very pronounced cultural role, strictly followed Byzantine traditions.

Christianity reached what is today Romania from Byzantium and this became decisive for the denominational character of the region. Eastern Orthodoxy played a dominant role over the entire history of both Walachia and Moldavia. Several attempts to introduce the Greek Catholic rite ended in failure. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic or the Protestant

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<sup>20</sup> The Ruthenian population is of a similar ethnic origin as the Transcarpathian Ruthenians. It has inhabited the northern (nowadays: Polish) and southern (nowadays: Slovak) slopes of the Carpathians up to the town of Poprad in the West. On the Polish side of the border the Greek Catholic and the less numerous Orthodox population was resettled from 1945 to 1947.

In north-eastern Slovakia the ethnic situation did not change, but the organizational conditions of religious life were unstable (as had happened in eastern Galicia). After the so-called pseudo-Council in Lwów (March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1946), a similar event took place in Slovak town of Prešov (April 28<sup>th</sup>, 1950). The Greek Catholic population was forced to join the Orthodox Church. It was only after the downfall of communism that the majority of this population returned to their original faith. The issues of geography of religion in Slovakia are considered in a paper by the present author, Eberhardt (2003b).

<sup>21</sup> As in Brest in 1596, and also in Uzhgorod, in 1646, a Union was established, leading to formation of the Greek Catholic Church, subordinated to the Vatican.

creeds were identified as Hungarian and were therefore unacceptable for the Romanian population.

The hierarchy of the Orthodox Church in Romania, continuously functioning over the centuries, rigorously kept to the principles of faith and liturgy as inherited from Byzantium. However, after the united Romanian kingdom was established in 1861, with the capital in Bucharest, a political transformation occurred; Romania evolved close civilizational ties to western countries.

Dramatic emphasis started to be put more on the Romanian (Dacian) national origins, with the religious heritage being treated as less important in the shaping of identity of the Romanian state and nation. The Greek alphabet was abandoned and the Latin alphabet adopted. This had important consequences in terms of cultural awareness and identity. The Romanian elite and then the entire nation were becoming more strongly integrated with the western civilization. French culture became the model pattern, adjusted to the Romanian environment, and Romania saw itself, increasingly, as a Latin land surrounded by Slavic nations. The attitude of the Romanians with respect to the Orthodox countries, and especially to Russia, was one of alienation; Romanian culture started to slight the cultural and civilizational achievements of these countries – as it increasingly looked solely to the west.

This is why Romania, given its Latin alphabet and Romance language, and its adopted way of life, belongs without doubt to the western European civilization. On the other hand, if the religious, denominational criterion is taken into account, it cannot be gainsaid that Christianity came to Romania from Byzantium; it is Orthodox churches that dominate the landscape in Romania, and not Catholic or Protestant ones. Thus, if we consider the denominational criterion and draw the boundary as one which runs between eastern and western Christianity, Romania ought to be placed to the East of the religious divide. Note that, though, owing to secularization, such a distinction loses its formerly blatant character.

The Hungarian-Romanian ethnic borderland is vast. It is associated with the history of Transylvania, which belonged to Hungary for about 1000 years up until the Treaty of Trianon in 1920. This province was inhabited by Hungarians, Romanians and Germans. Inclusion of Transylvania in Romania during the inter-war period and after the World War II weakened the position of Hungarians there, and they preserved their ethnic identity only in the eastern part of Transylvania.<sup>22</sup> Hence, there exists an enclave of Western Christianity, located in the very center of Romania, separated from Hungary by an area inhabited by Orthodox Romanians. This enclave has been gradually shrinking, mainly as a result of emigration of the Transylvanian Germans to Germany. On the other hand, the Hungarian-

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<sup>22</sup> Ethnic relations within the Slovak-Hungarian, Ukrainian-Hungarian, Romanian-Hungarian and Serbian-Hungarian borderlands are presented by Hungarian scholars in a very well documented monograph of Kocsis and Kocsis-Hodosi (1998).

speaking Szeklers of Transylvania maintain their separate identity and have not undergone Romanization.

As a result, we can assume that the boundary between Latin and Byzantine Christianity runs approximately along the present-day Hungarian-Romanian state border, with an “island” inhabited primarily by the Hungarian-speaking minority in Transylvania classified as belonging to the West.

The demographic-ethnic situation of the Banat – a province in South-eastern Romania – was determined by its strategic location. Depopulated during the Hungarian-Turkish wars, it was then settled by Germans, Hungarians, Romanians and Serbs -- re-colonization. Now its population belonged to various denominations. After World War I a distinct Romanization process took place there. The Banat, therefore, is a typical borderland area, subject to different cultural influences.

To the south of the present-day Romania and Hungary are situated areas inhabited by Southern Slavs. During centuries, or, actually, for more than a millennium, the boundary ran across these areas, separating the reaches of influence of Rome and Byzantium. To the west of this boundary Catholic nations developed of Croats and Slovenians, while to the east of it three Orthodox nations grew: Serbs, Bulgarians and – having relatively recently appeared – Macedonians. Cultural and political conditions within these areas were unstable. Ethnic relations were, in addition, severely disturbed as a result of the long period of subordination to the Ottoman Empire, a time which left there numerous Muslims. They were concentrated mainly in Bosnia and Herzegovina, around Sarajevo, as well as in Biháč and Cazin. The Dalmatian Coast is inhabited by Croats, but until the World War II many Italians lived there, as well.

As a result of recent military conflicts and mutual ethnic purges on what was formerly the territory of Yugoslavia, what had become a truly poly-ethnic region underwent a significant constriction. Nonetheless, the boundary between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs still plays a very important role.

There is, particularly, a quite cumbersome course of the eastern border of Croatia. This results from the fact that the Croats inhabit two geographically almost separate lands – Slavonia in the North and Dalmatia along the Adriatic coast. Between these two historical regions are found not only Croat and Serb areas but also Muslim ones. Ethnically Serb areas in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not form a compact whole because the Serbs here are surrounded from the south, west, and partly from the north by Croats. Their area is composed of two parts, linked by the narrow “Passavin” corridor just five kilometres of width. The entire central part of Bosnia and Herzegovina has a Muslim character, not only in religious, but also in ethnic terms.

The blood-shedding war between Serbs, Croats and Muslims in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century brought about the establishment of a relatively small, but quite ethnically homogeneous state of Bosnian Muslims, opposed to both the Catholic Croats and the Orthodox Serbs.

The northern province of the former Yugoslavia is called Vojvodina. It had been until World War I politically and ethnically Hungarian. Nowadays it is dominated by Serbs, although in the north Hungarian Catholics still prevail, while Slovaks and Romanians are also quite numerous.

The long Turkish domination of the territories of South-eastern Europe brought about the development of important areas of a Muslim character outside of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Most of these areas are populated today by the Muslim Albanians (except for small communities of Albanian Catholics in the vicinity of Škodra in northern Albania and the Orthodox population close to the border with the Greek Epirus). Similarly, almost the entire Yugoslav province of Kosovo, now a separate political entity, after the flight of Serbs, is inhabited by Albanians.<sup>23</sup> Members of this nationality are also concentrated in western Macedonia.

Thus, quite a significant community of Muslims live on the Balkan Peninsula. They are of an Albanian nationality, differing quite importantly as to their culture and civilization from their Christian neighbors. These, though, are not the sole Muslims of Europe. After World War I Turkey preserved a part of its territory to the north of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus, inhabited by Muslim Turks. There is also an important Turkish minority in Bulgaria (in the Rodepe Mountain area and in the north-eastern part), and there are also Bulgarian-speaking Muslims in Bulgaria (the so-called Pomaks). These two groups amount together to just ten percent of the Bulgarian population; this does not change, therefore, the overall Orthodox cultural character of Bulgaria. In south-eastern Serbia areas dominated by the Muslim population do exist, as well (for example, Sanjak). The Albanian Muslim minority plays also a significant role in eastern Montenegro.

However, except for the Muslim areas mentioned above, the population of South-eastern Europe, from the Adriatic to the Black Sea, belongs integrally to the Byzantine-Orthodox civilization. This population includes Slavonic Serbs and Montenegrins, Macedonians and Bulgarians, Romanian-speaking nations of Romanians and Moldavians, as well as Greeks.<sup>24</sup>

There are significant differences, especially regarding the Orthodox inhabitants of the Slavonic Ukraine, Belarus and Russia. The boundary which separates these two populations can be drawn along a line approximately equivalent to the course of the Dniester River.

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<sup>23</sup> Albanians tend to be quite indifferent as to the religious questions, but in the framework of their ethnic community they are extremely united and hermetic with respect to foreigners.

<sup>24</sup> Until World War I, in the northern part of Greece, the Slavonic Orthodox population dominated. Owing to Greek policy in the region, however, the population of the Greek Macedonian province underwent a linguistic Hellenization.

To the west of this boundary the Romanian-speaking population dominates, using a Latin alphabet, while to the east are the Orthodox Ukrainians and Russians. The culture of the latter has been largely shaped by the long period of existence of the Russian Empire, in which the Byzantine civilization was associated with the Turanian one.

The discussion so far has shown that the entire territory to the south of the Carpathian Mountains is extensively fraught, divided in terms of nationality, language and religion, and the spatial distribution of the particular ethnic groups form a mosaic.

This delimitation poses problems, muddies the water a bit, especially in view of existence of numerous multi-cultural areas. Thus, in all fairness the people of this region cannot always be unambiguously classified into the civilization of the East or of the West.<sup>25</sup> This, of course, does not change the fundamental fact of the division between the two, one which crosses the European continent. The areas, situated on both sides of the divide have, as well, lost their homogeneity over time. Reformation has brought a disintegrating element into the cohesion of the nations of the West. On the other hand, appearance of the centralist Russian Empire caused the character of that portion of Orthodoxy subordinated to the authority of Moscow to differ from which has stayed faithful to the succession of Byzantium.

At the same time, owing to the changes of political boundaries which took place during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, two important enclaves appeared, separated from their cultural core areas: the District of Kaliningrad, belonging now to Russia, and the region in central Romania inhabited by Hungarians. One should add the areas inhabited by Muslims on the Balkan Peninsula, clearly distinct against the background of their neighboring Christian areas (Fig. 2)<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> The description here provided neglects the ethnic groups living in considerable dispersion, but which have played an important role in the history of the countries and nations mentioned. This applies in a particular manner to the Jews, who constituted for centuries an important cultural factor.

<sup>26</sup> The course of the boundary as proposed by the present author is shown on the map of Europe having the same scale as the boundary proposed by Huntington. Even though these are not extremely precise maps, the differences in the courses of the boundaries suggested are clearly visible and might constitute the starting point for a more detailed analysis.



The concept of boundary between Latin and Byzantine civilisations in Europe (according to P. Eberhardt)




-  Western European enclave
-  Eastern European enclave
-  Muslim territories

Fig. 2. Current boundary between the Latin and the Byzantine Christianity in Europe (author's elaboration)

**Closing remarks**

The ideas contained in the book of Samuel Huntington gained widespread popularity and provoked interesting journalistic and scholarly discussions. This took place notwithstanding the rigid perspective and simplifications of Huntington's work.

His views belong certainly among the extremely deterministic concepts of the philosophy of history and geography. Huntington assumes that all great civilizations always struggle for domination and are bound to get into conflicts in the future. Although he attempts to demonstrate this proposition, the evidence is not convincing. The image provided is, in principle, abstract, in many cases in disagreement with history or the reality of the contemporary world.

The experiences of recent centuries do not provide convincing proof that the reasons for all kinds of antagonisms and wars stemmed mainly from differences between civilizations. Political rivalries, which still exist, have been to a large extent conducted by states, entities whose objectives have not been identical with the interests of the civilizations they represent. The two world wars of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were – from this point of view – fratricidal, fought largely within the framework of one, Western European civilization.

To predict the future is difficult. The vision of humanity doomed to fight ideological wars is hardly probable. Samuel Huntington does not take into account, in particular, the development of science and technology, leading currently to advanced unification, globalization, universalization, and all-embracing consumerism. The shrinking influence of religious motivations in many parts of the world shall alleviate potential religious differentials.

Under such circumstances struggles between particular civilizations will become an anachronism. This, of course, does not mean that the world will be free of local and regional wars, in which cultural differences shall play an important causal role.

The proposition of the nascent threat of conflicts between civilizations, or their varieties, which might have a decisive influence on the future fate of the world, is very strongly emphasised in the book by Huntington. Hence, it may be worthwhile to consider the possibility of appearance of crisis situations in Europe, brought about by the presence of different cultures or religions. It seems to this author that in the present phase of integration processes any kind of conflict between different Christian denominations in Europe is increasingly improbable. Yet, this statement might be challenged, since not so long ago we witnessed the military clash between Catholic Croats and Orthodox Serbs. The antagonism between these nations is still very strong, but a new war in Bosnia and Herzegovina appears to be little probable, also because the multicultural areas, which were the fuel for the conflict, have largely disappeared owing to the recent ethnic purges.

Within the other Catholic-Orthodox borderlands the situation is more normalized and does not give rise to apprehensions of armed conflict. The antagonisms between Catholics and Protestants are also fading away.

It can therefore be expected that differences in customs and cultures between the formally Catholic, Protestant and Orthodox communities shall have a tendency to disappear in an integrating Europe. The situation within the post-Soviet territory (except for the Caucasus) shall also rather be stable.

On the Balkan Peninsula, which is still dominated by the Eastern Orthodox Church, there is an increasingly important Muslim community. It is composed, primarily, of Albanians, Bosnians and Turks. Relations between these groups and the Orthodox Serbs, Macedonians, and, to a lesser extent, Montenegrins and Bulgarians, do bear a character of confrontation.

A total of ten million Muslims live in this region of Europe. The biggest group (roughly six million) is composed of Albanians. The Islamic populations are characterised by high demographic dynamics and territorial expansion. Thus, for instance, Muslim Albanians push gradually away from Serbs and Macedonians, broadening the ethnic Albanian territory. An instance is provided, of course, by Kosovo, becoming Albanian, meaning, in this context, Muslim. An important part of western Macedonia has also been dominated by the Albanians.

The evolution of contemporary attitudes tends toward confrontation and struggle for domination between Albanians, on the one hand, and Serbs and Macedonians on the other. Of course, the reason for this is not only the clear religious and cultural differences, but, first of all, political. Yet slogans based on religion are easily understood and emotionally charged, and so are commonly used. A definite causal mechanism arises, based on differences between ethnic groups, and these are associated with various civilizational values.

Thus, Huntington's prophecy of unavoidable conflict along this boundary may in fact be fulfilled.

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