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## *Evidence for Belarusian-Ukrainian Eastern Slavic Civilization*

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This article argues for the existence of a distinct Eastern European Slavic civilization on the territories of modern Belarus and Ukraine. One group of Slavs migrated to Eastern Europe from the fifth century to the ninth century and then, for various reasons, separated and formed two civilizations – an Eastern Slavic civilization (Belarusian-Ukrainian) and a Eurasian civilization.

The critical factors for this division were the Mongol-Tatar invasion and the emergence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the Principality, which saved Eastern Slavs from “Eurasian influence.” Belarus and Ukraine share a number of characteristic Western features.

Today it is obvious that including Belarus and Ukraine in the Orthodox, Eastern or Eurasian/Russian civilization must be revisited. Including the two civilizations as one has resulted from the prevalence of created myths and misinterpretations of history, such as the asserted threefold nature of East Slavic people (Great Russians, Little Russians and White Russians); on the claimed Slavic nature of the Russian Empire; on a supposed historical continuity between Kievan Rus’ and modern Russia; and on Muscovy’s role in uniting the Eastern Slavs.

### **Introduction: Was Rurik in Polotsk -- or who wrote our history for us?**

Kievan Rus’ emerged at the end of the ninth century on the territory occupied by the Eastern Slavs. The term Kievan Rus’ is used by many investigators, both in scholarly and in popular literature, to refer to the ancient land around Kiev that is today part of Ukraine and, to some extent, Belarus (Zacharii, 2002; Plochy, 2006). Modern Russia emerged out of the area known as Muscovy (the territories around Suzdal, Murom, and Rostov).

The change in meaning of Russia-Rus’ began in the early eighteenth century, especially during the reign of Empress Catherine II (1762-1796). She ordered a history of Russia to be written that included the Normanist theory of the origin of Rus’ and Tatishchev’s (1686-1750) and Karamzin’s (1766-1826) histories of Russia. In fact, all these works, as well as some later ones (Solovyov, 1820-1879), were used to justify the *de facto* annexation of the Polish Republic and the 'reunification' of the Eastern Slavs (Great Russians, Little Russians, and White Russians), confirmation of both the Slavic nature of the Russian Empire, and the legitimacy of historical continuity from Kievan Rus’ to modern Russia.

For a long time, the history of the Russian state was official in Belarus and Ukraine. Karamzin’s and Solovyov’s histories of Russia were based on the Normanist theory, developed by G. F. Mueller (1705-1783), who worked at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

According to the Normanist theory, a major role in the creation of Kievan Rus' [not Russia - PM] was assigned to Scandinavians, Germans and Varangians (Vikings), and these alien peoples were called "Rus'". The territory of Rus' has often been known in the West as "Ruthenia."

This theoretical formulation was familiar to people of the region since the end of the Russian Empire, although Soviet historians were anti-Normanists. There is a political bias to the topic. Obviously, it was necessary to maintain the Slavic unity of the three nations that had formed the basis of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, supported unconditionally in both cases by the Orthodox Church. During the reign of Catherine II, it was needed to prove the leadership of Scandinavians and Germans in governing the Slavs; in the Soviet era, between the two world wars, it was necessary to keep the unity of the Slavic spirit. No wonder that the Second World War saw the release of the film on Alexander Nevsky who defeated the Teutonic Knights (Germans) on Lake Peipus.

Mikhail Lomonosov did not accept a history of Russia written by German scholars and he accused Mueller of falsification. Lomonosov believed that the Rus' hailed from Slavic lands and they were not Varangians (Bielawski, 1955). Only the first part of the first volume of Lomonosov's *Ancient Russian History* was published posthumously by Mueller, while Lomonosov's archives have vanished. It should be noted that Muller managed the archives of the Academy of Sciences from 1766 until his death. Such was the case also with the works of Tatishchev, with Mueller posthumously publishing five volumes of Russian history based on Tatishchev's notes. Again, as in the case with Lomonosov's archives, the Tatishchev manuscripts mysteriously disappeared, along with earlier and now unknown chronicles on which these manuscripts had been based.

Perhaps it is no coincidence that the ideas contained in such works of Lomonosov are similar to those of Mueller. So what were they arguing about? That's why it is crucial to create today an accurate understanding of the actual place of the Eastern Slavic states of Belarus and Ukraine in the modern world.

The starting point for the Normanist theory was 'The Tale of Bygone Years' or 'The Chronicle of Nestor'. For more on Normanists, neo-Normanists, and anti-Normanists see the historical reviews of Zakharii, 2002, Klein, 2009). *The Tale of Bygone Years (Povest' Vremyan'nykh Let)* (PVL), which dates back to 1113, was written by a monk named Nestor, and perhaps not only by him (Pihio, 1981), based on lost chronicles, legends, and Byzantine documents.

The first mention of the Slavs in PVL dates them back to 862. This means that the chronicle was written more than 250 years after the events it was describing could possibly have taken place. PVL tells of the arrival of the Vikings/Varangians, whom the Slavs had invited to reign over them. Three semi-mythical brothers (Rurik, Truvor, and Sineus) began to rule in Novgorod, Izborsk, and Beloozero in 862.

However, there is no further information on the latter two brothers anywhere. Moreover, the current reading of PVL gives the following explanation of the names 'Rurik, Sineus, en Truvor' as 'Rurik, his relatives and companions' ('Rurik, sine hus, en tro(gna) vār (ingar),' Scand.; 'Rurik, his house/relatives, and true companions, Eng. (Katsva, Yurganov, 1996).

Catherine II, who certainly believed this theory, even commanded a medal in honor of Truvor; on the front side of that medal was an imaginary portrait of Rurik, and on the back, the Truvor mound and the inscription: "Before this day is memorable," and below "Truvor died in Izborsk in 864." Perhaps nobody of that name existed, but there was a medal struck.

As for Rurik himself, the original version of his sojourn in Novgorod was not confirmed. Given that modern Novgorod, according to archaeological research, appeared only in the second half of the tenth century, the principality of Beloozero ("White Lake"), where 'Sineus' might have ruled, did not even exist at that time.

There is a hypothesis that Rurik, in contrast, founded his settlement on the shores of Lake Ladoga, but, again, so far there is no evidence for this. Rurik, like Truvor and Sineus, may have been a fictional character. Therefore, it is a major question whether there was a man named Rurik in the late ninth century. But thanks to Mueller this idea was taken up by Russian historians, and Prince Rurik and his successors reigned in Muscovy until the end of the sixteenth century. Karamzin wrote that Rurik came to Novgorod, Sineus to the Finnic Ves in Beloozero, and Truvor to Izborsk, the city of the Krivichi. Smolensk, also populated by Krivichi, and Polotsk itself still remained independent, and they had no involvement with Vikings.

Consequently, the power of the three rulers, connected by ties of kinship and reciprocity, extended only from Beloozero to Estonia, where we can still see the monumental ruins of the old Izborsk fortress, not far from the contemporary border between Russia and Estonia. This part of the current St. Petersburg, Estonia, Novgorod and Pskov provinces was then called Rus', named after the Scando-Russian Princes. Two years after the deaths of Sineus and Truvor (864) the elder brother, Rurik, attached their areas to his principality and founded the Russian Monarchy.

Thus, at a time when neither Moscow, Beloozero, Novgorod, nor maybe even Truvor, Sineus, or Rurik, actually existed, in Karamzin's interpretation they more or less founded a Russian Monarchy, and Karamzin himself called a certain territory 'Rus' for the first time. Yet, neither the PVL nor Karamzin's history mention Polotsk or Smolensk as cities that invited the Varangians to reign. In addition, Karamzin wrote that Polotsk was independent, i.e., he acknowledged that the city had its own history, independent from the history of Kiev and moreover from Russian history, where automatically, due to the imperial 'traditions' of the Russian Empire, the history of Kievan Rus' is included.

We can also find a free interpretation of the PVL in Solovyov's history; there, Polotsk was independent according to Karamzin, and according to Solovyov the 'Polochans in the south' were already under the authority of Rurik.

It is doubtful that the arrival of a few Vikings could have had more than a superficial effect on the development of the Slavic tribes that had lived there for a long time. Although there is a hypothesis that they controlled the trade route 'from the Varangians to the Greeks', Scandinavian colonies seemed 'islands in the sea of the Krivichi of Polotsk, the Slovene of Novgorod, or the Polyane of Kiev. (Kotlyarchuk, 2002).

There are many contradictions in the interpretation of the past by Russian historians, but these history tales, using documentary material, lead the reader to the main idea that Russia's statehood began with Rurik and Kiev.

The free interpretation of the most famous and ancient Eastern Slavic chronicles, even if written with deviations, is one thing. But by contrast, the record of this historically fundamental chronicle (PVL) was repeatedly rewritten and reworked.

For example, since the reign of Vladimir Monomakh (1113-1125, from whom the line of Muscovy's Rurikid princes descend) in Kiev, the PVL had been crafted by the monk Sylvester and other scribes in the Monomakhs' interests (first in Kiev, then in Novgorod during the reign of Monomakh's son Mstislav). See Cross, Sherbowitz-Wetzor, 1953, Talochka PP, and Talochka OP, 1998.

So there appeared new PVL editions which were later included in the Laurentian (1377) and Hypatian (early fifteenth century) chronicles, and that information, supplemented with additional explanations, was included in Russian history textbooks.

One cannot deny that the PVL and its later versions are important documents reflecting simultaneous or related changes and accretions.

However, the constantly changing examples of past events, as well as later ones distributed worldwide (the trinity of the three eastern Slavic peoples, the Slavic character of the Russian state, the historical continuity from Kievan Rus' to modern Russia, the role of Muscovy in unifying the Eastern Slavs) all suggest the necessity for a more critical reading of the previous history and the identification of the true events in Belarus and Ukraine, especially given the contextual analysis of those who were favored by the myths created.

### **Migration and demarcation of the East Slavic tribes**

There are several theories of the origin of the Eastern Slavs, starting from that they came from the Scythians or Goths, that they had always been living in nearly the same territories which they currently occupy, and, finally, that they gradually migrated from the regions of central Europe to the South, East, and partly to the North.

It is now believed that the Slavs emerged over a fairly large area, stretching from the Oder in the West to the Danube in the South, and all the way to the Dnieper in the East (Curta, 2001; Geary, 2003). The Eastern Slavs probably migrated in the fifth through the seventh centuries from the Elbe (now Pomerania in Germany) and Vistula areas to the territories they currently occupy.

However, some researchers consider it unlikely that the Slavic tribes were able to occupy the territory of the Eastern and central-Eastern Europe in such a short period of time, especially because the Slavs were farmers and, therefore, led a life that was tied to the land they occupied (Halsall, 2006).

So perhaps, it was the second wave of Slavic migrants who joined the Slavs who had already settled there, in the new lands, earlier, in the fifth through the seventh centuries.

According to Shakhmatov (1919) Slavic tribes from the Elbe and Vistula moved from west to east in two groups. The western group, gradually moving to the north, northeast and east, occupied the territory of present-day Belarus and the Pskov, Novgorod, and Smolensk areas. The second, moving south and southeast, gradually settled the territory of modern Volhynia, Ukraine, and the Carpathians. Thus, the Slavs had gradually occupied the territory which later historians called Kievan Rus'.

However, by the period of settlement and under Kievan Rus' the division of the Eastern Slavs into groups by language had not yet emerged. The Eastern Slavs of the pre-Kievan and Kievan periods (Rus', Rusyns, and Ruthenians) can be assigned to one ethno-nationality (Plokhly, 2006). But the start of their split can be seen as early as the latter period, and it is conceivable that this process may have become clearer with the collapse of Kievan Rus'.

Eastern Slavs are divided into tribes based on archaeological and other studies. It is believed that to northwest Eastern Europe came such tribes as the Dregovichy, Drevlyane, Duleby, Krivichi, and Polochane peoples, who were then assimilated by the existing Baltic tribes. Indeed, some authors argue for the Baltic theory of the Belarusians' origin (Dzermant, Sanko, 2005; Deruzhynsky, 2009; Goldenkov, 2009). The Slavs who reached Kiev and border areas (Drevlyane, Polyane) were assimilated by the Sarmatians and gave rise to the modern Ukrainians.

The Slavic tribes (Ilmen and Novgorod Slavs, Krivichi, Radimichi, and Severjane) who later moved to the north, northeast and east, reaching the territories occupied by Finno-Ugric tribes, gave rise to another East Slavic branch, later called Great Russians (people who occupy the land of what became known in the rest of the world as "Russia proper", i.e., the land that formed the basis of Muscovy and, then, Russia).

The north and eastwards movements of the Slavic tribes were constrained by both natural factors such as unsuitability for agriculture (forests, grasslands, cold climate), and by their

lack of sufficient numerical preponderance in order not to be assimilated by the Finno-Ugric tribes who occupied these territories (Mordovians, Merya, Ves, Meshchera, Muroma).

One passage in the PVL indicated that there were tribes speaking non-Slavic languages: these included the Chud, Merya, Ves, Muromians, Cheremissians, Mordovians, Permians, Pechora, Iam, Lithuanians, Zemigalians, Kors, Narva, and Livs (in Russian: чудзь, меря, весь, мурома, чарамісы, мардва, перм, пачера, ям, літва, зімігола, корсь, нарова, лівы). They lived by the lakes (Rostov, Beloozero, Kleshchyna) and the Oka river and paid tribute to Rus', which means that the Slavs from Novgorod region and the Dnieper, coming to the North-Eastern lands, inevitably were assimilated with non-Slavic tribes.

Assimilation of the 'Great Russian Slavs' by those tribes (the first wave of assimilation) was one of the reasons for the subsequent separations of the Eastern Slavs. This indicates that the split of Eastern Slavs into 'Belarusians, Ukrainians, and Great Russians' did not happen in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but started much earlier, even before the collapse of Kievan Rus'.

### **Internecine war as a reason for separation of Eastern Slavs**

Feudal fragmentation was one of the reasons not just for the collapse of Kievan Rus', but also the prerequisite for further ethno-national division of the Eastern Slavs.

Kievan Rus' was not united. It had three centers (Kiev, Polotsk, and Novgorod) constantly at war and struggling for supremacy. The wars did not contribute to the unity of the Slavs; on the contrary, multiplied by tribal characteristics, they led to local concentrations of population around the local leaders and traditions, control over the occupied territories, and the emergence of new ethnic groups with the development of linguistic differentiation.

The documented history of Kievan Rus' begins with the reign of Prince Igor (912-945). However, there is no evidence that he was the son of Rurik, apart from the description in the PVL. Obviously, Prince Igor existed, and he had a father who has gone down in history under the name of Rurik, and from whom many Rurikids originated, including the line of Muscovite princes and tsars. The main point is that he was the prince of Kiev who extended its influence over the lands inhabited by Slavs.

Was Kievan Rus' strong during Prince Igor's reign? If we accept that Prince Igor mounted two campaigns against Constantinople, it is possible that the principality of Kiev was beginning to be established, albeit still heavily dependent on the powerful trading kingdom of the Khazars, a longtime Turkish buffer state between the Byzantines and the Umayyad Caliphate which flourished for three centuries between 650 and 950 and that became Jewish.

Certainly, in the middle of the ninth century, the Khazars controlled the territory south of a line drawn from Smolensk to Murom, and ruled over Kursk, Chernigov, and Kiev. All these cities paid tribute to the Khazars. Even after 967, the Khazars' defeat at the hands of Prince Svyatoslav I of Kiev (Igor's son), and his capture of Itil, their capital, did not protect Kiev from further clashes with the Pechenegs, the successors of the Khazars. It is from that moment that we can talk about the beginning of the flowering of Kievan Rus' during the reign of Prince Svyatoslav (945-972), Princess Olga (945-969, as regent), the brothers Princes Yaropolk (972-980) and Vladimir (980-1015), and Yaroslav the Wise (1019-1054).

It is believed that during the reign of Yaroslav the Wise, the population of Kievan Rus' totaled about 7.8 million. Yaroslav's power was especially strong in the principalities closest to Kiev, such as Chernigov, Pereyaslav, and Galicia. At the same time, we should not conclude that Kievan Rus' as a whole was a real feudal power.

Why? Polotsk kept its independence and specific position, among the three centers - Kiev, Polotsk, and Novgorod. Yaroslav the Wise was the Prince of Kiev, Novgorod, and Rostov, but not the Prince of Polotsk. So was Polotsk ruled by Kiev? The first known prince of Polotsk was Rogvolod (920-978). According to one hypothesis, Rogvolod was one of the Varangians (Orlov, 2005); another hypothesizes that he was the son of Princess Predslava of Polotsk who came to the throne after his mother's death, returning to her ancestral lands 'from overseas' (Ermolovich, 1990).

Prince Rogvolod and his family were destroyed by Kievan Prince Vladimir Svyatoslavovich, who went on to become king of Kievan Rus'. Vladimir was very tough and during the struggle for power he killed his brother Yaropolk while the latter was the Grand Prince of Kiev. The daughter of the Prince of Polotsk, Princess Rogneda, became Vladimir's prisoner and then his wife at age 13 and gave birth to Princes Izyaslav (Prince of Polotsk 988-1001), Yaroslav the Wise (Grand Prince of Kiev 1019-1054), Vsevolod (Prince Vladimir-Volyn), Mstislav (Prince of Chernigov and Tmutarakan), Princess Predslava (married to the Czech Prince Boleslav III) and Pramislava (married to the Hungarian Prince Ladislav the Bald).

Even if we consider only Yaroslav the Wise, who reigned in Kiev for 35 years, we can note the significant role played by Princess Rogneda in the formation of Kievan Rus'. If Vladimir is considered the godfather of Kievan Rus', Princess Rogneda is the mother of Kievan Rus'. As Prince of Polotsk (986-1001), their son Izyaslav continued to pursue the policy of independence of Kiev that started by his grandfather, Prince Rogvolod. Yermolovich's 1990 monograph documents that there was no decade where Polotsk was not at war with either Novgorod or Kiev. The Principality of Polotsk saw its greatest flowering during the reign of Vseslav the Seer (1044-1101). For a short period (1068-1069), he even reigned in Kiev. Many researchers now believe that in the ninth through the thirteenth centuries, the Principality of Polotsk was the first form of statehood on Belarusian territory.

Thus, except for the short period of Prince Vladimir's attack on Polotsk, we can assume that Kiev did not control the activities of the Principality of Polotsk. In other words, all Rurik did was cast a shadow over Polotsk. This independence of Polotsk from Kiev is a positive factor, or if you will, a valid reason for Belarusians not to participate fully in the struggle for the full heritage of Kievan Rus' now underway between Ukraine and Russia.

Historically, there were constant wars between other principalities of Kievan Rus'. As a result, this feudal structure fell apart after the death of Yaroslav the Wise in 1054. The land was divided into small principalities among his sons, who began quarrels that signaled the beginning of the disintegration of Kievan Rus'. The actual struggle for the throne of Kiev also contributed significantly to this (the continuity of the position of Prince of Kiev is one of the fundamental issues of historical disputes involving Kievan Rus' and Russia).

Power transferred in Kiev according to seniority, i.e., from highest to lowest in the whole clan, and not from father to son. In 1093, the eldest prince Svyatopolk Izyaslavich of Turov, a cousin of Vladimir Monomakh (1053-1125) took power. After Svyatopolk's death in 1113, the Kiev throne by right of seniority was claimed by Svyatoslav's sons. However, their cousin Vladimir Monomakh, a top military leader, ascended the throne instead. According to Russian historians, this event was at the invitation of the elders and with the consent of the people of Kiev. What is significant is that from the time of Vladimir Monomakh, the rotation system governing changes of power was broken.

The violation of the rules of heritage led to the war between the sons of Oleg of Chernigov, the sons of Monomakh from Pereyaslavl, the sons of Izyaslav from Turov/Volhynia, and the Princes of Polotsk.

Over 45 years, from 1125 to 1169, the throne in Kiev changed hands twenty-one times. Some of them, after a hard struggle, had sat on that throne three times (e.g., Yuri Dolgorukiy, son of Vladimir Monomakh, Izyaslav Davidovich, Rostislav Mstislavich, and Vyacheslav Vladimirovich). Even the sons of 'Oleg' of Chernigov, Igor and Vsevolod Olegovich (1139-1146), were able to prove their right to the throne of Kiev.

Although it is written in Russian sources, they (the sons of Oleg) forced Monomakh's descendants to recognize their right. See the first and fourth chapters of Solovyov's *History of Russia from Ancient Times* ('On the prince's relationship at all' and 'Events involving the great-grandchildren of Yaroslav'; Volume 1) regarding the cause of these quarrels.

The descendants of Vladimir Monomakh personally undertook the literal destruction of the city of Kiev in 1169: Kiev was destroyed by the army of Andrew Bogolyubsky, Prince of Rostov-Suzdal, (grandson of Vladimir Monomakh and the son of Yuri Dolgorukiy, the founder of Moscow) and then in 1203, Kiev was sacked by Rurik Rostislavich (great-grandson of Monomakh -- who had married three times -- by his second line), together with the sons of Oleg and including the Polovtsians. (It should also be remembered that Rurik Rostislavich held the great Kiev throne six times at various intervals.) Then finally, at the

end of 1240, Kiev was seized and destroyed by Batu Khan's invading Mongol armies. They massacred most of the population of the city, and then proceeded on their way to capture much of Europe.

Thus, the strife between the principalities of Kievan Rus' was one of the main factors in its disintegration. The collapse of Kievan Rus' led to the strengthening of existing centers and the created conditions for the development of new eastern Slavic centers with their own specific features. The separate nature and independence of the Principality of Polotsk (the predecessor of the future Belarusian State) became even stronger, as did that of the principality of Volyn-Galich (the precursor of the future Ukrainian State). In the same period, the Republic of Novgorod (1136) was formed with limited power given princes, as well as the principality of Vladimir-Suzdal (1157), the first North-Eastern Duchy, which became the nucleus of the future Muscovy, on the territory of the Finno-Ugric tribes. But that was nearly 200 years after the establishment of the principalities of Polotsk and Kiev.

### **The Mongol invasion and the formation of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania - the main factors distinguishing the Eastern Slavs**

The migration of the Eastern Slavs south and south-east of Kiev was impossible, not because of the endless, agriculturally unfriendly steppes, but because the steppes were longtime centers of activity and control by the nomads. The Black Sea - Caspian steppe joins the Kazakh steppe, and thus becomes part of the vast Eurasian steppe. For thousands of years, warlike tribes of nomads moved across the steppes from east to west, and even reached and occupied significant regions of Europe. There were Scythians (700-200 AD), the Sarmatians (200 BC -200 AD), the Huns (370 - 453 AD), the Alans (500-1100 AD) Avars (600-800 AD), the Khazars (600-1000 AD), and later the Pechenegs (800-1100 AD), Kipchaks and Cumans (1100-1300), and Genghis Khan's Mongols (1300-1500) (Riazanovsky, 1993).

According to some Russian historians (most notably L. Gumilev, the classic Eurasianist), the nomads and the steppes played a huge role in the further establishment and development of Russia. The Mongol-Tatar invasion was one of the key factors dividing the Eastern Slavs into two civilizations – Eastern Slavs/Belarusian-Ukrainian civilization and Eurasian/Russian civilization.

This line between civilizations is readily apparent if one follows territories captured by the Mongol Empire. The former remained free of the invaders from the Eurasian steppe, while the latter were reduced to the status of vassals. The defining feature of the Mongol campaign -- relevant to this paper's civilizational division argument -- was that the Mongols bypassed principalities located on the territory of modern Belarus and part of Ukraine. As a result, the Eastern Slavs living in the territory of Belarus and Ukraine, in contrast to the inhabitants of the Northeast, avoided the empire being established by the Mongols. They remained apart, avoiding domination by the Turkic peoples.

By the mid-thirteenth century, the Eastern Slavs living in what is now Belarus had come

under the sway of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), while the north-eastern and southern principalities fell under the influence of the Mongols' Golden Horde khanate.

Thus, Mongols contributed to the separation of the Slavic 'Great Russians' who fell under their power for two and a half centuries (up to 1480) from other Eastern Slavs, including 'Belarusian' Slavs, free from the Mongols, and 'Ukrainian' Slavs, some of whom came under the influence of the nomadic Mongols for 100 years. However, the Ukrainian lands were freed after 1362, when troops under the leadership of Prince Olgierd defeated the Tatars at the Blue Waters.

Subsequently, the southern and south-western parts of the former Kievan Rus', as well as the territory of modern Belarus, were gradually incorporated into the GDL, which had played a special role in uniting the East Slavic lands.

In the GDL at the end of the fourteenth century, only one out of nine people was of Lithuanian origin (O'Connor, 2003), i.e., almost all the rest were Ruthenians. At that time the word 'Russian' meant Ruthenian. But, the official language of the GDL was Old Belarusian. Starting from the early fourteenth century, the full name of GDL was The Grand Duchy of Lithuania, Ruthenia and Samogitia, the last a region in northwestern Lithuania.

The GDL stopped the 'Eurasianization' of a large part of the Slavs, the future Belarusians and Ukrainians. Hence, the unification of the Eastern Slavs in the GDL was the major factor in creating and saving East Slavic European civilization.

Russia as a State originated in the lands located to the northeast of Kievan Rus' (Suzdal or Zalesie, Rostov, Murom). These were remote areas separated from Kievan Rus' by forests and frequently arable farming regions.

The Slavs assimilated relatively unwarlike Finno-Ugric tribes, and subsequently they combined into the principality of Suzdal, a first for these lands (1157). The fact that Suzdal emerged as a principality two centuries later than the Polotsk and Kievan principalities points, on the one hand, to a slow migration of the Eastern Slavs and to the length of the time involved in their peaceful assimilation by the local population.

Mikhail Pogodin (1800-1875), one of the ideologues of pan-Slavism, claimed that the Slavs in Russia were actually immigrants from Kievan Rus' who, under pressure from the Mongol-Tatars, had been forced to migrate to the area which was to become Muscovy.

In fact, he denied the existence of a Ukrainian people, saying that the Ukrainians had come to the lands of the former Kievan Rus' from the Carpathian Mountains later, in the fifteenth to sixteenth centuries. However, Pogodin's hypothesis on a mass migration of Slavs has not confirmed (see Plochy, 2006).

It is obvious that the Slavs' assimilation in Muscovy substantially accelerated with the Mongol-Tatar invasion, and actually led to an even greater degree of dissociation from the eastern Slavs of future Belarus and Ukraine. From this period the formation of a new East Slavic civilization based on Ruthenians (Belarusians and Ukrainians) became more in evidence, as well as the formation of a Eurasian civilization which first arose on the territory of Muscovy. The Mongol-Tatar invasion occurred at about the same time as the disintegration of Kievan Rus', but did not cause it, as some maintained.

A number of facts point to the interaction between Muscovy and the Horde for about 240 years.

The Mongols, after returning from campaigns in Western Europe, stayed in the Lower Volga region, where they founded the town of Sarai, the capital of the Golden Horde. In 1243-1246, the principalities of Kiev and of the North-Eastern edge acknowledged their dependence on the Golden Horde, i.e. they became its vassals. In 1245 Yaroslav, Grand Prince of Vladimir, suggested that the Russian princes should recognize Batu Khan as their king. In 1246, Prince Yaroslav was poisoned while in Mongolia, however, and his son, Alexander Nevsky, allied with the Horde in 1257.

According to Lev Gumilev, the Horde and Russian principalities agreed to establish a defensive alliance against the Teutonic Knights and the pagan Lithuanians. Since the conclusion of such an agreement, almost 20 years after Batu's campaign, subordinate principalities started to pay tribute to the Golden Horde, and the Khans of the Horde gave out *yarlyki* (permission and right to Russian princes to govern a designated territory) to reign.

The interaction between the enslaved principalities and the Horde was not solely negative. Alexander Nevsky was the adopted son of Batu Khan, and he was named a brother to the Khan's son – Sartak. In Sarai, thanks to Alexander Nevsky, the Orthodox bishop established a farmstead. Thus, the Orthodox faith began officially to exist in the Horde.

In addition, Academician Halikau has compiled a list of more than 500 noble Russian family names derived from Tatar (see Magazine «SAKAVIK», № 1, 2013). Recently, the debate has been focused on the Tatar origins of such prominent Russian leaders as Ivan IV (the Terrible), Boris Godunov, and Peter I (Abdullaev, 2011; Garyfullin, 2012).

In the early fourteenth century, Sarai, capital of the Golden Horde, had a population of 600,000 (Encyclopedia Britannica), while Moscow had 30,000 in 1350. Muscovy gradually borrowed systems and characteristics from the Horde government, pursuing military, monetary, and fiscal reforms, studying military skills, and finally taking on an authoritarian and centralized management style.

The principality of Muscovy was formed in 1263, under the rule of the Golden Horde, 23 years after Batu's aggressive campaigns, i.e. not against the Horde, but thanks to it.

Muscovy and the Golden Horde used the strife between the northeastern principalities; so the Tver Uprising (1327) was brutally suppressed by the Horde army led by Prince Ivan Kalita of Muscovy. Thanks to Russian historians, that prince has gone down in history as the “Collector for Rus.” Note that when he “united the Slavs”, he did it with the help of a punitive Mongol army.

In a certain sense, the Golden Horde was an artificial and unsustainable state. Its population consisted of Mordva, Slavs, Greeks, Bulgars living permanently in the Volga area, as well as nomadic Turkic tribes (Kipchaks, Tatars, Turkmens, and Kyrgyz). In addition, the Horde was greatly weakened by internal strife between Tokhtamysh and Tamerlane in the late fourteenth century; this led to Moscow’s transformation from a vassal state into a semi-vassal state. Still, even the Mongol-Tatars’ defeat at the battle of Kulikovo on September 8, 1380 did not end their dominance, which lasted for about another century.

On the other hand, Moscow, with the establishment of a vassal Tatar principality in Kasymov, actually became the successor to the Golden Horde (Vernadsky1968: 17). Thus the vassal Kasymov Khanate lasted in the lands of Muscovy for nearly 250 years (1452-1681, the modern Ryazan region).

It was the first of the great heritage of Eurasia, and Muscovy’s first step in the conquest of peoples of the Eurasian steppes and North Asia, which led to the formation of the Eurasian civilization. Nowadays, the Eurasian steppes alone are home to many peoples of Russia’s autonomous republics and peoples (Bashkir, Mari, Mordovians, Tatar, Udmurt, Chuvash, Adyghean, Ossetian, Balkarians, Ingushetians, Kabardians, Kalmyks, Karachai, Chechens, and Circassians).

Thus, one can conclude that Russia, by absorbing over the course of a long history these and other Eurasian territories and the populations that inhabit them, is arguably the result of the east-west Eurasian movement commenced by the Mongols.

### **Relations between the East Slavic and Eurasian civilizations in the thirteenth to nineteenth centuries**

After the collapse of the Golden Horde for internal reasons, Muscovy gained freedom of action and directed its predatory interests to the fragmented and scattered Khanates over the Eurasian steppe: the Khanates of Kazan (1552) and Astrakhan (1556), the Great Nogai Horde (1557), the Siberian Khanate (1582), and the Skewbald Horde (1619). As a result, by the late sixteenth century, the territory of the Muscovite state was about 5.5 million square km, with a population of about 10.9 million people (whereas in 1450 it was only 430,000 square km with a population of 3,000,000).

The only region still unattainable for Moscow from the fourteenth century to the eighteenth century was westward expansion, for there was a strong State, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL), blocking the way. In fact, people who lived in what is now Belarus,

Lithuania, and Ukraine had created a strong European power; the bulk of the population were Ruthenians (Belarusians and Ukrainians), and within the GDL, they were protected from absorption by the Eurasian civilization.

Unlike Muscovy, this State, the GDL, as has been noted above, barely experienced the Tatar-Mongol yoke and developed under completely different conditions. It became even more powerful in 1569, forming along with the Kingdom of Poland, a federation called the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth.

Before the conclusion of Union of Lublin (1569), the GDL in many respects had been an independent principality. Even after the annexation of the GDL in the late eighteenth century, Tsarist Russia did not dare to infringe on the rights and freedoms of people for a further 30 years: thus, the GDL statutes remained in force, and the institutions of the nobility (Szlachta) and the Uniate Church (more than 70% of Belarusians at the time were Uniates) still existed.

Data at the end of the fourteenth century (i.e. to the time after which the gradual annexation to Muscovy of territories inhabited by Turkic peoples had been started), demographic data show that in the GPL in 1493 there were about 3.75 million Ruthenians, i.e. Belarusians and Ukrainians (Pogonowsky, 1987). At about the same time (1450), Muscovy had about three million inhabitants, and in 1500, after the accession of the neighboring rival principalities – the Republic of Novgorod (1478) and Tver (1485) – about six million inhabitants (The Great Soviet Encyclopedia, 1969-1978). How many of them were Slavs is unknown, because along with the Muscovites there lived Komi, Udmurt, Tatar, Mari, Chuvash, Mordovians, Karelians and other Finno-Ugric peoples.

However, if we extrapolate the results of the latest census for the population of Russia (2010), the Slavs might have totaled a maximum of 4.8 million (77.7% Russians out of 6 million). Thus, the ratio of Muscovy Slavs to the Slavs of Belarusians and Ukrainians could be pretty close (such as, e.g., 1.3:1, respectively).

With the expansion of the territory of the GPL under the Treaty of Deulino, which concluded the Polish–Muscovite War (1605–1618) between the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and Russia, the population rose. There were 12 million inhabitants, of which Ukrainians made up 3.5 million and Belarusians 1.5 million (the Ruthenian portion was 5 million). But half of the population of Belarus was killed during the GDL's next war with Muscovy (1654-1667); only 1.4 million survived out of 2.9 million (Saganovich, 1995).

By the end of the eighteenth century, the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth had disappeared. Belarus was annexed by Russia, under the rule of Empress Catherine II. According to current estimates, there were 11-14 million people living in the Commonwealth in 1770 (Bideleux, Jeffries, 1998, Lukowski, Zawadzki, 2001), and in the Russian Empire about 19 million in 1762, while in 1800 there were as many as 35.5 million

(Falcus). It is easy to calculate the source of this increase, if we recall that the Commonwealth was divided among Prussia, Austria, and Russia. Russia took the entire territory and population of present-day Belarus and Ukraine. These were forcibly seized and became part of the Russian and Eurasian empire. They thus acquired the status of Eurasians, surrendering their European status.

In sum, Russia's history involves permanent territorial expansions during the existence of Muscovy (1263-1547), the Russian kingdom (1547-1721), the Russian Empire (1721-1917), Soviet Russia (1917-1922), the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (1922-1991), and the Russian Federation (since 1991). Additions and changes in the Russian population were not only quantitative but also qualitative.

Now there are more than 180 nations in multinational Russia, in accordance with official statistics. Simple calculations show that the ratio of the Great Russians to the Ukrainians and Belarusians for five centuries is growing in the favor of Russians. So, if at the end of the fourteenth century this ratio may have been 1.3 to 1, then according to the Russian census of 1897, the ratio of the Great Russians (55.7 million) to Ukrainians and Belarusians (22.4 and 5.9 million, respectively) accounted for about 2:1 (calculated on linguistic criteria). According to the census of the USSR in 1989, the proportion was already 2.7:1 (Russians, 145.5 million; Ukrainians, 44.2 million; and Belarusians, 10.0 million).

These calculations show that for five centuries, the relative strength of the Great Russians has been increasing twice as fast as that of the Belarusians and Ukrainians.

It should be noted that these calculations were made by this author's conservative estimate (PM). It may well be argued that this increase cannot be explained by assimilation alone, and most likely points to the direct admission of other nations to the Slavic population of the Great (Russian).

To this day, many Russians deny that the Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples assimilated Great Russian Slavs. However, recent studies have shown a significant difference in the distribution of genetic material, with a gradient from north to south and from west to east in the North-Eastern Slavic lands where Russia emerged; this points to the migration of the Slavs and their assimilation into the non-Slavic peoples of Russia (Malyarchuk et al., 2004; Balanovsky et al., 2008).

We are clearly discussing the emergence of two different civilizations in the eastern regions of Europe.

### **Characteristics of the East Slavic and Eurasian civilizations**

According to the foregoing analyses, we can conclude that a number of factors influenced Eastern Slavs to be split and to form two civilizations - East Slavic European civilization (the Belarusian-Ukrainian) and Eurasian civilization (Russian).

Objective factors that contributed to the formation of these civilizations were tribal specifics of the Eastern Slavs; assimilation of eastern Slavs with local tribes; the internecine war between various lands and kingdoms; the Mongol-Tatar invasion, a historical continuation of the movements of nomads of the Eurasian steppes; and the emergence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, the unifier of the Eastern Slavs.

Today, the East Slavic civilization is represented by two relatively ethnically homogeneous countries: Belarus and Ukraine; and Eurasian civilization – Russia and the countries that adhere to the Eurasian ideology. We can distinguish three periods in the development of both civilizations, the pre-Kievan and Kievan period, the formation period, and the modern period (Table 1).

**Table 1.**

**Characteristics of the periods of development of East Slavic and Eurasian civilizations**

<b>Period</b>	<b>Short Description</b>
Pre-Kievan and Kievan period	The initial division of the Eastern Slavs in the 9 <sup>th</sup> to 11 <sup>th</sup> centuries on the basis of the features of Slavic tribes themselves, their assimilation with local tribes, and the feuds between lands and kingdoms
Formation Period	Emergence of European East Slavic civilization (the Belarusian-Ukrainian) in the 13 <sup>th</sup> and 14 <sup>th</sup> centuries and the beginning of the formation of Eurasian civilization in the 13 <sup>th</sup> to 15 <sup>th</sup> centuries (modern Russia and the countries sharing Eurasian ideas now)
Development Period	Continued to present

East Slavic civilization began to emerge from Slavic migration from central Europe, and from their settlement in the territory of modern Belarus and Ukraine. We can assume that East Slavic civilization has existed for eight centuries, as far back as the mid-eighth century, while Eurasian civilization was just beginning to take shape.

It should be noted that some of the features in the modern period of the development of the East Slavic civilization are most relevant to its 'Ukrainian' part: firstly, they are due to the temporary Mongol occupation of Ukraine territory in 1240-1362, and secondly, due to the characteristic features of the Ukrainian national liberation movement during the Hetmanate (the Ukrainian Cossack State between 1659 and 1764) (Bohdan Khmelnytsky, Ivan Mazepa).

There are several major points that show significant differences between East Slavic and Eurasian civilization, and are at the same time proof of their existence (Table 2).

East Slavic civilization is much older, and it has existed for almost three more centuries than the Eurasian for two main reasons: first, due to the slow migration of the Slavs in the land of future Muscovy as evidenced by the considerably later emergence of the Principality of Suzdal in comparison to the principalities of Polotsk and Kiev; second, Muscovy's status as a vassal of the Tatars for 240 years (such features as assimilation and changes in the territory occupied were also mentioned earlier).

The populations of Belarus and Ukraine have been largely ethnically homogeneous for nearly eight centuries, while in the North-East the Slavs assimilated first the Finno-Ugric tribes, and later the Turkic peoples.

The principal difference in the population in our time might be noted when calculating the ratio of Slavs to other ethnic groups (30:1 and 24:1 for Belarus and Ukraine, respectively; contrasted with 4.8:1 for Russia); and the ratio of Christians to Muslims (90 or 180:1 and 27:1 for Belarus and Ukraine, respectively; and 7:1 for Russia). When calculating the group of Slavs, Great Russians, Bulgarians, Belarusians, Poles and Ukrainians were included (similar results were obtained by calculating the ratio of the eponymous nation to a portion of other ethnic groups [not shown - PM]. Religious affiliation to Islam was chosen for the calculations because the corresponding figures for all comparison groups were available.

There are a number of features typical of both Belarusian-Ukrainian civilization and Western civilization.

There is enough scholarly evidence (Bekus, 2011; Kuplevich, 2013) to assign Belarusian-Ukrainian civilization to Western civilization. (Also, Szporluk, 2001 and Kohut, 2001). Kuplevich (2013) highlights 15 key factors pointing to Belarus's European nature, including:

- the 1000-year history of Belarusian traditions,
- the presence of European civilization processes in Belarus (the Renaissance, the Reformation, the Counter-Reformation, the Union of Brest, the Enlightenment),
- the presence of the European institutions (parliaments, the Sejm, Magdeburg Law, the Town Hall),
- the modern nation-building process, and
- the integration of Belarusian elites into the European political, cultural, economic processes, etc.

Recently, a substantial difference in mentality between the two civilizations was discussed (Zgerski, 2014). Additional research, however, is required to study the mentality, behavior and traditions, typical of representatives of the two civilizations.

**Table 2.**  
**Characteristics of the East Slavic and Eurasian civilizations<sup>1</sup>**

	<b>East Slavic civilization</b>	<b>Eurasian civilization</b>
Duration of existence	More than eight centuries	Less than five centuries
Territory occupied	Was not changed substantially	Increased more than tenfold
Assimilated by Eastern Slavs	Balts, Sarmatians	Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples
Ratio of Slavs (Great Russians, Bulgarians, Belarusians, Poles, and Ukrainians) to other ethnic groups*	Belarus– 30:1 (96.8%:3.2%); Ukraine– 24:1 (96%:4%)	Russia – 4.8:1 (82.7%:17.3%);
Ratio of Christians to Muslims**	Belarus – 90:1 (а) Belarus– 180:1 (б) Ukraine – 27:1	Russia – 7:1
Features of Western civilization (see the text)	+	—

There are a number of approaches to the classification of civilizations (Toynbee, 1934; Huntington, 1993; Kuzik & Yakovets, 2006; Targowski, 2009; Kuplevich, 2013). According to Huntington, there are eight civilizations – Western, Orthodox, Islamic, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Latin, and sub-Saharan Africa. Huntington assigned Belarus and Ukraine to the Orthodox civilization. But that is a moot point. As mentioned above, many features of Slavic East European civilization (Belarusian-Ukrainian) can be assigned to Western civilization.

Not assigning Belarus either to the Eurasian or the Orthodox civilization is supported by postulating a separate Belarusian civilization (Maldis, 2003) or border civilization (Titarenko, 2009).

<sup>1</sup> \* Calculations based on population census: Belarus (2009), Russia (2010), Ukraine (2001).

\*\* Calculations based on the following information: for Belarus - (a) *Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor*. International Religious Freedom Report 2010. Belarus. *U.S. Department of State*; (б) Республика Беларусь в зеркале социологии. Сборник материалов социологических исследований за 2011 год. — Минск: Бизнесофсет, 2012 с. 44. — ISBN 978-985-6939-42-9; For Ukraine - “РЕЛІГІЯ І ВЛАДА В УКРАЇНІ: ПРОБЛЕМИ ВЗАЄМОВІДНОСИН”. Інформаційно-аналітичні матеріали до Круглого столу на тему: “Державно-конфесійні відносини в Україні, їх особливості і тенденції розвитку” (2010). [http://www.razumkov.org.ua/upload/prz\\_2011\\_Rlg\\_sml.pdf](http://www.razumkov.org.ua/upload/prz_2011_Rlg_sml.pdf); for Russia - Атлас религий и национальностей России (2012). Данные социологического исследования: <http://ru.wikipedia.org/wiki>; исследовательская служба «Среда», [www.sreda.org](http://www.sreda.org).

According to Kuzik and Yakovets, the early twenty-first century should see the discussion about the creation of fifth-generation local civilizations; the authors divide them into three groups: Western group – West European, East European, North American, Latin American and Oceanic; an East group – Chinese, Japanese, Indian, Buddhist, and Islamic; and mixed – Eurasian (Russian), and sub-Saharan African.

If one adheres to that classification, Belarus and Ukraine may be involved in Eastern European civilization, and as shown in this essay, even more specifically to Eastern European Slavic civilization. However, Russian authors carried the two countries into Eurasian/Russian civilization: it can be seen on the maps of the future development of Russian civilization (until 2050); the rationale for including Belarus and Ukraine on those maps is generally not given.

According to the classification proposed by A. Targowski (2009), Belarus, and Ukraine, in our opinion, could be assigned to the West-central civilization, for the reasons described above, and not to the Eastern civilization where the author assigns two countries, along with Russia and Bulgaria. Targowski's definition of civilization consists of a number of factors, but if the predominant religion (Orthodox Christianity) was taken as a basis in assigning Belarus and Ukraine, then one would have to take into account the ratio of Orthodoxy with other religions. For example, the relationship between Orthodoxy and Islam among believers in Russia and Bulgaria is around 6:1 and 7:1, while among the believers in the Ukraine and Belarus, 50:1 and 150:1 respectively.

In a post-industrial society in the era of globalization, the general existence and role of local civilizations varies greatly, and their future depends on the nature of the relationship between them – whether conflict or cooperation. Conditions for the development of the East European Slavic civilization were more favorable in Boris Yeltsin's time.

However, it is believed that the reforms initiated by Boris Yeltsin, just like the reforms of Peter I, were 'null and void' because they did not correspond to the values of Eurasian Russia (starting from as far back as Alexander Nevsky, Russia has engaged in anti-Western rhetoric). The Yeltsin period replaced a time of uncertainty and transition with a new Eurasian policy, which included the change from pro-Western to anti-Western, and which may now be partially observed in the organization of the Eurasian Economic Union.

As recently noted (Kuzik, Yakovets, 2006), Western civilization has incorporated Baltic countries, and intends to include Ukraine, Moldova, and Georgia (v. II, p.69). But there is no mention of Belarus at all. The authors also add that Russian strategy for the twenty-first century was not formulated yet, so soon after the fall of the Soviet Union.

The authors do predict a possible split of the Eurasian/ Russian civilization, where central Asia might fall under the influence of Islamic civilization, while the Russian Far East and Siberia could fall under the influence of Chinese, Japanese, and North American civilizations.

In this case, as the authors say, Eurasian civilization will have no choice but to be Russian or East Slavic civilization. The same authors, in speaking of 'Russian' civilization, seem to incorporate Belarusians and Ukrainians into that civilization.

Attempts by Russian researchers to learn Russian history more profoundly during the transition period following the collapse of the Soviet Union were subject to severe criticism. The concept of Tartary, a country that existed, according to the authors, in the northern part of Asia (Nosovskiy, Fomenko, 1999; Agrantsev, 2005) was condemned as unscientific by a special commission of the Russian Academy of Sciences (Commission, 2007). The politicization of the issue under consideration may be observed arising once again.

Evidently, a period of uncertainty in the restoration of Russia's strategy is to be replaced by Eurasian ideology. It is clear that the movement of the Eurasian civilization back to the east was forced or, from the point of view of modern Eurasianists, was wrong. It is obvious that the new Eurasianists, as with the classic ones, will continue to implement their ideology to legitimize the existence and expansion of empire. M. Danilevsky (1822-1875) saw Russia as a distinct civilization, which should absorb and assimilate the whole of Europe, and called on the Slavs to rid themselves of Turkish and German influences and to form a Slavic empire.

The ultimate goal for classic Eurasianists was – and remains -- to end the hegemony of Western culture by demonstrating the superiority of the East (Vernadsky, 1927).

Classical Eurasianism was founded by Russian émigrés in the 1920s, primarily by Prince Troubetzkoy (1890-1938), Karsavin (1882-1952), Savitsky (1895-1968), Vernadsky (1887-1973), Jakobson (1896-1982), Shuvchynski (1892-1985). The more recent proponents of this theory include L. Gumilev (1912-1992), Panarin (1940-2003) and his contemporaries, A. Dugin, V. Surkov, N. Nazarbayev, S. Karaganov. The main theses of the classical Eurasianists were that Russia has a unique culture, one peculiar only to Russia, and that Eurasian culture is the basis of Russian civilization. This includes an ideology based on the Christian Orthodox religion and culture, reflecting Russia's national interests and unique destiny, as determined by its geo-strategic location as a bridge between Asia and Europe and by specific ethnographic mixture of Eurasian peoples.

According to these thinkers, Russia is not truly a Slavic country. It was a great surprise and even 'shock' to B. Haggman, a Western scholar, most recently (2011). The classical authors of this movement argued that Russia was not even genuinely Slavic. What's so shocking, even if the Russians admit it?

However, the West still reads the myths and legends-clichés of Rurik, of Russia as a Slavic country, written by eighteenth and nineteenth century Slavophiles. For more on the history of the Eurasian ideology, see recent reviews (Laruelle, 2006; Matern, 2007; Pry, 2013).

Classic Eurasianists did not recognize the rights of Belarus and Ukraine to independence in the 1920s, considering the peoples of these countries as a separate branch of the Russian people, while at the same time noting the major role played by the Turkic peoples in the development of Russia. Gumilev wrote that in fact the Russians were closer to the non-Slavic people, and that the empire of Genghis Khan was transformed into Moscow; “The merger of Genghis Khan’s military and political experience with Russian Orthodoxy in the fourteenth century gave birth to Muscovite Russia” (from the preface to Khara-Davan, 1992).

In turn, P. Sawicki in a letter to Gumilev wrote, “I still consider our great and terrible father of Genghis Khan as one of the greatest figures in the history of pre-Leninist Eurasia. Lenin was only surpassed by its scope and strength of his purpose” (cited from M. Laruelle, 2006). Classical Eurasianists’ idea did not find support in the USSR, but they themselves had subsided when they saw that after World War II, Eurasia-Russia extended up to central Europe, signifying that in fact, their ideas were being implemented.

However, no matter the views adhered to by Russian historians and leaders (Normanist or anti-Normanist theories, or the Eurasian, Pan-Slavic or Slavophile currents), few of them rejected Kiev/Kievan Rus’ as his historic fiefdom. From the today's point of view it is not quite true because of the existence of an independent state – Ukraine, which is primarily based on claiming the history of Kievan Rus’.

After all, the recognition that modern Russia has nothing to do with Kievan Rus’ currently leads to the absolute recognition of the independence of Ukraine and Belarus and, as a consequence, to the loss of those claims on Slavic territory and to the loss of 'informed' historical influence on these countries, which the imperial mindset cannot afford.

The idea of the Slavophiles, Eurasianists, and Pan-Slavists, including Russian national patriots, was to consider Russia a Slavic country (“Russian Russia”) or as a country where the leading role of the Slavs led to the crisis in the explanation of the current situation. This meant that, on the one hand, the former Russian Empire included no countries from East Slavic civilization, such as Belarus and Ukraine yet, on the other hand, there was a need to solve national problems in their own country. Imperial thinking is a logical counterweight to the normal process of self-reflection as a Eurasian state, which led to its strengthening.

For East Slavic civilization, the treatment of Russia in such a situation by Western civilization is important. Until recently, everything to the east of the Brest-Lvov line was called “Russia” by many Westerners, not even called the Soviet Union. It is now gradually becoming known that the East Slavic world was not so united, and that the Eastern Slavs had their own civilizational values that cannot be attributed to Eurasia or Moscow.

Some might even argue that the war between Russia and Ukraine nowadays is a convincing argument for the existence of two civilizations – East Slavic civilization and Eurasian/Russian civilization. Certainly, its historic roots should not be ignored.

Whether Western civilization is interested in supporting an independent development of the East Slavic civilization and its possible movement to the West will determine the future of a Slavic civilization. If such support does not occur, it can be swallowed by Eurasian civilization, sharing the fate of many other territories and peoples from the fifteenth century to the twentieth century (now parts of the Russian state).

The Eurasian Economic Union came into being on January 1 of this year. When Kazakhstan President Nursultan Nazarbayev first called for an organization in 1994, it was to be based on economics, a regional trading bloc, and it was not to be a political union. Still, there is historically justified suspicion among the peoples of the East Slavic civilization, caused by constant westward movement of Eurasian forces, although in a time of globalization, aggression will have to be perceived to be limited.

The disadvantage of East Slavic civilization today is that two of its components, Belarus and Ukraine, are pulling in different directions. But nothing stands still: the centuries-long development of the East Slavic European civilization has its own continuation.

## **Summary**

The article explains the existence of a separate East Slavic civilization in the modern European territories of Belarus and Ukraine.

The Slavs migrated to Eastern Europe in the fifth to ninth centuries; under the influence of various factors, they separated and formed two civilizations – East Slavic (Belarusian-Ukrainian) and Eurasian.

The disengagement of the Eastern Slavs was determined by the characteristics of their tribes, natural conditions of the Eastern European plain and the Eurasian steppes, assimilation to local tribes, internecine wars between lands and kingdoms, the influence of the Mongol Empire, and the emergence of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania as a unifying factor for the Eastern Slavs.

It seems that the ethno-national division of the Eastern Slavs began in the tenth and eleventh centuries, regardless of the processes of formation of Kievan Rus', and even before its collapse.

This division emerged between the Slavs living in what is now Ukraine and Belarus, and the Slavs who had migrated to the North-East (the territory of the future Muscovy), where they mingled during “first wave” assimilation with Finno-Ugric peoples (Mordvins, Mari, Vepsians, Meshchera, and Muromians).

A second wave of assimilation with Turkic peoples continued for centuries, as under the rule of the Golden Horde and later, the Muscovy Slavs were separated even further from the Slavs of Belarus and Ukraine.

Muscovy/Russia's Eurasian culture is based on interpenetration, lifestyles, mentalities, traditions and knowledge amongst Slavic and Finno-Ugric and Turkic peoples. We can assume that Russia, including during the long history of the Eurasian territory and its population, is the successor of the Eurasian movement from east to west. However, many Russians still consider Russia, in defiance of the facts, an exclusively Slavic nation, and do not recognize the separate existence of the Belarusian and Ukrainian ethnicities.

Infighting between the principalities of Kievan Rus' was one of the major factors in its decay, but perhaps counterintuitively, it led to the strengthening and separation of coeval centers (the principalities of Polotsk and Galicia-Volhynia) and to the creation of new feudal formations of the future Muscovy (the Republic of Novgorod, and the Principality of Rostov-Suzdal). The Belarusian and Ukrainian Slavs preserved their identity and civilization largely because of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) which actually united the Eastern Slavs after the collapse of Kievan Rus'. At the time that sort of unifying role could not have been performed by Muscovy, itself a vassal dependent on the Mongol Golden Horde.

East Slavic civilization is nearly three centuries older than Eurasianism, both because of the slow migration of the Slavs to the future lands of Muscovy (as evidenced by a much later formation of Suzdal compared to the principalities of Polotsk and Kiev) and due to Muscovy's status as a Tatar vassal for over 240 years. The population of Belarus and Ukraine, dating back almost eight centuries, is largely ethnically homogeneous and has been resident in the same territory, while the North-Eastern Slavs were assimilated in Russia, first by the Finno-Ugric tribes, and later with the Turkic peoples.

A principal difference between the populations of the two civilizations is understood at present by calculating the ratio of the Slavs to other ethnic groups, and the ratio of Christians to Muslims.

Belarus and Ukraine are assigned to the Orthodox, eastern or Eurasian/Russian civilization (although they share a number of characteristic features of Western civilization) on the basis of myths and conclusions resulting from the interpretation of historical facts viewed from the prism of geopolitics.

These myths address the assumed trinity of the three Slavic nations – 'Great Russians,' 'Little Russians' and 'White Russians.' They are based on the supposed Slavic character of the Russian Empire, historical continuity between Kievan Rus' and Russia, and Muscovy's claim for a role in the union of the Eastern Slavs.

The development of civilization requires a long time, and it is clear that East Slavic European or Belarusian-Ukrainian civilization will take its proper and appropriate place in an era of global change in the world through the understanding and co-operation of its constituent parts, which still have a great deal in common.

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