

CONCEPT OF CIVILIZATIONS BY SAMUEL HUNTINGTON AND THE INTERNATIONAL ORDER

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Abstract. The purpose of the article is to analyze why Huntington's ideas about civilizations, which have been much criticized, misused, and abused, continue to show amazing vitality by tackling the trends of international order. His paradigm has been a good predictor of international conflicts, but at the same time a tool that allows us to accept some primordial things. Properly understood and applied, civilizational analysis, which considers one's strengths and weaknesses, can be used, like geopolitical analysis, as an indispensable component of planning a strategic approach.

Keywords: civilizations, social theory, paradigm, Cold War, liberal world order, Samuel Huntington, Western world, Russia, Ukraine

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1. Introduction

Most of those who work in the fields of sociology and international relations are familiar with the idea about 'clashing civilizations' proposed by Samuel P. Huntington (1927–2008). Huntington ranks among the most prominent and influential social scientists of the 20th century. He became known worldwide with the article (Huntington 1993), which he wrote to discuss Francis Fukuyama's 'end of history' visions of humanity's future development (Fukuyama 1989, 1992). His essay attracted more public attention than any paper *Foreign Affairs* had published since Kennan's Cold War essay (Kennan [alias Mr X] 1947). In 1996, Professor

Huntington published the book as a supplement to the topic (Huntington 1996). Henry Kissinger called this work one of the most important analyses of global relations published at that time since the end of the Cold War. In 2013, a special edition of *Foreign Affairs* magazine was issued to mark the 20th anniversary of the first publication in the press of Huntington's thesis (Foreign Affairs 2013).

Huntington was a child prodigy who graduated from Yale University at the age of 18. After his doctorate at Harvard University, he started teaching there at the age of 23. Unfortunately, because of excessive stress, he got diabetes, which forced him to control and regulate his blood sugar level until the end of his life. In retrospect, it is difficult to say whether serious health problems and the limitations that came with them were an obstacle or a tonic in his fruitful life. Anyway, Huntington's role was important not only in the academic sphere, but he was also an active participant in foreign policy, being a political advisor on national security issues to American Presidents Lyndon Johnson and James Carter.

But above all, Samuel Huntington was a brilliant scientist who worked for many years as a professor of international relations at Harvard University. Among his most famous students are Eliot Cohen, Fareed Zakaria and Francis Fukuyama. In addition to conceptualization of civilizations, he has analyzed the civil-military relations in a democratic society (Huntington 1957) and the political order of rapidly changing societies (Huntington 1968). Huntington as author has had an indisputable ability to predict the future. In his last published book, he foresaw what could happen in America. "If multiculturalism continues to spread, it is likely at some point to generate an ethnic and possibly racist populist reaction from white Americans," he predicted correctly. "If this occurs, the United States will become isolationist and hostile toward much of the outside world" (Huntington 2004).

The writings he created have the enviable quality of starting a life of their own after publication, which does not happen often, although this is probably the aspiration of every author. Huntington's characteristic clarity of thought and excellent language use have certainly helped. After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, Huntington's book (1996) became a bestseller for a second time, as conservatives across the United States and Europe cited its arguments for why Islam was fundamentally incompatible with Western societies. From left-wing side much rant has appeared the about possibility of self-fulfilling prophecies of Huntington's predictions (Said 2001). In other words, some kind of causal connection between the idea of the clash of civilizations proposed by him and the increasing contradictions and the frequency of conflicts in the world can thus be hypothetically found.

To a certain extent, however, Huntington has suffered the fate of the classics – many know the name and have heard something about him, but few have read the author's original texts. It is a pity as we all know the classics are giants, and standing on their shoulders we can all see further. The purpose of this paper is *inter alia* to remember this great and honorable scientist and to show how relevant some of his ideas sound even today, 30 years after their first publication.

2. About the importance of theorizing

According to William James, only a ‘blooming, buzzing confusion’ reigns in the mind of a person observing the world, not theorizing, or attempting to decipher what he or she sees (James 1981: 462). When people think seriously, they must think abstractly; they conjure up simplified pictures of reality called concepts, theories, models, paradigms. ‘Pure experience’ means to record the immediate course of life, which, for us, forms only raw material for processing in conceptual categories. That is why there is criticism of the theory of civilizations along the lines of “I recently went to Russia and Central Asia. I met several nice people there, and we had a good chat about world affairs. There are no civilizations there; all statements in this direction only make me laugh ‘frankly’ sounds arrogant. Especially if this kind of ‘train of thought’ belongs to someone who, in their opinion, is engaged in social science but is not able to formulate the basic theory of their worldview as such even at the most elementary level but sings like a folk singer about everything that flashes past their eyes.”¹

The hypothesis of civilizations is one possible way to conceptualize a social reality. The question of how to evaluate one or another theory about social sphere (or, more broadly, any theory) as a tool is, of course, multifaceted. Karl Marx had a good but devious answer ready for this: “The criterion of truth is practice” (Marx 2002). The deviousness of the answer lies in the timeliness of people’s assessment of practice because the only practice that we can use to assess the theory’s correspondence to truth is practice that has already taken place. We do not yet know anything about what is to come, and tomorrow’s practice may be diametrically opposed to today’s. But as you know, Marx also suggested that it was time for philosophers to move from explaining the world to the world changing, which also establishes the deeper meaning of practice as a criterion of truth: “Philosophers have hitherto only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it” (Marx 2002). Philosophers intend to determine what will happen in the future and at the same time prove that theory is in complete agreement with the truth.

However, if we distance ourselves from this kind of fundamentalism, then as a more balanced point of view, any social scientific theory can be evaluated on the basis of the following three criteria. First is the descriptive component, which historically or empirically explains past and present phenomena. Second, a predictive, forward-looking element that projects trends or provides an opportunity to cope with what will happen in the future. Thirdly, the theory must have some prescriptive advice for planning further action (policy) (Owens 2015). So, if we want to evaluate Huntington’s thesis on civilizations as a social theory, we must ask, firstly, how well it describes the phenomena of the past and present, secondly, whether it shows the ability to predict future events, and thirdly, whether it is possible to get guidelines, advice for the future trends of policymaking from this theory.

At the same time, we do not forget that a summary of the following characteristics of a good scientific theory can be added to the above. Economy or parsimony, which

¹ Internet comment, screenshot of which is in the author’s possession.

allows explaining phenomena in the simplest possible way. The scope characterizes the extent to which the theory can explain a certain range of phenomena and to what extent it can do it. Plausibility – the extent to which a theory can explain the relationships between two or more facts of reality. Measurability – the extent to which a theory can be empirically, scientifically measured, and verified. Falsifiability, i.e. whether the theory can be refuted in a rational way, i.e. whether there is a better possible explanation to explain the phenomenon (Akers 2012: 1). Here, a distinction must be made between the real sciences, i.e. so-called hard science, and social sciences, which are mostly placed under so-called soft science, in which case the last two requirements are (mostly) not always fulfilled. Since organizing social science experiments under controlled conditions and repeating them by varying certain parameters is mostly impossible in real life, one can only talk about measurability and falsifiability in these sciences to a limited extent.

Serious social science must include the accumulation of new knowledge and its ever-better interpretation within the framework of some theoretical paradigms. During intellectual and scientific progress, a paradigm that cannot explain new facts is discarded and replaced by a new paradigm that copes better with the facts. To be recognized as a paradigm, a theory must seem more successful than competing theories. “Paradigms achieve their status because they are more successful than their competitors in solving some of the problems that the specialist community has come to regard as acute. Being more successful does not mean complete success in solving every single problem, nor does it mean outstanding success in solving any number of problems” (Kuhn 1970: 23).

Based on the named criteria, the theory of civilizations has enough strengths to help overcome several problems that prevail and threaten the scientific work carried out in the field of comparative social studies. First, the ‘us and others’ dilemma. So, in the Western world (also elsewhere), there is a tendency to mistakenly think that other (non-Western) societies are not fundamentally different from the societies of the Western world. Since people as a species are believed to be the same everywhere, it is assumed that the human communities created by people also function on the same principles that, for example, the relations between the person and the state fit into the same or at least similar frameworks.

This is not the case if we even look at how, for example, in the countries of the Western world, a distinction is made between foreign and domestic policy and the attitude towards the use of the armed forces, and special services for domestic political purposes, and we compare it with the practices and perceptions of some Islamic countries and Russia. Or we evaluate to what extent the ruler of one or another country must consider the opinion of their subjects of the state (or voters in elections). By not accepting the basic differences between countries, the possibility of understanding what is happening in different societies, assessing the internal climate there, and forecasting the future is basically cut off.

Secondly, the ‘sub-theory dilemma’, when theorizing and theory, tends to be considered a kind of unnecessary luxury because practical, urgent issues need to be solved at the national level; the focus is on the so-called action, general attitudes of

decision makers are action oriented. Unfortunately, without theory and the ability to create mental models and make theoretical generalizations, practical experience also becomes empirically only a 'data storage place' without being able to do anything useful with this data. In this way, instead of social science, a so-called football science can develop, which lollaps behind practical politics, behind what is happening in practical life, and only retrospectively describes events that have already taken place. Figuratively speaking, it will forever be left wondering what, for example, could be 'going on in Putin's head', thus depriving the tabloids of their daily bread.

Thirdly, the 'prisoners of prejudice' dilemma, in which practitioners seem to ignore and despise theoreticians and analysts. Representatives of the academic world often do not have permission to access some (classified) data, so the analyzes they create do not speak of the 'real thing'. If we bring another parallel from football, sports commentators, as a rule, only see what is happening from the outside but can never know how the 'soup really cooked', i.e. what happens behind the scenes (in the locker rooms) when there are no more cameras and microphones present.

On the other hand, the representatives of the academic world consider those who work in practical politics (e.g. in national defense) to be arrogant, secretive, self-centered characters, and not infrequently justifiably so. In this way, the arrogance, haughtiness, and the so-called academic ignorance, and callowness of the practitioners collide with each other instead of reaching the best results in fruitful cooperation.

3. What we know about civilizations

Huntington proposed his vision to replace the Cold War-era idea of the world being divided into three: first, relatively wealthy, mostly democratic (capitalist) societies (countries), led by the United States; secondly, communist societies (countries), led by the Soviet Union, which were in ideological, economic, political and sometimes armed local conflict with them; third, the Third World, where poverty and political instability prevailed and which often oscillated politically and ideologically between the first two trends. It should be emphasized here that this kind of tripartite division was consensual, as all parties basically agreed to it.

Today, it seems somewhat strange, but during the Cold War, the ideological enemies had reached an agreement on many issues, including fundamental ones. An excellent example of this is the popular convergence theories that were already in the 1960s, the central idea of which was that all people, countries, and all humanity have one goal, but the ways to get there vary (Inkeles 1981: 3-38). In contrast to today's widespread denial of the existence of truth, due to the acceptance of truth as such, public lying was avoided, disinformation was also attempted to give an external form of truthful information, etc. Today's top liars see no problem in exposing a lie because "the truth does not exist, and anything is possible" (Pomerantsev 2015). Public lying seems to have become a privilege (a prerogative) of a certain number of politicians and other so-called public figures, which helps them stay in the focus

of attention without being caught for lying, leading to the loss of the liar's (political) reputation.

The boundaries between what was allowed and what was forbidden were in place and were adhered to, which made understanding the world relatively easy and logical. Even the use of social science terms was somehow consistent. For example, Western social scientists did not unanimously accept class struggle as the main factor shaping the world development, as did Eastern Marxist-Leninists in the field of social science. However, they still used concepts derived from Marxism, such as socialism (communism) and capitalism. Reputedly, they have a definite meaning precisely in the context of class struggle and change of social formations, outside of which they are only signifiers of two opposing social life arrangements.

Together with the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Soviet Union, the picture became colorful; at one point, there were significantly more variables than before, which is why there was an acute need to explain the new kind of world. According to Huntington, by that moment (i.e. the beginning of the 1990s), the so-called ideological period had ended, and humanity had entered a new era, i.e. an era of cultures and civilizations, when many fundamental things had acquired a new meaning. More than political views, ideology, or economic interests, which can be changed, in the future, people will be bound by everything with which they truly, not seemingly, identify themselves.

Huntington's approach was based on the understanding that civilizations exist objectively, and realistically. They are not illusory phenomena. This means, among other things, that Western states, China, Russia, and Iran are something much more than the regimes and personalities currently in power in these countries. To understand more adequately what is happening there, we must go much deeper than the surface because civilizations are inextricably linked to a common origin, religion, language, and values, that is, the cultural field of human existence. At the same time, the assumption of the reality of civilizations as complex cultural phenomena does not mean that their deeper nature is easy to define. Civilizations themselves tend to remain things invisible to direct observation like the state, electricity, and wind, the existence of which could hardly be denied because of being directly invisible (Saar 2014: 51-58).

Civilizations can be viewed as ideal types – pictures (in German *Gedankenbilder*), which Max Weber talked about in his time. It is important that Weber had in mind the world of ideas, abstract, mental images whose function is to create order in the apparent chaos that prevails in the real world. The ideal image does not emphasize perfection, the moral ideal, or the statistical average, but it highlights the elements that appear regularly in a certain phenomenon, which are 'normal in most cases'.

According to Weber, an ideal type is formed from the characteristics and elements of a certain phenomenon but is not intended to correspond to 'all characteristics in every individual case'. "The ideal type is formed by first emphasizing certain views, then by synthesizing many divergent, different, more or less existing individual phenomena, which are finally combined into a universal analytical construct" (Weber 1949: 42-44). It is a useful tool in comparative sociology for analyzing social and economic phenomena,

which has a clear superiority over very general, abstract ideas on the one hand and specific historical cases on the other.

The civilization approach is a concept belonging to social science that helps us better understand the complex processes taking place at the level of large groups and the group behavior of people, not an ideological fiction created to protect the interests of a certain group. Among other things, the theory helps to understand why the rapprochement between the West and Russia failed once again after 1991 because the difference was in the basic values. The global expansion of the liberal world order (LWO) at the end of the Cold War was from Russian side evaluated as the highest level of Western (US) hegemony (Davis and Deyermond 2021). The West offered Russia partnership between equals; however, such a belief did not fit into the basic understanding prevalent in Russia, namely that one party must always be the subordinate, below, and the other one the superior, above.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, many Russians felt ashamed, humiliated, brought to their knees, and treated unfairly. From Russia's point of view, what was kindly offered by the West was seen as an insincere and cunning ploy to ensnare and destroy Russia. The lesson for the West is that what has happened since the beginning of the 1990s should be rationally analyzed today so that when the next opportunity for rapprochement arises, the result will be better. In fact, Huntington warned the leaders of the Western world that there could be a situation of 'the West versus the Rest', where the West, because of its stupidity, inattention, or arrogance, will find itself in confrontation with all or most of the rest of the world (Foreign Affairs 2013: 18-20). A monopolar world will develop, where the West, led by America, is the only center of power, and all the others are on the opposite side. Thus, Huntington spoke directly about the need for a new multi-polar world model, largely anticipating the criticism coming from Moscow and some other capitals today, where the West, above all the United States, is accused of trying to create and consolidate a so-called unipolar world order.

There is certainly no reason to deny that the processes of globalization pushed the world in this direction, and it is possible that sometime later, in retrospect, the time from 1991 to 2022 will be defined in this way when under the label of globalization an attempt was made to establish Western hegemony in the world once and for all. The basic idea of Fukuyama's work, after all, was the final and irreversible victory of Western liberal democracy throughout the world (Fukuyama 1992). Of course, Huntington's approach is Western-centric because it was created by a person representing Western culture based on Western traditions of thought and social science. Visions representing any other civilization could be brought aside here, but one cannot introduce here an approach representing the entirety of humanity or world culture for the simple reason that there is no world culture as a real whole.

There are only many different cultures/civilizations from which common features can be derived, and this common part can be conditionally called world culture. In the worldwide spread there tends to be more mass culture, kitsch, and lack of culture. Together with the globalization of production and consumption and the emergence of the information society, when there is even talk of the emergence of virtual states

instead of national states, an increasing number of people are at risk of becoming rootless. Figuratively speaking, such a world gives wings but does not give roots, the primordial sense of belonging that every person and nation needs for their identity.

4. 'The invention' of civilizations

Huntington was not first discoverer of civilizations because he based his hypothesis on several famous predecessors. The social scientific basis for the civilizational paradigm was created in the first decades of the 20th century. Émile Durkheim and Marcel Mauss developed the concept of civilizations (plural), proposing to distinguish civilizations from societies in such a way as to consider the former as large-scale and long-term formations that always unite several contemporary and future societies (Durkheim and Mauss 1991, Mauss 2004). For these authors, civilizations primarily meant environments with a certain moral style, which included peoples, where each individual national culture was only a special form of manifestation of one and the same whole.

Max Weber focused his comparative studies on the major Eurasian civilizations and their religious traditions. He did not use the concept of civilization, and the term he proposed was cultural worlds (in German *die Kulturwelten*), which, in terms of content, overlapped with Durkheim's and Mauss' understandings of civilizations. For Weber, culture meant the nature of relationships and meanings of certain dominant worlds, but he did not explain the mechanisms of cultural action in more detail. Weber's interest was focused on those historical forces and cultural sources that allowed the West to reach dynamic, modern capitalism (Weber 2013).

The concepts of the Axial Age and Axial Turn are related to the approach to the historical development of civilizations. After World War II, Karl Jaspers began to talk about a phenomenon he called the Axial Age, the Axial Epoch, to describe the period between 800 and 200 BC. He argued that it was at this time that the spiritual foundations of humanism were laid simultaneously and independently in China, India, Persia, Palestine, and Greece. The turn was developed by the enlightened thinkers (ideologues) of the time, and humanism is based on it to this day (Jaspers 1949).

At that time, according to Jaspers, the primary divergence between the so-called Western and Eastern world view took place, which has a deep religious background. In one case, the real world is distinguishable from the observer, as if external to them; in the other case, the world and the observer are treated as inseparable phenomena. According to such a division, Eastern systems of thought represent concepts that are primarily syncretistic in such a juxtaposition (i.e. mythology and philosophy are intertwined), in contrast to Ancient Greece, where a transition from myth to logos (science, knowledge) was observed, which is associated with the birth of philosophy and science. Hence, the lack of trust in science, philosophy, and even theology emerged in Islam and Orthodoxy as syncretistic cultural worlds, which as disciplines and ways of thinking belong more to the Western worldview.

Carl Schmitt's ideas in the field of international law and international relations are associated with the concept of great space (in German *Grossraum*). Great spaces are based on religion as a source of values, and great space as a term is a kind of political equivalent of civilization. Large-spatial belonging cannot be changed in leaps and bounds, and in this sense, being in a certain great space is natural for one nation but unnatural or artificial for another. According to Schmitt, the future of the Earth belongs to the great spaces, which together must create the legal basis (Nomos) for the new world order. Originally, this term did not mean a legal act, but formal rules for pastureland (*nemo – I distribute*), more precisely, the order of fair distribution of land in use. Nomos ensured legal certainty, clearly opposed common law, the law of the strongest, and made the latter (e.g. arbitrary power) at least theoretically impossible (Hattenhauer 2004: 7-11).

According to the foundation of modern and Hellenistic understanding, *nomos* is a so-called pure right, which in English can be denoted by the term 'radical title' (radical, original right to property). It is the original form of ownership, which formed the basis for all subsequent acquisitions and which, in a historical sense, gave way to the first transition of land into the legal structure of the community. *Nomos* is related to naming, taking territory, and subjugation is its conceptualization. The *nomos* of territory, in the sense of its initial acquisition, is taking; Schmitt argued that the word is related to the German word for take – *nehmen* (Schmitt 2006: 67-79).

5. Do civilizations clash?

The deepest content of civilizations consists of values and collective identities formed on their basis, which are either directly or in a more mediated way related to religious tradition, which is why external changes in the way of life do not lead to fundamental changes. Drinking Coca-Cola does not make Russians think like Americans, eating sushi does not make Americans Japanese, and Afghans using iPhones are still Afghans. Attempts to change collective civilizational belonging have been violent, as a rule, but not really successful because they are possible only with the change of collective identity and value system. What can be done with an individual in a relatively simple way is significantly more complex at the group, community level, and the larger the community, the more complex it is.

In an existential sense, this would mean changing the collective identity, and as a rule, it is easier to destroy human groups than to introduce new norms and values and create a new identity. At the same time, civilizations are dynamic entities in terms of boundaries and content; they rise and fall, disintegrate, and form again. In a sense, civilizations are like the tectonic plates of the Earth's crust, which in the short term are stationary and unchanging, but over the course of centuries and millennia, they move and reshape the continental configuration of the Earth. According to this theory, the earth's crust is formed by giant dynamic plates, usually the size of continents or larger, that drift slowly on relatively fluid mantle material (Wegener 1966). Today, this theory is generally accepted.

Borders between civilizations, unlike national borders, are rarely well-defined but nevertheless real, existing things. For example, a relatively clear geographical and mental fault line (the so-called Huntington's fault line) has been separating Western Christian civilization from Orthodox (mainly Russian Orthodox) and Islamic civilization in Europe for centuries. The fault line goes back to the fall of the Roman empire in the 4th century, the emergence of Byzantium as the so-called new Rome with its capital Constantinople, and the creation of the Holy Roman Empire in the 10th century. It has been in its current location for the last nearly eight hundred years. From the north, it runs along the current borders between Finland and Russia and between the Baltic states (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) and Russia. Further, the line divides Belarus and Ukraine into the Christian West and the Orthodox East. In Romania, it separates Transylvania, with its Hungarian-Catholic population, from the rest, and in the former Yugoslavia, it separates Slovenia and Croatia from the other republics. This line also runs along the former border of Austria-Hungary and the Ottoman Empire in the Balkans (Huntington 1996: 157-163).

In the form of the above-mentioned Huntington's fault line, it is a symbolic cultural-civilizational border, which, at some times, has more, and at others, less, coincided with the borders of countries. The fault line can be regarded as a marker of Europe's cultural coverage area: on one side, pivotal events (e.g. antiquity, Renaissance, Reformation) that deeply influenced the Western world have taken place; on the other side, Orthodox Russia was originally more connected to Byzantium and the Golden Horde. The mental turns that have shaped the Western world have reached Russia only as a distant echo and have largely stopped at this notional line. Historian Arnold Toynbee calls the Baltic Sea coast an important area where Russia and modern Western civilization directly collided as they expanded. Here, the Russian empire was no longer dealing with its relatively underdeveloped continental neighbors from Eastern Europe or Asia but with the nations inhabiting the European coast of the Atlantic Ocean, who, at the turn of the 15th and 16th centuries, led the expansionist trends of the Western world (Toynbee 1960: 612).

Huntington popularized the term 'clash of civilizations', but he was not the first to use it. This term was already used by the renowned orientalist Bernard Lewis in his 1990 article on Muslims (Lewis 1990) and Mahdi El Mandjra's 1992 book was titled *The First Civilization War* (Mahdi 1992). In fact, even earlier (1928), the phrase 'clash of cultures' appeared in a book about the period called the 'Golden Age' (Belle Époque) (Matheys 2008: 196).

According to Huntington, civilizations are cultural, not political entities, and they do not provide order, do not establish laws, do not wage wars, do not negotiate. All these things are handled by states and governments representing countries and different ideologies (Huntington 1996: 44). This is a very important insight that cools down, for example, the idea of a war of civilizations, which belongs squarely in the realm of conspiracy theories. It also shatters the declaratory calls for a 'dialogue of civilizations', behind which it is usually not difficult to see the ambition of the leadership of some countries to engage in the so-called global reconciliation, in fact, to become a kind of world judge (Baumgärtner 2020). At the same time, the

awareness of civilizational affiliation can be a good orientation for countries in setting long-term goals because it should be fundamentally easier to do things with people who share similar norms and values.

The mutual influence of civilizations is constantly changing; figuratively speaking, the clash is present and helpful in understanding global processes. Even if we remember one recent round anniversary, that is, the total population of the Earth reaching 8 billion people (United Nations 2022). Translating it into the language of civilizations, there is approximately one so-called golden billion, that is, mainly the West and some of the non-West, and a population of about 7 billion a different color from other countries, which is constantly increasing. In other words, the tension at the level of resources is increasing between the golden billion, which is formed by the population of developed countries (USA, Canada, Australia, European Union countries, Japan, Israel, and South Korea) and the rest of the world. That is to say, the contradiction between the West and the rest of the world is becoming more and more acute, regardless of who or what is 'to blame' for such a situation (Hardin 1968).

The cultural-civilizational approach proposed by Huntington is a social scientific paradigm for interpreting and understanding the world, not an ideological fiction. Today, the civilizational paradigm is becoming more and more an influential social science trend, and the voice of the so-called civilizationists camp is getting ever louder (Arnason 2002, 2006, Eisenstadt 2003). The future will show whether a new social science paradigm is emerging based on these assumptions, that is, whether a scientific revolution will take place. Also, a book on the subject by the author of this article was one attempt to further develop the paradigm of civilizations by specifying mutual influences across three civilizations (Western Christian, Slavic-Orthodox, and Islamic) (Saar 2014). It tried to analyze and understand the reasons why people in the Western world so often do not understand the behavior of people from other civilizations and their backgrounds, and vice versa. In addition, it discussed the mental convergence/rapprochement of Slavic Orthodox and Islamic civilizations, which are driven by a similar value background and regular anti-Western positioning in both. As shown by what is happening in the world now (i.e. in the spring of 2024), the importance of these topics is still growing.

6. Conclusions

Huntington's ideas, which have been much criticized by opinion leaders, politicians, and social scientists and which seemed to be in the shadow of death, continue to show amazing vitality in the interpretation of international life. And maybe it is not even wrong to say that we are seeing the return of the paradigm of civilizations that was overshadowed in the last couple of decades. Huntington provided a new model of the so-called intellectual base for understanding what is happening in the world. He was right that world politics will henceforth be determined not by competing ideologies or nation-states or economic blocs but by competing cultural regions. The battlefields of the future, as we now see acutely in Europe, are in the areas

of contact between civilizations, which is vividly demonstrated by Russia's war in Ukraine and the composition of the coalition of countries that sided with Ukraine. Like the rather supportive, understanding reaction to the terrorists of September 11, 2001, that dominated the Islamic world, we see the same with the Russians today: the Western world siding with Ukraine is interpreted as a direct attack on Russia.

Seen by the Western world, Russia received too little serious attention in the intervening period, i.e. since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The role of Russia as an opponent competitor was no longer on the agenda. The active economic rapprochement of the West and Russia ("*Wandel durch Handel*") led to the fact that the decision-makers of the Western world forgot how different culturally and civilizationally they still are from Russia and the Russians. Up to the point that in the mid-second half of the 1990s, Russia's accession to NATO was seriously discussed in the capitals of the Western world. Today, we see how strange such ideas were, and we, here on the border of two worlds of values, must thank fate that they did not materialize in any form. Today there is rather reason to assume that Russia joining NATO would probably have led to the internal disintegration of that organization.

The Russian leadership skillfully took advantage of the shock that hit America after 11 September 2001 and convinced the Americans and the entire Western world that Moscow was fighting Islamic fundamentalists in the wars in Chechnya and, in general, everywhere in the world. In fact, Moscow fought the Chechens' bid to create an independent state in one part of Russia and put the most extreme Islamists in power there without the slightest hesitation. And, of course, we must not forget Moscow's cooperation with organizations practicing fundamentalist terrorism (e.g. Hamas, Hezbollah) that goes back decades and continues to this day. However, in the context of civilizations, Moscow's cooperation with Islamists shows mental closeness to fundamentalists and distance from Western mentality. Here, it is worth noting that in today's Russia, neo-Eurasianists themselves actively emphasize this closeness (Dugin 1997).

Huntington's mistake seems to be the failed description of Russian-Ukrainian relations. In his opinion, the closeness of civilization between Ukrainians and Russians means that the level of violence that could break out between them should be low (Huntington 1993: 38). Today, we see that events have developed in the opposite direction, and the violence is escalating. The key to understanding Putin's extreme intolerance towards the Ukrainian state and Ukrainians lies in Putin's distinction between 'enemy and traitor'. In 2008, during the war against Georgia, he discussed with Aleksei Venediktov, the editor-in-chief of the radio station Ekho Moskvyy. Putin asked if Venediktov knew what he had done at his previous job. Venediktov answered: "Mr. President, we all know where you came from." Putin then asked, "Do you know what was done to traitors at my previous workplace?" "Yes, we do," replied Venediktov. "And do you know why I'm even talking to you? Because you are an enemy, not a traitor!" Putin summed up. Indeed, in Putin's eyes, Ukraine committed the greatest crime imaginable: betraying Russia (Krastev 2022). For Ukrainians, the ongoing war of independence is a matter of survival, where defeat would lead to irreversible tragedy for the entire nation. For many Russians,

however, what is happening is a ‘deserved punishment for a traitor, a defector’.

When defining the civilizational content of Ukraine, Huntington was too schematic and classified this land as a divided region, i.e. the division of the country to two parts was final and fatal in his eyes. Contrary to Huntington’s predictions, the conflict within one civilization proved to be as significant in the new century as it had been in the previous one. In fact, the Second World War, especially in its initial phase, was a conflict that broke out within the Western Christian civilization and became global. A conflict within a civilization can grow into a so-called fault line war, because of which a change in the location of the borders between civilizations is possible in the long term. It is not easy, but it is possible.

Ukraine has always been a borderland between Europe and Russia while being different from Muscovy from the very beginning. Russia, ruled by the tsars, inherited from the Golden Horde the society of ‘slaves and slaveholders’ with the accompanying mentality. Ukraine, in turn, was already in the time of the hetmans, that is, before 1654, when the hetman Bohdan Khmelnytsky swore allegiance to the Tsar of Moscow, a land of free peasants, where serfdom was rare (Plokyh 2021). This is probably also why many people in Ukraine, who used to mentally side with Russia, have drastically changed their attitudes today. The threat of falling under the Russian world once again has opened their eyes; the way Russia conducts war clearly shows what such a change would entail. It is not surprising that today, in order to survive, Ukraine is trying its best to integrate with the economic and defense structures of the Western world to receive protection from imperial pressure coming from Russia.

The West, Occident, and Western Christian civilizations are not so much geographical factors but historically formed value spaces, cultural structures, and social environments with specific content. The West is a whole with its own past and traditions, including its legal tradition, which goes back to the papacy. The greatest ‘enemy’ of any civilization is itself when it embarks on the disastrous path of denying and rejecting its own values. When we lose values, we lose everything. By relying on Western values, i.e. staying true to oneself, one can find a successful strategy to meet the challenges of today because one must believe and hope that the set of values of the Western civilization is sufficiently healthy and viable. In other words, when things get serious, existential questions always arise about who we are and what we want. Russia’s aggressive, unprovoked attack on Ukraine, starting a war in the middle of peaceful Europe, helped the entire Western world to understand how necessary it is to keep civilization together and not remain passive.

The Western worldview and approaches are not the only possible and infallible ways, and so many mental ‘rotten apples’ are of Western origin. Considering postmodernity as the ultimate stage of development of self-awareness, when all previous cultural and civilizational dividing lines disappear in the world, turned out to be an obvious mental dead end. The post-World War II international order is currently bursting at the seams largely because it has not been able to take the world’s cultural diversity seriously enough. One of the most worrying political trends is the sudden rise of both the extreme right and the extreme left around the

world. When it comes to the world order, its survival is only possible based on the jointly followed principles that bind a culturally diverse humanity. The cornerstone of the new international order will be taking this into account, although we all must figure out together in what form and exactly how it will take place.

Today, we can calmly and without emotion ask if anyone has a so-called map better than that of Huntington, which would help us navigate the processes taking place in the world based on a social scientific theoretical framework. Without doubt his paradigm has been a good predictor of conflicts, but at the same time a tool that allows us to accept some primordial things. Especially when it comes to strategic thinking and planning, only the geopolitical approach can claim the same level of strategic thinking. In a sense, these two approaches even complement each other. The same caveat applies to civilizations as to geopolitics: “Geopolitics is a concept, but also a bundle of interrelated ideas that directly invite reckless abuse” (Gray 1996: 247).

Properly understood and applied, civilizational analysis, which considers both one’s own strengths and weaknesses, is, like geopolitical analysis, an indispensable component of planning a strategic approach. And, of course, one cannot forbid anyone from sincerely continuing to believe that the effort to reach an understanding of the ‘meaning of history’ goes one way or another beyond the limits of the human mind.

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