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An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

<https://www.e-ir.info/2014/10/08/an-examination-of-russias-foreign-policy-through-the-clash-of-civilizations/>

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The Ukrainian Crisis: An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations*

The current Ukrainian crisis is not a return to the Cold War, but actually demonstrates the emergence of a different global order. This paper will argue that the current crisis between Ukraine and Russia demonstrates the validity of Samuel Huntington's paradigm *The Clash of Civilizations*. President Putin is increasingly using a civilizational approach when conducting relations with other states. The language that Putin uses to justify Russia imperial adventures fits within Samuel Huntington's paradigm. In response, neighbouring states of predominantly different civilizations have begun to change their foreign narratives in response.

The first component of this paper will outline Huntington's main thesis and attempt to clarify a few key concepts. The following section will provide a brief historical overview of the Russian and Ukraine relationship. The third part will examine the current crisis in Ukraine and the justifications for such actions provided for by President Putin. The fourth component will briefly look at Russia's posturing within the Arctic. The final section will provide an overview of the growing tensions between Russia and Turkey through a civilizational approach.

The Clash of Civilizations Revisited

One of the most common criticisms of Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of the Civilizations* revolves around the issue of how to define a civilization. Huntington defines a civilization as a cultural entity, which can be composed of villages, regions, ethnic groups, nationalities, and religious groups (Huntington 1993, 24). He argues that civilizations are the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people can possess (Huntington 1993, 24). Huntington does not deny that other factors may influence world actors, such as ideology, but he does assert that culture and civilization will become the dominant factor. These definitions do not clarify what role ethnicity, religion, or another component assumes in the creation of the civilization identity. For the purposes of this paper, the presence of either will suffice.

The term ethnicity will be referred to multiple times throughout this paper. Huntington does not provide a comprehensive definition of the concept in his book. Therefore, Crawford Young's definition of ethnicity will form the basis of the analysis. Young breaks ethnicity down into three components. Firstly, the ethnos of ethnicity is rooted in an array of shared properties, but language is often a core element (Young 2008, 10). Secondly, common cultural practices and symbols help define group identity from the other (Young 2008, 10). Third, ethnicity becomes visible once it is joined to an active collective consciousness (Young 2008, 10). A common language, cultural practices, and a collective consciousness are the main components of ethnicity. There may be limitations to such a simplistic definition, but for the purposes of this analysis it will be sufficient.

Samuel Huntington argued that with the end of the Cold War, a new paradigm of international relations would emerge—one based on culture and civilization. The dominating source of conflict in the post-cold war world would be cultural, and the principal conflicts would occur between nations and groups of different civilizations (Huntington

An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

Written by Matthew Rae

1993, 22). He divided these future conflicts into three potential categories: core state conflicts between dominant states of different civilizations; fault-line conflicts between states of different civilizations that border each other; and fault-line conflicts within states that contain groups of different civilizations (Fox 2002, 416). The third category, fault-line conflicts within states, is of interest. This paper will explain how the current situation in Ukraine is an example of one of these conflicts. It will also examine how the second category may be of interest when discussing the current relations between Turkey and Russia.

In his seminal article of 1993 in *Foreign Affairs*, Samuel Huntington outlined six reasons why civilizations may clash. Of the six, two are pertinent to this paper's topic. Huntington argued that since the world is a smaller place, it would lead to more interaction between different people, which would lead to an increased awareness of one's civilization (Huntington 1993, 25). In fact, globalization would reinforce the civilization identity. He also argued that economic regionalism would increase and further solidify the civilization identity (Huntington 1993, 26). As will be discussed later, the reasons Huntington outlined for civilization conflict are present in the Ukraine crisis.

This paper will not argue that civilizations will replace the traditional state. Even Samuel Huntington acknowledged the role states would still assume in international relations. Nation states are and will remain the most important actors in world affairs, but their interests, associations, and conflicts are increasingly shaped by cultural and civilizational factors (Huntington 1996, 36). Cultural and civilizational factors are having an increasing influence on states, because of the effects of globalization, among other factors. State borders have become increasingly preamblable and this has led to the emergence of a varied, complex, multi-layered international order (Huntington 1996, 35). As a result, the state increasingly needs to rely on other forms of power to project its influence abroad. Huntington highlighted how cultural and civilizational factors would become a conduit for states to increase some of their power that globalization has eroded. Russia has begun to use cultural and other civilizational factors to assert its power in its near board.

In his book, Samuel Huntington did briefly examine the potential of a Russian and Ukrainian crisis emerging. He argued that a statist approach favoured the possibility of a Russian-Ukrainian conflict, while a civilizational approach highlighted the possibility of Ukraine splitting in half based on cultural factors (Huntington 1996, 37). In the case of Ukraine, the cultural factors would trump the ideological influences. Huntington argued that a potential split between the Europeanized Slavs in western Ukraine and the Russo-Slav of eastern Ukraine would not be the result of ethnic polarization, but would be predominantly related to different cultures (Huntington 1996, 166). This makes it an excellent prototype to examine the role of culture and civilization identity.

The civilizational approach advocated by Samuel Huntington does fail to explain the current Ukrainian crisis in some aspects. He argued that a civilizational approach would encourage cooperation between Russia and Ukraine, and urge Ukraine to give up its nuclear weapons while seeking substantial economic assistance (Huntington 1996, 37). Ukraine did relinquish its nuclear weapons in exchange for Russian promises. The cooperation between the Ukraine and Russia has failed recently. The civilizational approach cannot explain every detail of the current crisis, but it does provide us with a broad lens to examine it.

Finally, Huntington argued that Western support for the partition of Ukraine would not be forthcoming. The only instance Western support would be high was if relations between the West and Russia deteriorate seriously and came to resemble those of the Cold War (Huntington 1996, 167). The current crisis in Ukraine would fulfil this condition. The probability that Ukraine will split into two separate states is unknown, but Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilizations* does provide us with a paradigm in which to examine the foreign policy decisions surrounding it.

Russia and Ukraine Historical Overview

The relationship between Russia and Ukraine in the recent centuries has been one steeped in hatred. Russia's imperial goals in the Black Sea began in 1453 with the fall of Constantinople. The fall of Constantinople in 1453, to the Ottoman Turks, allowed Ivan the terrible to assume the imperial title of the fallen Eastern Caesars and by association authority over the traditional Byzantine Empire (Halle 1967, 17). Ivan's seizure of this imperial title has allowed successive Russian leaders to claim leadership of the Eastern Orthodox Church. In history, it seems that a

An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

Written by Matthew Rae

Russian leader's first claim to speak for cultural and religious organizations. Then once they have solidified this position, they begin to claim authority over physically territory. In 1746, during the reign of Catherine the Great, the land of Taurida became part of Russia (Matviyenko, March 21, 2014). Modern day Crimea is composed of these Taurida lands. Since its first union with Russia, Crimea has become of great historical significance for Moscow.

During WWII, Sevastopol became a key battle against the Nazis advance. Sevastopol's navy halted the Nazis military advances from the south (Matviyenko, March 21, 2014). Just as Leningrad is remembered as a great military victory in Russian history, so is the victory over the Nazi fleet at Sevastopol. Even before WWII, it had military significance. Sevastopol was also successfully defended against invading forces during the Crimea War (Matviyenko, March 21, 2014). Sevastopol and Crimea, in general, occupy a sacred space within Russian historical military events.

Russians, and especially President Putin, view the partition of Crimea to Ukraine under Khrushchev as a catastrophic mistake. Putin has stated that Khrushchev made an arbitrary decision in 1954 and that it was taken in violation of the Soviet Union's constitution (Matviyenko, March 21, 2014). Despite its historical significance to the Russian mythology, the citizens of Crimea voted in favour of Ukrainian independence. The Crimea public, which was 70 percent Russian at the time, substantially supported Ukrainian independence from the Soviet Union in December 1991 (Huntington 1996, 167). The large support for independence amongst Russians in Crimea seems to suggest that a civilizational identity was not prevalent amongst the local population. In 1991 this may have been the case, but this paper will demonstrate that Russia's foreign policy under Putin has polarized populations along cultural and civilization lines.

Russia's historical relationship with Ukraine has been one of subjugation and brutal repression. As mentioned previously, Crimea occupies a sacred position within Russian history. In its move towards a more civilizational approach, Russia has increasingly used its influence and power to protect Russians nearby. It is regarded as perfectly natural from Moscow's perspective that they should exercise special supervision over an area which lies next to Russia's borders and in which 25 million Russians live (Malcolm 1994, 32). This attitude has been demonstrated repeatedly during the 1990s and early 2000s. For example, Russia has used the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), a regional organization, to gain for itself political and strategic

advantages (Malcolm 1994, 31). More specifically, it was Russian pressure through the CIS in the early 1990s that forced Ukrainian President Kravchuk to hand over the entire Black Sea Fleet and Ukraine's remaining nuclear warheads to Russia in exchange for the cancellation of its \$2.8 billion debt (Malcolm 1994, 31). In short, Russia has increasingly relied on regional organizations, in which it is the sole superpower, to legitimize its imperialist tendencies. The historical use of regional organizations strengthens Huntington's hypotheses. It is through these regional groupings that states will act. The current crisis in Ukraine is a prime example of this as well.

As will be discussed in the following section, the narrative surrounding Russia's foreign policy has assumed a more imperialist tone of late. Russian political culture has become saturated with notions of victimization, xenophobia, messianic responsibilities, and exceptionalism (Rachwald 2011, 126). These trends are apparent especially in President Putin's speeches. The development of a messianic political culture and its implications on Russia's foreign policy can only be understood through a civilizational approach. Subsequently, this paradigm also provides us with the best lens to view the current Ukrainian crisis.

The Ukrainian Crisis

The current crisis in Ukraine can be understood through a civilizational approach. The components of civilizations outlined in the first section of this paper may not be the sole reason for the current unrest. The prevalence of corruption within Ukrainian society can be viewed as one of the main catalysts as well. For years Ukrainians have known that their political class is amongst the most self-seeking in the world (Evans 2014, 27). The Maidan backlash was not an intellectual reaction, but simply a final unreflecting enough (Evans 2014, 29). Hence, corruption in Ukraine is atrocious. According to Transparency International's website, in 2013 Ukraine was ranked 144th out of 177 in the world for corruption, with a score of 25 out of 100. In the same year, Transparency International ranked

An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

Written by Matthew Rae

Russia 127th out of 177 with a score of 28 out of 100. The fact that Russia is marginally less corrupt than Ukraine does provide legitimacy to the claim that the Maidan protests were a result of systematic corruption. Corruption may be viewed as one of the primary reasons for the protests. However, the narratives that continue to be used by both the Ukrainian and Russia authorities demonstrate the role civilization and culture play in the crisis. This section will examine how the narratives of common language, history, culture, religion, and other shared values has shaped Russian and Ukrainian responses.

In line with Samuel Huntington's hypothesis, the Ukrainian crisis has witnessed a rejection of ideological narratives. President Putin recently spoke out against the Bolsheviks. He stated that "the Bolsheviks, for a number of reasons—may God judge them—added large sections of the historical South of Russia to the Republic of Ukraine" (March 18, 2014). President Putin rejected the ideological explanations of historic state action, because they do not advance the current foreign policy goals of Russia. Increasingly, Putin has relied on Russian imperial and historical identities to justify his actions, and not ideological identities.

The speeches of President Putin surrounding the Ukrainian crisis are steeped in historical alliteration to the supremacy of the Russian culture. In a speech at the "We are together" rally, the President illustrated how extensively he would use cultural language to justify hard power military action. He stated that "after a long, hard and exhausting voyage, Crimea and Sevastopol are returning to their harbour, to their native shores, to their home port, to Russia" (March 18, 2014b). Putin continues by thanking the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol for their courage and persistence. He complemented them "for staying true to the memory of their heroic ancestors and for carrying their love for our motherland, for Russia over decades" (March 18, 2014b). The President of the Russian Federation continuously makes these allusions to these historical battles and victories of Russian Crimean's in his speech. These references reinforce the civilization identity of Russia and attempt to provide legitimacy for its actions.

The references to a common identity are an attempt to justify his actions and achieve his goals. President Putin believes that the Russian nation is one of the biggest, if not the biggest, ethnic group in the world divided by borders (Putin, March 18, 2014a). He asserts that tens of millions of ethnic Russians found themselves outside the borders of Russia after the fall of the USSR. Approximately 17.3 percent of the Ukrainian population is Russian (Conant 2014). It is interesting to examine other states surrounding Russia and the percentage of ethnic Russians living in these states as well. It is now Putin's goal to bring these displaced Russians back into the warm embrace of Moscow.

Ukraine contains a substantial number of ethnic Russians. Some analysts believe that it is President Putin's main mission to rectify this mistake and re-unite these ethnic Russians with the motherland (Birnbbaum 2014). The reference to a common history and culture are used to justify his actions. It is through a civilizational approach that one is able to make the connection between state action and the foreign policy narrative.

In addition to the military victories mentioned previously, Crimea is also of religious significance for Orthodox Russians. It is the location of ancient Khersones, where Prince Vladimir was baptised (Putin, March 18, 2014a). Prince Vladimir is known for spreading Orthodoxy to Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus and in the process founded the basis of cultural, civilization, and human values that unite these people (Putin, March 18, 2014a). It seems that Crimea is Russia's Jerusalem. The current Russian administration views this region as central to the ethnic Russian cultural and religious identity.

President Putin and his administration refuse to even acknowledge the historical fact that the Crimean population voted for independence from the Soviet Union in 1991. They view this time period as a Ukrainian occupation. According to Putin, "they [Crimea] not only withstood the 23 years of defence, but the people have remained intact as spiritually health Russian organism, possibly even healthier than many regions within Russia" (Putin, April 10, 2014). It is believed by the Russian authorities that Crimea was actually defending itself for the past 23 years against the invaders from Kiev. This illusionary struggle has apparently made them even more Russian than some regions under Moscow's control. The primal language used by President Putin, in addition to the religious and historical significant of Crimea, illustrates how Russia is behaving in civilizational manner. The current importance the regime in Moscow places on the Russian civilization is also demonstrated through the manner it justifies its actions.

An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

Written by Matthew Rae

President Putin is attempting to warp international legal norms to justify his imperial tendencies. In 2008, President Dmitry Medvedev outlined Russia's plan for a Pan-European Security Pact. The most important objective of this security plan was to secure international justification for an expansionist foreign policy. Its aim was to provide Russia with a basis in international law to claim a Russian variant of the Monroe doctrine, which would be applicable to Russia's near abroad (Herpen 2008, 3). This document was published six years before the crisis in Ukraine, but it still forms the basis of Russia's approach today. In a speech on March 18, 2014, President Putin stated that, "we hoped that Russian citizens and Russian speakers in Ukraine, especially its southeast and Crimea, would live in a friendly, democratic and civilised state that would protect their rights in line with the norms of international law." Putin does refer to international law and norms, in an attempt to justify his future annexation of Crimea.

However, the violation of international law was not the reason Russia took over the Crimean territory. Putin only referred to these norms in attempt to provide justification for his actions. The supposed violation of certain components of Huntington's civilization paradigm, namely the suppression of Russian history and culture, led to Russia annexing Crimea. International legal norms were not the main driving force; they made up a sufficient component but not a necessary one. The objectives identified by Samuel Huntington in his paradigm of civilizations were the necessary component. A realist perspective or liberal institutionalist perspective based on international legal norms does not fully explain Russia's behaviour, but a civilizational approach provides a more holistic view.

Continuing with the civilization analysis, the behaviour of Russia in general further reinforces Huntington's paradigm. One of the six characteristics of this new international system was the rise of regional organizations. The main regional organization in the world at the time of Huntington's book was the European Community, but since the early 1990s the regional groupings of states have proliferated. One of the most significant regional agreements is Mini-Warsaw Pact or the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO). The members of this organization include Russia, Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Tajikistan (Lukin 2014). It has an equivalent of NATO's article 5, defining a mutual defense obligation (Herpen 2014, 2). Russia is the undisputed military leader within this organization and the presence of mutual defense obligations further strengthens the treaty. There is another component, which further strengthens this organization—culture and religion. A majority of Orthodox Christian believers in these states do not support Western moral relativism and other ideals (Lukin 2014). These beliefs have propelled towards power leaders who support the integration of the former Soviet republics, and have helped Putin succeeded in establishing an independent power center in Eurasia (Lukin 2014). The Eastern Orthodox religion may not be the state religion in these states, but there exists a large enough populace to force political leaders to behave accordingly. The religious and cultural beliefs within these societies have reinforced the formal treaty organization and further increased Putin's ability to project power abroad.

The Maidan protests were a threat to these regional organizations and Russia's power within them. President Putin has stated that "we understand what is happening; we understand that these actions were aimed against Ukraine and Russia and against Eurasian integration" (March 18, 2014). Putin's actions were not in response to a violation of international norms, but they were an attempt to protect Russia's regional power, which was based on cultural and historical commonalities between these states. The rise of regional agreements within Eurasia has led to the clash between western and eastern Ukrainians, because these groups are partly based on different cultural and historical experiences.

To further reinforce these common experiences, Russia has returned to imperial practices. The black-and-orange St. George's Ribbons were a czarist-era military decoration, but have been recently brought back to commemorate veterans (Birnbaum 2014). These imperial traditions have been revived because the regime in Moscow believes that attempts have been made to deprive Russians of their historical memory and subject them to forced assimilation (Putin, March 18, 2014a). The return to these practices is an attempt to reinforce the collective culture and historical memory of ethnic Russians. The actions of President Putin are based on the view that civilization identity does matter and that state action in the name of protecting these common languages, cultures, and religions is legitimate.

These expansionist views are not limited to the President, but are held by all strata of the regime. Deputy Prime Minister Dmitry Rogozin has also supported these expansionist views. He visited Transnistria on Victory Day this past spring in a show of support for the ethnic Russians there. Transnistria is where pro-Russian separatists want to

An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

Written by Matthew Rae

unite a band of territory from Transnistria to Odessa to eastern Ukraine in a new Kremlin allied state of Novorossiia (Birnbaum 2014). The physical territorial claim of these separatists is not the only significant aspect. The name they have chosen is important as well. "Novorossiia" means new Russia and was the geographic title used for southern and eastern Ukraine during the reign of Catherine the Great (Conant 2014). Again these separatists and the Deputy Prime Minister are justifying such potential action based on a common language, history, and culture, all components of a civilization.

A recent discussion between President Putin and the Russian Popular Front in Crimea demonstrate how revisionist the regime is. In a discussion about history textbooks, the criticism was raised that the previous administration in Crimea had gotten rid of the term "Great Patriotic War" and replaced it with "World War II", and the fact that nothing was written about Sevastopol and its historic deeds (Putin, April 10, 2014). This revisionist history is an attempt to further reinforce the legitimacy of Russia's actions by building up Russian culture and history. By strengthening the Russian identity in Crimea and Eastern Ukraine, future Russian actions in the area may be viewed as more legitimate by the local population.

Russia has not been the only state to behave in a civilizational manner. The Ukrainian administration has also used a similar narrative to justify its own actions. The new President Poroshenko told Vladimir Putin that Crimea would always be Ukrainian (BBC News Europe 2014). Poroshenko has also called for Ukraine to join the EU and that Ukrainian remains the sole state language (BBC News Europe 2014). Again the role of regional organizations, in which its members share a common culture and history, has led to a clash.

The Ukrainian narrative is not as easily understood by a civilization approach compared the Russian one, but the regime still alludes to certain components that Huntington's paradigm identified. The insistence on potential EU membership and Ukrainian being the sole language reinforces the Western identity in Ukraine, while alienating the Eastern identity. Ukraine has not extensively referred to a common culture or history, but Russia's continued reference to such an approach will force Ukraine to adopt similar language. Russia's behaviour also reinforces the civilizational identity in Western Ukraine.

Russian Overtures in the Arctic

Ukraine is not the only example of recent Russian imperial tendencies. President Putin has also made control over the high Arctic a key foreign policy objective. Global warming is progressing twice as fast in the Arctic than anywhere else, leading to the potential of a passage opening up between the northern coast of Eurasia and the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans (Liow 2014). Russia wants to control as much of these new waterways as possible. The potential for new sea routes is not the only driving factor. According to the US Geological Survey, up to 30 percent of the world's undiscovered gas and 13 percent of undiscovered oil deposits lie in the Arctic region (Liow 2014). In a world of shrinking natural resources, the deposits located in the Arctic will become increasingly valuable. There is an urgent need for new sources of oil and gas, but in the Russian case it is evident that it is a matter of nationalism (Reynolds 2007). If Russia was able to gain jurisdiction over large areas of the Arctic, it would significantly increase their ability to project power within the international system, through control of key transportation hubs and oil deposits.

The scramble for the Arctic does have a connection with the current crisis in Ukraine, beyond Russia merely asserting its authority over vast amounts of territory. To understand this connection, one has to examine the other major player in the Arctic, Canada. The Russian military recently announced that it would send a nuclear submarine to the North Pole to plant a Russian flag on the ocean floor (Huebert 2014). This is a very symbolic mission and is reminiscent of old imperial missions of planting flags on foreign lands. This mission was not planned years in advance. This announcement only came immediately after Canada indicated that it might include the region near and surrounding the North Pole in its submission to the Arctic Council (Huebert 2014). Russia viewed Canada's claim to the Arctic as a threat to its own claims. In response, Russia used a combination of soft and hard power to intimidate Canada into backing away from its position. However, Russia's recent adventures in Ukraine have only solidified Canada's position and demonstrate the role civilization plays in an interconnected international system.

An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

Written by Matthew Rae

Canada is known for having large immigrant populations. As a result of being a large immigrant accepting country, Canada has become home to a large and politically significant Ukrainian migrant population (Liow 2014). The current crisis in Ukraine will only exacerbate the tensions in the high Arctic between Canada and Russia. Even though Canada is physically on the other side of the world, it will continue to come into direct conflict with Russia, for cultural and political reasons. One reason is the country is home to more than 1.2 million Ukrainian-Canadians, the world's third-largest Ukrainian population behind Ukraine and Russia (Carlson 2014). Ottawa, for instance, has a historical relationship with Ukraine. It was the first western nation to recognize Ukraine's independence in 1991 (Carlson 2014). The Canadian government has a long history of supporting the territorial integrity of Ukraine. Russian encroachment in the high Arctic and in Eastern Ukraine will only intensify the clash with Canada.

It is only through a civilizational approach that one is able to have a holistic understanding of the conflict between Russia and Canada in the Arctic. If one was just to focus solely on the balance of power, one would not pay due attention to the large Ukrainian expat community in Canada. A civilizational analysis allows one to view the confrontation in its entirety and examine how the balance of power projections interact with the cultural perspectives.

Turkey and Russia

To fully demonstrate how Samuel Huntington's *Clash of the Civilizations* offers a valid paradigm to explain the current international state system, one needs to examine another civilization outside of the Russian Eastern Orthodoxy. This section will examine how Turkey has begun to behave in a civilizational manner, partly in response to Russia's imperial advances of late. Turkey has also begun to assume a more independent and Turkish driven foreign policy, because of the West's inability to solve systematic problems in Turkey's near abroad.

The rise of a modern Turkish civilization and a distinct cultural identity emerged after 1989. Traditionally there have been four main sources of Turkish foreign policy. One source was the historical experiences of the Ottoman Empire (Murinson 2006, 945). Another source was the nationalist Kemalist revolution and the creation of the modern Turkish republic (Murinson 2006, 945). This stream of the country's foreign policy has been more isolationists in character. A third influence on the development of Turkish foreign policy has been Europeanization and modernization. Finally, suspicion of foreign powers, or the Sevres Syndrome, has also influenced foreign policy elites at times (Murinson 2006, 945). These are the main conceptual groupings of Turkey's foreign policy.

At the end of the Cold War, there was a transition within Turkey's foreign policy perspective. Turkish foreign policy underwent a shift from Kemalism to neo-Ottomanism under the leadership of Turgut Ozal, prime minister from 1983 to 1989 and again from 1987 until his death in 1993 (Murinson 2006, 946). The move from an isolationist foreign policy during the Cold War to a more activist one has altered the role of Turkey in Central Asia and the Middle East. This section will discuss some of these cases.

In addition to domestic changes, global changes have led to an increase awareness of a new Turkish civilization as well. As a result of the increased rate of globalization, especially increased economic and social interdependence, Turkey now has a new opportunity to engage in its neighbouring sub-regions (Murinson 2006, 952). A more active Turkey has become increasingly evident in the past few years. The annexation of Crimea by Russia is a threat to the Turkish state, but before this crisis Russia took an active role in another neighbouring area to Turkey.

The civil war in Syria between President Bashar al-Assad and the rebels has led to a more active Turkey in the region. As of June 2014, 1 million Syrian refugees were living within Turkish territory (Nedeau 2014). The sheer number of refugees has forced the government in Ankara to react. Another reason Turkey has assumed a larger role in the Syria conflict is due to Western weakness. The response from Western powers, especially to Russia's unyielding support of the Assad regime, has been weak and divided (Unver 2014). It could be argued that this demonstrates an inability to project power close to the Russian zone of influence (Unver 2014). If Western powers, namely the United States, cannot counter-balance Russian influence in Syria, Turkey came to the realization that it will have to by itself. Since the protests against Assad morphed into a civil war, Prime Minister Erdogan has supported the full spectrum of groups fighting for Assad's overthrow (Leigh 2014). This policy has been pursued even with the potential risk it would alienated Turkey's traditional Western allies. Western powers increasingly favour

An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

Written by Matthew Rae

a negotiated solution (Leigh 2014). To understand why Turkey has supported the rebels and broken with Western allies, one needs to examine what Russia would gain if President Assad remains in power.

Russia would gain militarily if the Assad regime were to remain in power in Syria. Russia believes that thanks to its support of President Bashar al-Assad, Syria will allow Moscow long-term access to the Tartus naval base in Syria (Unver 2014). This would be a direct threat to the Turkish navy in the Mediterranean. It would also provide Russia with another warm water port. The decision to support the Syrian rebels may seem to be based on a balance of power calculation, but Turkey's support has also been dependent on civilization aspects.

Russia itself does not view Turkey in a positive light either. Relations between Russia and Turkic nationalities in Central Asia have been strained. Ethnic Russians have been feeling Turkic nationalists. In 2003, about eight million ethnic Russians had fled Central Asian countries because of strained relations with Turkic nationalities in the area (Conant 2014). As Turkey assumes a large role within the international system as a distinctly Turkish power, these disagreements will become more prevalent.

The involvement of another power in the Syrian crisis encourages the development of a Turkish civilization identity as well. The involvement of Iran in the bloody crackdown within Syria has made it easier for the Turks to lend their support to the rebels (Cook and Gwertzman 2011). Iran is one of Turkey's main competitors for regional power in both the Middle East and Central Asia. This is in addition to the Syrian crisis leading to a split between Turkey and its traditional Western allies. The annexation of Crimea and wider problems in its immediate neighbour has provided Turkey with the opportunity to assert its civilizational identity in the region.

In one of the most underdeveloped parts of the world, Turkey remains a bastion of economic progress. It boasts the fifteenth largest economy in the world (Cook and Gwertzman 2011). Turkey has sought to position themselves, not just in the economic sphere, but also as a leader of a region that is presently lacking leadership, whether in North Africa or in the Gulf (Cook and Gwertzman 2011). As mentioned previously, Turkey has used this new leadership in the Syrian crisis and is attempting to forge a new path, a Turkish path, for the region. The seizure of Crimea and its significant for Turkey needs to be viewed from a civilization perspective.

Crimea itself has occupied a unique place in Russian history, but also in Turkish history. From a Turkish perspective, the Russian invasion of Crimea simply fits a 340-year pattern (Unver 2014). For Turkey, nothing has changed since Crimea fell from Ottoman hands. In the mid-17th century, the Crimean region was the Paris of Muslim intellectuals in the Ottoman Empire (Unver 2014). It produced the founding fathers of modern Turkish nationalism, including Yusuf Akcura and Ismail Gasprinski (Unver 2014). Turkey has made no claims to Crimea in the recent crisis. The cultural and intellectual significance of the region may prompt action in the future. If Russia were to purge Crimea of its Turkish past, as it has claimed Ukrainian did with its Russian heritage, then Turkey may become more directly involved. Russian action has created a precedent for state action based on civilization characteristics, which other states could utilize, such as Turkey.

Turkey's immediate response to the Crimea crisis is difficult to predict. Currently, Turkey has no reassuring plan to counter Russia's expansion of the Black Sea fleet (Unver 2014). It may join an effort of containment, but this will depend on the direct benefits Turkey could secure for its civilization. The Syrian Crisis has demonstrated that Turkey is willing to split with the West and forge its own path. If it does join a containment alliance, it will be because it has secured both hard power benefits and victories that are historically and culturally significant.

Conclusion

This paper has discussed how Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilization* hypotheses allow us to understand current Ukrainian crisis, but also Russia's increasing imperial tendencies. The annexation of Crimea is significant because it is one of the most heated confrontations between Russia and the West since the end of the Cold War. It is also even more significant because in annexing Crimea, Moscow decisively rejected the West's rules and in the process shattered many flawed Western assumptions about its motivations (Lukin 2014). The US and European officials are now required to find a new paradigm to understand the thinking behind Russia foreign policy, if they want to resolve

An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

Written by Matthew Rae

the Ukraine crisis and prevent similar ones from occurring in the future (Lukin 2014). Samuel Huntington's hypothesis about civilizations and the fault-lines between them provides the West with a paradigm to understand and anticipated Russia behaviour.

This paper has demonstrated that the current crisis in Ukrainian can be understood through the civilizational approach as advocated for by Samuel Huntington in the *Clash of Civilizations*. President Putin has extensively used a narrative that fits within Huntington's hypothesis to justify Russia's actions in Crimea. Russia has reverted to imperial practices in an attempt to seize territory near its borders. In the process, this has led to Ukraine behaving in a more civilizational manner. This paper also examined how southern and eastern Ukraine are not the only territorial ambitions of President Putin. The control of vast amounts of territory in the Arctic fits within the civilization paradigm as well. Canada's opposition to Russian expansion in the Arctic is both a hard power response, but also a response in attempt to appease the large Ukrainian diaspora in its country. It was also demonstrated that Turkey has begun to act more within the civilization paradigm, because of waning Western power in Middle East and Russia's increasing imperial overtures in the Black Sea. Russia's actions of late are difficult understand through traditional paradigms, but Samuel Huntington's *Clash of Civilization* paradigm offers a holistic view of the crisis. It is difficult to make a definitive statement about this paradigm's ability to explain the ever changing international system, but it is one of the most promising we possess to date.

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An Examination of Russia's Foreign Policy Through The Clash of Civilizations

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Date written: July 2014