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UKRAINIAN SHIELD IN DEFENSE OF EUROPEAN CIVILIZATION: CHRONOLOGY AND PERIODIZATION

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ABSTRACT

This article demonstrates how the 'Ukrainian Shield' has protected European civilization for more than a thousand years of turbulence. The article also develops a periodization of this phenomenon.

Scientific novelty. Despite a thorough study of some aspects of the topic, the Ukrainian Shield hypothesis as a unifying theme has not been adequately covered in Ukrainian historiography. The authors show the leading role of Ukraine in the struggle against various enemies who tried to conquer European countries, and we define the chronological boundaries and develop a periodization of this process.

Methodology. The study uses a civilizational approach, methods of analogy and periodization, historical, chronological comparative and analytical methods.

Conclusions. For more than 1155 years, the Ukrainian Crystal Shield has defended European civilization from various enemies, with the Ukrainian population bearing an enormous cost. This process began in 867, when the legendary Kyivan Princes Askold and Dir defeated the Pechenegs, and continues in 2023, when Ukrainians stopped the resurgent Moscow horde that threatens the whole world.

The periodization of the Ukrainian Shield was developed on the basis of the stages of Ukrainian statehood. *Stage I. Princely Statehood:* wars with the Pechenegs (867-1036); with the Torks (1055-1060); with the Polovtsians (Cumans) (1060-1238); with the Mongol-Tatars (1223-1241). *Stage II. Cossack Era:* confrontation with the Turks and Tatars (1478-1775). *Stage III. The Ukrainian National Revolution:* the struggle of the Ukrainian insurgency against the march of the Bolsheviks' World Revolution (1917-1923). *Stage IV. The Modern Ukrainian Independent State:* the Russian-Ukrainian war (2014-2023).

The Ukrainian Shield protected European civilization from the Pechenegs, Torks, Polovtsians, Mongol-Tatars, Turks, Bolsheviks, and continues to protect it from Russian aggression since February 24, 2022. For 667 years out of the past 1155 years, Ukraine has been engaged in open conflict to repel invaders. Many of the 'peaceful' years were spent preparing for the next onslaught. These long and bloody wars, often waged against superior opponents, has required enormous effort, along with material and human resources from Ukrainians. The principal beneficiaries of Ukrainian heroism have been the peoples of central and western Europe.

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Keywords: Ukrainian Shield, European civilization, periodization, nomads, Cossacks, World Revolution, Russian-Ukrainian War

УКРАЇНСЬКИЙ ЩИТ НА ЗАХИСТІ ЄВРОПЕЙСЬКОЇ ЦИВІЛІЗАЦІЇ: ХРОНОЛОГІЯ І ПЕРІОДИЗАЦІЯ

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АНОТАЦІЯ

Мета статті полягає у показі ролі «Українського щита» в захисті Європейської цивілізації протягом більш ніж тисячолітньої історії та розробка періодизації цього явища.

Наукова новизна. Попри доволі ґрунтовну наукову розробленість окремих аспектів теми, гіпотеза, щодо визначення ролі «Українського щита» не знайшла належного висвітлення в українській історіографії. Авторами показано роль України у боротьбі з різними ворогами, які намагалися завоювати країни Європи, визначені хронологічні межі та розроблена періодизація.

Методологія. У дослідження використано цивілізаційний підхід, методи аналогії, історико-порівняльний, аналітичний, хронологічний і періодизації.

Висновки. Більше 1155 років Український кристалічний щит виступає щитом для Європейської цивілізації, захищаючи її від знищення різними ворогами. Почався цей процес у 867 р., коли легендарні київські князі Аскольд і Дір розбили печенігів і продовжується у 2023 р., коли українці зупиняють новітню московську орду, яка загрожує всьому світу.

Періодизація «Українського щита» розробленого на основі етапів українського державотворення: *І етап*. *Княжа державність*: війни з печенігами (867-1036 рр.); боротьба з торками (1055-1060 рр.); протистояння з половцями (1060-1238 рр.); боротьба з монголо-татарами (1223-1241 рр.). *ІІ етап. Козацька доба*: протистояння з турками і татарами (1478-1775 рр.). *ІІІ етап. Українська національна революція*: боротьба українського повстанства проти реалізації ідеї Світової революції більшовиків (1917-1923 рр.). *IV етап. Сучасна українська незалежна держава*: російсько-українська війна (2014-2023 рр.).

Український щит захищав європейську цивілізацію від печенігів, торків, половців, монголо-татар, турків, більшовиків і продовжує захищати з 24 лютого 2022 р. від російської агресії. З 1155 років протистояння зі Сходом, 667 років велася довга та кровопролитна війна, яка вимагала і вимагає від українців величезного напруження, матеріальних і людських ресурсів.

Фінансування. Стаття підготовлена у рамках міжнародного проєкту Erasmus+ за напрямком Jean Monnet «Implementation of European values as a basis of democracy in Ukraine» (EVADEM – 101085843 – ERASMUS-JMO-2022-MODULE).

Ключові слова: Український щит, Європейська цивілізація, періодизація, кочовики, козацтво, світова революція, російсько-українська війна

INTRODUCTION

One of the peculiarities of the development of modern Ukrainian studies is the assimilation and increasing use of the methodology of civilizational interpretation of the historical past, the transition from event history to the history of processes and phenomena. The civilizational paradigm, which is based on the priority of socio-

cultural, spiritual, and value-based approaches, allows for a more complete picture of history, and for understanding the past of a state or region in the context of the global historical process.

The civilizational approach focuses on the perception of historical development as a multidimensional polycentric process within a single human civilization, takes into account a wide range of factors that influence the world historical process, and refutes the existence of 'human development' in the sense of progression from the simple to the more complex.

A special place in the process of its formation is occupied by the civilizational concept of the English historian Arnold J. Toynbee, whose attempts to understand it forms the basis for the development of civilizational issues in modern Ukrainian historical science and the use of civilizational methodology in domestic historical research[1].

While studying the role of Ukraine's territory in the development of European civilization, the method of analogy, which is closely related to the historical and comparative method, is used. The authors analyse historical analogies of the struggle against various enemies at certain stages of the development of Ukrainian statehood: during the princely period, the Cossacks, the Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921, and modern independent Ukraine.

An analogy involves comparing several historical events or processes in order to study the essential features of one of them using the examples of others. A similar methodology was used by the authors in writing the article 'Pakistan-Ukraine. Analogies in the Triangles of Regional Security Complexes'[2]. Analogy is a general scientific method of cognition, which leads to the conclusion that similarity of some features is based on the evident similarity of other features of the compared objects. It is clear that the range of known features of the object (phenomenon) with which the comparison is made should be wider than that of the studied object. Historical analogies are the basis of the historical-comparative method, which has significant cognitive capabilities. First, it allows to reveal the essence of the studied phenomena in cases where it is not obvious, based on the available facts; to identify the common and repeated, necessary and natural, on the one hand, and qualitatively different, on the other. Second, the historical-comparative method makes it possible to go beyond the studied phenomena and, on the basis of analogies, to come to broad historical generalizations and parallels. Third, this method made it possible to compare historical events corresponding to different stages of statehood on the territory of Ukraine.

The analytical method helped to identify individual military events and their dates to create a periodization of the Ukrainian Shield. The chronological method was used to show the events and phenomena of the historical process in a temporal sequence. The method of periodization is based on the properties of human intelligence to isolate and divide information into quantitatively and qualitatively homogeneous groups and systematize it according to temporal and spatial criteria to obtain theoretical knowledge.

The object of the article is the development of humanity within the boundaries of

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[1] *Toynbee A.J.* A study of history. 3 vols. Oxford University Press, 1935.

[2] *Kotlyar Yu., Lymar M., Tykhonenko I.* Pakistan-Ukraine. Analogies in the Triangles of Regional Security Complexes. *Annali di Ca'Foscari. Serie orientale.* Giugno 2020. Vol. 56. P. 219-244. DOI: 10.30687/AnnOr/2385-3042/2020/56/009

two regions – 'Europe' and 'Ukraine'. It should be noted at the outset that historical scholarship has no clear definitions of these two concepts and the boundaries between them. Each of them can be perceived from different perspectives: geographical, historical, and cultural. An important component of understanding these terms is the historical context, because in different historical epochs these concepts had different, sometimes radically different meanings. In our understanding, the concept of 'Europe' is primarily a cultural space based on the development of the ancient and Christian tradition, which geographically coincides with the borders of the eponymous part of the world. The term 'Ukraine' primarily refers to the modern (since 1991) administrative territory of the Ukrainian independent state and the adjacent historical and ethnographic regions where the Ukrainian Diaspora lived and lives. In the context of our study, two terms are used: 'European civilization' and 'Ukrainian Shield'. European civilization is used in the broadest sense – to denote the totality of Western European countries as a certain integrity, based on a common historical experience and worldview[3].

Ukraine's geographical location made it a zone of collision of three civilizations: Western Christian, Eastern Christian and Islamic (according to Toynbee). In addition to its metaphorical and symbolic meaning, the term 'Ukrainian Shield' has a clear geological basis. The Ukrainian Crystalline Shield or Massif (Ukrainian Shield) is an uplift of the crystalline foundation of the East European Platform, which extends the middle course of the Dnipro in a strip more than 1,000 km long and about 250 km wide. This is an ancient Precambrian structure, which was formed more than 3.6 billion years ago. It stretches from the northwest to the southeast in the middle part of Ukraine, from Belarus to the Sea of Azov. Zhytomyr, Vinnytsia, Dnipro, Kryvyi Rih, Zaporizhzhia and Mariupol are all located on the Ukrainian Shield. In width, the Ukrainian Crystalline Shield extends from Khmelnytskyi to Kyiv[4].

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ukrainian scholars are actively using the geopolitical approach, which is perceived as a field for the practical application of civilizational methodology. Moreover, Ukraine's aspirations to integrate with Europe has stimulated research in Ukraine on European civilization and Ukraine's place in it[5].

In the two-volume monograph *Ukraine of the Ancient Times – XVIII Century: Civilizational Context of Cognition*[6] and *Ukraine of the XIX – Early XXI Century: Civilizational Context of Cognition*[7], a team of distinguished Ukrainian authors shed

[3] *Гончаревський В.* Цивілізаційний підхід до історії: сучасний український досвід (1991-2009). Київ: Логос, 2011. С. 180.

[4] *Студінський В.А., Диняк С.В.* Економіко-екологічні аспекти видобування граніту на Житомирщині: проблеми і перспективи. *Економічний вісник університету*. 2021. Вип. 15. С. 90-95; *Kotlyar Yu., Lymar M., Ahieieva-Karkashadze V.* The U.S.-European coordination for assisting Ukraine, reviving the Alliance and Protecting European Values. *Американська історія та політика: науковий журнал*. 2022. № 14. С. 7-20. DOI: 10.17721/2521-1706.2022.14

[5] Українська культура в європейському контексті / Під ред. *Ю.П. Богуцького*. Київ: Знання, 2007. 680 с.; *Шпак В.Т.* Україна: від «російського комунізму» – до європейської цивілізації. Черкаси: Брама, 2002. 199 с.

[6] *Юрій М.Ф. та ін*. Україна найдавнішого часу – XVIII століття: цивілізаційний контекст пізнання. Тернопіль: Астон, 2012. Кн. 1. 700 с.

[7] *Юрій М.Ф. та ін*. Україна XIX – початку XXI ст.: цивілізаційний контекст пізнання. Тернопіль: Астон, 2012. Кн. 2. 696 с.

considerable light on the ethnogenesis of the Ukrainian people, the history of its formation and struggle for freedom and independence. The research focuses on how culture, spirituality, and modernization contributed to a civilizational historical process, resulting in a unique Ukrainian civilization; a civilization continuously buffeted and challenged by storms arising in the East and West. The civilizational approach adopted in the above volumes placed Ukrainian historical events in the context of the entire system of local civilizations, and clarified Ukraine's place and role in this system.

The civilizational mission of Ukraine as a protective gateway to Europe is most fully described by Ukrainian-American historian Serhii Plokhy *The Gate of Europe. A History of Ukraine*[8]. The scientist mentions the following: "Europe is an important part of Ukrainian story, as Ukraine is part of European one. Located at the western edge of the Eurasian steppe, Ukraine has been a gateway to Europe for many centuries. Sometimes, when the 'gates' were closed as a result of wars or conflicts, Ukraine helped stop foreign invasions east and west…"[9].

The book by Ukrainian archeologist and historian Leonid Zalizniak *Ukraine between East and West. On the Origins and Essence of the Russian-Ukrainian War of 2014*[10] contains articles on the history of Russian-Ukrainian relations that help to understand the deep background of the civilizational conflict between Europe and Eurasia on the lands of Ukraine in 2014.

Book by Ukrainian historian Yaroslav Hrytsak *Overcoming the Past: A Global History of Ukraine*[11] is also important for offering a global perspective of Ukrainian development. This fundamental work helps to debunk myths about Ukraine, to open new horizons and topics for understanding the past, and to find new vectors for discussing the present and future of Ukraine. It is especially relevant to look at Ukraine's past from the perspective of modern knowledge of European and world history.

The problem of the 'Ukrainian Shield' that protects Europe is outlined in a number of studies and videos by Ukrainian historian Yuriy Kotlyar, who argues that the Ukrainian crystal shield helped protect European civilization from a succession of Eastern hordes and allowed the West to escape more serious onslaughts[12].

The main ***purpose of the article*** is to build on these previous studies to show the role of the 'Ukrainian Shield' in protecting European civilizations from various enemies for more than a thousand years and to develop a periodization of this phenomenon.

DISCUSSION

The historical and geographical area of Ukraine has always attracted migrants and conquerors from the East. Through the steppes of Southern Ukraine ran the Eurasian

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[8] *Plokhy S.* The gate of Europe. A history of Ukraine. New York: Basic Books, 2015. 460 p. Among his many distinctions, Plokhy won Ukraine's Taras Shevchenko Prize in 2018.

[9] Ibid. P. XXI.

[10] *Залізняк Л.Л.* Україна між Сходом і Заходом. Про витоки і суть російсько-української війни 2014 р. Київ: Шлях, 2014. 168 с.

[11] *Грицак Я.* Подолати минуле: глобальна історія України. Київ: Портал, 2022. 416 с.

[12] *Котляр Ю.В.* Український кристалічний щит і Європейська цивілізація. *Petro Mohyla TV, YouTube*. 2022. URL: https://bit.ly/3Qro6D4; *Kotlyar Yu.V.* Ukraine and European Civilization // Україна і Європа: спільність історичної долі (ціннісний аспект)» в рамках міжнародного проєкту Erasmus+ за напрямком Jean Monnet «Implementation of European values as a basis of democracy in Ukraine»: тези доповідей. Миколаїв: Вид-во ЧНУ ім. Петра Могили, 2022. С. 1-3.

corridor, which originated thousands of kilometres to the east, near the Pacific Ocean. The steppes have long been ruled by warlike nomadic tribes – from the Cimmerians and Scythians to the Sarmatians, Huns, Bulgars, Avars, Khazars, Magyars, Pechenegs, Polovtsians (Cumans), Torks, Mongols, and Tatars[13]. Their westward movement turned the territory of Ukraine into a first point of contact with Europeans making Ukraine a protective shield.

It was here that the Great Frontier passed between the settled and nomadic. Slavic and Turkic, Orthodox and Jewish and Muslim worlds interacted, feuded, cooperated, and coexisted. The components of interaction on the Great Frontier were trade, gift exchanges, military service, and intermarriage. However, the most important factor was military confrontation. That struggles with the Pechenegs, Torks, and Polovtsians were among the longest and bloodiest[14]. They took place during the Princely Era (Ukrainian: *Kniazha doba*) of Ukrainian statehood:

Wars with the Pechenegs (867-1036). The Pechenegs were a union of tribes formed out of the combination of nomadic Turks with Sarmatian and Ugrophin tribes. The Pechenegs were divided into eight hordes or tribes, with representatives of one half roaming between the Danube and the Dnipro, and the other half between the Dnipro and the Don[15]. The first half, the so-called 'Turkic Pechenegs', roamed the steppes south of the territory of Rus[16] (Ruthenia) and were sometimes allied and sometimes hostile to it. The second half, the 'Khazar Pechenegs', were one of the constituent parts of the Khazar Khaganate, along with the Alans, Oguzes, Bulgars, and others. Each of the eight hordes, in turn, was divided into another 40 parts or uluses.

Once established in the Black Sea region, the warlike tribes soon clashed with all the neighbouring nations. First, the Hungarians were driven out of the fertile plains, and then Rus, Byzantium, and Bulgaria felt the power and devastation of the sudden Pecheneg raids[17].

According to the *Nikon Chronicle*, Rus' warriors first encountered the Pechenegs on the battlefield in 864. *Povist Vremennykh Lit* [*The Tale of Bygone Years*] tells that many Pechenegs were defeated by Kyivan Princes Askold and Dir in 867. These ninth century battles probably represented the first Rus-Pechenegs clashes. There is some confusion on this point because another chronicler noted that the Pechenegs first came to the attention of Rus in 915, during the reign of Grand Prince Ihor, when they approached Rus' southern borders. The Pechenegs evidently did not pose a great danger to the Kyivan state at that time, because Ihor made peace with them and forced them to move to the Danube. However, a few years later, in 920, there was a military clash with the Pechenegs.

The Pechenegs struck again in the reign of Grand Prince Sviatoslav the Brave, when in 968 the Pecheneg horde crossed the borders of Kyivan Rus, taking advantage of the absence of Grand Prince Sviatoslav. At the same time, the Pechenegs laid siege to Kyiv. The capital was saved by a courageous boy who escaped from the city, crossed the Dnipro, and warned the voievoda (province governor) Pretych.

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[13] *Огнев'юк В., Відейко М.* Історичний досвід української цивілізації. *Світогляд.* 2022. № 4. С. 5.
[14] *Бороздіна А.* Печеніги та Київська Русь: військові стосунки. *Воєнна історія.* 2005. № 5-6 (23-24) URL: http://warhistory.ukrlife.org/5_6_05_7.htm
[15] Ibidem.
[16] In Cyrillic – name 'Русь' (Rus), the last character is a soft sign – 'ь' – indicating the palatalized pronunciation of the preceding consonant.
[17] *Бороздіна А.* Печеніги та Київська Русь…

In 971 Sviatoslav went to war with the Danube Bulgarians and Byzantium. The Pechenegs, warned by the Greeks, blocked the Dnipro rapids. The voivode Sveneld advised the prince to go to Kyiv by a land detour, but Sviatoslav sought to make his way to the capital on boats loaded with spoils of war. In a battle with the Pechenegs in 972, one of the greatest commanders of Kyivan Rus, Prince Sviatoslav, was killed[18].

The Pechenegs did not leave Rus alone during the reign (980-1115) of Sviatoslav's successor, Prince Volodymyr the Great. They constantly terrorized the entire southern border, daring to approach Kyiv itself. For many decades no one in Rus felt safe from their murderous raids. Moreover, the adoption of Christianity in 988 by Rus further increased pressure from the Pechenegs.

After Volodymyr, Yaroslav the Wise, the next grand prince, successfully continued the fight against the Pechenegs. He moved the defensive line even further south, built new ramparts and fortifications, and organized people living in the borderlands to fight their nomadic neighbours. The final victory over the Pechenegs took place near Kyiv in 1036 under Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise.

The Pechenegs systematically *cut off* Rus from the Black Sea and severed the lucrative trade routes to Byzantium and the East. The invasion of the Pechenegs added to the destruction caused by the various princes' internecine wars. The Pecheneg offensive adversely affected the Rus' international relations. Engaged in constant wars with the Pecheneg horde, the Kyivan princes were unable to pursue a sufficiently active foreign policy on the western borders. At the same time, Kyiv's leading role in organizing the fight against nomads contributed to its transformation into a recognized political and military centre of Rus. The creation of a system of border fortresses with permanent garrisons concentrated large military resources in the hands of the Kyivan princes, which they used to strengthen the unity of the country[19]. The Pecheneg wars helped forge, a strong military tradition that was capable of defending the independence of the native land and Europe from dangerous enemies the next of which were the Torks.

Struggle against the Torks (1055-1060). Following the lengthy struggle to defeat of the Pechenegs, Kyivan Rus faced a new onslaught in the south from the Torks. Known in Byzantine chronicles as Uzs or Guzs, the Torks shared a language and ethnicity similar to those of the Pechenegs. Under the pressure of the Polovtsians to their east, the Torks slowly moved westward and reached the borders of the Pereiaslav land until the middle of the XI century.

Initially, Rus-Torks relations were generally amicable, with the Torks often allying with Rus' princes. The peaceful relations began to deteriorate by the mid-XI century. One of the first clashes with the Torks dates to 1055. This change in relations was probably in part the result of changes in the leadership of the Kyivan Rus. In 1054, Grand Prince Yaroslav the Wise of Kyiv died, and his vast possessions stretching from the Black Sea to beyond Novgorod in the north, were divided among his three sons. Two of them were Princes Iziaslav and Vsevolod. Iziaslav, whose possessions included Novgorod and the Turovo-Pinsk principality, started to rule in Kyiv, while Vsevolod, whose lands laid along the Oster, Psel, Vorskla, Sula rivers and also included included the Rostov-Suzdal territories, was in Pereiaslav. Forged an alliance with his brothers,

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[18] *Бережинський В.Г.* Війни Київської Русі з печенігами. *Український історичний журнал.* 1996. № 6. С. 116-117.

[19] Ibid. С. 119.

Vsevolod attacked the Torks. Having defeated the Torks, he first encountered the Polovtsians, but managed to conclude a peace treaty with them. Before the Polovtsians became a new threat to Rus, the Torks had already turned from friends of the Rus princes into their enemies. The struggle against the two enemies, the Torks and the Polovtsians, required the united efforts of the three Yaroslavovych brothers – Iziaslav, Sviatoslav, and Vsevolod. In 1060, the Yaroslavovych brothers inflicted a crushing defeat on the Torks. However, new enemies entered the historical arena – the Polovtsians[20].

Confrontation with the Polovtsians (1060-1238). 'Polovtsians' is a Rus term. In a broad sense, they refer to the Kipchaks, who were part of the Kimek Khanate. It is believed that the Kipchak peoples belonged to the western branch of this khanate, gradually settling down, moving westward, and thus ended up on the territory of the Ukrainian steppes, which are the modern south and east of Ukraine. When the Polovtsians came to the Ukrainian steppes, a significant part of the Pechenegs retreated to the borderlands, to the so-called chronicle Porossia. They were a kind of buffer between the neighboring Rus' principalities and the nomadic steppe.

The first mention of the Polovtsians in the chronicle dates back to 1054, but under this year it is noted that a Polovtsian prince named Bolush came and made peace with the Rus prince of Pereiaslav. And in the 1060s, wars began. However, the wars were not unambiguously attacking on the one hand and defending on the other. Historians are aware of both Polovtsian campaigns against Rus and Rus campaigns against Polovtsians. Over 180 years, there were 12 military attacks by the Polovtsians on Rus and the same number of Rus in the Polovtsian steppe, and 30 joint military campaigns[21].

Rus' princes repeatedly campaigned in the Polovtsian land to stop the raids of the Polovtsian hordes. The great campaigns of 1103, 1107, 1109, and 1111 ended in victory for the princely troops. Volodymyr Monomakh was the most famous Rus' prince in the fight against the Polovtsians. Describing his military exploits, the Ukrainian historian Mykhailo Marchenko stated that Volodymyr Monomakh "concluded nineteen peace treaties with the Polovtsian khans; he made many campaigns, 83 of them – large and countless – small ones… The Polovtsians trembled when they heard his name"[22].

Campaigns against the Polovtsians were supplemented by measures to strengthen the southern borders of Rus. At the end of the XI century, new lines of defensive fortifications were built along the Sula, Ros, and Dnipro rivers. The Posulska line played a particularly important role, protecting the left-bank lands of Rus from Polovtsian attacks. In the second quarter of the XII century, the Rus borderlands were virtually devastated by increasing attacks by the Polovtsians.

In Europe, the Polovtsians proved to be cruel conquerors. Thus, in the wars for the Babenbergs' Austrian inheritance, where they were used by the Hungarian king, various sources mention the sacking of Moravia. Moreover, these were two campaigns year after year – in 1052 and 1053. Czech sources mention that they were shocked by what was happening. This story turned out to be very painful for them[23].

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[20] *Марченко М.* Київська Русь у боротьбі з кочовиками до монгольської навали. Київ: Промінь, 2012. С. 59.
[21] *Тимар І.* Половці і Русь. *ZAXID.NET.* 2023. Березень, 12. URL: https://zaxid.net/polovtsi_i_rus_n1559610
[22] *Марченко М.* Київська Русь… С. 85.
[23] *Тимар І.* Половці і Русь…

In the 70s of the XII century, Khan Konchak united the Polovtsian hordes in the basin of the Siverskyi Donets. In 1185, he led the Polovtsians in a battle with Prince Ihor Sviatoslavovych of Novhorod-Siversk in Ukraine. Ihor's campaign is known to have been unsuccessful, and the prince was captured[24]. In 1197/98, 1201, and 1204, Roman Mstyslavovych, Prince of Volhynia (Ukrainian: *Volyn*) and Galicia-Volhynia, defeated the Polovtsians three times on their land. In the first third of the XIII century, the Polovtsians took an active part in the internecine struggle for Kyiv between Volodymyr Rurikovych of Kyiv, Mykhailo Vsevolodovych of Chernihiv, and Danylo Romanovych, who was the prince of Volhynia at that time.

In the mid-XIII century, the bulk of the Polovtsians were conquered by the Mongol-Tatars, and some moved to Hungary.

Struggle with the Mongol-Tatars (1223-1241). In the early XIII century, a powerful state was created in the Mongolian steppes under the rule of Genghis Khan, which conquered Southern Siberia, Northern China, Central Asia, and Transcaucasia in 1207-1222. In 1222, the Mongol army unexpectedly overcame the Caucasus Mountains and was trapped there. The Polovtsian khans gathered their forces and fought the Mongols on the banks of the Siverskyi Donets river, but were defeated. Then the Mongols moved to the Crimea, where they captured the Venetian fortress of Sudak. The father-in-law of Galician Prince Mstyslav the Great, Polovtsian Khan Kotyak, asked the Rus princes for help. At a congress of princes in Kyiv, it was decided to give the Mongols a fight in the Polovtsian steppes.

In 1223, the main forces of the Rus-Polovtsian army and the Mongols met on the Kalka River. At first, the Rus-Polovtsian army forced the Mongols to retreat to the left bank of the river. At the decisive moment of the battle, a disagreement broke out between the princes. The Rus armies suffered significant losses: six princes were killed and only one in ten soldiers returned unharmed.

The defeat at the Battle of Kalka significantly weakened the Rus principalities, sowing panic and despair. However, the Tatars turned eastward, limiting themselves to the devastation of Western Ukraine and the Volga region. Soon after, Genghis Khan died (1227), and this postponed the catastrophe for Rus and the prospect of the destruction of Europe for ten years[25].

After a ten-year break in 1235, the Mongols began preparing for a conquest to the West. The Great Western Campaign was led by Batu Khan. After the defeat of Volga Bulgaria, the first Mongol attack in early winter 1237 fell on the Ryazan principality. The prince's army met the enemy in a desperate battle on the border of the principality, but was defeated. After that, the Mongols laid siege to Ryazan, which resisted for six days. The Mongol army broke into the city and committed a brutal massacre, destroying everything in its path.

Then, the Volodymyr-Suzdal principality, with the strongest army among the Rus principalities, continued to resist the Mongols. However, it could not withstand the Mongol invasion either. After that, the Mongols turned south to the steppes. On their way, at the end of March 1238, the main Mongol forces approached the small Chernihiv city of Kozelsk. For seven weeks Batu tried to break the resistance of its inhabitants. It

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[24] *Євстратов В.* Похід новгород-сіверського князя Ігоря проти половців у 1185 році та його наслідки. *Сіверянський літопис*. 2010. № 1. С. 5.

[25] *Терещенко Ю.І.* Україна і європейський світ: Нариси історії від утворення Старокиївської держави до кінця XVI ст. Київ: Перун, 1996. URL: https://bit.ly/3SADKPd

was only after the Mongols brought in siege vehicles that they managed to get to Kozelsk. The cities that were defended most fiercely were destroyed completely[26]. In 1238, Batu also defeated Polovtsian Khan Kotyak, who fled to Hungary with his horde after that defeat.

In the winter of 1239, the Mongols continued their campaign through the Rus principalities. That time it was directed against the Pereiaslav and Chernihiv principalities. Having overcome the defensive line against the nomads on the border of the Pereiaslav principality, the Mongols approached the capital city. Bishop Simeon led the defence of the city. Despite desperate resistance, the city fell on March 3, 1239. In the fall of 1239, the Mongols approached Chernihiv. Prince Mstyslav Hlibovych of Chernihiv fought the Mongols under the city walls. On October 18, the enemies broke into the city, looted and burned it. Later, the Mongols destroyed Hlukhiv, Putivl, Vyr, Rylsk, and other cities. At the end of 1239, the Mongol army approached Kyiv, but did not dare to storm it and retreated to the steppe.

In 1240, Batu's invasion reached the Kingdom of Galicia-Volhynia, which was united under the rule of Danylo Halytskyi. Just before the Mongol offensive, Kyiv was annexed to Danylo's possessions, and its administration was entrusted to the thousand-commander Dmytro. In the early summer, a large Mongol reconnaissance detachment appeared on the left bank of the Dnipro River and sent envoys to the city with a proposal to surrender, but Kyivans rejected the offer. Then, after careful preparation, in the late summer of 1240, a huge Mongol army from the south invaded the Kyiv principality. The first to be hit were the outposts of the fortress cities along the Ros River, which protected Kyiv from nomadic raids. After fierce resistance, all 23 fortresses were completely destroyed by the Mongols. Then the same fate befell the cities that directly protected Kyiv: Vitychiv, Vasyliv, Bilhorod, etc. On September 5, 1240, Batu approached the city walls and began a siege.

The struggle for the city was extremely fierce and bloody. It was only after Batu learned that the weakest point in Kyiv's defence was in the area of the Lyadsky Gate (Ukrainian: *Lyadska Brama*) that the Mongols were able to turn the tide in their favour. The bulk of the wall-breaking machines were concentrated in the area of these gates, which 'beat incessantly day and night'. Eventually, on November 19, 1240, gaps appeared in the city walls. The Mongols launched an assault. On the first day, they managed to capture the walls and rampart of Yaroslav's city, but could not advance further. Taking advantage of the break, the people of Kyiv created a new line of defence along the fortifications of the city of Volodymyr. On December 6, the Mongols broke through the fortifications near St. Sophia's Gate and approached the last line of defence of the city, which was erected by the defenders near the Church of the Tithes (Ukrainian: *Desiatynna tserkva*). The last defenders put up a desperate fight, but Batu again used siege machines. Under their blows, the stone walls of the Church of the Tithes collapsed, burying the last defenders under the rubble. Giovanni da Plano Carpini, an ambassador of Pope Innocent IV who passed through Kyiv in February 1246, left the following description of the consequences of the Mongol invasion of Kyiv: "When we were journeying through that land, we came across countless skulls and bones of dead men lying about on the ground"[27].

[26] *Plokhy S.* The gate of Europe. A history of Ukraine… P. 51.
[27] Ibidem.

After that, in 1241, Tatar-Mongol detachments moved deep into the Volhynia region and further into Galicia. One by one, Volodymyr, Halych, Zvenyhorod, and other cities were destroyed by the horde. However, the inhabitants of Kreminets, Kholm, and Danyliv resisted the enemy with determination. Batu failed to conquer these cities.

The next stage of Batu's conquest was the invasion of Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Transylvania. However, the horde was unable to continue its advance into Europe, as it was exhausted by the battles in Rus. In 1242, after learning of the death of Great Khan Udegei, Batu brought his troops to the lower Volga River, where he founded a new state, the Golden Horde[28].

In the **Cossack Era**, the confrontation with the East continued and resulted in a long and bloody ***confrontation with the Turks and Tatars (1478-1775)***.

One of the main reasons for the emergence of the Ukrainian Cossacks was the Turkish-Tatar expansion, which threatened the very existence of Ukrainians as a nation and European civilization. The Cossackship was shaped by the peculiar Ukrainian geopolitical situation, the place that Ukraine occupied on the map of Europe. Located on the border of civilization and the aggressive steppe, Ukraine has always produced a social stratum of warrior-defenders who protected both the territory of Ukraine and Europe from Turkish-Tatar expansion[29].

In 1478, the Crimean Khanate recognized the protectorate of the Ottoman Empire. Immediately after that, almost annual attacks on Ukrainian lands associated with Mengli Geray began. In 1482, Ukrainian lands in the steppes were devastated. Even earlier, that had happened to the Left Bank. It turned into a wasteland until the last quarter of the XVI century.

The defence of Europe by the Ukrainian Cossacks was most clearly demonstrated during the ***Khotyn War***. In the spring of 1621, a 160,000-strong[30]. Turkish army led by Sultan Osman II with 260 guns and 60,000 Tatars set out to defeat the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth (Rzeczpospolita). Due to the small size of the Polish army, which amounted to just over 30,000 people with 38 guns, the royal government turned to the Cossacks for help, promising to expand their rights and privileges. Since the Turkish-Tatar invasion threatened to enslave the Ukrainian people, the Cossack Council decided to provide assistance in the fight against the 'Busurmans' and, at the same time, to sent ambassadors headed by Petro Konashevych-Sahaidachny to the king for achieving its demands for the expansion of Cossack rights and the approval of the newly ordained higher Orthodox hierarchy in Ukraine. Thus, 40 thousand Cossacks moved to face the enemy. In order to disperse the Turkish forces, another 10 thousand Cossacks were sent to the Black Sea to intensify hostilities there.

The central point of the fighting was the fortress of Khotyn, where the Cossack army arrived on September 1, 1621. The next day, the Turks and Tatars approached the city and immediately attacked the Cossacks' positions, hoping that they did not have enough time to fortify their positions. However, the Turks and Tatars suffered heavy losses and were forced to retreat. Subsequently, the Turkish army attacked the Cossack camp almost continuously for a month, reasonably believing that victory over it would

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[28] *Терещенко Ю.І.* Україна і європейський світ…

[29] *Огнев'юк В., Відейко М.* Історичний досвід української цивілізації. *Світогляд.* 2022. № 4. С. 8.

[30] Here, in the text, are some more realistic figures, unlike the 300,000 and 500,000 that are found in various sources. *Сас П., Кіркене Г.* Хотинська битва 1621 – битва за Центральну Європу. Київ: Балтія-Друк, 2011. С. 74-79.

help them easily deal with the Poles. But, having lost about 80 thousand people, it was unable to take the fortresses.

On October 9, 1621, the Treaty of Khotyn, favourable to the Poles, was concluded that included the following provisions: 1) Poland's border with Turkey was established along the Dniester; 2) the Turks and Tatars undertook not to make plundering campaigns on the territory of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth; 3) the Polish government agreed to ban Cossack expeditions against the Crimea and Turkey[31].

The Battle of Khotyn did not bring a final victory to either side, but that uncertain outcome was seen in Warsaw as a triumph for the Kingdom of Poland. The Poles stopped a huge Turkish army near their borders and signed a peace treaty that did not provide for any territorial losses. Everyone realized that without the Ukrainian Cossacks this outcome would have been almost impossible. For the first and short time, the Cossacks became the favourites of the entire Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth. Books that will soon appear will glorify Konashevych-Sahaidachny as one of the greatest Polish knights[32]. Unfortunately, Konashevych-Sahaidachny died on April 10, 1622, from a wound he received near Khotyn.

Paradoxically, the Cossacks did not benefit from their victory, despite their self-sacrifice, when they not only saved the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth from defeat but also dispelled the myth of Turkey's invincibility and, having significantly weakened the latter, forced it to abandon its plans to conquer Europe. Poland failed to fulfil even the modest Cossack demands, including payment of regular wages, provision for the disabled, withdrawal of the crown troops from the Kyiv province, and permission to enter the Black Sea.

The most poeticized symbol of Cossack valour and courage in the fight against Tatar-Turkish raids was Cossack Otaman Ivan Sirko. During his otamanship from 1659 to 1680, Sirko participated in 55 battles and won everywhere, not counting the many small skirmishes with enemies that were also won, but not recorded in the chronicles. The Turkish sultan issued a firman (decree) on prayers in mosques for his death.

In 1775, the Zaporozhian Sich was destroyed by order of Empress Catherine II and the legendary confrontation between the Cossacks and the Turks and Tatars ended. A new, imperial era was coming.

During the **Ukrainian Revolution of 1917-1921**, not only the first and second Soviet-Ukrainian wars took place, but also the struggle against the realization of the ***Bolsheviks' World Revolution***, which started to be actively implemented after the October Revolution of 1917. It was widely used by Bolshevik leaders, allowing Russian revolutionaries, on the one hand, to count on the support of European Marxists, and on the other hand, to actively interfere in the affairs of other states, helping local communists to prepare anti-government protests. For these purposes, a special international organization, the Comintern (Communist International), was created. It was the Ukrainians who were able to protect Europe from the realization of the idea of the World Revolution.

Soon after the Bolsheviks seized power in Russia, Marxists in many countries felt the ability to bring about global political change. Many of them believed that the World Revolution would take place in the near future. On March 2, 1919, in his speech at the opening of the First Congress of the Communist International, Lenin said: "…victory is

[31] *Сас П., Кіркене Г.* Хотинська битва 1621… С. 123-124.
[32] *Plokhy S.* The gate of Europe. A history of Ukraine… P. 82-83.

ours, the victory of the world communist revolution is assured"[33]. A few days later, on March 6, during the closing of the Congress, he expressed his opinion more clearly: "The victory of the proletarian revolution throughout the world is assured. The foundation of the international Soviet Republic is coming"[34].

The 'export' of the World Revolution to Europe was hindered by the massive Ukrainian insurgency, which bled the Bolshevik troops and prevented them from moving westward.

The cessation of regular military operations in Ukraine in November 1920 did not end the war, as the Ukrainian rebellious peasantry continued to fight. The French researcher Alain Besançon noted that in terms of its scale and danger to the Bolshevik government, the peasant war was more massive and national than the civil war[35]. At the beginning of 1921, Lenin was forced to openly admit the involvement "in a new form of war, a new kind of war, which can be summarized by the word 'banditry'"[36].

The insurgency covered the whole of Ukraine, so it is difficult to clearly identify the areas of greatest activity. However, we believe that the South was distinguished by a high level of organization and mass uprisings, as the Right Bank Ukraine and the Left Bank Ukraine were deprived of a universally recognized leader of the rebellious peasantry (although almost all of them verbally recognized the supremacy of Symon Petliura). A paradoxical situation arose in the south and southeast of Ukraine, when the ideas of communism and anarchism were adopted by peasants who opposed the government, which also promoted communist ideas. The most colourful figure in Southern Ukraine was 'father' Makhno. The bulk of the rebels grouped around him, so the peasant movement in this region was called 'anarcho-Makhnovshchyna'[37].

The organized insurgency of the Ukrainian people lasted until 1923, when the Bolsheviks killed the main insurgent commanders of Ukraine. The insurgent anti-Bolshevik resistance of the Ukrainian people forced the Bolsheviks to reconsider their policy of exporting the World Revolution. At the Fifth Congress of the Comintern on June 17, 1924, Grigorii Zinoviev stated: "…there is no victory yet, and we will have to conquer 5/6 of the earth's landmass in order to have a Union of Soviet Socialist Republics throughout the world"[38].

Since 1991, the stage of modern Ukrainian state-building has begun, when the historical mission of the Ukrainian Shield was fully manifested during *the Russian-Ukrainian war*. In February 2014. In February 2014, the Russian federation started a war with Ukraine, invading its territory from the south – the Crimean Peninsula. Since then, for a long eight years and until the new full-scale invasion in February 2022, the Russian-Ukrainian war continued with different waves of aggravation and forms and, of course, had several different periods. The most complete and objective periodization of the Russian-Ukrainian war is presented in the publications of the Ukrainian historian Pavlo Hai-Nyzhnyk[39]:

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[33] *Ленін В.* Повне зібрання творів. Київ: Політвидав, 1973. Т. 37. С. 468.
[34] Ibid. С. 488.
[35] *Безансон А.* Війна більшовиків проти селян. *Всесвіт.* 1993. № 9-10. С. 129.
[36] *Ленін В.* Повне зібрання творів. Київ: Політвидав, 1974. Т. 43. С. 9.
[37] *Ганжа О.І.* Українське село в період становлення тоталітарного режиму (1917-1927 рр.). Київ: НАН України Інститут історії України, 2000. С. 134.
[38] *Горін Н.* Радянська економічна інтеграція чи індустріальний колоніалізм? *Heinrich-Böll Stiftung*. 2022. 1 вересня. URL: https://bit.ly/3u7I7ar
[39] *Гай-Нижник П.* Російсько-українська війна – Війна за Життя (2014-2022 рр.): періодизація. *Українознавство.* 2022. № 1. С. 53-66.

Period I: *Occupation and annexation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea* (February 20 – March 24, 2014) – 'Front without Resistance';

Period II: *Anti-terrorist operation* (March 1 (officially – April 13) – August 24, 2014) – 'The Internal Front';

Period III: *Russia's invasion of Donbas* (August 24, 2014 – February 19, 2015) – 'Eastern Front: The Donbas Battlefield';

Period IV: *Positional war* (February 20, 2015 – September 20, 2016) – 'Eastern Front: The Minsk Trap';

Period V: *'Fragile' war* (September 20, 2016 – May 20, 2019) – 'Eastern Front: 'The Normandy' Trenches';

Period VI: *Waiting war* (May 20, 2019 – February 23, 2022) – 'The Eastern Front: The Workaround to Peace'.

The period VII of the Russian-Ukrainian war began at 5 a.m. on February 24, 2022, after Vladimir Putin announced a 'special operation' in Ukraine that became a signal for intensive shelling of Ukrainian Armed Forces units in the east. At the same time, Russian troops crossed the north-eastern border, launched missile and bomb attacks on military command centres, airports in Boryspil, Ozerne, Kulbakyne, Chuhuiv, Kramatorsk, and Chornobaivka, as well as on military warehouses and facilities of the Armed Forces of Ukraine throughout Ukraine. The bombing also began in Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Dnipro, Mykolaiv, Mariupol, Berdiansk, Vasylkiv, and other cities and towns. Thus, Russia launched a massive missile strike against Ukraine and started a land offensive from the north (Belarus and Russia), south (Crimea), and east (occupied Donbas). Ukraine's information and communication technology (ICT) infrastructure deteriorated as a result of cyber attacks and bombings. On the very first day of the war, the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine unanimously approved the introduction of martial law. Several Ukrainian cities were occupied. The Chornobyl nuclear power station was also seized. Late in the evening of the first day of the Russian offensive, on February 24, a decree on general mobilization signed by President Volodymyr Zelenskyi was made public[40].

Putin's Russia was hoping for a blitzkrieg and the complete defeat of Ukraine. It is interesting to analyse certain historical parallels (a kind of 'magic of numbers'). On February 24, 1991, the ground phase of the Desert Storm military operation, carried out by multinational coalition forces led by the United States, began. It lasted 100 hours (from 4:00 a.m. on February 24 to 8:00 a.m. on February 28) and ended with the defeat of Iraq and the liberation of Kuwait's territory[41]. Putin started a treacherous aggressive war against Ukraine at almost the same time of the morning, day and month, but – 31 years after the described events. Obviously, his main hopes were for the first 3-4 days of the war.

The current treacherous aggressive war of the Russian Federation against Ukraine is another attempt to cross out everything Ukrainian in the European and world civilization space, to appropriate the Ukrainian historical discourse in its broadest sense[42].

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[40] Ibid. C. 69.

[41] *Cleveland W.L., Bunton M.* A History of the Modern Middle East. Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009. 450 p.

[42] *Киридон А.М., Троян С.С.* Цивілізаційна війна 2014-2022 рр.: національно-визвольна війна України XXI століття (теоретичний дискурс). *The Russian-Ukrainian war (2014-2022): Historical, political, cultural-educational, religious, economic, and legal aspects: Scientific monograph.* Riga, Latvia: Baltija Publishing, 2022. C. 528.

For more than a year since February 2022, the Ukrainian people, with the help of their allies, have been heroically deterring the military aggression of Russian militarism (the newest Moscow horde of the XXI century), protecting Europe and the world. Ukraine, like a thousand years ago, has once again become the Rubicon that separates peace from war, light from darkness, democratic dignity from totalitarian despotism, and finally, civilization from barbarism.

CONCLUSIONS

For more than 1155 years, the Ukrainian Crystal Shield has been a shield for European civilization, protecting it from destruction by various enemies. This process began in 867, when the legendary Kyivan Princes Askold and Dir defeated the Pechenegs, and continues in 2023, when Ukrainians stop the latest Moscow horde that threatens the whole world.

The periodization of the Ukrainian Shield, developed on the basis of the Ukrainian statehood stages, may be shaped in the following way:

Stage I. Princely Statehood:

- wars with the Pechenegs (867-1036);
- the struggle against the Torks (1055-1060);
- confrontation with the Polovtsians (1060-1238);
- the struggle with the Mongol-Tatars (1223-1241).

Stage II. Cossack Era:

- confrontation with the Turks and Tatars (1478-1775).

Stage III. The Ukrainian National Revolution:

- the struggle of the Ukrainian insurgency against the realization of the Bolsheviks' World Revolution idea (1917-1923).

Stage IV. The Modern Ukrainian Independent State:

- the Russian-Ukrainian war (2014-2023).

The Ukrainian shield protected European civilization from the Pechenegs, Torks, Polovtsians, Mongol-Tatars, Turks, Bolsheviks, and continues to protect it from Russian aggression since February 24, 2022. A bloody war has lasted for 667 years out of the past 1155 years of confrontation with the East that has required and continues to require enormous effort, material and human resources from Ukrainians. This is the historical mission of Ukraine.

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