

The Clash of Civilisations? Religion as a Major Component of Cultural Differentiation on the Example of Belarus and Poland

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Abstract

This comparative study investigates the role of religion as an important factor in shaping political and economic mental models, focusing on the contexts of Belarus and Poland. It builds upon Samuel Huntington's thesis, which posits that cultural and religious differences are fundamental to civilisational conflicts. By analysing how Catholicism and Orthodoxy have shaped the divergent mentalities of these neighbouring nations, this research highlights the long-lasting influence of religious traditions on societal development. Employing a mixed-methods approach, including CATI surveys, statistical analyses, and historical comparisons, the study identifies significant differences in political and economic behaviours between Belarusians and Poles. These disparities underline the long-term impact of religion on attitudes toward power, property, and individualism. The findings contribute to a nuanced understanding of how religious values not only define societal norms but also shape national trajectories and contemporary geopolitical alignments. This research underscores the enduring relevance of religion in explaining cultural dynamics and civilisational divides in Eastern Europe.

Keywords: religion, civilisation, mental models, Belarus, Poland

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Introduction

The role of religion in shaping cultural and societal norms has long been a topic of scholarly interest. Although religion is not the only factor that shapes mentality, it is a factor of particular importance. For centuries, religious teachings have shaped mentality and visions of what society and authority look like and should look like. Religions have shaped attitudes towards work, wealth and money. They have defined the role of the individual in society and what is fair or unfair. The teachings and ideas preached by religions are deeply rooted in the mentality of modern people, despite secularisation trends.

More than thirty years ago, Samuel P. Huntington (1993; 1996) posited that cultural differences between major civilisations would be the main cause of conflict in the world in the 21st century. While initial critiques dismissed this notion in favour of a more unified global trajectory, contemporary geopolitical tensions between the West and Russia appear to validate Huntington's thesis. This divide can be further understood through the contrasting trajectories of Poland and Belarus. As neighbouring nations with shared historical experiences yet distinct religious and cultural frameworks, they serve as compelling case studies of Huntington's thesis in action. In the context of Eastern Europe, the religious traditions of Catholicism in Poland and Orthodoxy in Belarus provide tangible examples of how civilisational differences manifest in cultural and societal norms.

Although the reality of the 1990s did not indicate this – there was talk of megatrends such as the democratisation of political systems and the transition to a free market in most countries, while Francis Fukuyama (1992) prophesied the 'End of History' – the contemporary world seems closer to Huntington's vision.

In Europe, Russia's war with Ukraine is currently underway. The West (Western civilisation) and Russia, together with the countries subordinate to it, such as Belarus, are in open conflict arguably even more intense than during the Cold War. Today, the political and economic systems of the countries belonging to these two civilisations are axiologically different and, in the case of political systems, completely different. Huntington (1996) pointed to religion as one of the main factors that shape culture within a civilisation. This study situates itself within this discourse by analysing the mental models of two nations – Belarus and Poland – that sit at the crossroads of Western Catholic and Eastern Orthodox civilisations.

The differing affiliations – Catholicism in Poland and Orthodoxy in Belarus – offer a clear lens to observe how religion shapes societal models and aligns with Huntington's vision of civilisational fault lines.

Poland and Belarus share a complex historical relationship, marked by periods of political union, cultural exchange, and subsequent division. This shared history includes the medieval Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, a multi-ethnic and multi-religious entity that was heavily influenced by both Catholic and Orthodox traditions (Davies 2005). However, with the partitions of Poland and the rise of the Russian Empire, the religious landscape shifted significantly, particularly in Belarus, where Orthodox Christianity became the dominant religious force. In contrast, Poland remained a bastion of Catholicism, deeply intertwined with its sense of national identity, particularly during foreign occupation and communist rule. As a result, religious

identity in both countries has become a powerful tool for political mobilisation and national consolidation, contributing to the formation of distinctive mental and behavioural characteristics in their populations (Pospielovsky 1988; Riasanovsky 2011). *This divergence prompts a central question: How has religion shaped the mentalities of Belarusians and Poles, and what implications does this have for their respective political and economic trajectories?* **This framework directly informs the hypothesis of this study: that the Catholic and Orthodox traditions in Poland and Belarus have cultivated divergent mental models, influencing attitudes toward power, property, and individualism.**

This article employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating CATI (Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview) survey data, statistical analysis, and historical context to investigate these questions. Specifically, it examines how religious traditions influence key mental variables, including attitudes toward power, property, individualism, and social trust. By exploring these variables, the study aims to illuminate the broader cultural and civilisational dynamics at play in Eastern Europe. This study uniquely integrates mental models into the analysis of civilisational differences rooted in religious traditions, specifically Catholicism in Poland and Orthodoxy in Belarus, offering new insights into Eastern European cultural dynamics.

The objective is to analyse how Catholicism and Orthodoxy influence mental variables, including attitudes toward power, property, and individualism, and to assess their implications for the political and economic systems of Poland and Belarus.

The Complex Interplay of Religion, Culture, and Economic Development

Mental models are subjective frameworks through which individuals and societies interpret the world, make decisions, and interact with their environment (Johnson-Laird and Byrne 1993, pp. 323–380). They shape attitudes toward various societal factors, including power, property, and social relationships. Civilisations, as defined by Huntington (1996), are the highest cultural groupings of people, characterised by shared religion, language, customs, and institutions. While they ensure the stability of social systems, they can also perpetuate inertia (Rosenbaum 2022, pp. 1–18). Culture, defined as the values and beliefs transmitted across generations, evolves slowly, remaining largely stable within individuals' lifetimes (Becker 1996; Guiso, Sapienza, and Zingales 2006, pp. 23–48). The robust intergenerational transmission of cultural values often persists even when these values prove ineffective (Grusec and Kuczynski 1997). Oded Galor (2022) points to cultural characteristics as a significant factor that influences the development of societies and explains inequalities between them. Among the critical components of culture, religion seems to play a pivotal role. Religious teachings, philosophical tenets, and ethical norms influence political behaviour and, directly or indirectly, economic productivity (Barro and Sala-i-Martin 2004). Politics and economics, deeply interlinked, shape and condition each other (Porter M. 2000, pp. 14–28).

Religion profoundly shapes societal mentalities, influencing values, behaviours, and institutions. Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* highlights Protestantism's emphasis on hard work and frugality as foundational to capitalism. Studies like that of Guiso,

Sapienza, and Zingales (2003) affirm religiosity's role in fostering trust and cooperation, crucial for economic success. However, Barro and McCleary (2003) caution against excessive dogmatism, which can hinder innovation and economic freedom.

Religious doctrines also affect human capital through education and health. Protestant missionaries historically advanced literacy and economic development (Woodberry 2012, pp. 244–274), while McCleary and Barro (2006) connect community health improvements to religious influence. Yet, doctrines that prioritise spiritual over material pursuits may deter entrepreneurship and education (Noland 2005, pp. 1215–1232).

Religious values underpin political and economic institutions. North (1990) links religious ethics with governance quality, noting that Protestant traditions emphasise accountability. Conversely, Kuran (2004) critiques rigid theocratic systems for restricting innovation and market freedoms. Harrison (2006) argues that cultural factors, including religious beliefs, significantly shape economic performance, with traditions valuing education and work ethic often correlating with stronger economies.

In *The Clash of Civilisations*, Samuel Huntington (1996) posits that religion shapes cultural identities, influencing governance and economic trajectories. For instance, Christianity's emphasis on individualism supports economic dynamism in Western civilisations, while collective-focused Islamic and Orthodox traditions yield differing outcomes. Huntington warns that rigid religious systems can stifle innovation and exacerbate economic divides, as seen in conflicts over secularism and financial systems between Western and Islamic civilisations.

Mental models, shaped by cultural and religious influences, embody subjective worldviews that guide decision-making and social systems (Johnson-Laird and Byrne 1993, pp. 323–380; Rosenbaum 2022, pp. 1–18). Despite cultural evolution, intergenerational transmission of values ensures religion's enduring impact, even in secularising societies (Becker 1996; Grusec and Kuczynski 1997).

Religion's role is particularly significant where it intertwines with national identity, as seen in Poland and Belarus. In Poland, Catholicism has historically symbolised resistance against oppression, preserving national identity through foreign partitions, Nazi occupation, and Soviet influence. The Catholic Church's activism, epitomised by the Solidarity movement, shaped Poland's transition from communism and continues to inform its conservative policies (Kubik 1994; Porter B. 2000).

In contrast, Belarus reflects the Orthodox Church's alignment with state power, fostering conformity and loyalty to the authoritarian regime of Alexander Lukashenko (Rudling 2014). This alignment mirrors the Russian model, where religion reinforces state narratives, shaping a deferential societal mentality (Stoeckl 2014).

These divergent trajectories, rooted in distinct religious traditions, underline the interplay between cultural, political, and economic factors. Despite a shared history as part of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth, differences in governance, international alignment, and economic structures persist. Poland, representing Western civilisation, exemplifies democracy and market

integration as an EU and NATO member, while Belarus, aligned with the Slavic Orthodox world, remains authoritarian with a regulated economy.

This article examines how these religious and cultural influences shape mental models related to political and economic behaviour in Poland and Belarus. Following Huntington's thesis, we hypothesise that Christianity's denominational differences have played a pivotal role in moulding long-lasting societal values, attitudes, and laws (Williamson 2000, pp. 595–613). This analysis identifies the mental variables most significantly impacted by religion, providing insights into the enduring interplay of culture and economics in shaping national trajectories.

Religion's impact is particularly pronounced in contexts where it intertwines with national identity, culture, and politics. Poland and Belarus, as neighbouring nations, offer a compelling study of how Catholicism and Orthodoxy – two branches of Christianity – have shaped societal trajectories. These religious traditions continue to influence political, social, and economic dynamics, embedding collective mentalities and shaping responses to authority and cohesion (Casanova 1994; Ramet 2006).

In Poland, Catholicism has historically symbolised resistance to foreign domination, preserving national identity through periods of partition, Nazi occupation, and Soviet control. The Catholic Church's opposition to state power nurtured a tradition of social activism, epitomised by the Solidarity movement of the 1980s, which contributed to the fall of communism (Stokes 1993; Porter B. 2000). Today, Catholic values of independence and moral responsibility influence Poland's conservative stances on immigration, European integration, and relations with Russia (Kubik 1994). Recent research shows that the political relevance of religiosity, especially in Poland, may be more nuanced than traditionally assumed. For instance, Olejnik and Wroński (2025) argue that electoral preferences in highly religious regions are shaped more by economic underdevelopment than by religiosity itself.

Conversely, Belarus exhibits a contrasting trajectory. The Orthodox Church has traditionally aligned closely with state power, functioning as a tool of propaganda and control during Tsarist Russian imperial and Soviet eras (Payne 2011). During the Soviet era, the communist authorities initially brutally suppressed the Orthodox Church. Atheism was part of communist ideology. However, it soon became apparent that it was difficult to completely eradicate religion from people's lives. The Orthodox Church was therefore allowed to function in a limited capacity, while at the same time being widely used as another tool for surveillance of society (Mironowicz 2001).

In contemporary Belarus, this alignment persists, with the Church supporting the authoritarian regime of Alexander Lukashenko, reinforcing loyalty to the state and promoting narratives that align with government objectives (Rudling 2014; Stoeckl 2014). This collaboration fosters a passive societal mentality, linking religious identity to political conformity (Marples 2014). What is more, the modern Belarusian Orthodox Church has its patriarch in Moscow. The Belarusian Orthodox Church is therefore essentially the Moscow Orthodox Church. It, in turn, is at the service of President Putin and is an integral part of the regime's propaganda machine (Köllner 2021).

According to the 2021 census, there were 27.1 million Catholics in Poland. This accounted for 71.3% of the population, although it represents a decrease compared to 2011, when 87.6% of the population (33.7 million people) declared themselves to be Catholic. In 2021, 6.87% of the Polish population declared themselves atheists. Additionally, 20.57% of people refused to answer the question about their religion (Statistics Poland 2012; 2022).

Although information on religion is currently unavailable on Belstat, it can be found through other official sources: from 2019, there were 6.87 million Orthodox Christians in Belarus. This accounted for 73% of the population and represents a decrease compared to 2009, when 81% (7.7 million people) declared themselves Orthodox. In 2019, 14.3% of the Belarusian population declared themselves atheists (Гурко, Мартинович 2025). According to the World Values Survey Cultural Map (World Values Survey 2023), Belarus belongs to “Orthodox Europe,” which differs from “Catholic Europe,” which contains Poland. Therefore, these nations can exemplify Huntington’s (1996) thesis on the role of religion in defining civilisations.

This article examines the influence of the two denominations of Christianity (Orthodox and Catholic) on the political and economic mentalities of Belarus and Poland. Drawing on Huntington’s framework, we hypothesise that religious traditions, particularly Catholicism and Orthodoxy, have profoundly shaped long-standing societal values, attitudes, and laws (Williamson 2000, pp. 595–613).

Methodology and Survey¹

This study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative CATI surveys with historical and statistical analysis. The aim of the first stage of the study (the CATI survey) was to outline the political and economic mentality (understood as a set of unconscious and conscious attitudes, ways of thinking and, consequently, behaviour) of Belarusians and Poles. Mentality is analysed based on the structure of behavioural and thinking stereotypes that are responsible for reducing uncertainty in the external world, building relationships (cooperation) with others, and for being open to new experiences.

This study should be understood as a pilot empirical investigation carried out in cooperation with a licensed sociological research agency as part of a larger project funded by the Polish National Centre for Research and Development (NCBR). While the sample sizes ($N = 282$ for Belarus and $N = 252$ for Poland) are not statistically representative in the strict probabilistic sense, they provide valuable exploratory insight into mental patterns and are adequate for identifying trends and formulating hypotheses for further research.

The survey was conducted using the CATI method by trained interviewers. Participants were selected according to predefined quota sampling criteria to ensure balance in terms of age groups

¹ The sociological research was conducted as part of the NCBR project implemented at the University of Lodz. The fieldwork for the sociological study was carried out at the Belarusian Analytical Workshop Foundation (Fundacja Białoruska Pracownia Analityczna), and the survey results were analysed by the authors.

and regional distribution across voivodeships (in Poland) and oblasts (in Belarus). The recruitment and interviews were conducted in the respondents' native languages.

The survey questions were developed in close collaboration with sociologists from the research agency and were carefully designed to align with the study's conceptual framework. Special attention was paid to minimising sensitivity, ensuring that the items could effectively capture key political and economic mental variables without causing discomfort to respondents. The issue of potential self-censorship among Belarusian respondents due to the authoritarian context was indeed carefully considered during the design phase of the survey, and this specific concern was discussed in detail with the research agency.

To address it, the questionnaire was deliberately formulated in a way that minimises the sensitivity of politically charged topics. In particular, questions related to "Attitudes to Power" and governance were framed indirectly. Rather than asking about political authority or government structures, we used proxy questions referring to perceptions of superiors and decision-making processes in workplace settings. This approach, developed in collaboration with the experienced sociologists, was intended to reduce the perceived risk for respondents while still allowing us to access the core dimensions of the construct.

No survey weights were applied, as the study aimed at exploratory and comparative rather than population-level generalisations. The objective was not to produce statistically representative population estimates, but to examine attitudinal patterns and test the conceptual framework. Future representative studies may incorporate appropriate weighting techniques.

The response rate was estimated at approximately 25–30%, which is typical for CATI surveys. The data collection was conducted by a professional sociological research agency, following established recruitment and quality assurance procedures.

The research focuses on two populations: Belarusians and Poles, whose political and economic mentalities were evaluated to assess the influence of religious traditions (Orthodoxy and Catholicism) on key mental variables. The survey was designed to capture mental variables associated with political and economic attitudes. Respondents were presented with 13 carefully crafted statements, each corresponding to a specific mental variable.

While cross-national surveys such as the World Values Survey (WVS) and European Social Survey (ESS) provide invaluable large-scale data, the added value of our study lies in its specific theoretical focus, contextual adaptation, and conceptual coherence tailored to the Belarusian–Polish comparison.

First, unlike the WVS, which covers a broad and diverse range of topics, our survey is theory-driven. It focuses specifically on key mental dimensions of political and economic culture, such as Locus of Control, Power Distance, Attitudes to Property, and Uncertainty Avoidance, all selected and formulated based on a unified conceptual framework. This enhances the depth and interpretability of results within the targeted domain.

Participants provided their level of agreement on a seven-point Likert scale, allowing for nuanced responses.

Key mental variables assessed include:

1. Political Mentality: Locus of Control (internal vs. external); Individualism vs. Collectivism; Power Distance (acceptance of authority and inequality)
 2. Economic Mentality: Attitudes toward Property (private vs. public ownership); Attitudes toward Work (effort and success correlation); The Role of the State in the Economy (market vs. interventionism); Short- vs. Long-Term Orientation; Attitudes to Uncertainty (openness to innovation vs. conservatism); Social Trust
- **Belarus Sample (N = 282):**
 - Gender: female (53.9%), male 45.4%.
 - Age distribution: 18–30 years (17%), 31–45 years (29.1%), 46–60 years (27.3%), 61+ years (25.9%).
 - Education: primary (4.6%), secondary (30.5%), technical/vocational (39.4%), higher (24.8%).
 - Religious Affiliation: Orthodox (74.8%), Catholic (17.7%), Jewish (2.8%), Muslim (0.4%), others.
 - **Poland Sample (N = 252):**
 - Gender: female (52%), male (48%)
 - Age distribution: 18–24 years (8.33%), 25–29 years (7.14%), 30–39 years (19.05%), 40–49 years (18.65%), 50–60 years (14.68%), 61+ years (32.15%)
 - Education: primary (24.6%), secondary (32.54%), technical/vocational, higher (23.41%)
 - Religious Affiliation: Catholic (76.59%), Orthodox (1.59%), others.

Responses were analysed using the Chi-Square test to determine statistical significance in differences between the two populations.

Findings of the CATI survey

The findings from this study show significant differences in the mental models of these societies (see Tables 1 and 2). In the following section, we explain how Poland's Catholic traditions have fostered individual agency and democratic values, while Belarus's Orthodox heritage has reinforced collective thinking and deference to state authority.

The systemic elements of mentality were selected based on the research of the Culture Factor Group (2025) and the World Values Survey (2023). They were divided into two categories: political mentality and socio-economic mentality.

The first variable refers to a fundamental psychological parameter, the locus of control. It indicates the extent to which a person is convinced that they have a say in what happens to them. It can oscillate between two extremes: I am the sole author of my fate, or everything that affects me does not depend on me. This parameter is of paramount importance. Among other things, it determines the level of entrepreneurship, the propensity to innovate, participation in political life, and the sense of responsibility for oneself and the state. The differences between the two countries on this issue are

very pronounced. More than 71% of Poles place control over their lives ‘within’ (i.e., they feel they are in charge of their lives); only about one-tenth of respondents say they are not ‘the master of their own destiny’. In contrast, 40% of Belarusian respondents place control ‘within’ and almost as many ‘outside’.

Table 1. Comparative characteristics of the political mentality of Belarusians and Poles (based on the 2023 survey)

Mental variables	Belarus	Poland	Statistical significance of differences (χ^2 values and p-values)
Locus of control (1)	40.8% believe they have a say in their own destiny (internal locus of control). 37.2% believe the opposite (external locus of control) – permission to be passive.	71.0% believe that they have a say in their own destiny (internal locus of control). 9.5% believe the opposite (external locus of control) – permission to be passive.	64.8342 p < 0.00001
Individualism vs. collectivism (2)	50.0% represent typically individualistic values. 33.0% represent typically collectivist values.	64.7% represent typically individualistic values. 17.1% represent typically collectivist values.	18.3897 p = 0.000102
Attitude to power (power distance) (3)	62.4% accept the distance between society and authority and are willing to submit to its decisions, even though they disagree with them. 19.9% do not accept the distance to authority.	35.7% accept the distance that separates society and authority and are willing to submit to its decisions, even though they disagree with them. 31.0% do not accept the distance to authority.	38.4794 p < 0.00001

Source: CATI survey carried out as part of the NCBR project.

The second mental variable refers to the individuals’ mindset (individualism vs. collectivism). Individualism refers to the degree to which people feel independent, while collectivism refers to the degree to which people feel interdependent on other members of society. In individualistic societies, individual choices are accepted and socially expected, whereas in collectivistic societies, individuals need to ‘know their place’, and their choices are more determined by social expectations. Polish society is more individualistic than Belarusian society. Almost 65% of the Poles and 50% of the Belarusians agreed with the statement ‘Life is first and foremost about realising one’s goals’; 17.1% of Poles and 33.0% of Belarusians disagreed.

The third variable, ‘relation to power’ (distance to power), determines the extent to which members of society accept the inequalities that separate them from people with some kind of formal power. This applies to social relations at all levels (student–teacher, employee–boss, citizen–official/politician). Societies with higher levels of ‘power distance’ are more likely to accept authoritarian forms of government and consider them natural. Conversely, as the power distance decreases, support for authoritarianism declines, demands for democratisation of political life increase, and democratic systems are considered natural. The majority of Belarusians (62.4%) accept the distance that separates them from those holding some kind of power and are willing to submit to their decisions, even when they do not agree with them. In contrast, only

35.7% of Polish respondents feel this way. Meanwhile, 19.9% of Belarusians reject these inequalities compared to 31.0% of Poles. A greater distance to authority is characteristic of societies with a predominance of collectivist thinking and a greater external locus of control the Culture Factor Group (2025). Belarus and Poland seem to confirm these correlations.

Table 2. Comparative characteristics of the economic mentality of Belarusians and Poles (based on the 2023 survey)

Mental variables	Belarus	Poland	Statistical significance of differences (χ^2 values and p-values)
Attitude to property (4)	56.6% – private ownership is more efficient in the economy. 27.4% disagree.	58.7% – private ownership is more efficient in the economy. 23.0% disagree.	1.47 p = 0.226
Attitude to work (5)	41.5% – achieving wealth requires effort and honest work. 38.3% disagree.	53.6% – achieving wealth requires effort and honest work. 26.2% disagree.	10.1035 p = 0.001
Attitudes towards the role of the state in the economy (6)	69.5% support strict regulation and control of the economy by the state. 15.6% disagree.	40.5% support strict regulation and control of the economy by the state. 41.3% disagree.	52.6379 p < 0.00001
Short- or long-term orientation (7)	44.3% prefer to live according to short-term plans and goals. 42.2% say that the future is more important than the present and that life requires long-term planning.	39.3% prefer to live according to short-term plans and goals. 34.1% say that the future is more important than the present and that life requires long-term planning.	14.7006 p = 0.001
Attitude to uncertainty (openness to innovation and new experiences versus tradition and conservatism) (8)	45.0% declare openness to new developments. 36.5% are cautious about new developments; 60.6% believe that tradition plays an important role in their lives. 19.9% do not consider tradition to be important. 62.8% need clear rules and find it difficult to function under uncertainty. 19.1% accept orders created spontaneously.	35.3% declare openness to new developments. 31.3% are cautious about new solutions; 69.4% believe that tradition plays an important role in their lives. 14.7% do not consider tradition to be important. 76.2% need clear rules and find it difficult to function under uncertainty. 7.9% accept orders created spontaneously.	15.93 p = 0.0003
Social trust (9)	29.4% say that most people can be trusted. 48.9% are of the opinion that most people cannot be trusted.	38.1% say that most people can be trusted. 32.1% are of the opinion that most people cannot be trusted.	15.5847 p = 0.0004

Source: CATI survey carried out as part of the NCBR project.

The fourth variable (see Table 2), attitude to ownership, is a basic element of economic mentality and a key element of views on how the economy should be arranged. It determines the extent to which society believes that private property is natural and unquestionable, and that the economic system should take this into account. The majority of respondents (about 60%) from both countries were in favour of private ownership (Poles slightly more than Belarusians),

describing it as 'better' than state ownership. However, state ownership was unequivocally favoured by a large number of respondents, with many people in both countries supporting state ownership (27.4% of Belarusians and 23.0% of Poles).

The fifth variable, 'attitude to work', refers to the adoption of certain life attitudes and strategies that are perceived as effective and profitable. Adopting more of a 'hard work' strategy as a recipe for success in life will imply social demands for the system to respect private property and economic freedom. Here, there is no similarity between countries. Almost 40% of Belarusians believe that hard work, career planning and saving are not effective strategies. The same number (just over 40%) hold the opposite view. More than 50% of Poles declare that they rely on honest work, saving and planning for the future in their lives. Nevertheless, 26.2% consider these attitudes to be ineffective.

The sixth variable, 'attitudes towards the role of the state in the economy', refers to the age-old dilemma of 'how much market and how much state,' and it directly relates to social system preferences: liberalism vs. interventionism. Here, there were significant differences of opinion. Almost 70% of Belarusians believe that the economy requires strict regulation and control by the state (and only about 16% disagree). Polish society, on the other hand, is almost symmetrically polarised on this issue – 40% of respondents are in favour of strong state intervention, and the same number are against it. The Poles' experience bears the stigma of socialism, although not as much as that of the Belarusians.

The seventh variable, 'short-term or long-term orientation', indicates whether people plan and how far their plans go. Belarusian society is symmetrically polarised: 44.3% prefer to live according to short-term plans, while 42.2% say that the future is more important than the present and that life requires planning. Poles are similar, except that fewer respondents are decisive: 39.3% live for the moment or plan for the short term, while 34.1% make long-term plans.

Variable eight describes people's attitudes to uncertainty. It includes openness to new experiences and innovation, attitudes to tradition, and the level of conservatism. Belarusian society is more open to novelties. Openness is declared by 45.0% of Belarusians (Poles 35.3%), while 36.5% have the opposite attitude (Poles 31.3%). Both societies are attached to tradition (60.6% of Belarusians and 69.4% of Poles), and people need clear rules to function (62.8% of Belarusians and 76.2% of Poles). The stronger the need for clear rules, the greater the demand for a system that respects property rights and freedom of contract.

The ninth variable is social trust. Among other things, it influences how business is done in a country. When people trust each other, the transaction costs of operating on the market are lower than when they do not trust each other. This variable also reflects political behaviour. When public trust is low, people do not trust politicians and the government, and the government does not trust the public. In such a system, control is socially required and accepted, and transaction costs are high at every level of functioning – markets, organisations, and the political system. In comparison with the level of social trust achieved in Western countries, Poland fares badly (32.1% of respondents are of the opinion that most people cannot be trusted) and Belarus very badly (almost half declare a lack of trust in people).

When comparing the political attitudes of Poles and Belarusians, distinct patterns emerge that align with Huntington's civilisational thesis. The divergence in mental models underscores the role of religion as a cultural foundation that shapes societal norms and governance structures. For example, while Polish respondents consistently displayed higher levels of trust in non-governmental organisations and civic activism, Belarusian respondents exhibited stronger loyalty to centralised authority, reflecting the Orthodox Church's historical alignment with state power. The influence of religion on mental variables related to economic behaviour does not seem to be direct or particularly strong. Material living and economic conditions may be of significant importance in this case.

To summarise this part of the article, the research reveals significant differences in both political and economic mentalities between Belarusians and Poles. We found the most profound differences are in the mental variables we categorised as 'political mentality': locus of control, individualistic vs. collectivistic thinking, and power distance. These subtle traits are first shaped in childhood within the family environment during the upbringing process. They are among the basic components of a worldview in which religion plays a crucial formative role.

Regarding economic mentalities, there are also generally more differences than similarities. Poles and Belarusians have similar attitudes to property, wealth and inequality (acceptance of redistribution), attitudes to tradition, and the predominance of short-term orientation. However, this is where the similarities end. The economic mentality is generally formed a little later than in childhood (also as a result of interacting with the environment outside the family). Therefore, in our opinion, the differences in mentality were and are influenced by different historical experiences – religion is also relevant here, but not as much as in the case of 'political mentality'. Economic mentality develops over slightly shorter periods (over two to four generations) and is greatly influenced by material living conditions and their variability. Both countries have experienced significant institutional changes over the last 100–150 years. However, recent studies indicate that Belarus has been and continues to be poorer than Poland (Markevich 2019; Bukowski, Kowalski, and Wroński 2025a; 2025b). The climate, population density, and proportion of urban dwellers are also important factors. In this respect, Belarus has fared worse than Poland over the last few generations.

This analysis demonstrates how religious traditions, deeply embedded in the historical and cultural contexts of Belarus and Poland, have shaped the divergent mentalities of these societies. Catholicism in Poland has contributed to values such as individualism, low power distance, and personal agency, fostering a democratic ethos and liberal economic attitudes. Orthodoxy in Belarus has reinforced collectivist values, acceptance of authority, and reliance on state structures, contributing to a preference for centralised governance and economic regulation. While historical experiences and socio-political systems also play crucial roles, religion emerges as a foundational influence, particularly in shaping the political mentality of both societies.

These results reveal a profound interplay between religion and societal behaviour, affirming the study's hypothesis and objectives. By shaping perceptions of power, property, and individual agency, religious traditions continue to influence not only the mentalities of Poles and Belarusians but also their broader geopolitical orientations. The Catholic emphasis on moral responsibility and resistance to authority aligns Poland with Western democratic ideals, while Belarus's Orthodox values of collectivism and loyalty to authority anchor it within the Slavic Orthodox civilisation.

Table 3. Comparative Analysis of Mentality Differences and Religious Influence in Belarus and Poland

Aspect of Mentality	Explanation of Religious Influence
Locus of Control	Poles demonstrate a strong internal locus of control, believing in personal agency and accountability. This belief is rooted in Catholic teachings that highlight moral responsibility and individual choice. In contrast, Belarusians tend to lean towards an external locus of control, influenced by Orthodox doctrines that promote acceptance of fate and humility towards higher powers. This divergence contributes to Poland's more active and participatory political culture compared to Belarus's tendency to passively accept authoritarian rule.
Individualism vs. Collectivism	The strong individualism present in Poland aligns with the Catholic emphasis on personal dignity and the importance of individual rights. Meanwhile, Belarus, influenced by Orthodoxy, exhibits a balance that skews towards collectivism, placing greater value on community and the common good over personal ambitions. This collective mindset supports hierarchical governance and social unity but can restrict the pursuit of democratic reforms.
Power Distance	Poles expect accountability from their leaders, which is consistent with Catholicism's legacy of opposing oppressive rule, as illustrated by the Catholic Church's historical role as an opposition force. Conversely, Belarusians demonstrate a greater tolerance for power distance, shaped by Orthodoxy's historical association with state authority that reinforces respect for hierarchy and authority.
Attitude to Property and Work	In Poland, Catholicism has nurtured the belief that hard work is essential for success and emphasises the importance of property rights, reflecting its advocacy for personal responsibility and economic initiative. Conversely, in Belarus, Orthodoxy's focus on communal welfare and its ties to state control during the Soviet era have led to a more ambivalent attitude toward the efficacy of work and a greater acceptance of state ownership. Orthodoxy's alignment with state power supports a collectivist approach, while Catholicism promotes the value of private property rights. Apart from religion, the high support for 'state ownership' among Belarusians can be explained not only by the longer episode of socialism compared to Poland, but also by the very high level of nationalisation in the contemporary Belarusian economy. The high support for state ownership among Poles is more difficult to explain, however. The period of the Polish People's Republic (1947–1989) undoubtedly had an impact. The widespread pessimism about the importance of 'hard work' among Belarusians is most likely due to collective experience acquired back in the period of tsarist Russia and under communism, as well as Lukashenko's state capitalism. The 'hard work' strategy generally works well under conditions of respect for private property, i.e., under capitalism, which is where Poles have more experience.
Attitudes towards the role of the state in the economy	Belarusians predominantly support state intervention in the economy, a viewpoint shaped by their history of central governance and the Orthodox Church's partnership with state authority. In contrast, Poles, although divided, generally show less support for state control, reflecting their more liberal economic experiences and the emphasis Catholicism places on personal responsibility and solidarity. Besides religion, historical experiences seem to be crucial in this regard. Taking into account only the 20 th and 21 st centuries, apart from short episodes of marketisation (the reforms of Stolypin and Vite in tsarist Russia, the period of the Second Republic for the lands of western Belarus, or the beginning of independence, 1991–1994), the economy in Belarus has always been heavily regulated.

Aspect of Mentality	Explanation of Religious Influence
Short- or long-term orientation	Both societies tend to have a short-term orientation, influenced by historical instability and the unpredictability of their circumstances. This could align with the teachings of both religious traditions that emphasise humility and dependence on divine providence. However, both countries' treatment of the future as something unpredictable that makes no sense to plan for stems from their historical experiences of the 20 th and early 21 st centuries, when the precarity was on an incomparably larger scale than in other parts of Europe. 'Big history' (The Bolshevik Revolution, the Polish–Soviet War, World War I, World War II, changes in states, borders, political and economic systems) generated enormous uncertainty, which became inherent in the mentality of these countries. Nonetheless, Poles exhibit slightly more long-term planning, possibly influenced by a more stable post-communist economic environment.
Attitude to uncertainty	Poles prefer clear rules and adherence to tradition, reflecting a conservative perspective shaped by Catholic teachings that value order and structure. On the other hand, Belarusians tend to be more open to new experiences and innovations, which might derive from the Orthodox Church's historical adaptability to changing governmental systems. Both religions emphasise the significance of tradition, but they manifest this emphasis differently – Orthodoxy connects tradition to state authority, while Catholicism links it to moral and civic identity.
Social Trust	Both countries display low levels of social trust, with Poland exhibiting slightly higher trust levels. Catholic teachings that promote community and solidarity have contributed to the modest levels of trust in Poland. In contrast, Orthodoxy's focus on institutional loyalty has fostered a reliance on government structures rather than interpersonal trust in Belarus. In addition to the religious factor, historical experiences in this area may also be of great importance. Social trust can develop under certain institutional conditions: power under public control, a transparent and efficient justice system, and long periods of stability. This has been lacking in the history of both countries. What dominated was authoritarian power, not infrequently oppressive and arbitrary, and corruption and nepotism in administration, the economy and almost every area of life. However, Poland's greater democratic traditions, the relatively law-abiding interwar period, and the last three decades of democracy and the free market have resulted in greater public trust.

Source: authors' development.

Religion as a key factor shaping mental models

A country's affiliation with a particular civilisation is determined by a common set of meta-rules. These include, above all, the scope of individual freedom and responsibility (location of control), the perception of the role of the individual in society (individualism vs. collectivism), the relationship between the authorities and society, and the resulting type of legal order (distance from the authorities). These factors are complemented by social trust (understood as predictability of behaviour), attitudes towards private property and the role of the state in the economy, attitudes towards work, planning and others. Meta-rules (embodied in culture and mental models) are shaped in a long- and medium-term historical process and depend on many factors, including religion, science, art, and natural and material living conditions and their variability, among others. They constitute what is known as the cultural pro-development potential (Hryniewicz 2023).

During our historical analysis, we noted that the components of “political mentality” (location of control, individualism, distance from power) are shaped more over long periods of time. Religion plays a key role in shaping them. By religion, we mean not only the content of holy books, but also their practical interpretations, the attitude of the church towards authority, and the role played by the church in the nation. This gives a more complete picture of the influence of religion on mentality than the content of holy books alone. Religion has also been and continues to be of great importance in shaping the “economic mentality” (attitudes towards property, wealth, work, the role of the state, etc.), but it seems that material living conditions, economic management and their variability have no less influence. We have also noted that this type of mentality develops over medium periods of history.

The cultural potential for development, reflected in a higher level of individualism, a more internal locus of control, a lower distance from authority, and greater social trust, will create conditions for the development of a democratic political system and a market economy based on private property. Less individualism, external control, greater distance from authority and less social trust tend to support the development of an authoritarian political system and an economy that is significantly regulated by the state.

Orthodoxy vs. Catholicism

Although 1054 is considered the official date of the Great Schism that divided Christianity into Eastern (Orthodox) and Western (Catholic) churches, differences in biblical interpretation, liturgy, and rites emerged long before then. From the middle of the 11th century, these religions began to live fully independent lives, establishing meta-rules that formed the foundations of Western and Eastern Christian civilisations.

In general, Western Christianity (Catholicism) imposed fewer restrictions on the faithful, partly due to competition between Christian denominations during the Reformation. This gradually reduced the negative impact of strict ethical norms on participation in political and economic life. One important advantage of Catholicism was its early acceptance of private property, as reflected in the writings of St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas (Sawicki 2010), thereby “endowing” the faithful with agency and responsibility.

The Catholic interpretation and teaching of Christian doctrine placed a much greater emphasis on the individual’s responsibility for their actions than was the case with Orthodoxy. The principle of “rendering unto Caesar what is Caesar’s, and unto God what is God’s”, emphasised by the Catholic Church, created a space for individual choice that was unknown to Orthodox believers. Over the centuries, this interpretation of Christian teaching has meant that Catholics generally have greater ‘internal control’ than their Orthodox neighbours. Individualistic thinking also prevails over collectivist thinking among Catholics, and the opposite is true for Orthodox Christians.

Both branches of Christianity also have different historical experiences in their relations with political authority. From the beginning, the patriarchs of Byzantium and later of the Orthodox Church were not in the habit of criticising rulers. This custom evolved into the Orthodox Church’s complete subordination to state authority. The Orthodox

Church was even part of the state administration of the Russian tsars, served the communists as a tool of surveillance, and today is an integral part of the Lukashenko regime in Belarus and Putin's regime in Russia. The relationship between secular and spiritual authority was and still is completely different in Catholicism. The church authorities sought to be independent of the state authorities, and there were frequent disputes and conflicts between them. This created space for discussion and intellectual debate, encouraging people to interpret political, legal and moral issues for themselves (Winiecki 2012, pp. 202–212). The different relations and attitudes of Orthodox Christianity and Catholicism towards the state authorities shaped a different political mentality. The distance between Catholics and the authorities is much smaller than that between Orthodox Christians and the authorities.

The Role of Orthodoxy in Belarus and Catholicism in Poland: A Historical and Contemporary Overview

Belarus presents a unique religious and political trajectory, especially in comparison to Poland. While Poland's Catholic Church has historically been a strong force of resistance to external and internal oppression, the Orthodox Church in Belarus has played a much more ambivalent role, often aligning itself with ruling authorities. The Orthodox Church has been historically dominant in Belarus since the 18th century, following the partitions of the Polish–Lithuanian Commonwealth and Belarus's gradual incorporation into the Russian Empire (Plokhly 2015). This period marked the beginning of a closer association between the Belarusian Orthodox Church and the Russian state, as the church became a tool for promoting Russian imperial interests and identity in the region. As mentioned above, the Orthodox Church did not criticise the authorities; moreover, it became, in a sense, part of the state administration, helping the tsars to oppress the faithful (Pipes 2006, pp. 227–230).

During the period of Soviet rule, the Orthodox Church in Belarus, much like its counterpart in Russia, was heavily controlled and manipulated by the communist state. Despite the official atheism of the Soviet Union, the Orthodox Church was permitted to continue operating under strict government supervision, primarily as a means of ensuring social order and loyalty to the regime (Ramet 1998). This legacy of state control has persisted into the post-Soviet era, where the Belarusian Orthodox Church has remained closely aligned with the authoritarian government of Alexander Lukashenko. Unlike in Poland, where the Catholic Church played a leading role in opposing communist rule, the Orthodox Church in Belarus has often functioned as a supporter of state power, reinforcing narratives of national unity and loyalty to the regime.

In the modern Belarusian state, the Orthodox Church continues to serve as a vital instrument of state propaganda and control. Since coming to power in 1994, Lukashenko has fostered close ties with the Belarusian Orthodox Church, using it as a means of promoting his own legitimacy and consolidating national identity. This relationship mirrors the broader alliance between the Russian Orthodox Church and the Russian government under Vladimir Putin, with both churches playing key roles in promoting conservative social values and reinforcing loyalty to the state (Stoeckl 2014). The Belarusian Orthodox Church, in particular, has supported

the government's geopolitical alignment with Russia, endorsing its anti-Western and anti-liberal policies. The church often frames its support for the regime as a defence of traditional values against the perceived moral and cultural degradation of the West (Payne 2011).

This close relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Belarusian state has had a profound impact on the mental and behavioural characteristics of the Belarusian population. The Orthodox Church's historical role as a supporter of state power, rather than a challenger to it, has fostered a culture of political passivity and deference to authority in Belarusian society. Religious identity in Belarus is often linked to political loyalty, with the church reinforcing narratives of national unity and obedience to the state. Unlike in Poland, where the Catholic tradition has cultivated a strong sense of civic engagement and resistance to authoritarianism, the Orthodox tradition in Belarus has reinforced a more hierarchical and deferential social structure (Marples 2014).

Moreover, the Orthodox Church in Belarus plays a central role in shaping the country's geopolitical identity. As the state continues to align itself with Russia both politically and culturally, the church reinforces this alignment through its promotion of shared religious and historical narratives. These narratives emphasise Belarus's role as part of the "Russian world" (*Russkiy mir*), a concept that frames Belarusian identity as inherently tied to Russian culture, language, and Orthodoxy (Rudling 2014).

In addition to reinforcing political loyalty, the Orthodox Church also plays a crucial role in promoting traditional social values in Belarus. The church is a vocal supporter of conservative positions on issues such as family, gender roles, and sexuality, and its influence extends into the educational and cultural spheres. This promotion of traditional values is closely aligned with the state's broader geopolitical agenda, which seeks to distance Belarus from liberal Western influences and maintain its close relationship with Russia (Stoeckl 2014). In this way, the church not only supports the political status quo but also shapes the moral and cultural framework within which Belarusian society operates.

While Poland benefits from a growing body of quantitative research on religiosity and political preferences, such data remains limited in the Belarusian context, largely due to political constraints and restrictions on sociological research. Nevertheless, studies on Russia, such as Köllner (2021), offer relevant comparative insights, particularly regarding how Orthodox Christianity can be mobilised symbolically and institutionally in state narratives. These parallels may be useful for interpreting Belarusian patterns in the absence of direct empirical studies.

Poland adopted Christianity in the late 10th century from the West and with it a set of identifiers and meta-principles common to Western civilisation. Their adoption set Poland on certain trajectories of development that shaped the social system and mentality of the Poles. The adoption of Christianity precisely from the West had and still has a significant impact on the differentiation of the mentality of Poles from their Eastern Orthodox neighbours.

In the 19th century, during the period of the formation of modern nation-states in Europe, the Catholic Church played a special role in the Polish lands. Poland was not an independent state at that time, but was divided between the partitioners. Membership of the Church soon became a marker

of ‘Polishness’, which gave rise to the stereotype that a Pole is a Catholic, embodied in the saying ‘Pole-Catholic’. The Catholic Church has always been politically involved in Poland, independent of the authorities (Pawlak 2014). It shaped a culture of criticism of authority, of dispute, of dissent. Hence, the mental ‘distance to authority’ of Poles is much smaller than that of Belarusians.

The Catholic Church has been particularly active in recent Polish history, which has further influenced contemporary Poles. Under communism in Poland, the Catholic Church openly opposed the authorities and contested the culturally alien social orders imposed by the Soviets. During the rise of the Solidarity movement, it actively supported it; one could even say that it was an integral part of it. In the 1980s, the churches were full of the faithful, who found a space to hear opinions that were very different from those propagated by the government propaganda (Pieczewski, Sidarava 2022, pp. 168–198).

Although the churches are no longer so full in Poland and society is slowly becoming secularised, the Catholic Church still plays a very important role in the world of Polish politics by upholding, in this case, conservative values and supporting right-wing parties. In a general sense, the very attitude of the Church – active participation in political life – shows people that authorities are not to be feared, can be criticised, can be changed, and that power should serve the people, not the other way around.

The influence of Orthodoxy in Belarus has been fundamentally shaped by its historical alignment with state power, from the Russian Empire to the Soviet Union and the contemporary regime of Alexander Lukashenko. Unlike Poland’s Catholic Church, which has often acted as a force of resistance and moral authority in the face of authoritarianism, the Belarusian Orthodox Church has traditionally reinforced political conformity and deference to authority. This has had a significant impact on the mental characteristics and behaviour of the Belarusian people, fostering a more passive and hierarchical society in contrast to the more civic-oriented and independent mentality found in Poland. In the context of contemporary geopolitics, the Orthodox Church continues to play a vital role in reinforcing Belarus’s alignment with Russia, promoting conservative social values, and supporting the authoritarian state. The World Values Survey (2023) confirms significant differences in the cultural foundations of Belarus and Poland, clearly classifying Poland as ‘Catholic Europe’ and Belarus as ‘Orthodox Europe’.

Beyond religion

There are, of course, many other factors that influence mentality besides religion. Western civilisation is shaped by the influence of ancient Greece – its democratic political system and economy based on private property, as well as its love of philosophy and science. Ancient Rome, with its republican heritage and highly developed laws (including property law), had a very significant influence. The development of cities and merchant capitalism, as well as a more decentralised political system in Western Europe (multiple levels of the feudal ladder), also played an important role (Ferguson 2011). Eastern European civilisation was influenced by the legacy of ancient Greece, but then, as a result of historical events, the Moscow state became a vassal of the Mongol khans (13th–14th centuries), adopting the culture and patterns of strong, ruthless, and oppressive rule that originated in Asia. This also permanently shaped a certain legal culture in which the ruler stands above the law,

is its source, and can shape it at will according to his needs. The absolute power of the Russian tsars also included an almost complete monopoly on property. Suffice it to say that the traditions of private property protection in Russia are very young compared to the West – they were introduced by Catherine II in the mid-18th century (Pipes 2006). Other factors that influence differences in mentality include differences in climate, population density, wealth, literacy, and size of cities, among others. As for recent history, life under communism had a huge impact on the mentality.

Conclusions

The research objectives were to explore how religious traditions influence mental variables, including attitudes toward power, property, and individualism, among others, and what implications they had for the political and economic systems of both nations.

These mental variables, shaped to a large extent by religious traditions, have broader implications for contemporary geopolitics, highlighting the enduring relevance of Huntington's civilisational framework. While Poland integrates with Western democratic and economic systems, Belarus remains aligned with the Slavic Orthodox world, characterised by authoritarian governance and state-dominated economies. This divergence not only reflects historical religious influences but also perpetuates their impact on global alignments and conflicts.

Our research into the mental models of contemporary Belarusians and Poles reveals significant differences in mentality. We found the most profound differences in the mental variables we categorised as 'political mentality': locus of control, individualistic vs. collectivistic thinking, and power distance. In Poles, the locus of control, which influences the sense of agency, initiative, and entrepreneurship, is more 'internal', while in Belarusians, it is more 'external'. We found more individualistic attitudes among Poles than among Belarusians. The distance to authority is much higher among Belarusians than among Poles. These subtle traits are initially shaped during childhood within the family environment during the upbringing process. They are among the basic components of a worldview in which religion plays a crucial formative role.

In terms of the mental variables we categorised as economic, there are also generally more differences than similarities. Both nations have similar attitudes to tradition and the predominance of short-term orientation. In both countries, we also noted low social trust, although it is higher in Poland. Clear differences emerge in attitudes towards work – many more Poles believe that hard work leads to success. Regarding attitudes towards uncertainty, Poles are more attached to tradition than Belarusians are, and they are more in need of clear rules to function.

Economic mentality is generally formed a little later than childhood through interactions with the environment outside the family. Therefore, in our opinion, the differences in mentality were and are influenced by the distinct historical experiences with private property and different economic systems – particularly Belarus' longer and more radical episode of communism – and varying levels of economic development. Nevertheless, the characteristics singled out as 'political mentality' are, in our view, of greater importance as they shape the political system, which in turn determines the economy.

In our opinion, the perceived differences in mentality (especially political mentality) are largely due to the influence of two different Christian denominations over the centuries: the Orthodox Church mainly on Belarusians and the Catholic Church mainly on Poles. This was despite the fact that Poles and Belarusians shared the same state organisms for a long time. The seemingly minor differences in the truths proclaimed and the differences in relations with the authorities of these two denominations have for centuries shaped the worldview, values, and attitudes, and consequently the mental models of their followers in different ways.

Western Christianity (in this case, Catholicism) has encouraged greater responsibility for one's actions, individual choice, and a willingness to contest political authority, showing what independence means. In contrast, Orthodoxy promotes more humility, acceptance of fate, collective thinking, and cooperation with – and dependency on – state power, teaching the faithful to respect authority. Despite the gradual secularisation of both societies, ancestral faith is still of colossal importance in shaping the mentality of modern people. The current East–West conflict can thus be viewed as a conflict of values.

This study confirms Samuel Huntington's thesis that cultural and religious differences significantly shape the political and economic systems of nations. By examining the divergent mental models of Belarusians and Poles, the findings underscore how centuries of religious influence – Orthodoxy in Belarus and Catholicism in Poland – have forged distinct societal attitudes and behaviours. Looking at the current situation in Eastern Europe, it seems that Huntington was right. Today's conflict between the West and Russia and its satellites (including Belarus) is a conflict of two civilisations based on different values on which the political and economic systems of these countries are built. These values have been shaped over centuries, with religion being one of the main forces.

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Zderzenie cywilizacji? Religia jako główny składnik zróżnicowania kulturowego na przykładzie Białorusi i Polski

Niniejsze studium porównawcze bada rolę religii jako kluczowego czynnika w kształtowaniu politycznych i ekonomicznych modeli mentalnych, koncentrując się na przykładach Białorusi i Polski. Opiera się ono na tezie Samuela Huntingtona, która zakłada, że różnice kulturowe i religijne mają fundamentalne znaczenie dla konfliktów cywilizacyjnych. Analizując, w jaki sposób katolicyzm i prawosławie ukształtowały rozbieżne mentalności tych sąsiadujących ze sobą narodów, badania te podkreślają głęboki wpływ tradycji religijnych na rozwój społeczny. Wykorzystując zróżnicowane metody badawcze, w tym ankiety CATI, analizy statystyczne i porównania historyczne, badanie identyfikuje znaczące różnice w zachowaniach politycznych i ekonomicznych między Białorusinami i Polakami. Różnice te podkreślają długoterminowy wpływ religii na postawy wobec władzy, własności i indywidualizmu. Wyniki badania mogą przyczynić się do lepszego zrozumienia tego, w jaki sposób wartości religijne nie tylko definiują normy społeczne, ale także kształtują trajektorie rozwoju i współczesne układy geopolityczne. Badania te podkreślają trwałe znaczenie religii w wyjaśnianiu dynamiki kulturowej i podziałów cywilizacyjnych w Europie Wschodniej.

Słowa kluczowe: religia, cywilizacja, modele mentalne, Białoruś, Polska

