

On Psychological Factors in Historical Processes



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Abstract. One of the key driving forces behind history and the development of its subjects – peoples, social strata, and individual actors – is the functioning and evolution of their individual and collective mental systems. Psychological factors exert a profound influence on economic processes (whether the prevailing orientation is toward increasing or reducing consumption or armaments, the willingness to take risks, etc.), on the structuring of society, and so forth. Yet in historical research, and especially in Russian historical scholarship, this factor is generally given insufficient attention. The reason lies in the underdeveloped state of many problems in social psychology, as well as the limited familiarity of the academic community with this field. For several decades now, a scholarly direction known as psychohistory has been developing in Western countries, dedicated to studying the interplay between historical processes and the development of the individual and collective psyche. The article demonstrates the role of such factors as psychological attitudes and types, in particular the types of passionaries, innovators, and conservatives. It examines the capacity to concentrate and subordinate most of the states and functions of the psyche to a single center, a higher meaning-bearing principle, a dominant attitude – a capacity that lies at the foundation of religions and other ideological movements. The article explores the mutual influence of psychological attitudes and “general historical” systems (productive-technological, socio-economic, institutional, and moral) across the eras of Christianity, modernity, and the present day. The differences between Western and Russian civilizations are examined on the basis of the distinctive features of their respective psychological systems. Psychohistorical research has significance that goes beyond theory alone. It can and must become an important tool in the elaboration of strategic plans and forecasts in such areas as the socio-economic sphere, education, defense, and geopolitics.

Key words: power, war, innovators, conservatives, passionaries, dominant attitude, the Modern era, ideology of superiority, productive-technological progress, humaneness.

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Introduction (the general course of history and psychological factors)

Approaches to structuring history in time and space – to describing processes and events in the general terms of an abstract model – are, as a rule, confined to socio-economic and production-technological processes and concepts, to relations of rights and duties, and to the institutions of power and governance. The concepts and system of categories developed by psychology are rarely used and are employed only sparingly, even though all the above-mentioned systems of knowledge are of interest primarily from the standpoint of human perception, evaluation, and reaction – that is, from the standpoint of the individual and collective psyche. The obstacles to employing psychology in historical research are the underdeveloped state of social psychology and the academic community's limited familiarity with this subject.

A significant contribution to overcoming these barriers was made by L. Gumilev, who introduced the psychological type of the passionary into historical research and systematically took it into account. In the United States and Western Europe, this role is performed by scholars working in the field of psychohistory (for more detail, see the subsequent sections of the article). The obstacles just described mean that the first part of this article is obliged to set out the psychological factors that interact with the forces of historical development in considerably more detail than would otherwise be necessary.

Contemporary individuals approach their life activity as a goal-oriented process in which achievement is understood as the expansion of human and communal capabilities, assessed in relation to their needs. Our understanding of history is shaped primarily by a multitude of historical subjects interacting with one another and by the processes of their existence – their emergence, development, and decline. These historical subjects are communities that create their own culture; their own spiritual-ideological (value-semantic), economic, political, and military systems; they are countries, peoples, and civilizations. Processes and

factors that remain independent or only weakly dependent on the decisions and actions of the governing systems of these subjects include natural processes and geographical factors, scientific-technological and cultural development, the growth of production, and shifts in sectoral structure – all of which create the material conditions of life and other dimensions of emerging situations.

In this article, we specifically focus on those factors that constitute the psychological system of individuals and collectives. These are the factors that ensure social cohesion, account for the causes of societal rifts and other historical processes, and include the attitudes of a society's collective consciousness, or those of its active strata, or the consciousness of charismatic leaders. In the works of historians, the behavior of individuals and communities is often depicted solely as rationally deliberate action, whereas psychologists are well aware that the psychological system whose functioning determines human behavior is far more complex than the subsystem we call consciousness. The governing systems of historical subjects respond to existing and anticipated situations with their own decisions and actions.

The outcome of all these processes may be termed the general course of history (or macro-historical processes). Within it, psychological factors appear to constitute only a small part of the overall picture. Yet, in my view, this representation underestimates the significance of this dimension of historical processes, as it encompasses all the value-based, meaning-laden, and informational aspects of human activity, as well as all the motivations underlying human behavior. The reason for this underestimation lies in the insufficient interaction between two scientific fields – theoretical psychology and historiography – coupled with a broader societal lack of interest in psychology. Meanwhile, expanding and deepening such interaction is essential not only for the advancement of these academic disciplines. Knowledge of the mutual influence between history and psychology must play a critical role in the formulation of economic and political forecasts and strategies, and in addressing

problems of upbringing and education, among others. The aim of this study is to contribute to the development of theory and to the understanding of the essence and significance of the mutual impact of historical and psychological processes – an area that remains clearly underdeveloped at present, yet plays a crucial role in grasping the mechanisms of historical development, as well as political, economic, and social events unfolding both globally and nationally. In Western countries, a scholarly direction called psychohistory emerged long ago (although it does not cover a number of important aspects of the problem at hand).

In the United States and Western Europe, *there was a period when a new scientific discipline – psychohistory – took shape and developed rapidly on the basis of studying the mutual influence of historical and psychological processes*. In the four decades from the late 1930s to the late 1970s, the number of scholarly articles and defended dissertations on the subject increased tens of times over. Scholarly societies emerged, regularly published journals appeared, and the Institute for Psychohistory (headed by Lloyd deMause) was established at Boston University. From the 1980s onward, however, the growth of this field has been waning.

Russian scholarship has not experienced anything comparable to the flourishing of psychohistory, although prominent scholars (such as A.G. Asmolov, S.V. Grigoriev, A.I. Fursov, and others) have certainly explored the mutual influence of history and psychology.

The focus of psychohistorians has been directed primarily at the formation of human behavior under the influence of factors investigated by history, sociology, and other social sciences. The main areas of research include:

- the impact of childhood living conditions, child-rearing systems, and parenting styles;
- the study of biographies of individuals from different cultures, social strata, and historical periods;
- the influence of the group and the larger community to which an individual belongs.

In the work of psychohistorians, methods of Freudian psychoanalysis are frequently applied, while categories of psychological types and attitudes are employed only rarely. Our article also considers other factors, with greater attention directed toward historical processes and trends whose causes lie in the functioning of the collective psychological system.

This paper examines the toolkit available to modern science for identifying a set of psychological factors that exert a significant influence on historical processes within specific communities at specific stages of their development.

The most visible part of the picture – or model – of history resembles the Darwinian model of the evolution of biological species, genera, and families. This is reflected in theories and models of ethnogenesis and the development of civilizations (N. Danilevsky, A. Toynbee). In the spiritual-intellectual sphere, the emergence and development of an ethnos or civilization corresponds to the evolution of cultural phenomena, the value-normative system – including national and patriotic life-sustaining incentives, and distinctive features of mentality – in short, everything that provides a sense of unity among individuals who identify themselves with that community and distinguish themselves from other communities.

The process of ethnogenesis often involves the mutual penetration and blending of cultures of neighboring ethnic groups, the convergence of their institutional systems, and ultimately, their merger and consolidation. Super-ethnoses are thus formed. Over the past century, the principal factor shaping the defining features of history has been the confrontation, or rivalry – at times escalating into hot wars – between a super-ethnos realized in the countries of the Collective West, united by an ideology of global hegemony led by the United States, and an association of countries ready to oppose this Western orientation and coalescing into a coalition underpinned by the ideology of a multipolar world. We shall refer to this as a *civilizational confrontation*.

In recent decades, concepts exploring the mechanisms of development and interaction among countries and other large communities have been developing intensively. An overarching framework is provided by the theory of strategic advantages, which determine the development and regularities governing these mechanisms. Its most advanced and comprehensive version is reflected in the articles by E.V. Balatsky (Balatsky, 2021b; Balatsky, 2024). These works also offer a detailed review and critical exposition of preceding concepts. Strategic advantages include such readily measurable parameters as a country's population size, the extent of its territory, and its level of economic development (GDP volume and GDP per capita). Beyond these, however, the possibility and necessity of accounting for such hard-to-measure factors as the level of scientific and technological development, military potential, and others have also been demonstrated¹. The study (Ekimova, Gaganov, 2024) establishes that state sovereignty and the capacity to participate in and forge geopolitical alliances also play a crucial role in modern history. This line of research constitutes the study of the object referred to above as the general course of history.

We conclude this section with an illustration of the significance of psychological factors, whose impact on history is comparable to that of economic and political forces. Let us compare two Russian revolutions (or coups) – those of 1917 and 1991. In the first, the main driving forces were economic: the peasantry (80% of the population), possessing a deep-seated psychological attitude (both conscious and unconscious) toward land ownership for running their own farms, and the proletariat, demanding improved social conditions. An ideology was also present – Marxism and Lenin's theory of the alliance between the working class and the peasantry. This was an ideology that accurately reflected the role of economic factors but, more importantly, was capable of shaping collective psychological attitudes and behavior.

¹ The set of strategic advantages of countries and peoples must, of course, also include socio-psychological factors.

In Gorbachev's Perestroika and Yeltsin's reforms, the leading role was played by political and ideological factors linked to the psychology of a narrow stratum of the party-state elite, as well as to the socio-psychological attitudes of poorly organized mass protests. Russian public figures lacked a theory that accounted for psychological problems and was suitable for guiding these processes (people often understand the external world far better than they understand their own psyche). Yet such a theory already existed in the West—Gene Sharp's theory of nonviolent resistance, which laid the groundwork for all the “color revolutions.” Hence, it is essential to study social psychology! Instead, between 1985 and 1991 in the USSR, a segment of the ruling elite, convinced that the country could peacefully join Western civilization (which seemed so attractive!), preoccupied itself not with social but with individual psychology. The Yakovlev group sought (and found) ways to reinforce Gorbachev's belief in the “unity and indivisibility of the world” (East and West). The well-known historian E. Spitsyn recounts how this group psychologically primed the senior Politburo member A. Gromyko and cultivated ties with Central Committee members to secure Gorbachev's election as General Secretary. Once elected, the Yakovlev group endeavored to make Gorbachev's psyche increasingly “malleable” so that he would dare to adopt the plan for perestroika².

The capacity for the concentration of the psyche. The dominant attitude

Among the psychological factors that influence the course of history, one of the most significant is the need and the capacity of the human psyche to subordinate most of its functions and states to a particular attitude, a single center, a higher value- and meaning-bearing principle. When it comes to the collective psyche of a society, we shall refer to this center or principle as the social *psychological dominant*. This property is manifested to differing degrees in different individuals and in the structures of the collective psyche of various communities.

² Spitsyn E.Yu. (2025). The “Gorbachev” project: How the “foremen” of perestroika seized power in the USSR: Interview with the newspaper Zavtra. Zavtra, no. 14.

For the individual psyche, such an attitude or principle may consist of personal interests that are unconnected to the problems of society. But if a substantial share of a community's members experience a concentration of the psyche around a shared – or at least closely related – supra-personal center (a dominant principle or idea), this creates a powerful potential for ensuring the community's unity, development, strengthening, and activation. We shall refer to this state of society as subjecthood.

A state of collective concentration in any people, as a rule, emerges and spreads throughout the entire society during periods of war or other dangers to the community. A psychological state of mobilization arises; patriotism and devotion to the motherland – to its national traditions, culture, and customs – become the semantic summit, the dominant. The psychological attitude that is dominant in a society exerts an influence on historical processes not only, of course, during periods of wars and revolutions. The features of a subject's mental system may include attitudes toward another people – attitudes of stable empathy or hostility – and an orientation toward territorial expansion or toward superiority in the economic-technological and military spheres.

The subordination of consciousness to a single principle requires that principle to rest on a more or less stable set of ideas and attitudes – that is, on a picture of the world and a value- and meaning-bearing system with a clearly defined “summit”. These phenomena are, as a rule, present in the collective culture and collective psychology of a sufficiently large community and constitute the content of its ideology, which becomes the psychological dominant. We shall use the concept of ideology in a broad sense, including religious teachings in it as well. At the same time, the foundations of the dominant system of attitudes and principles are often rooted in the collective unconscious and remain unrecognized by the majority of the society's members (while the system of dominant principles frequently proves to be contradictory and irrational from the standpoint

of the society's interests). An important feature of the socio-psychological system of religions and ideologies is the presence of a group of people who are the bearers of this supra-personal attitude and for whom its value- and meaning-bearing significance proves to be higher than the interests and needs of their own personality, of their own ego. This group constitutes the society's elite, or a part of that elite.

The dominant attitudes that exert the most profound and, more importantly, the most long-term influence on history are world religions and other spiritual movements (ideologies) that designate entire epochs. To denote the state of concentration of the collective psyche in communities where the dominant attitude is an ideology or a religion, we shall replace the category of subjecthood with the terms spirituality or ideological commitment. It should be noted that, for a great many people, the embrace of a supra-personal attitude that expresses the community's subjecthood is a pressing need – often even stronger than their biological needs. This is confirmed, in particular, by L. Gumilev in his descriptions of passionary personalities.

In the study (Volkonsky, 2025a), ideology (including religion) is presented as a dual structure. The complex of functions and states of the psyche of adherents to a given ideological doctrine (believers) – functions connected in one way or another to that doctrine, not fully conscious, and possessing varying degrees of influence on the behavior of members of society and groups – is termed *deep ideology* (DI). For the formulation of state policy and for the upbringing of future generations, an intellectually formalized system of concepts, rules of thought and conduct, and value-semantic attitudes is required. The state (or other ruling groupings) develops an *intellectually formalized ideology* (IFI). The IFI belongs largely to the sphere of consciousness, whereas DI belongs predominantly to the sphere of the unconscious.

The book (Todd, 2024) presents the cycle of the development of ideological commitment as consisting of three phases or stages (using the

examples of Protestantism, nationalism, and other historical phenomena): an active phase, an inert phase, and a phase of “zeroing out, a spiritual vacuum”. What takes place is the fragmentation and the disintegration of the society’s unity. Ideological commitment can exert a serious influence on the state of society not only during the active stage but also during the inert stage. Examples include the Reformation in Western Europe and the Cultural Revolution in Maoist China (Todd, 2024).

The primary forms of ideology were the monotheistic religions, which created the conditions for a deep and long-term faith. The principal distinction between religion and the modern non-religious ideologies consists in the isolation of a portion of the psyche – together with the external objects and rituals associated with it – and its endowment with a special quality of the supernatural and the sacred. This quality serves to protect and preserve the established religions over the long term.

The historical significance of all the great religions lies, first and foremost, in the formulation and pursuit of the task of transforming the human psyche, the entire set of its attitudes and drives, and of creating internal, subjective drives and attitudes in accordance with the rules of an ideological worldview and behavior. The cycles of a religion’s development broaden and strengthen the role of the introverted psychological type in society (this applies, to the fullest extent, to many of the Protestant sects). Yet it may, perhaps, be necessary to speak of the existence of an independent psychological type – people who are predisposed toward ideological commitment.

It should be noted that the extraverted type, with its adherence to the empirical perception of reality, is endowed with the capacity for religious faith and for subordinating its psyche to a higher meaning-bearing attitude to no lesser degree than introverts. C. Jung writes: “The empiricist replaces the lack of reverence for ‘eternal’ ideas with what amounts to a religious faith in the actual fact” (Jung, 1997, p. 382). In all peoples, one can identify long ancestral, hereditarily linked chains (dynasties) of clergymen

that, without interruption, pass through many generations and across epochs in which various religious systems have been dominant in society. During anti-religious periods, the representatives of such dynasties shift to other forms of mental activity that require similar psychological qualities. These facts allow one to hypothesize that the need to subordinate the psyche to a higher meaning-bearing attitude and the capacity for religious faith distinguish a specific psychological type.

The importance of psychological dominants for history is confirmed by the fact that cultures and super-ethnoses, as well as the long epochs of their development, take as their name the designation of the psychological attitudes that are dominant within them: the civilizations of liberalism or of statehood, the epoch of capital accumulation, the epoch of colonialism. Our knowledge of history makes it possible to structure it “in space” and in time – that is, to divide the multitude of the subjects of history into groups according to sets of characteristic features. The most productive approach at present is to group the subjects of history into civilizations. This constitutes a structuring “in space”. The time of the development of each subject (a country, a civilization) is divided into qualitatively distinct periods and stages of development. This is a structuring in time. When investigating different historical problems, periods of the most varied duration may, quite naturally, be considered.

No analogous, structured picture of the mental world of Man yet exists. Its creation can, however, be regarded as an important problem toward which scholarship is advancing. *Several approaches (models, typologies) have been developed for structuring and grouping the features, or properties, of the psyche. As a rule, the subject of research in psychological science is the psyche of the individual, the personality. The properties of the collective psyche of communities that live and act over extended periods of time have been studied considerably less.*

Directions in psychology necessary for the development of psychohistory

One approach to classifying the needs, capacities, and functions of the psyche is based

on the role they play in a person's life. Such a classification was already presented by I. Kant in his "Critique of Pure Reason" (1790). The results of this sort of identification of psychological factors and of their significance for human life activity are presented in a deeply elaborated form, for example, in the works (Leontiev, 1983; Kostin, Golikov, 2017). The authors distinguish three functions of the psyche: the cognitive (perceptual) function; the relative function, which evaluates the information that has been perceived (as positive, neutral, or negative); and the regulative function, which initiates and organizes the subject's activity.

In essence, the foundations of theoretical psychology were laid by C. Gustav Jung. He described the phenomenon of the collective unconscious and investigated psychological types and attitudes, thereby creating the prerequisites for studying the groups of people who are the bearers of the corresponding features of the psyche and their role in historical processes (Jung, 1997, Sections X, XI). One of his most important discoveries is the theory of the collective unconscious and of archetypes (Jung, 1967).

Jung devoted a great deal of attention to the state of the psyche that has come to be termed the attitude. An attitude is the readiness of the psyche (a predisposition, an inclination) to perceive and interpret the signals it receives in a particular direction and to act in accordance with this perception. An attitude may be conscious or unconscious, or both simultaneously. One can speak of the attitude of an individual person. For historical research, however, the attitudes that characterize large communities are usually more important. An example is the capitalist attitude, which requires entrepreneurs to choose actions and to direct their efforts toward the constant augmentation of capital. A set of collective attitudes is generated by the ideology that is dominant in the society. The most widespread and stable attitudes — ones that are, essentially, inherent in every person — include the capacity to relate to, and to identify oneself with, a large community, above all with a people, a nation, or a state.

Perhaps the most crucial step in comprehending the psyche as a system — and in advancing the socio-psychological approach — is distinguishing between the conscious and unconscious psychological factors that drive the behavior of individuals and communities, along with recognizing the vital role played by the unconscious functions and states of the psyche. The dominance of the meaning system of the capitalist era has conditioned us to explain the actions of historical figures and communities in terms of their interests (primarily economic ones). Most of the historically significant actions people take — whether the decisions of leaders or participation in collective processes, whether organized or chaotic — are linked to the conscious functions of the psyche. This, however, is far from always being the case. Whether the challenges and perceived signals that give rise to action reach consciousness is largely determined by previously accumulated experience, which is stored in the unconscious. Research on problems in social psychology has demonstrated that the unconscious plays a critical role — both as a cause and as a director of conscious behavior — in the development of culture, morality, and institutional systems.

This, however, is only a part of the unconscious and of its functioning — in particular, its functioning as a repository of accumulated experience, of memory. The memory of historical events and processes is recorded and preserved in the products of social consciousness, mainly in objects that are external to the living, individual psychological system: in tales, legends, songs, and material objects such as manuscripts, books, paintings, and architecture. Within the living, individual psyche, memory is preserved in the reservoirs of the unconscious. Moreover, according to Jung's conception, these reservoirs may store structures that arose both during the prehistoric evolution of our ancestors and in historical times³.

³ The content of the unconscious in the individual psyche is profoundly shaped by experiences acquired in childhood and, correspondingly, by the system and style of upbringing. The effects of this influence often determine an individual's psychological traits for a lifetime. As noted earlier, the factor of childhood upbringing is one of the central research problems for psychohistorians.

The protracted nature of severe wars and the emergence of enduring hatred between ethnic groups demonstrate that the causes of historical events are often *supra-personal*, collective socio-psychological states rooted in the collective unconscious (see also the section on innovators and conservatives). A similar influence of entrenched attitudes within the collective unconscious can be observed in the persistence of traditional economic ties between the populations of neighboring states, even in the face of radical shifts in political relations between those states.

The phenomenon of the collective unconscious and archetypes has become more accessible to non-specialist understanding thanks to extensive research into the system of instincts. In most animals, instincts almost entirely determine behavior; in humans, they play a smaller yet still significant role, influencing both actions and other psychological processes. Instincts and unconditioned reflexes govern not only individual behavior but also the collective, “supra-individual coordinated behavior” (Gumilev, 1993, p. 514) of animal communities (packs, colonies, herds, and species). These are pack or herd instincts. The works of the renowned animal behavior specialist K. Lorenz are devoted to the study of instinctual systems in animals and humans, and to their comparison⁴.

A great variety of *theories of needs and motivation* exists today (see, e.g., Leontiev, 1971). Yet scholars almost invariably reference the seminal work of the American psychologist A. Maslow, “Motivation and Personality” (published in New York in 1954), which arguably offered the first exceptionally detailed study of needs and introduced their hierarchy. Lower, or basic, needs typically take

shape in the unconscious regions of the psyche; they are then consciously recognized and give rise to goal-directed activity. Higher-order needs can emerge from the awareness of individual or collective experience (beginning with childhood upbringing) and subsequently become entrenched in various compartments of the unconscious.

The works of E. Todd (Todd, 2025) and E.V. Balatsky (Balatsky, 2024) propose a model of the stage-by-stage development of a society’s institutional system – first during the rise, and then during the subsequent decline, of its social and economic activity. In this context, a paradoxical relationship emerges between indicators of socio-economic activity (specifically, rates of economic growth) and the level of social production and welfare. A positive correlation between socio-economic activity and the level of production and welfare would appear natural: a higher level of welfare implies greater opportunities for an increasing number of society’s members to find productive employment, obtain a quality education, and so forth. The paradox, however, lies in the fact that in most developed countries, once a certain level of welfare is attained, the welfare level continues to rise, yet the rate of growth of social activity steadily declines. This phenomenon is corroborated by extensive statistical evidence (Balatsky, 2025).

It is quite natural to explain the rise in societal activity as a response of the collective psyche to unmet needs, and the decline in activity as the result of their increasing satisfaction. The question arises: is it really the case that economic and technological progress must inevitably lead society toward a decline in activity? This question pertains to psychology, to economics, and, in essence, to all the humanities. The first step lies in recognizing that the growth of welfare leads to the satisfaction of needs lower down on Maslow’s hierarchy. Higher-order needs, however, are by no means necessarily satisfied. The study of these higher-order needs and their interconnections with societal activity undoubtedly remains a vital direction in the development of psychology and all the social sciences.

⁴ I recommend his book “Tak nazyvaemoe zlo. K estestvennoi istorii agressii” [So-Called Evil: Towards a Natural History of Aggression], which is devoted to intraspecific aggression. Lorenz draws the following conclusions: “Aggression can make a mistake and thereby destroy life. But its purpose in the great unfolding of the organic world is to do good”. “The excessive aggressiveness that is in our blood, us humans, ... is the result of intraspecific selection that acted upon our ancestors for tens of thousands of years” (Lorenz, 2008).

To date, psychology has amassed a considerable array of tools capable of describing the individual psyche through a small set of concepts, yet with far greater detail and specificity than is possible with Jungian categories. One such approach is personality typology — research aimed at identifying (and describing) a limited number of personality types that account for the majority of the population. A closely related line of inquiry seeks to isolate a small set of basic psychological traits whose combination yields a universal personality model, one that can be used to characterize any existing type. This second approach is known as the Big Five, reflecting the number of core traits it identifies. The theory is presented, for instance, in the work (Pervin, John, 2000). In what follows, we will illustrate with examples how the personality types and basic psychological traits studied by psychologists can serve as factors that shape the unfolding of historical processes. Regrettably, the objectives typically pursued in these fields remain largely confined to psychological science and to medical or industrial practice, and are seldom connected with the problems of history or philosophy.

In the work of E. Spranger, a personality type termed the “political man” is introduced, characterized by a need for power, dominance, and a capacity to influence others (Spranger, 1921). The degree and forms of expression of this psychological property vary sharply across different individuals, national cultures, and civilizations. It is generally associated with a readiness to submit — with the need to belong to a power grouping that wields considerable influence in society.

Another personality type, the “economic man”, is characterized by Spranger in a manner analogous to the description of the basic trait of “agreeableness” in the Big Five model. What is highlighted is a propensity to create a businesslike atmosphere in interpersonal relations, marked by mutual trust and cooperation, with the aim of activity being the attainment of utility. An increase in the share of members of society, or of the active elite, who possess these psychological qualities should be

regarded as an important factor in the development of market relations.

Passionaries

A model analysis of the interaction between historical and psychological processes is provided by L. Gumilev’s introduction into historical research of a socio-psychological factor: the passionary type of person (Gumilev, 1993). The question of the origin of passionaries remains a subject of debate, as does the question of the hereditary transmission of the psychological traits of this personality type. Yet the historical role of this multitude of individuals has been investigated in detail by Gumilev as one of the principal factors in ethnogenesis. Passionaries are distinguished by their surplus of energy and by their need to take part in the formulation of socially significant goals and in their realization.

Theories and models of the evolution of civilizations and of ethnogenesis effectively capture the structure of historical development on timescales commensurate with the life phases of an ethnos — spanning several centuries or even millennia. The modern world, however, is developing at a far greater speed than before. Profound changes in its economic-technological, political-ideological, and institutional structures occur every fifty years, if not every single decade. These changes sweep up both the narrow strata of ruling elites, leading to a “reshuffling of cadres”, and the broad masses. It is difficult to imagine such transformations without the leading role played by passionary groups. All of this indicates that their role and its variability warrant closer examination.

According to Hegelian dialectics, a community, a social stratum, is defined by its juxtaposition with its alternative. L. Gumilev describes such an alternative as people of the harmonious type, the “energy-balanced”. These are people who adapt well to the conditions of life that have taken shape, to the political, economic, and institutional situation in society. As a rule, they do not display an inclination toward heightened, goal-directed social activity. Passionaries constitute the active part of society; harmonious people form the passive part.

Gumilev and other historians, observing periods of heightened social activity in ethnic and other collectives, link this rise to an increase in the number of passionaries and to the growth of their migratory, environment-transforming, military, economic, and other activities (passionary tension). Critics of Gumilev have called into question the theory that passionary individuals emerge as a result of fluctuations in cosmic fields or other factors unrelated to human agency. As an alternative concept, one may postulate the existence of a constant proportion of individuals genetically capable of passionary activity, the majority of whom, owing to an unfavorable historical situation, were unable to realize their abilities and aspirations (potential passionaries). Gumilev provides examples of shifts in people's mood and behavior in the presence of even a small number of passionary personalities, who transmit to those around them their behavioral attitudes, heightened activity, and enthusiasm, triggering a surge in passionary tension. Gumilev uses the term "passionary induction" for this effect. It may well be that the phenomenon lies not in the *emergence* of new passionaries, but in their *manifestation* (awakening).

Another variation of the concept suggests that a period of "passionary tension" arises not from an increase in the number of passionaries, but rather because the passive masses, under the influence of induction, adopt the aspirations and behavioral attitudes of the passionaries (induction here refers to the influence of passionary personalities on those around them, a term introduced by L. Gumilev). During wars, passionary commanders, leading a small group of patriots, frequently managed to rally troops composed primarily of harmonious personalities. Many of these individuals go on to become true passionaries.

Innovators and conservatives

I have drawn attention to numerous examples that clearly distinguish periods marked by a high volume of historically significant transformations from periods of resilience and stability (Volkonsky, 2025b). In my work, these are referred to as epochs

of change and epochs of stability⁵. I propose a hypothesis regarding the existence of two psychological types – or groups of people – characterized by relatively stable psychological attitudes: one is "charged" toward deep, multifaceted transformation of society and the social order – these are the innovators; the other consists of people whose primary attitude and goal is the resilience of society and the stability of the social order – these are the conservatives.

That article contains an error: the term "innovators" was replaced with "passionaries". Referring to a period of change as an epoch of passionaries is correct, but applying this substitution to the group of innovators is unacceptable. Not only innovators but also conservatives may require passionaries – with their powerful energy – to realize their societal goals. In such situations, passionaries can include individuals with either an innovator or a conservative orientation. During an epoch of change, a struggle for dominance and power often unfolds between innovators and conservatives. A case in point is the current period of change in the United States in 2024–2025 – the coming to power of Donald Trump and his battle against the "deep state". Trump and his team's orientation toward restoring America to the traditional principles of social order attests to his and his supporters' conservative character. The ideology and policies of the Democrats during the presidencies of Obama and Biden represent an orientation toward creating an entire "cancel culture", discarding most "outdated" ideological values and moral and legal norms and constraints in the name of a "New" world order. This elite split (and likely that of the whole society) clearly demonstrates the utility of employing the psychological types of conservatives and innovators for the psychohistorical approach.

The category of innovators includes revolu-

⁵ After completing this article, I learned of the book by E. Todd (Todd, 2024) and discovered his identification of analogous periods as stages in the changing effectiveness of religious faith in society: a stage of activity and a stage of inertia.

tionaries and reformers, as well as scholars and cultural figures whose work is connected with the search for new problems and directions that open up new possibilities for humanity. In the foreign policy and military spheres, the activity of innovators is offensive rather than defensive in character. The dominance of the innovator psychological type in society, or in particular sectors of it, tends to initiate and sustain progressive historical trends. At the same time, this category also encompasses representatives of communities charged (or infected) with the ideology of an anti-system (Gumilev, 1993, Part II), in particular that of a chimera. In his article “Russophobia”, I.R. Shafarevich examines in detail a type of anti-system highly relevant to present-day conditions, which he terms the “Small People” (Shafarevich, 1991).

After the catastrophe of World War II and the threat of nuclear apocalypse, and following the collapse of the USSR as a global ideological power, the participation of the conservative psychological type – an alternative to the innovator type – became a tangible and significant force in historical processes. These are by no means passive individuals; they are people whose primary orientation is toward the resilience and stability of the social order. Not only innovators, but also conservatives may require passionaries with their powerful energy to realize their societal goals. The article (Volkonsky, 2025b) discusses an issue that is highly relevant for present-day Russia: ensuring high economic growth rates in an epoch of conservatives.

The categories of an innovators’ epoch and a conservatives’ epoch can be employed to structure psycho-historical processes as the dominant orientations of ruling elites. This is vividly apparent at the present moment, when the waning of the innovators’ epoch and the growing influence of the conservatives are unfolding before our very eyes in the United States and occurred quite recently in Russia. (Such a turning point in two world powers is justifiably regarded as a turning point in global history.) In the Soviet Union, under the influence of the proximity of the wealthy Western civilization and its effective propaganda, the elite

split into Westernizing dissidents (innovators) and supporters of preserving the political-ideological course – who still held faith in the possibility of its renewal in the future (conservatives). The Westernizers won. But not for long: Vladimir Putin’s speech at the Munich Security Conference in 2007 demonstrated that Russia was returning to a position of state sovereignty. The conservatives’ epoch was beginning.

In the United States, the ideology of globalism – the establishment of a New Order across the entire planet under U.S. hegemony – can be regarded as the orientation of the innovators. However, the initiation of numerous cold and hot wars and “color revolutions”, against the backdrop of the rapid rise of China and India and the restoration of Russia’s sovereignty, only led to the steady erosion of America’s standing as a global leader. This, in turn, drove the expansion and strengthening of the conservative orientation within the American elite – an orientation toward a return to the bygone days of steady growth coupled with a stable societal order. The dominant grouping of innovators, in order to rally their supporters and realize their innovating essence, began to lend support to all manner of innovations: the rejection of the nation-state, of the family, of human nature itself, and more.

Trump came to power at a time when new civilizational poles and their coalitions were emerging and gaining strength. He declared that he would prevent America from losing its standing as a global leader. A large segment of the American public expects him to restore and preserve the country’s position as the world’s hegemon. To this end, Trump seeks to redirect society’s attention toward domestic issues and to ensure the resilience and independence of the economy by reviving manufacturing industries at home. Another task he must accomplish in order to protect the country against the destabilization of its social and moral order is the expulsion of illegal migrants – a task he has practically completed. Trump’s orientation toward ending wars around the world is necessary not only to halt American participation in conflicts

that impede the recovery of its economy. Trump is prepared to become the voice of a collective need shared by the majority of nations (with the possible exception of a group of Western European countries) – weary of hot and cold wars – for stability and resilience. The countries that have embraced the ideology of a multipolar world, like a large part of America itself, are waiting for the onset of a conservatives' epoch.

Unfortunately, it is often impossible to unambiguously determine the dominance of innovators or conservatives for a given period. The difficulty lies in the fact that different strata of society may hold sharply diverging attitudes and values, and even within a single social stratum, attitudes may differ with respect to various issues.

In closing this section, let us offer a conjecture about the role of passionaries in the unleashing of wars. In the article (Volkonsky, 2025b), it was suggested that one of the causes of war is the passionaries' need to find an outlet for their excessive energy when such an outlet is otherwise unavailable. Most often, this outlet can be found in the stoking of hostility toward a neighboring people, escalating it to the level of a cold war and then, potentially, to a hot one (see, for example, Blattman, 2024). This thesis should be refined with the aid of the socio-psychological categories discussed above.

First, fully conscious, rational factors alone are almost always insufficient to explain the outbreak of war. The losses incurred in wars frequently exceed by many times over the possible gains and advantages that states initiating and waging a protracted war might hope to secure. At the same time, the levels of culture and the value systems of the communities involved in the conflict are entirely sufficient to allow for finding a mutually beneficial resolution to the contradiction that sparked the conflict. It often seems that the problem lies solely in a lack of information on the part of one or the other participant – that, instead of war, the parties could be persuaded that the losses from war far outweigh the gains of an anticipated victory. War is simply not profitable! In reality, the cause of a

protracted conflict is most often not a deficiency of information or an inability to think rationally, but rather the fact that the people involved in the conflict between communities are different – only the differences are difficult to detect. The point is that they differ not in their physiological characteristics, nor even in their formalized ideologies, but in the depths of the unconscious.

Second, the initiators or supporters of the unleashing of a war may be not only passionaries but also (and perhaps even more often) innovators. It is easier for passionaries to find a worthy application for their capacities and attitudes than it is for innovators, for whom the search for, and the choice of, their place in social activity is concentrated precisely on change. War satisfies this condition. But to find, or to create, the idea of a profound social change under the conditions of a peaceful life is far from being always possible.

It is worth noting that historical processes linked to shifts in the organization of society and in international relations are sometimes explained in terms of the needs for rivalry and for belonging to a large, influential community (accompanied by estrangement from other communities). In my view, an explanation that draws on the categories of innovators and conservatives often proves more compelling.

The sections that follow will examine processes of world history, highlighting the influence that psychological factors have exerted upon them.

Christianity and the formation of Western civilization

The collective Christian ethos played a decisive role not only in the development of the countries of the Middle East and Europe but also in shaping the new contours of world history as a whole. Christianity brought a new dominant attitude into the world. Its defining feature was the demand that every individual be active – that they strive “upward”, toward a new human nature. This drive for activation became one of the principal traits of the dominant mindset that, in the era of capitalism and the Industrial Revolution, provided an unprecedented impetus to economic and

technological progress, as well as to all other spheres of human activity.

The drive for activation manifested itself earlier in the countries of Western Europe than elsewhere and exerted its most widespread influence there. O. Spengler identified constant activity, the overcoming of all limits, as the defining feature of Western civilization. “Life is important insofar as it is activity”; “Every Western European person demands something of others. The words ‘you must’ are spoken with the full conviction that it is, indeed, possible and necessary to change, shape, and order something in a general sense” (Spengler, 1998, pp. 541, 495).

In the 14th century, the cultural movement of the Renaissance began, leading to the elevation of the significance of the human individual, into whom God Himself had placed a particle of the divine essence. The development of individualism within the socio-economic structures of Western countries, combined with the drive for maximum activity, became a major reason why the psychic energy of passionaries was channeled into the advancement of culture. An orientation toward the emancipation of the creative personality – toward its comprehensive Liberation – took shape. A contradiction between individualism and collective ideational commitment began to ripen. These shifts in deep ideology (DI) were accompanied by a decline in the influence of introverts and a corresponding rise in the influence of the intellectual psychological type.

In the 16th century, a new confession (a transformation of the IFI) emerged within Christianity itself – Protestantism, exerting a transformative impact on history comparable to that of Christianity itself. Previously, it was the Church that had helped to elevate religious faith to the highest level of the meaning hierarchy, thereby liberating the believer from all earthly constraints. The Church served as an intermediary in the relationship between the human being and God. Now, it came to be perceived as a restrictor of the freedom of that relationship. Henceforth, each person was to define this relationship alone, without intermediaries, in direct communion with his or

her Creator. This relationship became the highest value. The individual could and must now make free choices and bear responsibility for his or her own thoughts and deeds. Thus was born the ideational commitment to individualism and liberalism – yet another feature of the psychological dominant, the driving force behind the economic-technological and macro-historical breakthrough of the Modern era.

E. Todd identifies three major outcomes of the impact of Protestant ideational commitment on history.

1. The historically rapid spread of mass literacy (every believer had to be able to read the Holy Scriptures for themselves).

2. The explanation (and justification!) of real inequality among people and the often negative attitudes they hold toward one another, at times escalating into hatred and violence. The basis for this is the doctrine of the predestination of each individual to salvation or damnation, which cannot be altered by deeds or thoughts. This doctrine contributed to a “paradoxical” state of the collective psyche of the West – one that prizes the achievements of progress above all else, yet simultaneously permits ideologies and societal arrangements such as racism, the genocide of nations, and Nazism.

3. The activation of the idea of the nation, since the Holy Scriptures were translated into local languages (Todd, 2024).

The most important outcome, however, was undoubtedly the emergence of the thesis that a person’s success in life and business should be understood as a sign of divine favor. This thesis – identified as a product of Protestantism by M. Weber – became the foundation for a drive toward capital accumulation, a drive that elevates entrepreneurial activity to the pinnacle of the hierarchy of values and meanings.

Thus, the era of Modernity dawned in Western Europe. It was characterized by a new outlook on human development, its goals, and its meaning. At the summit of the meaning hierarchy stood the drive for infinite development and perfection, originally instilled by Christianity – only now the

focus was no longer on the introvert's deep qualities of faith and morality, but on discoveries in science and technology that expanded the capabilities and power of human organization, and on the rational-cognitive abilities of the empiricist-extravert. A psychological dominant was taking shape for the socio-economic transformation of society – for the transition to the capitalist formation.

European ideologists began to search for and study the goal and direction of this development, which came to be known as civilization. Initially, the term referred to a particular condition of society – its highest stage, following savagery and barbarism. A civilized society was understood as one possessing state structures, social stratification, urbanization, a developed writing system, and so forth. Subsequently, civilization came to be viewed as the direction of a process. In his work “The Philosophy of Civilization” (1923), A. Schweitzer pointed out the necessity of regarding spiritual and ethical development as the most essential element of civilization.

In his classic scholarly work, first published in 1974, D. Baker draws on a vast body of historical evidence to demonstrate that the most important achievements of human communities lie in their capacity to create and develop civilizations. A substantial section of the book (Chapter 27) is devoted to a discussion of the concept of civilizations and the factors behind their emergence and development. The category of intellect, along with cognitive (knowing) ability as one of its components, is examined in detail (Baker, 2015).

The question of how to define the concept of civilization – one of the most critical in the discipline of history – remains a subject of debate to this day. The breadth of the divergence in definitions has been demonstrated in the work of S.D. Baranov⁶ (Baranov, 2024). His studies examine in detail seven approaches to defining Russian (or Eastern European) civilization, as presented

in the works of various authors. We shall employ the categories of Western civilization and Eastern civilization, keeping in mind their respective origins in the Catholic-Protestant and Orthodox branches of Christianity, as well as the distinction between the Western European and Eurasian groups of countries.

In the conventional sense, the category of civilization is understood as the accumulation of spiritual and moral values resulting from societal development. The transition in the countries of Western Europe from feudal society to the society of Modernity, the age of geographical discoveries, capitalism, and colonialism, led to the replacement of Christianity's dominant orientations with the supreme value of power, an ideology of supremacy, and an abandonment of the path of accumulating civilizational riches. In Russia, by contrast, the original Orthodox teaching of Christianity was preserved, along with many other features of a mentality distinct from that of the West. Over the course of the twentieth century, the divergence between Western and Eastern civilizations evolved into a political-ideological confrontation, oscillating between relatively peaceful and overtly hostile forms.

Colonialism, the ideology of superiority, racism

Works on historical materialism provide numerous examples of how a society's deep-seated attitudes and worldview have been shaped and reshaped under the influence of economic-technological and political events and processes. Let us highlight several lines of such influence. During the 16th through 19th centuries, the British colonial empire was taking shape. Within it, earlier than in other countries, changes occurred that were bound up with the transition from the feudal Middle Ages to modernity and capitalism. In key indicators, Britain became the leader among European nations.

An important instrument in the struggle for spiritual and socio-political leadership has always been an ideology of superiority over other peoples. This ideology rests on the needs and capacities of the human psyche – above all, on the needs and capacities for rivalry and for power. It is hardly surprising, then, that in colonial Britain, with

⁶ Baranov S.D. (2025). Axial civilization. Part one. The foundations of Russian identity. *Zavtra*, no. 22; Baranov S.D. (2025). Axial civilization. Part two. The contours of the Russian world. *Zavtra*, no. 23.

its extensive experience of contact with peoples and tribes at a far lower level of development, the elaboration of an intellectually formalized ideology of superiority took the path of racism. Racial theory, Social Darwinism, and eugenics all emerged (both in theory and in practice) earlier in the Anglo-Saxon states than elsewhere. The German racial theory, “racial hygiene” (eugenics), and the ideology of Aryan supremacy that became the ideological foundation of German Nazism drew, to a considerable degree, on the theoretical and experimental work of English and American scholars – as well as on their social-policy recommendations, already tested in practice⁷.

More unexpected, however, is the use by the Anglo-Saxon elite and the U.S. ruling stratum of a long-standing concept – one that appeared no fewer than four centuries ago – that traces the origin of the Anglo-Saxons (an elite group of peoples inhabiting the British Isles) back to the people of Israel. The Anglo-Saxons genuinely believed in this doctrine of “British Israelism”: it compensated for a deficit of the ancient archetypes essential to the resilience of a deep ideology. The leader of the 17th-century bourgeois revolution, O. Cromwell, referred to the English as “God’s people” and to Britain as the “New Israel”. This concept fully serves the interests of the Anglo-Saxon elite in the United States, where the spiritual space remains fragmented owing to the presence of numerous sects and diverse cultural stereotypes. Among the most influential and active national-confessional groupings are adherents of the Zionist creed. Securing an “indissoluble” bond between the United States and Israel also aligns with the geopolitical interests of the American ruling elite, since Israel serves as a permanent instrument (or weapon) for the U.S. in a region as critical and volatile as the Middle East.

The concept of “British Israelism” provides a telling example of how contemporary ruling elites exploit the features and attitudes of the collective consciousness and the collective unconscious in the service of their own policies.

⁷ See, for example: Katasonov V.Yu. (2025). The Anglo-Saxons and German Nazism. *Otechestvennye zapiski*, no. 12, 13.

The ability to influence the collective consciousness and the collective unconscious is actively exploited by ruling groups, including state structures, through the use of propaganda (soft power). These are groups that possess the capacity to control the mass media and other information flows. A wide range of techniques have now been developed and deployed which, by shaping conscious attitudes, also affect those unconscious functions of the psyche that are not subject to critical reflection – emotions, fear, submission to a super-idea, and the like. The methods and mechanisms of soft power are employed to serve various political and ideological ends: for instance, to destabilize and fracture the societal unity of an adversary or to destroy its national identity; to dehumanize its authoritative leaders; to cultivate anti-social groups and a counter-elite; to instill in the adversary a new value system, a new “correct” ideology, and new institutions; and to construct an image of the enemy (the adversary) in the consciousness of one’s own society.

As a result of the monopoly control exercised over all major media outlets – and, in effect, over the entire information space – by a single ideological center, the media manipulation of public consciousness has become the most critical weapon of hybrid warfare.

The transition to a world of information, with its capacity for virtually instantaneous dissemination to any point on the globe, along with the development of technologies for influencing public consciousness, has transformed the picture of how macro-historical processes interact with processes of change in the collective psyche. Let us note one consequence of this transformation. In the past, the collective consciousness and the collective unconscious of the masses possessed a relatively high degree of stability, so that the political elite was compelled to adapt itself to this “constant”. Today, the properties and attitudes of the collective psyche of the masses have, to a significant degree, become a “dependent variable” – one that hinges on the current goals and capabilities of the elite.

People have grown accustomed to the idea that such features of a nation's collective psyche as feelings of empathy or antipathy toward neighboring peoples take shape and change only over long periods of interaction or through bloody wars. It has therefore come as a great surprise to witness the spread (literally within the space of a few years!) across many Western European countries of Russophobia, of credulity toward fake news, and of reports alleging Russia's intention to attack Western nations, to the point of abandoning common sense altogether.

A major consequence of the shifts taking place in the life of society is a change in the very nature of war and in its meaning. Today, the greater part of a military conflict (that is, a major war) is waged in the ideological sphere. The most important objective of war has become not the seizure of the enemy's territory, nor the destruction of its army's manpower, but the enemy's acknowledgment – and the demonstration to the entire world – of its moral and ideological defeat, its inability to resist, and its readiness to submit. In other words, the goals and outcomes of war now encompass changes not only to the political, socio-economic, and institutional structure of the adversary's society, but also to its collective psyche.

The similarity and the difference between the psychological profiles of Western and Eastern civilizations

Both Marxism and the concept of escaping the "Malthusian trap" (see, for example, Popov, 2012) show how the class and institutional structure of a society changes during the transition from feudalism to the capitalist system.

In the 16th century, the dominant role in the economy was played by such branches of production as agriculture and crafts, along with fairly free market relations. Under these conditions, the greatest success accrued to individual (family) farms in the hands of an active proprietor. Obstacles to the development of the individual farm included the communal structure of the economy and the state and Christian ideational commitment that sustained it (which was, at that time, in a phase of

conservative inertia, as Todd might put it). The rise of the new ruling class of the bourgeoisie and of the system of market relations in the economy was facilitated by the growing influence of the innovator psychological type (A.G. Dugin: "Modernity is the negation of Tradition" (Dugin, 2020, p. 151)) and of the drive toward rivalry and competition. The ideational commitment of the New Era came to incorporate the value of individualism.

Since the individual becomes the highest value, what moral or spiritual norms and prohibitions can limit their striving for Liberation, for the expansion of their capabilities? Individualism engenders liberalism. In Western Europe, individualistic liberalism becomes the attitude of the innovators. A new psychological dominant is taking shape.

In Russia, Christianity is preserved in its original form of Orthodoxy. Despite the powerful influence of Western civilization, the psychological dominant invariably remains statehood, which rests on a pronounced need to identify oneself with a strong community. Epochs of conservative dominance alternate with epochs of innovators, marking radical turning points in Russian history – the reign of Peter I and the creation and development of the first socialist state, the USSR⁸.

The development of Western and Eastern civilizations can be traced across various spheres of life and through different groups of factors. Perhaps the most thoroughly studied is the set of economic, institutional, and political-ideological factors that feature in the Marxist model of the successive replacement of socio-economic formations. The article (Volkonsky, 2025a) proposes a synthesis of the model of changing formations and the concept of interaction between the two civilizations. Within the framework of feudalism in Western civilization, conditions gradually ripened for the emergence of a new, more efficient formation – the capitalist one. The principal features of the capitalist system – such as the dependence of an actor's power and influence on their wealth, the spread of market

⁸ For further detail, see the works (Popov, 2012; Volkonsky, 2024; Volkonsky, 2025a).

relations, and competition – readily proliferated throughout the countries of Western Europe. In Russia, however, they were perceived as a negative path of development, as a challenge emanating from the West. One reason for this can be seen in the incompatibility of the capitalist system – and the accompanying dominant of individualistic liberalism – with Russia's dominant of statehood and the orientation toward identification with the community. In Russia, interest in socialist ideology and in the creation of a society and economy of a new, socialist formation intensified. The central component of socialist ideology is the social state – that is, a state whose purpose is to ensure the welfare of the people. This idea fully accords with the psychological dominant of statehood.

The socialist movement in Russia can be interpreted as the East's response to the challenge posed by the West – along the lines of A. Toynbee's "challenge–response" scheme. The West's answer to the spread of socialism was an intensification of the ideology of superiority – both racial and civilizational – and a policy dominated by the drive to construct a unipolar world under U.S. global hegemony. The expansion of the unipolar-world "formation" probably reached its peak of success by the early 2000s, with the destruction of the Soviet Union and the weakening of Russia. Yet the law of "challenge–response" continues to operate. In the 21st century, countries outside the Collective West system are gaining the opportunity to create a coalition capable of resisting Western expansion economically, politically, and ideologically – a multipolar world (MPW). From the moment the socialist state was established in Russia, the divergence of social orders in the two civilizations turned into a persistent confrontation that continues to the present day. Relations between the civilizations exhibit an oscillating character: a phase of convergence and growing similarity is succeeded by a phase of divergence and repulsion.

Each civilization, in its own way, obtains and utilizes the achievements and features of the opposing side's social order that contribute to its effectiveness. Thus, socialist Russia initially sought to dispense with

market relations between economic organizations. Yet it proved necessary to employ elements of the market system for planning, for price formation, and for the incentive system. After the catastrophe of the 1990s, a system was created that can be defined as a combination of market mechanisms and the social state (the most essential component of the socialist system). As early as the mid-20th century, following the USSR's victory in the Second World War and the successes of the socialist countries, the Western nations were forced to borrow from the East the principle of the social state (as an ideological and institutional principle). The institutional and administrative structures of the countries of the East and the West are now very close to one another, and their production and technological levels are rapidly converging. Whence, then, arise the initiatives that replace the phase of rapprochement with a phase of estrangement and hostility?

Judging by a mass of facts (including classified materials that have since come to light), these initiatives tend, as a rule, to originate with the ruling elites of the Western countries. One might suppose that their source is an attitude dominant in the collective psyche of those elites. In the countries of Western Europe, part of this psychological attitude is a yearning for revanche – for military defeats and for failures in other attempts to eliminate Russia from the circle of superpowers. But more important is the difference in the psyche of Eastern and Western ruling elites, a difference connected with their origins and with their dominant psychological attitudes. The institutional pyramids, the hierarchies of power in the societies of the East and the West, are very similar. At the apex of the pyramid stands a small number of the largest industrial-technological and financial corporations, together with state bodies that operate in coordination with one another. However, the leaders and employees of these structures who hold real power:

– in the countries of individualistic liberalism, these are people whose supreme attitude is the consolidation of personal power or that of their family clan (many of them are heirs to the wealthiest lineages);

— in the countries of statehood, they are people for whom the highest value is society and the state.

This distinction among elites proves consequential in historical processes.

In the medieval period, the dominant spirituality and the primary psychological factor in development was Christianity. Yet the divergence that would later form the basis of the profound distinction between Western and Eastern civilizations can be traced, as S. Averintsev demonstrates, even to the Church Fathers as a precondition for the schism between Catholicism and Orthodoxy in the 10th century (Averintsev, 2006). It manifests itself both in the conscious part of the psyche — in the intellectually formalized doctrine (IFI) — and in the broader sense of the world, the complex of moral norms, meanings, and traditions accumulated over centuries that are preserved in the unconscious.

With the transition from the Middle Ages to the Modern era, the development of science and technology ascended to the highest level of the meaning hierarchy. This led to an enhanced role within society and education for the thinking and extraverted psychological types (and, most likely, their share of the population was increasing as well). This socio-psychological tendency, noted as early as Jung, must have exerted a reciprocal influence on the structure of processes within the “general course of history”, in particular becoming a prerequisite for the formation of the capitalist system with its overall orientation toward competitive success.

This shift in the structure of psychological types manifested primarily in the evolution of Western European civilization. In the West, a person who achieves wealth sees themselves as chosen by God, and is perceived in the same way by others. No such attitude exists in Russia. In the West, the value of scientific and technological development rises to the highest level in the hierarchy of values and meanings; the very notion of “progress” — a concept narrower than “civilization” — is predominantly tied to this development. For a Russian person, scientific and technological progress also holds great value, yet it cannot be the highest aim — it is, after all, only a means.

The more rapid development of the Western countries compared to those of the East in the fields of science, technology, production, and economics is customarily assessed as their superiority — as an advantage in a universal sense. Yet, by concentrating on the values and goals of technical progress, the individual loses (or diminishes the significance of) another essential part of their needs and capacities. Receding into the background are the abilities to love life and its joys in their everyday manifestations, the attachments and love for those close to the individual — capacities that were, to a considerable degree, sanctified and elevated by the worldview of early Christianity. An important feature of Russian culture is the high psychological significance of such values as one’s “small motherland” — life in immediate closeness to the land, to plants, and to animals. For Russian culture and the psyche, interpersonal relationships hold a greater importance than they do for the Western one.

For a great many people, to be happy means to love those close to them, to be in emotional contact and unity with their immediate world: not only one’s own self, but all the people dear to them must be happy as well. The foundation of such a feeling of emotional togetherness is tradition — the memory of joyful times and, in personal life, of moments of happiness once lived. A person deprived of this feeling cannot be genuinely happy. It was the philosopher and priest Pavel Florensky who wrote about the psychological quality of attachment to the place where one lives, about the meaning and value of family and ancestral ties, and about the bond between generations. And it was in the Russian language that the concept of the “small Motherland” (*malaya rodina*) emerged. S. Shcherbakov has written beautifully about the value and psychological significance of sensing life on the earth, amidst the plant world, and in communion with animals⁹.

⁹ See: Shcherbakov S. (2025). Russian fires: How to preserve the human being in the modern world. *Zavtra*, no. 33. It should be noted, however, that the author draws the conclusion that the peasantry, rather than urban dwellers, have always been the principal custodians of Russian culture. One cannot agree with this.

The divergence in the civilizational codes manifests itself vividly in the nature of interpersonal relations (see, e.g., Kasyanova, 1994). The Western individual treats people outside his or her immediate circle of contact as one would treat any object that either facilitates or obstructs his or her goal-oriented activity. A.S. Panarin employs the term “subject–object” character of relations (Panarin, 2005).

Parallel to the development of individualism, a broader attitude has been taking shape, one that distances the Western person’s mentality from that of the Eastern person and from early (Orthodox) Christianity. The Western individual perceives the world as divided into “mine” and “not-mine” – the alien, the unordered – into which order, “my” law, must be introduced. The Eastern individual, by contrast, places greater trust in the established order, be it traditional or divine. Their primary goal is to establish not their own personal order, but a universal moral law. For the Eastern individual, to “assimilate” that which is alien means to “understand” it and to find a system of relations that is “correct” and “just” from the standpoint of the whole, without destroying the whole in the process (Lossky, 1990).

As the features described above – the ones distinguishing a person of Western civilization (their behavior, inclinations, and customs) from a person of the East, from the Russian – clearly show, these are attitudes of the collective consciousness or, even more often, of the collective unconscious, attitudes that are fairly stable yet insufficiently studied by psychologists to have acquired the status of established categories within psychological science. These differences are identified and described by historians who study civilizations. In this connection, one cannot fail to dwell on the books of O. Spengler.

O. Spengler’s book “The Decline of the West” (published in Russian as “Zakat Evropy” (The Sunset of Europe)) is devoted to the spirituality of Western European civilization, or culture, as compared with other civilizations.

An important feature of the Western civilizational code that Spengler describes is aggressive

expansionism – “the soul’s claim to dominate the alien”. “The identity of space and will finds expression in the deeds of Columbus and Copernicus, just as it does in those of the Hohenstaufens and Napoleon – in both cases, the subjugation of world space. The pure space of the Faustian world-picture is extension as action, as overcoming, as will to power” (Spengler, 1998, p. 449).

In his work (Spengler, 1925), the author highlights another feature of the Western European civilizational code: the determination to achieve important goals “despite everything” – a readiness to discard any moral or legal norms accumulated through civilizational development. Here is what he writes about the struggle between the Germans and the English after the First World War: “There can be no reconciliation here. The spirit of the Vikings and the spirit of the monastic orders will carry the struggle to its end, even if the world emerges from the bloody torrents of this century weary and broken”.

Conclusion

This article has examined the principal theoretical hypotheses and postulates that elucidate, at both the individual and collective levels, the essence of how psychological factors influence historical processes. It has also offered concrete examples of historical events in which the impact of the collective conscious and unconscious played a decisive role. The study demonstrates that the state and functioning of a society’s psychological system are in constant interaction with the economic-technological, political, institutional, and other spheres of societal life. At moments of historical rupture – or when a society is engaged in a struggle for survival (revolutions, coups d’état, wars) – changes in the psychological state of a society or of its elite exert a determining influence on the course of historical processes and on their outcomes.

The most profound influence on historical processes is exerted by the psyche’s need and capacity to concentrate the greater part of its functions, subordinating them to a particular attitude, a supreme value-semantic principle – an idea, a task, a doctrine. This attitude becomes

a psychological dominant; it may be rationally recognized, yet it is also typically rooted, in part, in the unconscious. The doctrine that constitutes the content of the psychological dominant for a large community of its adherents is either a religion or an ideology of a different type.

The persistence of relatively stable living conditions over long periods leaves lasting imprints of historical events and processes in the collective unconscious of society – for example, a positive or negative attitude toward a neighboring people. In recent times, however, the informational environment in which all societies live has undergone a radical transformation, and technologies have been developed that enable ruling elites

to manipulate public consciousness and, to a significant degree, the collective unconscious. As a result, many features of the societal psyche have lost their stability.

Historians and writers often describe civilizational differences as differences in mentality and in the typical character traits of members of a given society – for instance, the person of Western culture versus the person of Russian culture. Yet the features that mark such differences have not yet been studied sufficiently to acquire the status of established categories within psychological science, a fact that underscores the importance of psychohistory for both theory and practical application in geopolitics and economic planning.

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