

# opción

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## **Mental bases of modern Russian society socio-political development**

**Yuriy D. Korobkov<sup>1</sup>**,

<sup>1</sup>Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 38 Lenin Avenue, 455000,  
Chelyabinsk Region, Magnitogorsk, Russia.  
[vss200975@mail.ru](mailto:vss200975@mail.ru)

**Svetlana S. Velikanova<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>2</sup>Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 38 Lenin Avenue, 455000,  
Chelyabinsk Region, Magnitogorsk, Russia.  
[vss200975@mail.ru](mailto:vss200975@mail.ru)

**Irina V. Samarokova<sup>3</sup>**

<sup>3</sup>Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 38 Lenin Avenue, 455000,  
Chelyabinsk Region, Magnitogorsk, Russia  
[samarokovai@mail.ru](mailto:samarokovai@mail.ru)

**Natalia V. Kozhushkova<sup>4</sup>**

<sup>4</sup>Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 38 Lenin Avenue, 455000,  
Chelyabinsk Region, Magnitogorsk, Russia.  
[natalka-koz@yandex.ru](mailto:natalka-koz@yandex.ru)

**Alexey G. Ivanov<sup>5</sup>**

<sup>5</sup>Nosov Magnitogorsk State Technical University, 38 Lenin Avenue, 455000,  
Chelyabinsk Region, Magnitogorsk, Russia.  
[ivanov79@mail.ru](mailto:ivanov79@mail.ru)

**Oksana P. Chernykh<sup>6</sup>**

<sup>6</sup>Moscow University of Finance and Law MFUA, 17/1 Serpukhov Val str., 115191,  
Moscow, Russia.  
[Chernyh.O@mfua.ru](mailto:Chernyh.O@mfua.ru)

### **Abstract**

The article compares the historical material and the data of modern sociological surveys through historical and genetic methods. Its result was the conclusion that the socio-psychological basis of the modern Russian political process is such features as patience, the reverse side of which can be various social conflicts by form and strength; such features of a Russian man state consciousness as the weave of state and anarchic principles. As a conclusion, the article shows the need to grow the basic features of truly Russian consciousness, relying on the common in the mental development of mankind.

**Keywords:** political, mentality, state, society, judicial.

# Bases mentales del desarrollo socio-político de la sociedad rusa moderna

## Resumen

El artículo compara el material histórico y los datos de las encuestas sociológicas modernas a través de métodos históricos y genéticos. Su resultado fue la conclusión de que la base socio-psicológica del proceso político ruso moderno tiene características tales como la paciencia, cuyo reverso puede ser varios conflictos sociales por la forma y la fuerza; Tales rasgos de la conciencia estatal de un hombre ruso son el tejido de principios estatales y anárquicos. Como conclusión, el artículo muestra la necesidad de desarrollar las características básicas de la verdadera conciencia rusa, confiando en lo común en el desarrollo mental de la humanidad.

**Palabras clave:** política, mentalidad, estado, sociedad, judicial.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction to the problem

The content, orientation, the character of any social transformations depend in many respects on the features of national character, stable behavioral stereotypes, the socio-psychological codes of reality perception and development formed during centuries, through which people comprehend reality and its place in it. The stated

fully applies to the development of the political process in modern Russia, whose trajectories are directly related to the specifics of national mentality, on which the centuries-old monarchical and Soviet political traditions rested.

## **1.2 Problem relevance**

The duration and the stability of national character main features do not mean their immutability and immobility. Under the influence of new historical realities, the modern trends in world development and the need for a person to adapt to them, the partial change in some features takes place, the filling of others with new contents, the restructuring of national character main components hierarchy, the correlation of terminal and instrumental values. All this requires a certain revision of Russian people mentality content and structure in order to determine its supporting structures, the delimitation of the center and periphery, constant and variable (specific-situational) features and, ultimately, the allocation of a stable core-forming nucleus.

## **1.3 Problem study**

The study and the description of Russian character and Russian soul began in Russia in the 40-ies of the XIX-th century. The most significant and relevant conclusions of prerevolutionary scholars for us are Beradyev's thesis about the dualism of Russian people state

consciousness, the observations by the authors of Milestones collections and From the depth about the peculiarities of the political behavior of Russians during the revolutions at the beginning of the 20th century, Klyuchevsky and Solovyov estimations on naive monarchism and the state paternalism of a Russian man as the main features of his political psychology. In Soviet historiography, this issue was on the periphery of research interests, which stemmed from the Marxist paradigm of the historical process. The current stage is characterized by the attention of experts to the study of political psychology of Russians and its comprehensive study by historians (Buldakov, 1997; Kolonitsky, 1994; Yarov, 1999) and sociologists (Lapin, 1997; Kasyanova, 1994; Sikevich, 1996), interesting attempts were made to identify the features and the basic traits of national psychology, the reasons for the development of its original system. The result of these studies was the statement of an obvious fact concerning the interrelation of the psycho-mental factor with the course of domestic reforms and its influence on the historical development of the country as a whole. In particular, the general inertial-mobilization type of both is indicated.

#### **1.4 Hypotheses**

Many attitudes of modern mass consciousness are adequate to the representations of the social bottoms of pre-revolutionary Russia and preserve space-time stability. Their identification based on a comparative historical analysis of pre-revolutionary and modern data makes it possible to take into account their influence on the state

development of post-Soviet Russia and to correct the political course of power.

## **2. METHODS**

The main methods used in this article were historical and genetic one, which allow us to trace the impact of Russia historical development on the changes in population mentality, historical and comparative one, which makes it possible to consider these changes in a comparative context, historical and typological, which allows us to identify the main categories of changes in behavioral patterns and the patterns of Russian life. The consideration of state consciousness main feature evolution in the broader context of the historical transformation of Russia and taking into account the diversity of the corresponding changes predetermined the importance of historical and systemic method.

## **3. MAIN PART**

As current practice shows, some of the political stereotypes of Russians, traditionally associated with mental constants, are largely originated from the peculiarities of the political process and the socioeconomic development of post-Soviet Russia. Along with this, many attitudes of modern mass consciousness are adequate to the representations of the social bottoms of pre-revolutionary Russia and preserve the space-time stability. Perhaps the most important and stable

of them should be the ability of people to a long-term patience. In real life, this meant that a person's reaction to emerging difficulties and complexities was not depression, despair and disappointment, not the actualization of struggle, but the involvement in a situation and the survival in it. As Sikorski wrote: "from a psychological point of view, patience is a concentration of will directed toward the appearance of physical or moral suffering, the lack of sentimentality, the stoic submission to fate and the willingness to suffer" (Sikorsky, 1903: 22). The patience of a Russian man was a peculiar form of his adaptation to constant natural and social cataclysms that accompanied Russian history throughout its entire period. A great role in its development was played by the religious motives of humility and obedience to fate, the divine recompense for suffering.

The patience of a Russian man played an ambiguous role in his development. On the one hand, it provided physiological and mental survival under difficult conditions, the stability of his spiritual world, and positively influenced the stabilization of social relations in Russia (Barulin, 2000). Along with these positive properties, it also had a negative impact on Russian statehood. The ability of Russian people to adapt to a variety of situations weakened the momentum of change, reduced their energy and initiative in production and public activities. Patience became the soil of social apathy, led to the desire to be content with a modest way of life, to rely on circumstances, luck and external forces. It meant a certain reconciliation with the shortcomings and the injustice of being, and later played the role of some

compensatory mechanism that reconciles Russians with the hardships of life.

The reverse side of prolonged patience was the concentration of social explosion energy, which, reaching a critical mass, led to powerful social upheavals, often taking extreme forms, turning into an element of total negation, into a senseless and a merciless Russian riot. Thus, one extreme produced another. Along passivity and humility burst out, in the end, into various forms of extremism, anarchy, a rampant revelry and the destruction of the foundations of being, as it was at the beginning of the 20th century. The data of modern sociological polls show that the ability to endure the blows of fate persistently and patiently still remains one of the basic features of the national mentality in post-Soviet Russia (Sikevich et al., 2004) and in many respects influences the attitude of Russians towards the events taking place and the ways of their social reflection.

The need for strong power, a firm hand and a powerful state as a whole is closely related and largely conditioned by the patience of the Russian people, the factor of his national psychology. Historically, it was determined by the peculiarities of a Russian man socialization, the relations of personal dependence that had developed in antiquity, and the ramified system of economic and, mainly, non-economic coercion. Because of this, the self-affirmation of a person, his attitude toward others were based on various manifestations of physical and spiritual strength, which was not only the basis for the development of interpersonal ties, but also the basic mechanism for the existence of

Russian society and led to an insufficient development of political, ideological and socio-psychological methods of public consensus finding, the search for mutually acceptable solutions, which in its turn created an additional ground for the preservation of a powerful state.

The reverse side of a Russian man state origin, based on these mental parameters, were emotional incidents, flight, rebellion, various forms of protest as the reaction to social injustice and the constant pressure of the state, which were followed by calm and reconciliation with the authorities. In general, any period of will ended in self-preservation or restoration of previous relations by the lower classes, which makes it possible to regard his statehood as the determining, basic component of a Russian man political psychology (Korobkov et al., 2017). The periodic outbursts of dissatisfaction with the authorities, various types of social protest that have occurred regularly in Russian history, along with their socio-political component, can be considered in many ways as the means of psychological tension release, during which a mass of negative emotions accumulated in generations burst out, and a kind of form of teaching for all levels of government, showing that it is necessary to take into account the opinion of people despite all his patience.

The timeless stability of this mental parameter and its finding in the number of system-forming features of spiritual and intellectual system of Russian people is evidenced by the data of numerous sociological surveys of modern Russia population, which point to the tendency of strengthening the request to the state for the growth of its

responsibility for population position and for a more active role in economy (Mareeva, 2013). From 2004 to 2008 the level of paternalistic claims among the population of Russia grew from 68 to 81% (Urnov et al., 2011). This situation continues at present time. The flip side of centuries-old statism is the weakness of the democratic tradition in the political culture and the crowd mentality. There is a similarity in the attitude of Russians toward democracy in pre- and post-Soviet space. In particular, in March-September of 1917, the content of rally and meeting resolutions at industrial enterprises of the Urals, consisted of demands for democratic freedoms only at 4.8% (Korobkov, 2004). A similar situation is recorded in the data of modern sociological surveys. They note that such democratic values as the freedom of expression, conscience and religion were on the periphery of public consciousness and were much inferior to the right to life, security, labor and its fair payment in the late 1990-ies (Levada, 1998), to security, order, legality and peace in 2013 (Shestopal, 2014).

The need for a strong state was contradictory combined with a general indifference to power. This feature was formulated in 1859 by Aksakov, speaking of an unlimited freedom of governing for the government and a complete freedom of life for people. The alienation of the crowd from politics resulted in the effect of a double bottom of consciousness, which was characterized by an external loyalty with an internal opposition or indifference, a maximum adaptability to any, even unpopular and alien power, a genetic distrust of the state and its institutions and, paradoxically, a weak rooting of state power idea in general, from which, by and large, only one thing was required - not to

interfere with one's own life. Describing this feature of the Russian dialogue between government and society, Gorky wrote about the centuries-old dream of the Russian peasants about "some state without the right to influence the will of an individual ..., about a state without power over a person" (Gorky, 2007: 13). This feature of the relationship between government and society, which Medvedev described as the coexistence in parallel dimensions is inherent in modern Russian society. The author points out, that:

A kind of relationship develops between the authorities and the people in Russia: the people, leaving the right to criticize people in power, do not enter into an open conflict with it and even supports it. At the same time, he allows himself to take revenge in his own way, developing non-political ways and the ways to ignore it (2002: 14).

The basis for this attitude to the state is not only the mental parameters, but also the centuries-old ignoring of the people's interests. The attitude of the crowd to the state was also characterized by a purely pragmatic, consumer approach. It is very capacious and accurately reflected by such an original encyclopedia of the people's mentality, as proverbs and sayings. The quintessence of the consumer attitude towards the state is formulated in it on the following principle: The coffer is a cask without a bottom and only lazy does not milk it, the Sovereign's treasury is not a wretched widow, it will not be taken away, and everyone will get something. Modern sociological surveys testify to the timeless stability of this mental parameter in the mass consciousness of the inhabitants of Russia. According to Akulovaet, in 2003 36.7% of the polled Russians morally justified such deception of

the state as the evasion from payment of taxes (Akulova et al., 2016). The same is evidenced by a high level of corruption in all echelons of power, mass theft and plunder of national resources by state servants. Leader cult is another characteristic feature of Russian mentality, which directly affects the peculiarities of Russian statehood. It is expressed in the notion of his special power and great possibilities, in its boundless faith in it, often with a semi-mystical, unconscious character of personified dependence and subordination. This was formed at all stages of human socialization, beginning with the family, where its head was an unquestioned leader, and then through communal relations within which an individual was subordinated to the whole, and the personal dependence on the landlord, this system developed to a universal dependence on the tsar as the embodiment of absolute power.

It is no coincidence that foreigners who lived in Russia back in the time of Ivan IV were amazed by such a strong love of the people for him despite all his cruelty, a love hard to acquire by other sovereigns only through condescension and affection (Viper, 1922). A few centuries later, the paradoxical nature of this situation in Nicholas Russia during the first half of the 19th century was pointed out by (Medvedev, 2002). Noting the emergence of an insignificant layer of the Nicholas regime critics, he stated that the most enthusiastic reviews of Russian scientists and publicists about one of the most despotic Russian rulers took place in the 1830-ies and the 1840-ies. The social demand for a strong leader has always increased during critical and transitional stages of Russian history. This is evidenced by

sociological measurements of the early 90-ies of the twentieth century (Medvedev, 2002). This regularity is confirmed by Putin's outrageous ratings in 2014-2015.

Another variation of social reality simplification, closely related to the universal social and psychological opposition we - they, is the search for the enemy complex that has become a stable component of mass consciousness. With a certain degree of conventionality, the image of an enemy can be considered as inherent in human nature, a biologically determined feature of social psychology, and a universal means of crowd mobilization, especially in crisis situations. Originated in the early stages of world history, it still remains one of the main attributes of political mythology, being on the distant shelves of the historical archive in stable times and becoming the subject of reader's interest in unstable situations. In Russia, the enemy rhetoric effectiveness and a massive replication of its different samples and specimens were associated with the inertia-mobilization type of development within the framework of overtaking modernization, social and cultural rupture of society, the lack of common values, inner spiritual braces that connect the different parts of society together. Therefore, the enemy became not only a factor in social mobilization and rallying, but also the fundamental basis of its internal organization. The authorities and the crowd were interested in his presence, and in his absence - by his appearance, and the entire history of post-Petrine Russia is an endless series of enemy images. Most often, this thesis is illustrated by the examples of Soviet history, however, they lacked before 1917 (socialists, bombers, masons,

Europe, Jews, Poles, bourgeois, etc.). Modern Russia also demonstrates a conglomerate of internal and external enemies (oligarchs, officials, corruption, liberals, communists, Europe, the United States, terrorists, Bandera followers...).

Ultimately, we can talk about the transformation of the socio-psychological mechanism in one of Russian mentality traits, which experts define by the concept of the judicial complex, and the mass consciousness by the eternal Russian question who is to blame? And the development of arrow consciousness at all levels of the social ladder Russian society.

#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

These features of Russian mentality with a timeless character must be taken into account both in the development of a modern state and in addressing an actual problem for modern Russia concerning a human factor activation and its connection to social problem solving. This is also important because even among modern Russian youth, which is more oriented toward the Western path of development and its values than the other categories of the population, the understanding of Russia special path increases as it is socialized Mareeva (2013) and the dependence of its further development vectors on the basic socio-cultural and psychic-mental constants of mass consciousness. Therefore, the identification of real and not imaginary features of national psychology, its basic values and their semantic

core, the use of international and domestic modernization process experience allow to rely on a value core which remained unchanged for a long historical period, to conduct purposeful selection work in the development of the current reform strategy to identify clearly and potentially reformative values and to minimize the negative impact on social processes of their opposites (taking into account the dualism of the Russian soul). The need to grow the basic features of truly Russian consciousness, relying on the common in the mental development of mankind was written by K.D. Kavelin back in the 60's of the XIXth century. This becomes a common place for modern socio-political literature, but the problem is still far from being solved and requires the joint efforts of all interested parties, both the expert community and the representatives of state power.

## **5. CONFLICT OF INTEREST**

The authors confirm that the presented data do not contain a conflict of interest.

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