The Scales of History: Culture, Economy, and Collective Memory in an Era of Change

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A reflection on the historical, cultural, and economic foundations of the relationship between Europe and the Eurasian landmass, beyond the turmoil of the day.



By Frank Dumon

The Echo of the Past in the Present

History is not merely a succession of facts and dates; it is the living fabric of collective memory that shapes the identity of nations. When we look back at the relationship between the European continent and Russia, it is essential to look beyond superficial, daily controversies. The true depth of current fault lines only becomes visible when we view them through the lens of culture, economy, and historical consciousness. It is an analysis that forces us to reflect on the philosophical foundations of our societies, the economic structures that determine

our well-being, and the historical traumas that still resonate in the collective subconscious of peoples.

In an era where the world order is undergoing profound shifts, an objective and respectful consideration of these three pillars—culture, economy, and history—provides a necessary counterweight to the simplistic versions that dominate public debate. By focusing on the long-term dynamics of civilizations, we can understand the forces driving current developments and perhaps find a path toward more sustainable coexistence.

The Burden of the Past: Historical Memory and Collective Trauma

No historical event has shaped the cultural and psychological structure of Russian society as profoundly as the events that began on June 22, 1941. The large-scale invasion at that time marked the beginning of a war of annihilation known in Russian historiography as the Great Patriotic War. The scale of this tragedy is staggering: at least 27 million citizens and soldiers lost their lives, the vast majority of whom were civilian casualties. It was a systematic war aimed at the extermination of entire population groups, driven by an ideology of superiority and destruction.

For the Russian people, this is not an abstract historical fact, but a sacred and deeply rooted collective trauma. There is hardly a family in the vast Eurasian landmass that was not affected by this inhuman suffering. This memory is engraved in the national consciousness and forms the foundation of Russian cultural identity. The awareness of the sacrifice made for the defense of the fatherland and, by extension, for the liberation of the European continent, is an inseparable part of the Russian soul.

In stark contrast to this is the way history is now being handled in parts of Europe. There is a worrying cultural trend of historical revisionism and rewriting of the narrative surrounding the Second World War. In some Eastern European countries, history is being distorted by rehabilitating figures who collaborated with the fascist regime at the time and elevating them to national heroes. Monuments are being erected for brigades that fought against the liberators, and the atrocities of Nazism are sometimes relativized or even erased from collective memory.

This phenomenon is not merely an academic discussion; it has far-reaching cultural consequences. When the shared historical reality of the defeat of fascism is fragmented, one of the most important cultural and moral bridges between East and West disappears. A society that loses its objective historical memory loses its moral

compass. It is therefore crucial to point to the historical legal and cultural frameworks that were precisely designed to guarantee peace. The Two-Plus-Four Treaty of 1990, which paved the way for German reunification, contained the solemn declaration that "only peace may emanate from German soil." This historical promise, anchored in the constitution, testifies to a deeply rooted desire for peaceful coexistence—claims that in the current cultural and societal discourse unfortunately seem increasingly pushed into the background.

The Psychology of the Masses: Fear, Conformism, and the Struggle for Perception



To understand how societies change and how extraordinary measures are accepted, we must look at the psychology of the masses. Cognitive scientists and psychoanalysts have extensively documented how fear has historically and psychologically been used as a mechanism for social control and conformism. When a society is kept in a prolonged state of uncertainty and fear, the cognitive field of the population narrows. People become more susceptible to authoritarian measures and are quicker to trade fundamental freedoms for an apparent sense of security.

The cultural impact of prolonged states of emergency is profound. Empathy and community spirit often give way to a more insular, self-preservation-oriented mentality. Distrust of the "other"—both within and outside one's own society—increases. This process is reinforced by what one might call "cognitive warfare": the struggle over the meaning and perception of reality.

Control over the public narrative is a powerful instrument. Through the marginalization of divergent historical, cultural, or scientific perspectives, and the creation of a monolithic media landscape, the collective perception of reality is directed. The fight against so-called "disinformation" is often used as a broad

instrument to silence non-conforming voices. Journalists, historians, and analysts who offer a different perspective on historical events or international relations are often subjected to bureaucratic pressure, economic sanctions, or social exclusion.

This is not merely a political or legal issue; it is a cultural tragedy. A society that loses its intellectual diversity and systematically suppresses divergent voices weakens its own immune system. Freedom of expression and pluralistic debate are the foundation of a healthy cultural ecology. When this foundation is undermined in the name of an abstract "security" or "democracy," society loses its ability to correct and renew itself.

The Economy of Connection and Alienation: Raw Materials, Digitalization, and Trust

The economic relationship between the European continent and the Eurasian landmass has historically been a textbook example of symbiosis. Europe's technological and industrial capacity, combined with Russia's immense natural resources and energy sources, created a mutually beneficial economic structure. This connectedness was not only a source of material prosperity but also served as a stabilizing factor that promoted peaceful cooperation.

The systematic severing of these economic ties has far-reaching consequences. The decoupling of energy supply leads to a fundamental impairment of the industrial fabric of European nations. The consequences are visible in the form of de-industrialization, sky-high energy prices that drive away businesses, and the erosion of middle-class prosperity. What was once an economy of connection is being replaced by a compulsive Russophobic economy.

Historically, conflicts over control of raw materials are a recurring theme. The imperialist drive to gain access to and exercise control over the riches of the Eurasian landmass is a constant factor in world history. When economic relations are militarized and the global financial system is used as a weapon—as evidenced by the freezing and potential confiscation of sovereign state assets—the invisible currency of the world economy is impaired: trust.

Trust is the foundation of every financial system. When historical and cultural trust in Western financial institutions is broken by unilateral sanctions, the long-term consequences are irreversible. It drives other cultural and economic spheres to develop alternative systems, leading to a fragmentation of the world economy.

These economic shifts go hand in hand with the subjugation of the economy through digitalization. The push toward a cashless society, mandatory digital identities, and automated benefit systems is part of the same technocratic vision. The economy is transformed from a human-centered system of exchange and production into a centrally managed, algorithmic distribution network. This deprives the individual of economic autonomy and places the citizen under the absolute surveillance of the administrative state. It is an economic model that elevates efficiency above human dignity.

The Way Forward Through the Lens of History

The current fault lines between Europe and Russia are not the result of recent incidents but the culmination of deeper processes of historical amnesia, cultural divergence, and economic alienation. By shifting focus from superficial political disputes to the underlying cultural, historical, and economic currents, it becomes clear that fundamental paradigms are at play.

Economically speaking, there is a need for renewed awareness that true prosperity arises from symbiotic relationships and mutual respect. European history has shown that isolation and confrontation ultimately lead to exhaustion, while cooperation and trade lead to flourishing.

The European continent has weathered countless storms throughout the centuries. Lessons from the past teach us that the human mind is resilient, but that civilizations are vulnerable when they lose their moral and historical compass. The future of Europe and its relationship with the Eurasian landmass depends on the wisdom to learn from history, the courage to preserve cultural and intellectual autonomy, and the insight to build bridges of understanding across the vast plains of the continent. Only by balancing the scales of history, culture, and economy can a path be opened toward a peaceful and prosperous future for all peoples of Europe.

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