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**IMPACT OF PEOPLES' CIVILIZATIONAL MENTALITY ON  
MODERN ECOLOGICAL PROBLEMS**

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*Abstract*

The author argues that many contemporary environmental problems have to do with the civilizational mentality of people, the specificities of their perception of the world and life style. The features of each civilizational mentality (paganism, monotheism and scientific world view) are examined to demonstrate the logical emergence in the modern world of the man with fundamentally new attitudes that go far beyond the family and state. Despite the externally imposed “leapfrogging” across civilization stages and socio-economic systems, each ethnic entity still perceives reality in accordance with the level of its civilizational mentality. This is borne out convincingly by the facts of the life of many ethnic communities in the North Caucasus and, further field, in China and India. This civilizational mentality forms the basis of ethnic entities regardless of the diktat of the central government and the ideology being imposed on them. There is an inherent logic in the civilizational transition of mankind from what may be called family mentality (homo familiaris under Paganism) to state mentality under monotheism) and from there to the “planetary man” (in accordance with the scientific perception of the world). The next mental type of man, considering man’s inevitable egress into extraterrestrial reality will be, in the author’s opinion, the “extraterrestrial man.” The case is made for the need of international legal acts to take into account the civilizational mentality of all ethnic groups and peoples of the world in order to prevent extremism in people’s relations and to forestall man-made and other ecological problems.

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**Keywords:** Civilizational mentality, scientific worldview, environmental security.



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## **1. Introduction**

The author distinguishes two main approaches and proposes them to solve the problem of environmental security on the global scale. The first involves the study of the degree to which the civilizational mentality of ethnic groups and peoples influences their attitude to the environment and identifying the most effective methods and ways of reformatting their consciousness through education and enlightenment. The second is the study of the attitudes of ethnic groups and peoples to their own work activities in the context of modern international cooperation and science-intensive production.

The impact of civilizational mentality of ethnic groups and peoples on the emergence of environmental problems is manifested, for example, in the fact that they transfer historically established traditions and customs to labor relations that are strange and alien to them and to their attitude to the results of their production activities.

Thus, the ethnic groups and peoples which today have pagan mentality do not comply with the strict rules of the entire chain of modern scientifically-based technological process and, moreover, as a rule fail to foresee all the negative consequences of the breach of production requirements and standards characteristic of the mentality of people who have a scientific perception of the world. Given the huge scale of modern industrial production, this factor often exerts a disastrous impact on the environmental situation in vast territories. It is no accident that the environmental situation in the European countries inhabited mainly by ethnic groups and peoples which have already entered the mental epoch of “scientific world perception” is incomparably more favorable than in Central Asia and North Africa inhabited by peoples most of which are in transition from paganism to monotheism. And this in spite of the fact that the scale of industrial production in the European countries is much larger.

## **2. Problem Statement**

Many environmental problems stem directly from the current civilizational mentality of various ethnic entities and peoples which determines their attitude to the environment, the traditions and customs of other ethnic entities and peoples. Therefore the main efforts of the states and the world community in dealing with environmental problems should be directed above all at speeding up the formation of a fundamentally new mentality of ethnic entities and peoples that corresponds to the bidding of our time. Because the environmental problems have hardly been studied at all from the viewpoint of their connection with the civilizational mentality of people, we believe it would serve a useful purpose to identify them in the most general way, leaving specifics for later studies.

## **3. Research Questions**

The author believes that there are two main approaches to the study and solution of environmental security problems facing the world community today. The first approach has to do with the study of the degree to which people’s civilizational mentality influences their attitude to the environment and the reformatting of their consciousness through educational and awareness activities. The second approach has to do with the attitude of people toward one another within the family, tribe or inter-state coexistence which exerts a direct or indirect impact on the state of the environment of individual regions and the whole planet.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

To demonstrate, first, that the level of civilizational mentality of ethnic groups and peoples has a direct impact on the state of the environment and their attitude to other ethnic groups and peoples; second, that to resolve environmental problems it is necessary to use the resources of international organizations which should bend their efforts to accelerate the processes of the molding of a fundamentally new mentality of the ethnic groups and peoples whose mentality does not correspond to the civilizational level required in the modern times.

Such pivotal concepts that are essential for the topic in hand as “civilization,” “mentality,” “nation” and “ethnic group” (ethnos) have been defined in the author’s numerous publications to which he refers the reader (Oganessian, 2013; Oganessian, 2017). Let me just remind the reader that I identify three mental types of humans. They are ethnic groups and peoples that are at the level of “paganism,” “monotheism,” and “the scientific world view.”

Accordingly, in the most general way we can talk about three mental types of people in the history of human development which have succeeded one another: the Pagans (polytheists, idol-worshippers), monotheists and those who are guided by scientific data in dealing with their life problems. Different ethnic entities as a rule lived through the above-mentioned mental civilizations at various historical periods, often coexisting in time and space (Oganessian, 2013; Oganessian, 2017).

As regards the present epoch, it too has ethnic groups and peoples of different civilizational mental levels coexisting in the same historical time. Some of them (a very insignificant part) are still at the level of Paganism, others are at the level of monotheism and yet others are in the transitional period from monotheism to the scientific perception of the world. In my previous publications, I argued that the proposed typology fits in with the data on the strategic direction of humanity’s development set forth in the Torah, the New Testament and the Koran which the Koran considers to be the three authentic messages of One God (The Bible, 1992; The Koran, 2008; The Torah, 1993).

Another critical point, in my opinion, is that the Scriptures refer to two key closely interconnected and interdependent factors that have a decisive impact on the change of mental civilizations and guide humanity down the strategic path preordained for it. The first factor is the innate intellectual and mental qualities which distinguish man in a fundamental way from all other living creatures on our planet and enable him, according to the Scriptures, to be “master” of the whole Earth (Torah, Bereishit 2, Bereishit; the New Testament, John 10:37; the Koran, Suras 15:29, 32: 9 and others.) (The Bible, 1992; The Koran, 2008; The Torah, 1993).

The second factor is the preordained steady increase of the number of people on Earth while the planet’s bioresources are finite (Torah, Bereishit 1Bereishit, 28) (The Torah, 1993). This circumstance constantly stimulates people to look for ground-breaking new forms and modes and methods of increasing the means that enable them to exist, which is one of the key drivers of their intellectual and mental development. It is no secret that it is thanks to their intellect (or Reason, to use a Biblical word) that people are able to pass on from extensive methods and forms of production, which have exhausted themselves, to intensive methods and, moreover, to create “products” that do not exist in the natural environment.

The intimate interconnection and interdependence of the first and second factors is highlighted by the fact that an increasing number of people on the planet inevitably, first, increases their total “biomass”

on the planet; and on the other hand increases the intellectual power of humanity as a single organism capable of coping with the problems of supporting this “biomass.” It is universally known that if the number of any living creatures in their habitats exceeds a certain level, they are doomed to extinction due to the shortage of natural resources.

On the one hand, people do solve many problems of life-support (food, clothing, communications, their relations with one another, etc.). However, the intellectualization of every aspect of their life leads to the production of fundamentally new life-support products which in turn gives rise to many complex environmental problems connected with disposal of waste that is not characteristic of the Earth’s ecosystem.

## **5. Research Methods**

The article uses research methods that are traditional for such studies. In particular, the analysis of statistical data on the state of the environment in various regions of the world populated by ethnic groups and peoples at the levels, respectively, of paganism, monotheism and “scientific perception of the world.” Comparative analysis of the activities of various ethnic groups and peoples is aimed at revealing their negative or positive impact on the environment.

## **6. Findings**

Let us cite some statistics to bolster the above conclusions. Thus, the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy has rated various countries in terms of environmental policy effectiveness based on 22 indicators in 10 categories. The countries with the most favorable environmental situation are, first, Switzerland, followed by Latvia, Norway, Luxembourg, France, Austria, Italy, Great Britain, Sweden, Germany, and Spain. The worst environmental situation is in Nigeria, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Eritrea, China, Kuwait, India, Yemen, Kazakhstan, Libya, Iraq, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan which occupy the bottom twelve places in the world rating of 132 countries (Environmental Performance Index). It is hard to imagine more convincing evidence of the impact of civilizational mentality of ethnic groups and peoples on the environment in various regions of the world. These results are borne out by other studies carried out by other scholars (Environmental Performance Rating of Countries, Countries with the Cleanest Environment in 2014).

The root of the problem is that the mentality of pagans is indifferent and often hostile to everything that is not in their possession, for example in the possession of a family, clan or tribe. A pagan, who has his own family god, cannot simultaneously belong to two families, hence is not allowed to possess or inherit the property of another family. The god of another family was an alien god to the pagan, and so was the property protected by the god (the dead father) of another family (Coulanges, 2010). Therefore, the fields and trees protected by the gods of other families, clans and tribes were destroyed, the crops of the enemy were burned because they were nearly always dedicated to deified ancestors. A war could wipe a whole tribe off the face of the Earth and turn fertile land into a desert. This happened to the territories around Rome which were turned into wilderness because the pagans were convinced that man is responsible only to the gods of his family, clan and tribe and accordingly the property protected by their own gods (Coulanges, 2010).

The “wars of conquest” waged by Genghis-Khan and his armies fit into that mentality. Having invaded Turkestan and Western Asia they ruthlessly destroyed irrigation facilities on captured lands, which led to salinization and desertification of the land of Ancient Khorezm. The Amu-Darya River turned its course to the west, resulting in the decline of the Central Asian oasis. Nomadic tribes had the same attitude to their own territories: having depleted their pastures, they moved to other ones.

One has to remember that in Ancient Greece the thick forests that covered mountain slopes had to be cut down to give space to new territories for agricultural crops. Besides, the unchecked breeding of goats, who destroyed trees (the twigs) resulted in only 12 percent of modern Greece being occupied by forests. The cutting of trees led to massive soil degradation and, according to many scholars, to the decline of Antique agriculture, the economy and the collapse of the entire Hellenistic culture (Kulisher, 1925).

The mentality of monotheists is marked by a fundamentally different attitude to the environment and to other peoples than that of the pagans. They regard them as phenomena and creatures created by God and belonging solely to the One God. (Torah, Bereishit 1 Bereishit, 27, 28) (The Torah, 1993). The norms and rules of life of monotheists are focused not so much on the interests of the individual and his family, as on the interests of the state (fatherland) regardless of its ethnic composition. This kind of mentality was ordained by such Scriptures as the Torah, the New Testament and the Koran which regulated practically every aspect of people’s life through the legal systems they established. Believers were convinced that the laws of the Scriptures had to be obeyed by everyone, from the chief to the slave regardless of wealth, sex, age, clan, tribe, ethnic entity or race. The One God proclaimed that He is the sole protector and savior of all those who obey His will and that He is merciless and ruthless to those who break the law (The Bible, 1992; The Koran, 2008; The Torah, 1993).

He conveyed the message to all people that spiritual kinship was above blood or family kinship. Therefore, those are “close ones and brothers” who worship the One God and obey only His will. These people, according to the Torah, the New Testament and the Koran, should be regarded as members of the single family of man and single brotherhood. However, those who do not worship the One God and do not obey His prescriptions are enemies both of God and all the people who are faithful to Him (the righteous). Hence the hostile attitude to those who are not faithful to the One God and to everything they own. However, it has to be stressed that while the Torah is intolerant not only of infidels, but all those who, having adopted the faith in the One God, then renege on Him allowing to exterminate and destroy themselves and their homes, cattle, crops, labor implement and pastures (Dvarim 13 Chassidus; 13 – 19; Bemidbar 21 Hukat, 2,3; Bemidbar 2 Dvarim, 31-34) (The Torah, 1993), over time a much more tolerant attitude to infidels came to be preached under the influence of the New Testament and then the Koran.

The process, of course, cannot be seen as accidental, for by the time the New Testament and even more so, the Koran were vouchsafed historical (socio-economic and other) conditions were ripe for the transition of many ethnic groups and peoples to the worldview principles and life according to monotheistic rules. In this situation, tolerance was an extremely important factor in introducing the fundamentals of monotheism into the life and daily practices of pagan peoples.

It has to be noted that in terms of people’s relations to one another and the surrounding world, monotheism inculcates the notion that nothing on Earth, in Heaven and in the water belongs to people. Everything belongs exclusively to the One God and is in His power, and has only been given to man “to

possess” (Torah, Bereishit 1 Bereishit, 27) (The Torah, 1993). When a man (his soul) presents itself to the Creator after death he leaves all the material goods on Earth bringing to Judgment only his good or evil deeds. But on the other hand, because the Scriptures proclaim that man has been created in the image and likeness of God and that God personally blew into his nostrils His life breath, that, according to the Scriptures, means that a special path of existence and development on Earth is predetermined for man from the start. Thus, he is endowed with the ability to solve the problems of his life independently, like God, including the problems of relationship with the surrounding world (Torah, Bereishit 2 Bereishit, 7; New Testament, John. 10:37; Koran. Sura 15:29, 32:9 and others) (The Bible, 1992; The Koran, 2008; The Torah, 1993).

Indeed, this capacity comes to be exploited intensively in the practice of human being starting from the Renaissance, Enlightenment and Reformation in Europe, which can be seen as the start of transition to a new civilizational mentality associated with scientific world perception. As human history shows, it was beginning from the Enlightenment era that people began to acquire qualities characteristic of a fundamentally new civilizational mentality based above all on human intellectual capacity, people’s creative, cognitive, independent mental activity while reliance on God (gods) characteristic of religious civilizations recedes into the past.

To be sure, human history offers a lot of examples of ethnic groups and peoples not moving progressively from one civilizational-mental level to another. Similarly, not all ethnic groups and peoples strictly passed through all the socio-economic systems. Owing to a multitude of external factors and circumstances, ethnic groups and peoples had either to run ahead skipping not only some civilizational, but also socio-economic stages in their development, or to roll back to lower stages.

Besides, peoples and ethnic entities belonging to different mental civilizations and socio-economic systems have lived and been neighbors at one and the same historical time. There is no direct link between the civilizational-mental level of an ethnos and the socio-economic system under which it has to exist due to various geopolitical and other circumstances.

Thus, many ethnoses in the Russian Empire that were at the pagan stage and at the stage of primitive and early feudal socio-economic relations had been forced by the central authorities to live in the conditions of an absolute monarchy and then, skipping the capitalist stage, pass on to the “socialist” stage in the USSR. Today these ethnic groups have rolled back from the “socialist” system to the early capitalist stage. Some striking contrasts of the mental level of ethnoses that were part of the Russian Empire and then became part of the USSR are offered, on the one hand, by the Baltic peoples and on the other hand by the peoples of Transcaucasia, the Caucasus and Central Asia, and again the ethnoses of the Far North. There are examples galore from the life of many other peoples that lived in various historical epochs on various continents and in various natural and climate conditions. Without delving too deep into history let us just note that “pagan” ethnoses, for example in modern India, China, Japan and Mongolia, exposed to the influence of Europe, the USSR and the USA and the world trends and global integration processes, are rapidly moving toward the mental stage of “scientific world perception” bypassing the monotheistic stage.

Thirdly, in spite of the externally imposed “skipping” of civilizational stages and socio-economic systems, each ethnos perceives reality in terms of its inherent civilizational mentality. It seeks to build its life on this mentality regardless of the diktat of the central authorities and the ideology that is being imposed

on it. This process is very evident in the daily life of many peoples in the North Caucasus in modern Russia which, in spite of the progress of education, science and culture during the Soviet years, have by and large gravitated to monotheistic civilizational norms and to “one-man rule” organization of life (Putin, Levada Center).

Moreover, in family and other social spheres, even today, they often adhere to the traditions and customs inherited from the “fathers and grandfathers” (adats) which as a rule are at odds not only with the scientific perception of the world, but also of monotheism, for example, the laws set forth in the Koran.

It is no secret that many socio-economic problems, including environmental ones, that arise today among the ethnoses, for example, of Dagestan, stem from their (largely pagan) civilizational mentality which may be seen, on the one hand, as an element of their idiosyncrasy and on the other hand as a moribund mental rudiment. Among the peoples of Dagestan this mentality manifests itself most vividly in the attitude to state property and government positions which they consider primarily in terms of personal enrichment.

A person with a scientific perception of the world builds his life, first, on the basis of the results of his own intellectual activity rather than living by the rules and norms passed on to them either by family gods or bequeathed by the One God. Second, people’s activities are influenced by the all-embracing world integration processes that manifest themselves in all the spheres of their lives beginning from international cooperation in the financial sphere and division of labor on the global scale and ending with international trade, the creation of industrial syndicates, concerns, etc. One upshot of this is the formation of a single international legal system which is already binding on all countries and prevails over national legal systems.

Hence the emergence of the concept of “human rights” which reflects the mentality of a basically new type of individual, the planetary individual who replaces the mentality of the statist type, ie. particularly important for each specific people and thinking through the prism of the interests of one’s own state (fatherland). This process is logically spurred on by the unstoppable growth of the planet’s population and as a consequence, powerful migration processes, which leads to the mingling of a vast number of people with different civilization mentalities, different world views, rules and behavior norms. Thus, according to the UN data, the number of migrants increased from 154 million in 1990 to 175 million in 2000. By 2017 the number of international migrants reached 244 million (Number of Migrants in the World Reaches 244 million).

All this forms a new attitude of people to one another and to the surrounding world. This is highlighted not only by the modern mass communications media which daily inform the whole world community of all the significant developments that happened or are ongoing in all parts of the world, but also by truly planetary economic crises. The formation of a single data bank on various spheres of human activity is another contributing factor (Hilbert, 2012; Lyman, Varian, 2006).

The process of the emergence of a new mentality (a new perception of the world) cannot but generate such negative phenomena as nationalism, extremism and often ethnic or faith-based terrorism in response to the loss of value guidelines connected with self-identification of ethnoses and peoples and diminishing ethnic cultural originality.

Thus, one can safely say that humanity logically passes from civilizational mentality focused on family (homo familiaris under paganism) to state mentality under monotheism and from there to “planetary

man” (corresponding to the scientific perception mentality). It can easily be predicted that the next mental type of man will be born when man leaves the terrestrial space to become “the extraterrestrial man.” This forecast chimes in with the prophecy of St. Paul about the inevitable transition of the first man created by God (Adam) to heaven. “The first Adam, made of earth, came from the earth; the second Adam came from heaven (1 Cor. 15:4-5) (The Bible, 1992).

On the other hand, this raises the key problems of interaction between people with different mentalities, and problems of the molding of a new type of mentality of ethnoses and peoples in transition from one civilizational epoch to another. And accordingly, the attitude of the people of all the three types of mental civilizations living in the same historical period to the surrounding world. For an obsolescent world view and ideology, and the corresponding norms and rules of behavior, as a rule cannot keep abreast of the changes, for example, in administrative and economic activities.

Thus, irrespective of the New Testament and the Koran which urge tolerance toward “one’s enemies,” even the individuals who considered themselves to be champions of Christianity and Islam, continued to act in real life in accordance with the mental attitudes characteristic of paganism. Think of the Crusades in the early 11th and later centuries. Inspired by the idea of recovering the Holy Sepulcher and delivering fellow Christians from Seljuk Turks a huge crowd of Franks, Swabians and Lotharingians headed toward Jerusalem in the Holy Land. When passing through Germany, Bohemia and other Christian countries, the champions of the “holy idea” behaved in a way that was anything but Christian. Having no provisions or a pack train, they ignored discipline and committed acts of rape, robbery and theft against their brothers and sisters in faith along the whole route. When they finally reached Byzantium the Crusaders roamed the city seizing whatever caught their eye (Crusades, Their History, Causes and Consequences).

As for the proponents of the teaching of the Koran, to this day some of them, under the guise of spiritual values of Islam, embark on the path of extremism and terrorism with regard to the Muslims who disagree with their reading of the Koran and the Haddiths. In effect they used the forms and methods of dealing with issues that were characteristic of the world perception of pagans, and not monotheists.

One has to remember that the overcrowding of Medieval cities which had not yet abandoned the civilizational mentality of paganism, in the absence of running water, sewage and other city amenities turned their environment into an appalling mess. All that was not private or family property of the “citizens” was neglected and despised. Discharge of liquid and solid waste from “home and courtyard” into the city streets, discharge of drainage into city water reservoirs from which people took drinking water led to acute stomach and intestinal epidemics. Pandemics hit whole cities and countries.

For example, the Thames in London was known as The Black River until the middle of the 19th century. Today, not without reason, the rapidly developing countries such as China and India face a serious environmental challenge (Environmental Problems of Developing Countries). The (largely pagan) mentality of the mass of the population in these countries does not yet match the wide use of economic means and technologies which are the products of the scientific world perception mentality and the corresponding behaviors.

Thus China, the most populous country (over 1.35 billion) and the most densely populated country in the world boasts the world’s second largest economy in terms of nominal GDP and is the largest economy in terms of PPP. Moreover, modern China has the biggest sovereign wealth reserves and is the world leader



in the production of the majority of modern science-intensive products (Ban, 2013; Bokarev, 2016; Vlasova, 2013). Yet in spite of all this, the condition of the soil, rivers, lakes and seas is deteriorating catastrophically, areas under forests and greenery are shrinking, the quality and reserves of drinking water are falling. In many Chinese cities ground waters are polluted with phenols, cyanide, mercury and arsenic compounds. The seas are polluted by oil, heavy metals and other harmful substances. Drain water is mostly discharged into waterways with little or no purification. Industrial waste disposal has made the water in China's rivers unfit for drinking and fish farming. The Yangtze, the largest river in Asia, is a receptacle for billions of tons of untreated drainage, etc (Ban, 2013; Bokarev, 2016; Vlasova, 2013).

Another indicative example is the rapidly developing India where intensive development of petrochemical, non-ferrous and ferrous metallurgy, thermal power plants and other achievements of the scientific world perception civilization have catastrophically polluted the air. In six of India's largest cities air pollution exceeds the maximum allowable concentration by more than three times (Environmental problems in India; Chopra, 2015).

## 7. Conclusion

The first and most important way to solve contemporary environmental problems is an intensive effort, through educational and awareness campaigns, to push the ethnoses with pagan and monotheistic civilizational mentalities toward a civilization of scientific perception of the world and thus to achieve a common civilizational mentality globally.

Needless to say, the broadest contacts between ethnoses and peoples in the modern world accelerate the adoption by people with backward civilizational mentality of a more advanced civilizational mentality. However, we cannot afford to wait until time inevitably brings ethnic groups and peoples closer together mentally because the world's environmental security is under constant threat. Therefore there needs to be systematic and painstaking work not only, say, with the personnel who man nuclear power plants, industrial and other enterprises involving a particular danger of man-made accidents. There needs to be educational and awareness work with the broad social strata in the so-called developing countries. This is all the more important because any instance of ethnic groups and peoples drawing together mentally as a rule involves a loss of part of their cultural identity and as a consequence a surge of nationalism, extremism and terrorism.

The second path is international legal regulation of environmental problems under rigorous control of international organizations. Not only government structures but also citizens' groups should be involved in these activities. Environmental security issues must be at the focus of attention not only of exporters, but also of importers of the latest technologies and equipment.

All the actions to ensure environmental security in the developing countries must be regulated not only under bilateral and multilateral international treaties, but also by the legal acts of the United Nations.

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