The Political Psychology of the Second World War

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By

Alexandra Kitty

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To Victim #29: You deserved better than the fate life had so cruelly given you. Though I was not even born when you were murdered, your plight moves me to tears from a single blurry photograph. May the world find out who you were and realize what it has lost when we allow children to stray too far for too long. We may have never met, but you touched my heart and soul all the same and changed the trajectory of my life more than you'll ever know.

One headline, why believe it?
Everybody wants to rule the world
All for freedom and for pleasure
Nothing ever lasts forever
Everybody wants to rule the world.

—Everybody Wants to Rule the World
Tears for Fears

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A FEW NOTES ABOUT READING THIS BOOK

It is tempting for an author to load a book with countless case studies and examples. I have done such arduous research over the span of my other books. In this case, I chose fewer examples to ease the flow of reading this book as its discourse is not just complex, but can be jarring for those who believe their perceptions and interpretations of reality are perfectly and brilliantly aligned and that they are not one of those people who goes through life on a single core literacy.

Just because I have opted to be sparse with the examples, it does not mean that I have not done my due diligence as an author. For those wishing for more examples, they can do their own research as well as read my previous books on the subjects of propaganda, journalism, and even hospital trains. The examples I used were an excellent representation of other instances of propaganda, psychological research, and political thought. While this is a standalone book, it is also meant to be a companion book to my previous work as well and is best understood by reading my previous work as this text is based on my notes from my aforementioned endeavours.

This book is not a traditional historical work: it is not about key players or specific battles: it is a history of the psychological scaffolding of the war and the changes it brought from its machinations. The psychological inner workings of elites and the heuristics they use are the focus of this book as well as how their psychological strengths and weaknesses impacted civilian thought processes. This feedback loop is one few people question, let alone examine, and this book fills in a hidden gap for the reader. The book is not one of narrative, but a radial approach of seeing an era through an analytical, primal, and emotional lens. This book is not a parable of heroes and villains, but an examination of obedience, cognitive outsourcing, and psychological scaffoldings which impact the lives of billions who do not consider the provenance of their own thoughts or examine their environments with a more critical lens. I provide specific snapshots of important benchmarks and discuss their significance from a psychological perspective.

Finally, as an author, I take a you-centred approach to my work, meaning I quote other works instead of paraphrasing passages. To get the feel of an

era or the thought processes of the past, I am not one who meddles in the works of others and I allow them to speak from their perspective, and prefer a modified epistolary style of writing. My books are about texture and provide the emotional feel of other eras and industries, and homogenization of thought is the trait of an analytical thinker with poor core emotional and primal literacy. As I neither appease nor pander and present the reality of organic plurality, I will present other voices for you to ponder how other people think and search for answers.

Preface

Middle-Class Blind

The secret of all victory lies in the organization of the non-obvious.
—Marcus Aurelius

Tell me how she lived and I will tell you how she died.
—Former UK Detective Chief Inspector Colin Sutton

Understanding the behaviours and motives of others first requires understanding our own behaviours and motives, but when we seek simple responses which are constructed to elevate our standing in society as we shield our psyches with narrative, atmosphere, and sophistry all while trying to present a posh façade of what popular culture dictates are the markings of a sophisticated individual, the mental resources get taxed, and then the temptation to indulge in cognitive outsourcing further drives us away from deep inner knowledge. The lack of self-awareness prevents us from evolving, progressing, growing, maturing, and improving.

The most difficult of tasks is to align perceptions with reality. Reality is chaotic, random, humbling, cruel, confusing, and seemingly unfair. How successfully we navigate through that reality depends on the level of deep inner understanding, yet falling to appeal to authority, confirmation biases, and even being unaware of our own pandas (negative qualities that are positively reinforced until the organic consequences of those behaviours begin to work against us) as we construct narratives based on atmosphere and sophistry which has nothing to do with reality.

That kind of deep understanding is not natural or obvious: it requires learning new ways of seeing and breaking down the environment around us as we gather facts from an empirical lens; however, emotional literacy is not something that is taught in schools, nor would such practices dovetail into the academic scaffolding. More interestingly, trying to quantify emotional elements usually turns into a rote binary analytical exercise of either Yes/No checkmarks or a Likert-scale-like spectrum: all unhelpful measures which give no context or understanding to the realm of emotionality. Is the person "happy" because the individual feels genuinely elated, or because the

sibling for whom they feel nothing save envy is now in a predicament, making the jealous rival now feel superior? What is the complex motive or the reason for the simple emotion? Or does the "happy" individual mistake some other emotion for happiness? We can use brain scans to see neurobiological shifts, but even then, we still cannot determine what a person is truly feeling or the motive behind it. Science, being an analytical discipline and not a deific one, can only go so far.

Away from the laboratory is, interestingly enough, much the same story. Much of people's understanding of emotions comes from popular culture, often more than live social interactions. When individuals repeat jingoisms heard on programs, movies, or video games, the authenticity of those feelings comes into question. How can our internal measurements of perception be accurate when we are reduced to cognitive outsourcing based on prepackaged narratives? Emotions and instincts do not lend themselves to analytical measurements, meaning there are no simple rules or steps one can memorize. Most of our reality exists in the grey zone filled with sophistry, narrative, atmosphere, and hypothetical constructs.

Critical thinking creates new lines of inquiry precisely because the system looks for the hidden and non-obvious components which explain the state of reality. We bypass sophistry for logic. We replace narrative with flow. We ignore atmosphere as we focus on geist. When we can align perceptions with reality as we understand that hypothetical constructs are not immutable or above challenge, we can then see those hidden factors which alter our world time and again. Yet that kind of thinking requires harmonising core literacies and understanding our time and place in the world before we begin to understand the time and place of our environment.

Yet it is that kind of thinking that is discouraged – not by academics – but by society itself. Middle-class thought is not one where an average citizen has deep expertise or empirical experience, even if opinions are set quickly based on advertising, gossip, memes, jingoes, and making one's neighbours jealous. Middle-class blindness ensures those who subscribe to its methods always live in the now, without thinking about the past or the future. The Past is the reference library. The Future is the reward, but the Present is the purpose. When we understand the chords of time, we begin to understand the zeitgeist. When we understand those who live above as privileged, those below as deprived, and those in the middle as the sheltered, we begin to understand ortgeist. More important than the content of thought is the structure of thought. Two people may hold opposing content, but they have identical structure, meaning they have more in common than not.

We can even refine the understanding of structure by understanding the loci of thought: me-centred people see the world differently than you-centered ones. The most important factor to consider is which core literacy an individual or group uses: analytical, emotional, or primal – and whether the favoured structure of thought is high or low literacy. An analytical thinker who is literate uses logic, yet one who is illiterate will use sophistry and a rote binary scaffolding. Once we untangle these complex threads, we can begin to understand the weave of thinking that shapes our world.

This book is your guide to a new kind of thinking: one where you observe to see and then to understand. It is an empirical observation which embeds ecological validity. Whether you are a journalist or someone in a field of applied psychology, you will learn how to see structures of thought; however, the focus of this book is specific: how the Second World War altered the global psychological scaffolding from primal-based dominance to analytical-based dominance. With such an intricate case study, you will be able to extrapolate the psychological underpinnings to observe how people think and how they are guided into new forms of thought – and when and why it often fails. From political divisions to socioeconomic divides, you will be able to find lines of inquiry to compare and contrast mindsets to understand how one group of people prosper under one set of conditions, but then panic and falter when the tacit rigs which once favoured them are altered or removed, but also when they are left in place, but other groups crack the code, yet fail to gain traction as they lack the understanding of the rig's nuances.

As with all my other work, this book requires the reader to be fluent in all three core literacies: analytical, primal, and emotional. I do not pander to analytical thinkers who erroneously believe that everyone must seek their approval. To appreciate the nuances, it is imperative that you use each of your literacies, even if you are not confident in one or more of them. Defence mechanisms and psychological fortresses will create barriers which will prevent a full understanding of the book. For those uninhibited Intrepids wishing for a true intellectual escapade, get ready to go forward to the past to see the world through a different lens.

CHAPTER ONE

THE SECRET WAR

What an average citizen understands about warfare often comes from popular culture, the news, or books, and often becomes seen as no different than cheering for a sports team to win at the expense of the other. For those who are stuck on the battlefield, their perceptions of war greatly differ as there is death, destruction, and chaos. When the fighting is over, memories fade and shift once again as reflection overrides reaction, but both the mind and brain forever alter, and a new landscape presents itself. While it may seem as if innocence is lost; however, naiveté of the new reality replaces it: we may become jaded, morose, bitter, or pensive, but we do not know how our new way of thinking will shape our new environment. No matter how savvy or street-smart we believe we are, when there are radical changes outside and within us, innocence can never be lost. There is always a new environment or situation where we have no expertise or experience.

It is the reason why so many in power develop a need to predict and control people and environments: the façade of omniscience is conjured to prevent a challenge to power or a loss of resources to maintain the narrative of dominance. The weaker the leadership, the greater emphasis on censorship, fear-mongering, propaganda, and authoritarian decrees. Contrived pecking orders are established as are systemic rigs, rotes, and rituals. When the power structure is threatened despite these measures, war is often used as a misdirection. War is deception, as Sun Tzu noted in The *Art of* War; however, it is a specific kind of deception: it is a theatre where the audience also becomes unwitting actors in the play who are too stressed and preoccupied with mere survival to be able to see the reality of the situation, and form more rational solutions to the problems.

The more taxed the human brain, the less likely subtle signs can be seen and processed, even if individuals are more vigilant and primed for survival. Finding hidden or non-obvious information can elude us. Political psychology should be seen as more as the psychology of politics, but also the psychology of the non-obvious and missed subtext which alters the zeitgeist and ortgeist with little or no questioning or challenge. What is the

impetus of human ideological shifts, adherences, and abandonments, and what parts of the brain regulate these changes? What logical fallacies impact our ideas of political thought and how do millions adhere to the dictates of what is very often nothing more than mere sanctioned insanity? How does one set of political beliefs sound rational and just for one generation, only to be met with horror and disgust by the next or vice versa?

It is the non-obvious factors which shape political thought and loyalty. Political choice is dependent on what we believe will improve of fortunes, and the mind and the brain use a variety of calculations to make choices, though more likely than not, calculations are based on heuristics and logical fallacies that are themselves based on shallow knowledge and little empirical evidence. Aligning perceptions to reality when the stakes are high and information is wanting should produce more doubt, yet political affiliation is often strident and unwavering. Still, understanding the non-obvious factors can explain much of our understanding of political thought and beliefs. As Gelman and Wellman noted in 1991:

> In many ways, adult cognition involves disregarding external appearances and instead penetrating to underlying realities, seeking deeper levels of analysis, and grasping (or inventing) non-obvious essences. This happens in everyday thought when we explain overt behaviours psychologically (by appealing to mental states, personality traits, and internal dynamics), when we categorize living kinds, such as mammals and birds, based on non-obvious features (by appealing to their reproductive 4 genetic, and kinship relations), and when we go beyond observational appearances in countless other domains (acknowledging that the earth circles the sun, not vice versa, that fake diamonds are just glass, and so on). Attention to underlying, non-obvious realities also characterizes experts' knowledge in a broad range of fields, including scientific theories, map making, medical diagnosis, and impressionist art. Indeed, imagine the phenomenal world of an organism that regarded only external appearances - for example, an organism that understood people behavioristically, believed glass chips were diamonds, understood maps as merely decorated paper, or regarded having measles as nothing more than wearing red spots.

The Second World War was a battle within another battle: the most obvious war was the one of Allied Forces fighting against various fascist regimes, from the Nazis to the Ustashi. There was also the war on the propaganda front: the Germans had made serious advancements in the dissemination of manipulative messages, and the Allied forces caught on with their version of it. The goal was to use fear, anger, and hatred to win. As Gustave Gilbert recounted in his *Nuremberg Diaries* in 1947:

> *Gustave Gilbert:* In a democracy, the people have some say in the matter through their elected representatives, and in the United States only Congress can declare wars.

> *Hermann Göring:* Oh, that is all well and good, but, voice or no voice, the people can always be brought to the bidding of the leaders. That is easy. All you have to do is tell them they are being attacked, and denounce the pacifists for lack of patriotism and exposing the country to danger. It works the same way in any country.

As propaganda became more precise and effective, the long-term psychological damage on the populace wasn't deeply considered, though many Western psychologists, from Solomon Asch to Stanley Milgram would conduct their studies in obedience decades later; however, even then, the neurobiological damage and trajectory of thought wasn't deeply pondered, though had it been, many insights into political thought would have been gleaned. Instead, we have ample indirect studies which show us how easily the human brain and mind can be manipulated and altered, yet it wasn't until the Second World War that propaganda was used as precisely and as organized as it was. The consequences would send quiet shockwaves around the world for decades.

Yet there was another kind of war which would change the course of the world being waged – as much as the physical war and the propagandistic one: one of psychological dominance. While primal thinkers – who once ruled the masses with brute force and evolutionary drives for centuries – would be replaced by analytical thinkers were on the rise, as it was technology and science, not brute force which won the Allied Forces a psychological victory and propelled the United States as a global force. The Second World War was a showcase of scientific and technological advancements: from hospital trains to synthetic rubber to the jeep to the atomic bomb, which was the most powerful symbol of analytical strength. Might did not win a war: intellect did. As the *Globe and Mail* marvelled on August 7, 1945:

> Japan rocked today under the most devastating destructive force ever known to man – the atomic bomb and Canadian science and Canadian uranium played a large part in this epochal achievement.

> Existence of the great new weapon, which may speed up the capitulation of the enemy, was announced by President Truman at 11 am EDT in a White House statement. He said the first atomic bomb had been dropped on the Japan army base of Hiroshima 16 hours earlier.

A *Globe and Mail* editorial on the same day discussed this "new force in the world" with reverence and fear:

> President Truman's announcement that an atomic bomb has been dropped
> on a military base near the Japanese city of Hiroshima opens a new epoch
> in human history. Not only does such a bomb extend the destructive element
> of warfare to the ultimate degree, but it opens to this Industrial age a new
> source of power more potent than any hitherto known. At this time,
> however, the significant thing is that, while atomic power for industry is still
> a development of the future, its destructive effect is an appalling reality.

Yet it wasn't just the bomb: everything from flu vaccines to electronic computers to radar and even blood plasma transfusions had their origins in the Second World War. The shift from physical might to intellectual might was showcased everywhere, and it not only altered the political landscape after the war but also altered how people thought about politics. Science and technology would alter what could be done and what would be acceptable which would greatly contrast with previous global scaffoldings as new actions would be rewarded, and through tacit and often unintentional operant conditioning, the structure of thought would shift. The war changed the psychology of leadership.

Eventually, women's rights would emerge as so-called "traditional" roles of women would wane as gave them the gift of being able to enter the workforce and gain control of their reproductive rights. Suddenly, science-based education became desirable to the Middle Class and university education would be the goal for millions as trade education was seen as lower on the professional pecking order. Technology was the mark of success. The past was primal thinking. The future was analytical thought. Those who won by primal strategies would begin to see diminishing returns as their old ways became increasingly seen as problematic, even *toxic.*

The change would be so pronounced, that by 1960, *Time* magazine decreed "scientists" to be their Person of the Year. The definition of power changed; thus, the structure of political thought would evolve as well.

How did analytical-based professions, such as technology, gain prominence during the Second World War, and then become the political structure of the ruling elite – and how has it succeeded and waned over the decades? This book is an examination of how a war changed the global psychological and political landscape: both in terms of structure shifts to the fallout of massive propaganda. These two seemingly unrelated battles would change the way we think: fragmenting thinking patterns and creating peculiar linear

divides. No longer would people think with all three core literacies equally: one was tacitly pressured to *choose one-third* of their cognitive capabilities and declare loyalty to it. What is more fascinating is this allegiance would be seen as political, and not psychological. While the Second World War is decades away, by 2020, a new silent shift would happen as the unforeseen consequences of the war would finally reach a head.

But before we can understand the changing political dynamics of the Second World War, it is important to look at what is defined as political thought and what psychological processes it hides.

CHAPTER TWO

HISTORY IS PSYCHOLOGY

History is rarely seen as applied psychology. We see history as the chronicles of time, place, events, and people which deviate from the mundane or the previously sanctioned routines. History is constructed as narratives and told by authorities, yet this is a shallow method of reconstructing and resurrecting the past. History requires *empathy* and the ability to ride the wavelengths of others without judgment. We do not excuse cruelty, injustice, or inhumanity, but we can gain insight and seek to understand the breakdowns to prevent dark history from repeating itself or spreading around the globe. Regardless of how we see the past, to heal social cohesion, the lens to see history is through psychology. What made those people tick requires a deep understanding of the mechanisms of human thought and behaviour.

History should not be seen through narrative, but *flow.* It is the chronicle of interactions among various people with different mindsets: to understand those mindsets, it is imperative to understand psychology. We must understand both the mundane and the extraordinary environments as well as the average and the extreme personalities. What we have is the beginning of a matrix of interactions: how do extreme personalities function in mundane environments? How do average people function in extraordinary ecosystems? Who reacts and who reflects? How and why do they react the way they do? When we begin to reconstruct events of political history through psychology, we gain a more realistic understanding of the flow and logic of events and people. We are not distracted with justifications nor are we beguiled by spin or propaganda: we see people as they are and resist the urge to deify or demonise people in the past. While it is said that victors write the history books, those who lost are forever trying to revise those books to justify their defeats. When we look through the lens of psychology, we no longer see the world in binary terms: we see the flow of actions and words, and then map out the organic consequences of each.

But how do we spot ortgeist and zeitgeist through psychological and neurobiological terms? We can begin the process in any number of ways,

and it is important not to use a single lens to understand the past and the present. Behaviour has multiple elements that shape it: it can be innate, learned explicitly or tacitly, and be situational, or random. When we understand that both ideas and behaviour can be seen as chords which seem to come from a unified source, we can begin to create psychological profiles of those from the past: we look at both the person and the individual's environment. While a more thorough discussion of primal literacy and geist is discussed in Chapter Three, we can begin to reorient ourselves by understanding the notion of psychological frequency, or *geist*.

Understanding Geist

An environment of war will trigger different ideas, beliefs, thoughts, and behaviours than one of peace. The difference in environment is *geist.* A functional workplace has a different geist than a dysfunctional one. A relaxed party has a different geist than an emergency room after a catastrophic event. The environment has both human and physical *triggers* which the brain uses to make a determination of thoughts and actions. A stressful trigger will cause an increase in cortisol levels and affect the limbic system and prefrontal cortex, while a trigger of victory will cause an increase in hormone levels which will have a positive impact on the victor's brain.

While all parts of the brain process geist, the primal core uses it to determine what needs to be done to survive or thrive. Do we decide to become part of an in-group for safety and progress, depending on the *geist* of the group – or do we rebel against them? We often speak of an area's *vibes,* but geist are the overt and tacit signs which give us clues about a place's safety, progress, and psychological health.

Geist can apply to a small era or short time frame: we may observe the geist of a party over the course of an evening, but we can narrow or expand both benchmarks to include an entire planet over the course of a century. We can compare and contrast geist to note shifts and changes in an individual or group's behaviour and look for what triggers can account for the changes. We can compare two groups of people or individuals within the same time and place to understand why the same environment had radically different impacts on both. For instance, one group may benefit from the rigs of an ecosystem, while the other is harmed and held back by them; thus, the inequality or unfairness creates a geist of judgment or manipulation causing factions within the ecosystem. For one group, their primal core is afforded the luxury of thriving, while the other's primal core must look for ways to

survive. While there will be differences in the emotional and analytical reactions, it is their primal literacy which will be impacted the most.

Geist can be empirically defined in any number of ways; however, we can further separate geist into two main categories: the era and the physical location. Each uses different benchmarks to understand the state of reality. We will look at each in turn.

Understanding Zeitgeist

The term means *spirit of the times* and during certain eras, there will be factors impacting the frequency of thought: economic conditions, sanctioned educational content, technology, human rights, censorship, and whether there is civil unrest, war, or peace. Whether a government uses a hands-off approach or employs invasive social engineering will also contribute to the *feel* of a period of time. Fashion will reflect these factors, as will books and entertainment. The overall health of citizens as well as crime will be other contributing factors to the era. The chances for upward mobility, immigration levels, and how competent leadership is at managing the affairs of the people will also contribute to the overall geist; however, as time progresses, there will be changes: new factors arise, and old solutions may no longer be effective, or worse, make problems worse. The changes may be slow and gradual, or there may be a salient event which shatters the mundane and alters the day-to-day reality of citizens. What matters is overall patterns of input or stimuli, and the organic consequences on behaviour – otherwise known as the output or response of people.

What ideas and inputs are sanctioned will, for a certain while, determine what outputs will help shape the zeitgeist; however, eventually, there will be challenges to the inputs, which will no longer produce the sanctioned outcomes, yet the method will be effective with the in-group who will reinforce each other's behaviours. In one 2023 study, Boeltzig et al discovered that subjects were more likely to learn and remember in-group teachings over out-group teachings:

> [I]ngroup sources augment the capacity to make novel inferences from separate but overlapping episodes. This process is crucially involved in updating and building new knowledge representations. Strikingly, this finding was observed using randomly generated episodes, suggesting that even neutral information from an unfavored source enjoys less privileged access to our knowledge base, leading to partisan minds. In real- life situations where information can be rejected and doubted or elicit strong

reactions, the inferential memory effects are likely to be even more pronounced.

As older citizens die or retire, they will be more likely to be from a leadership caste, meaning their ideological hold on younger generations will wane through attrition, disconnect from changes which specifically impact the young, and becoming an out-group of their own, which will fail to connect to new generations who will not be able to relate to the older group. Influxes of members of out-groups will bring their own ideas, fusing and blending the psychological scaffolding, and thus, break the spell of zeitgeist. A new zeitgeist will take the place of the old one, creating a new *era* which has different elements than the previous one, particularly if there is a generational or immigrational "boom" which overtakes the old one by sheer numbers alone.

Understanding Ortgeist

The term means *spirit of the place,* and while similar to zeitgeist, ortgeist refers to regional differences in psychological frequency. Here, while zeitgeist will still be in play, the in-group's rituals, rotes, rules, and rigs will be seen as tradition and positive input; thus, making fluctuations in the zeitgeist less important than the ortgeist. While zeitgeist requires reacting and reacting on evolving (or devolving) stimuli, ortgeist relies more on cognitive outsourcing to authorities. Societies may be isolated, or in-group bonds are held tighter through rituals and rules. Other times, the geography or chances for mobility may also make certain elements entrenched within the era, such as relying on a body of water for tourism or employment. If there are static physical elements, even a generational or immigration boom will fail to alter the ortgeist as the nature of reality keeps certain inputs in play.

When we are studying ortgeist, it is important to see which stimuli are likely to be physical or immutable, and then follow the line of inquiry to see what responses those static stimuli generate.

While there will be elements of both zeitgeist and ortgeist which overlap, there will be stimuli that are easily separated. Living on an isolated island will generate ortgeist; should a bridge suddenly be built to connect the island to a mainland will fuse both a new ortgeist, but now also alter the zeitgeist. A new flux of citizens will now impact the zeitgeist. In other words, while there may be overlap, we can still identify and classify elements into three basic categories: pure ortgeist, pure zeitgeist, and a hybrid of both; however,

even a hybrid will still have identifiable elements of both which will differ: a bridge will stay in place, meaning the ortgeist can be studied independently from the zeitgeist. The structure (i.e., the bridge) is immutable; however, what arrives and departs on the bridge (the content) will impact the zeitgeist.

Zeitgeist depends on content, while ortgeist depends on structure; however, our interpretations will be influenced by both, and often, we may confuse content with structure, or try to interpret structure through content or vice versa. We are teasing out both structure and content, looking for fluctuations of behaviours and thoughts, and comparing and contrasting elements to see how each element alters thinking. While there may be uniform thinking, most times, there will be clusters, depending on the preferred core literacy of in-group factions and whether the inputs improve their safety and prosperity, or hinder it. We can create matrices to examine and discover hidden sub-groups by looking at salient inputs and noting the organic consequences of each.

There is one more factor at play: how individuals and groups interpret stimuli. If they see an input positively and as an opportunity, they will benefit from it, or at least attribute their success to it; however, if they see it negatively and as an obstacle, they will be harmed by it, or at least attribute their problems to the element.ss Calculating either zeitgeist or ortgeist requires understanding how various elements in the environment are interpreted.

Taking the idea further, we may need to refine the process: what is the reality of the landscape or era? What are the accepted or sanctioned *interpretations* of the elements in the landscape or era? What are the outcomes in terms of behaviours and ideas, and how are those outcomes perceived by those in the in-group – and by those in the out-groups? Once we begin to note patterns and shifts, we can begin to understand the reasoning behind the psychological frequency of a time and place, as well as understand base assumptions and hidden factors. We can go so far as to perform a Euclidian Cluster Analysis on the date to find hidden interactions and gain insights.

Understanding the Role of Propaganda in History

There is one factor which impacts both zeitgeist and ortgeist: the role of propaganda, as it not only impacts the mind but more importantly, the brain. As propaganda not only relies on fear-mongering and cognitive outsourcing,

it manipulates all three core literacies: the analytical is fooled with sophistry; the emotional is fooled with narrative, and the primal is fooled by atmosphere. Propaganda has long-term effects on both the mind and the brain, and it is imperative to note propaganda on all sides of a conflict: both the in-group, the out-group, and the elite group vying for power by weakening both sides before entering the battleground and taking the resources and ruling two weakened factions who can no longer pose a challenge.

Propaganda is meant to rig perceptions of reality to a leader's favour; namely, encouraging citizens to give up their freedoms and rights, risk their lives for a battle, and allow their leader to rig the environment to ensure continued rule. Whenever we study the ortgeist or zeitgeist, we must also study the tainted and loaded communications used to cultivate obedience to authority and hatred toward out-groups. Here, we must ensure not to commit a *confirmation bias:* we must look at propaganda from all three players in a conflict, not just decree one side disseminates propaganda, while assuming the other side is "in the right" by default, while ignoring the propaganda of those wishing to gain resources from weakened factions. There will always be competing propaganda, and relying on a default delusion will prevent perceptions from aligning with reality.

It is important to study when propaganda is used, why, how, and who benefits the most from its message of obedience (a more detailed analysis can be found in Chapter Four). Yet there is another reason to be aware of the use of propaganda as it impacts the *brain;* biochemistry is altered. Hormone and cortisol levels change and impact thinking. Stress builds up, but as Donald Hebb noted, does not go back to its original levels: there will always be a residue. Those who are under psychological siege will employ various coping mechanisms: those mechanisms which seem productive will be reinforced, and the individual's behaviour will be modified for years or decades to come, even if they had the presence of mind to *defy* the propagandistic message. While their minds can see clearly, the brain is still affected by stress and perceptions of an upsetting reality and future.

History can be seen as a series of events sparked by various forms of propaganda, and outcomes are shaped by messages of fear-mongering. How people view themselves and their enemies will be shaped by propaganda, particularly if they are illiterate in its methods and unaware the messages are propagandistic. However, just because an individual is savvy to the mechanisms of propaganda, does not mean that they are unaffected by it, and it is important to differentiate between these two forms of manipulation:

Manipulated: This outcome is an overt modification of the propagandist whom we believe without scepticism. Our brains have been triggered, but so have our minds and both are aligned with the propagandist's intent. Once an individual has been manipulated, their beliefs are entrenched and will not believe that they have been exploited by an outside actor.

Primed: This outcome is a covert misfire of a propagandist who fails to align the triggered brain with the mind. Our brains still produce cortisol levels, or our hormonal levels are altered, meaning our behaviours and thoughts will change, but not toward the propagandist's target. While we may not believe the message, our brains will still go through the manufactured turmoil of the propagandist. The difference may be in who or what will be our target. For instance, a propagandist's faulty campaign may rouse fear, but fail to designate an enemy, thereby freeing up brain space, and we rebuff their interpretation of events. Conversely, the propagandist does manufacture an enemy out-group, but we are literate in manipulation, meaning we may reject the propagandist's demands that we see a group as an enemy, but we may begin to transfer those negative impulses toward a spouse whose negative traits suddenly become amplified to us, or we may choose a different out-group to blame for our woes. Often, these will be subconscious or simmering tensions that have been agitated through propagandistic priming.

By understanding the role of propaganda and its various outcomes, we can study the long-term effects of psychological manipulation on the ortgeist and zeitgeist. We are looking for changes in behaviours and ideology as well as base assumptions. Why has one religion dominated, only to fall out of favour? How did one political party gain trust, only to become reviled as scandalous? Why was one company seen as innovative before being associated with antiquated products? Why did this in-group see one set of beliefs as moral before renouncing those same traits as immoral? By looking at the origins of positive beliefs, we can determine what role those beliefs served and why, but also how a changing time or place no longer had use for those same assumptions. Should the beliefs arise amid a propagandistic campaign, we should not assume the two are linked or that propaganda was used to launch a political party or company. It is the organic consequences which shaped the post-propaganda logic to embrace those elements in the first place. For instance, if there is a war or danger, an ideology of protecting citizens will be trusted more than one which has a focus on education or the environment. Companies will fill a need, and take advantage of the change in zeitgeist or ortgeist. The radius of propaganda goes far beyond a war, and

it is important to follow the logic to understand thinking patterns after salient events.

Understanding Secret Teachings

Not all lessons are based on overt teachings. Many are implicit within a narrative or through sophistry. Many definitions or icons themselves have secret teachings within them which can confine interpretations which shape the zeitgeist or ortgeist. For instance, the United States describes itself as a "melting pot": here, the overt narrative and logic imply that everyone who arrives is seen as equal and has an equal opportunity to prosper; however, the secret teaching is assimilation and homogenization of personality. To succeed, one must agree to go by a trial by fire. A secret teaching presents a positive lesson on the surface, but a darker lesson is implied with the subtext.

Secret teaching may be by design, accidental or subconscious, but the crux of a secret teaching is through exploiting a target's assumptions, beliefs, vanity, greed, jealousy, pride, desperation, or gratitude to be lured into the overt lesson, and then use the same negative trait to ensure compliance to the secret lesson. Here, it is important to identify the overt lesson, and then test each possible interpretation of it to see which one seems to be the one that conditions subjects and modifies their behaviour to be favourable to a leadership's hold on power.

Hidden lessons are not only the most difficult to spot, but the ones which entrench negative behaviour (also known as a panda), making relearning more difficult. We are not aware that we have been taught a secret lesson as the overt lesson seems just and productive. The underside becomes entrenched as we assume it is aligned with reality, and thus, cannot be questioned.

We often erroneously believe that technology will improve with each new generation: the overt teaching emphasises improvement, but the secret teaching is twofold: one, younger generations are intellectually superior to older ones, and thus, can ignore them, and two, we can trust and not question new generations of products because we assume the newer ones are better. Passivity and cognitive outsourcing are the secret lessons. In reality, technology becomes obsolete, and once it is mass-produced, the quality degrades as it is used to churn out product. When addictive elements are embedded in a product, such as social media, and an audience has been habituated as they have placed time, resources, ego, identity, and investment

into it, there is no longer any inducement to improve the product. The secret lesson is to endure a faltering product because the next "better" one will arrive.

While propaganda is used when there are viable threats to a leadership, secret teachings are used to condition an in-group to have fiat into the status quo and not challenge the hierarchy as the ortgeist and zeitgeist reflect it. Each era and each place has its own sets of secret teachings, either through leadership cunning, or by serendipity, and it is important to consider these possible teachings when unproductive elements are endured, tolerated, embraced, and even celebrated.

Understanding the Role of Political Psychology in History

History is more than the flow of salient events: it is definable incidents which alter the thinking of individuals and groups. It is a form of conditioning. Problems arise, and many are chronic, meaning there needs to be a designated group and system to manage those issues. Modern thinking delegates those responsibilities to governments who make the laws, and then to public-sector institutions to oversee those issues. While there are numerous other ways to function, this method has been in play for decades, yet its proliferation began after the Second World War (see Chapter Eight for a more thorough discussion). Political psychology is a helpful tool in understanding world events past and present. We often see history as narratives, but it is more accurately interpreted as the flow of interlinked events. When we turn history into empirical units by shifting interpretations away from narrative and into flow, we can more objectively understand historical events in context.

By understanding political psychology's place in understanding historical events, we can understand why people behaved in a certain way: many people will question the blind obedience of the masses, but when we understand the role of propaganda and its use as misdirection and distraction to hide incompetence, we can understand why citizens gave up their power and resorted to cognitive outsourcing. The demystification allows us not to view history through contempt or romanticism, but as watching subjects reacting to stimuli in the real world. We can create ecologically valid empirical studies of history through psychology.

We can use scepticism as well as lateral and divergent thinking to find hidden factors. For instance, when a politician pushes for a particular remedy, we can look at outside factors from lobbying efforts to personal

connections to determine the impetus for the decision. We can also follow more psychologically-based lines of inquiry. When we see that a politician's motives are jealousy, narcissism, psychopathy, or greed, we are not taken in by flowery speeches written by a third party: we see how and why an actor chose a certain course of action to solve a problem.

When we focus our attention on hidden motives and drives, we can follow players and how they impact events.

Finally, by understanding core literacies as well as the mechanisms of neurobiology, we can see the cause and effect of actions and beliefs more clearly. We understand human motivations stemming from both the mind and the brain. When we see political ideology is based on logical fallacies, narrative, and atmosphere, we can see how obvious flaws are believed, and how those ideologies failed to solve the problems. By taking an empirical approach using multiple core literacies, we can prevent ourselves from aggrandizing or demonizing individuals and seeing reality as it truly happened, and prevent ourselves from accepting spin or even propaganda from tainting our perceptions of history.

Understanding Psychology in Interpreting the Reality of the Second World War

The Second World War was arguably the most psychologically important event in modern times as it (a) fragmented thinking by removing the interaction of the three core literacies through the unprecedented use of war propaganda, and (b) the shift of power from primal-based thinkers to analytical-based thinkers with the use of the atomic bomb. Not only had a new psychologically-based caste system formed, but people were divided on their primary core literacy with primal thinkers being supplanted by analytical ones. While history focuses on Allied Forces defeating the Nazis, there was another war in play: one without bloodshed, but one that brought a successful *coup d'état* against the previous power players. This secret coup would alter the way STEM-based industries were viewed, and what a nation's priorities and accolades would land. No other war has brought such psychological change, but there would be a shift again in 2020, as we will discuss in Chapter Ten.

The reality of the Second World War can be seen as a palimpsest: there are layers of history, but some have been erased and a more traditional view of the war took precedence. The Allied victory ensured a new kind of power player: the one whose currency was based on analytical thinking. The brute

force methods of primal thinkers did not win the war: it was scientists who created an atomic bomb. All it took was using technology on a single enemy, and the entire world would take note, bowing and bending to a new power elite. The shift was rapid on the one hand, but gradual on the other. Pairing science and technology with an Allied victory on a global scale ensured civilians would be conditioned to accept analytical thinking as superior to the former Gold Standard of primal dominance. The shift would be on scientific and technological advancement, and icons would favour intellectuals over those who prospered through brute force or cunning.

New industries began to rise, but others began to fall. As science and technology were seen as a solution to all problems, openings for civil rights would eventually be cemented in the decades following the war. New advances and inventions were to be revered, and those who could master those inventions were exalted. Eventually, the super-rich and elite founded technology-based companies as traditional industries such as legacy media began to erode. How the world changed from 1945 on came from the true victors of the war – the analytical thinkers who usurped power from primal-based thinkers. Nowhere was this shift in power more apparent than in the US. The primal-based thinkers of the Republican Party would begin to lose control in favour of the analytical-based thinkers of the Democratic Party. What held citizens in check in one era, would no longer have the power to do so in later eras. The common thread of both the zeitgeist and ortgeist was the triumph of analytical thinkers in winning the war against Germany.

However, to be able to understand how the Second World War quietly altered the thinking of billions of people, it is important to gain an understanding of how our brains and minds work, as the following chapter shows.