

# National character in the view of psychoanalysis

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## **Abstract:**

In the current context of globalization, alongside the prevailing trend, each nation-state still retains its distinctive national characteristics. These are the typical and unique features that each community contributes to the cultural heritage of humanity. In that sense, the character of each nation, expressing its identities and personalities, has always held a peculiar allure for researchers. However, national character is a rather nebulous concept, challenging to grasp, both relative and universal. Therefore, it remains an open concept, amenable to various approaches in psychology, sociology, ethnology, anthropology, value studies, and cultural studies. While psychoanalysis and national character may initially appear unrelated, national character is ultimately influenced by factors residing in the collective unconscious. Hence, if one seeks to discern the personality of a nation, psychoanalysis provides a promising avenue. From this perspective, the study of national character from a psychoanalytic standpoint can be considered quite unique and advantageous, deserving of attention. This article examines national character as a representation of a nation's unique identity from a fresh psychoanalytic perspective, offering insights into the national character of various nations, including Vietnam.

**Keywords:** anthropology, national character, psychoanalysis, psychology, social character.

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## **1. Introduction**

Globalization today raises numerous thought-provoking questions. Will the Lexus overshadow the Olive Branch to fashion a Flattened World? But what about a Flattened World from a cultural perspective? Perhaps, for an individual or a community, certain cultural layers may flatten or dissolve, but their identities and core essence shall endure. This represents the distinctive, individual contribution each human community makes to ethnic integration, thereby preserving cultural diversity within humanity. It is a profoundly human aspect of existence.

Nevertheless, for this preservation to occur, awareness among people is essential. Consequently, in recent decades, the matter of national character (national identity and personality) has received prominence on the agenda. Yet, national character remains an elusive and vague concept, simultaneously relative and universal. Thus, it stands as an open concept amenable to various

methodologies, including psychology, ethnology, ethology personality studies, and cultural studies. However, national character is akin to an iceberg, with only one-tenth visible above the surface, while the remaining nine-tenths lie submerged in the unconscious. Hence, exploring national character through the lens of psychoanalysis is a viable and promising approach.

## **2. What is psychoanalysis?**

When discussing psychoanalysis, it is likely to mention the founder of psychoanalytic theory, S. Freud. Psychoanalysis emphasises the influence of the unconscious on behaviours. S. Freud (2018) [1] believed that human personality consists of three components: the Id, the Ego, and the Super-ego. The Id comprises primordial desires, while the Ego is tasked with facing reality. The Super-ego encompasses all the ideals and values absorbed from education, parents, and society. The interaction of these three components results in complex human behaviours, as the Ego constantly

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seeks ways to satisfy needs and desires while the Super-ego suppresses these urges, urging the Ego to act in accordance with moral standards dictated by cultural traditions, including customs.

Psychoanalyst E.H. Erikson (1977) [2] extended Freud's theory and underscored the crucial role of development in human life through the psychosocial stage theory of personality. Freud's psychoanalysis faced criticism for overemphasising the role of the unconscious, sexuality, aggression, and childhood experiences. Additionally, the claims made by psychoanalysts are challenging to verify, as most of Freud's ideas are derived from case studies and clinical observations rather than scientific, experimental studies.

### **3. National character**

The concept of "national character" is referred to in some translated documents as "national character", "ethnicity", or "national personality". It pertains to the universal character representing individuals within a national category or nation. This concept is exemplified by two renowned cultural anthropologists, R. Benedict and Margaret Mead. The study of national character focuses on investigating the fundamental attitudes and values that are characteristic of a homogeneous society or a heterogeneous society comprising occupational groups, social classes, regions, domains, and ideologies.

R. Benedict authored the monograph "The Chrysanthemum and the Sword" (1946) about the Japanese personality, primarily based on secondary sources such as articles on Japanese life and interviews with Japanese immigrants in the US. Subsequently, a re-evaluation of her views revealed that most of her insights about the Japanese, including discipline, militarism, and aesthetic wisdom, were well-founded and accurate. These characteristics included being both rigid and adaptive, conservative, and open to new ideas. M. Mead, et al. (1953) [3] under the auspices of the American Tactical Operations Service (OSS), studied the national character of the British with the goal of elucidating the British personality while dispelling misunderstandings held by Americans about the British. The research, particularly on the role of fathers in the US and UK, shed light on the factors that encourage ostentatious attitudes in Americans and arrogance in Britons.

National character can be understood as the prominent features of a community sharing a common territory, language, way of life, and political rules over an extended period of history. National character is defined as "repeated characteristics that constitute the mental image of a nation", "Life within a shared territory, subject to the same historical influences and legal systems, generates common attitudes and characteristics, often referred to as national character" [4].

Nationality is both a theoretical and practical concept, not an amalgamation of two separate components - personality and ethnicity - but an intrinsic unity. Nationality is much like an iceberg, with only one-tenth visible to the conscious mind, while the remaining nine-tenths reside in the unconscious. Hence, an intriguing approach to understanding national character is through psychoanalysis.

### **4. National character from the perspective of psychoanalysis**

Contemporary investigations into national character have been fundamentally guided by the psycho-cultural theory of national character. The central concept of personality has been employed as a model for defining the notion of national character.

Since 1942, in a publication by the British psychologist M. Ginsberg (1942) [5], emphasis has been placed on the ambiguity inherent in the concept of "national character" [5]. It can refer either to the entirety of the characteristics exhibited by each ethnic group as a whole or, at times, merely to a mode of distribution of fundamental behavioural traits that are distinctive to a particular group of people. This dual meaning aligns with two theoretical orientations, representing the two currents within the analysis of the Modern School of national character: *the anthropological and the socio-psychological*.

#### **4.1. Psycho-anthropological models**

The central idea propounded by the psycho-anthropological movement within the Margaret Mead School, comprised of cultural anthropologists and cultural psychoanalysts, posits that every national culture possesses a unique collective personality, a "typical personality". The various elements of this personality collectively determine the individuality of each member to varying degrees. The integrity

of the national culture and the coherence of the elements of national character constitute the two fundamental postulates of this analytical movement. In this sense, the psycho-anthropological approach to national character can be described as an “organic” holistic approach [6].

According to this perspective, the concept of national character is primarily defined as a structured set of collective personality traits, a foundational personality, a shared pattern that shapes the attitudes, ideas, opinions, behaviours, and cultural values of the ethnic group. It moulds the individual personality of each member. However, this general definition of the concept of national character encompasses two distinct concepts, two theoretical models derived from the two analytical pathways of the Anglo-Saxon School of anthropological psychology: the anthropological model and the psychoanalytic model.

#### **4.2. The anthropological model “cultural personality”**

Emerging from anthropological studies on personality within primitive societies, the notion of “cultural personality” serves as a theoretical model in anthropological examinations of the national character in contemporary complex societies. This concept can be seen as synthesising the two most significant cultural theories: R. Benedict’s configuration theory (1932) [7] and A. Kardiner’s (1939) [8] fundamental personality theory. *Firstly*, each society is perceived as an integral configuration, a whole governed by a shared pattern. *Secondly*, every society is characterised by a consistent cluster of psychological traits that reflect their adaptation to the natural environment and the type of upbringing received.

#### **4.3. The psychoanalytic model “social personality”**

Anthropological and psychological analyses of personality attempt to systematise society within culture or explore how to psychologically structure society’s internal elements. Anglo-Saxon culturalist psychoanalysts focusing on ethnic personality have underscored the significance of socio-historical factors and the role of socio-economic factors in shaping the collective personality of societies. The rationalising psychoanalysts, such as A. Kardiner and E. Fromm, define national character as a “social personality”.

E. Fromm (1994) [9], in particular, elucidated the foundations of psychoanalysis in socio-economic causality. He delved into the German national character through the lens of Nazism, offering explanations, both psychological and socio-economic, for the rise of fascism and its leader, Hitler. The central foundational concept in Erich Fromm’s social psychology research is the notion of “social character”. E. Fromm refers to social personality as a constellation of traits that form the core of most members’ personality structure within a group. These traits are shaped by the prevalent experiences, popular culture, and lifestyle of that particular group [9]. In essence, social personality represents a personality structure shared among group or community members, individuals within a society or a class, moulded by their way of life, along with common societal expectations and cultural conventions that necessitate behavioural adaptation. This adaptation arises from the interplay between the individual and their social and cultural milieu. Fromm utilises the concept of social personality as the key to comprehending and analysing an individual’s social process, as well as grasping the ethos of a culture.

E. Fromm elucidates the cohesiveness of social consciousness in terms of social character: “To ensure the smooth functioning of a given society, its members must acquire a personality type that motivates them to act as members of that society or a particular class within it. They must objectively wish to do so” [9]. In this context, social personality serves to align individual desires with societal needs, fostering a constellation of personality traits and cultural values assimilated by group members. In industrial societies, for instance, social character dictates that individuals adhere to the demands of work, emphasising discipline and punctuality. E. Fromm thus identified the personality structure of a modern worker in industrial society as characterised by compliance, discipline, and punctuality [9].

Similarly, D. Riesman’s examination of national character aligns with the perspective of cultural sociologists utilising E. Fromm’s psychoanalytic investigations into social personality [10]. In his seminal work in 1950, *The Lonely Crowd* [10], D. Riesman borrowed E. Fromm’s arguments on socialization and the theory of instilling social norms through “social character”. In this vein, he employed the term “national character” to encompass all facets of personality acquired through lifelong socialisation

and playing a pivotal role in sustaining these social structural attributes.

In essence, the organic concept of personality, from the psycho-anthropological standpoint, informs a comprehensive approach to understanding national character. Armed with the analytical tools of “cultural personality” and “social character”, cultural anthropologists and psychoanalysts seek to apprehend the cultural personality of heterogeneous societies in their entirety, as well as the cultural compositions of contemporary great nations.

#### **4.4. Psychosocial models**

Derived from the fundamental culturalist hypothesis of personality, the research perspectives of the socio-psychological movement significantly diverge from those outlined by the psycho-anthropological movement.

*Firstly*, the socio-psychological analysis of national character is grounded in a concept of personality distinct from that developed in psycho-anthropological analysis. Psychologists and sociologists have adopted a statistical notion of personality, premised on the idea that multiple personality traits (and cultural patterns) exist within each ethnic group, in contrast to the holistic concept embraced by cultural anthropologists and psychoanalysts, positing a common personality shared by all members of an ethnic group, albeit with its own distinctiveness. Consequently, they have introduced the concept of a “unified personality,” highlighting the interconnectedness of numerous personality traits.

*Secondly*, socio-psychological analysis of national character reveals two closely intertwined approaches. The personality of a social group is observed psycho-sociologically in two ways: as an object and as a subject, as both a social fact and an element of relatively stable existence. Additionally, the subject is perceived as a reflection of social reality. Thus, the socio-psychologist can discern personality within a set of attitudes and behaviours specific to the group under investigation, as well as a subjective reality within the consciousness of individuals belonging to the group. This subjective reality manifests itself in the form of social images and stereotypes.

Within this theoretical framework, we can gain insights into the distinct characteristics of various

global populations. To illustrate this, we will delve into the national character of a few ethnic groups.

## **5. National character in some countries**

As cultures diversify in terms of lifestyle, customs, and other defining attributes, they contribute to the identity and character (identity, personality, and distinctiveness) of each nation. National character is a nebulous and elusive concept, both relative and universal. Perhaps it is one of the factors contributing to the diversity of national identities. It remains an open concept, amenable to various approaches: psychology, ethnography, ethology, anthropology, and cultural studies.

Every nation possesses a unique personality, where science and art can complement one another, and nothing is entirely right or wrong. Therefore, comprehending national character of various countries allows us to gain a holistic perspective. Through this intersection and overlap, we may discover a correct and lucid understanding of the intricacies of national character.

### **5.1. Russian national character**

To grasp the essence of a nation, one must penetrate into its dreams—the epics, folklore, and poetry unique to that nation. However, these dreams vary greatly; they encompass both trivial, base, malevolent visions and lofty, sacred aspirations. Unlike national fairy tales, which poets often embellish with beauty and nobility, dreams remain unfiltered and authentic, reflecting the full spectrum of human experience, even the darkest corners of the psyche.

In a paper presented at a conference organized by the Italian Institute of Eastern Europe in November 1923 in Rome, and subsequently published in the *Journal Philosophical Problems* in June 1995, the renowned scholar B.P Vysheslavtsev [11] ventured to explore the Russian national character through an analysis of dreams. Everyone harbours desires, needs, and aspirations, but not all these desires are conscious; some lurk in the subconscious and unconscious mind. When we sleep, these desires, unguarded, escape into our dreams. However, even in dreams, these desires remain concealed, taking on the guise of magical images or narratives. This is the mental life of an individual. In the life of an ethnic group or a nation, collective dreams are consciously

and unconsciously woven into myths, fairy tales, and epics [11]. B.P. Vysheslavtsev identifies the essence of the Russian character as a riddle embedded in Russian fairy tales and epics, genres “forged over centuries that unveil the authentic, age-old spirit of the nation” [12].

Russian fairy tales and epics provide a realistic portrayal of the Russian character, highlighting its strengths and weaknesses, desires, and fears. One of these fears is the aversion to hard work, which, for Russians, can rival their fear of suffering. Russian folklore vividly illustrates what Russians fear most: poverty and, even more so, hard work. It seems as though suffering has a penchant for visiting, almost as if it were invited. A poor man, on his way home from a friend's house, found himself irritated and began to sing to ease his frustration. Although he sang alone, he heard two voices. He paused and inquired, “Are you mocking me, Suffering?” Suffering replied, “Indeed, sir, it is I”. “Very well, Suffering, let us go together”. “Certainly, sir, I shall not leave your side now”. And so, Suffering led his master from one hardship to another, from one tavern to the next. When he had squandered his last coin, the young man refused further indulgence. “No, Suffering, my reason prevails; I have nothing left to squander”. “Why do you say you have nothing left? Your wife still has two dresses—one to wear and one to exchange for wine”. The man exchanged the dress for wine and continued drinking. Later, he pondered, “This is absurd! My clothes are in tatters, and so is my wife's!” [12].

Consequently, Russians continually seek another life, another realm where strong wine flows freely and fat goats graze without the toil of labour. To obtain this “eternal bread”, they create wishful narratives, tap into “scientific wisdom,” seek the elusive “Milk of the Cows”, or chase after magical birds. They also strive for “public works” to reach these unfamiliar, distant realms. In pursuit of these dreams, Russians are willing to sacrifice their possessions, their neighbours, and even their own flesh and blood (as in the tale of the Magon bird). Prophecy, messianism, and idealism permeate Russian folklore. These elements are both the strength and weakness of the Russian character.

The Russian epic of heroes reveals another facet of the Russian personality. Russian knights represent the elite among the common people. Their hands defended the realm and the church, thwarting invasions by adversaries. However, if they felt slighted or were not invited to a certain gathering, they would vent their righteous indignation by demolishing the church they had built and protected, raining arrows upon the palace. The destructive potential of the populace is formidable whenever this instinct is aroused, as evidenced in riots and even revolutions [13].

Yet the Russian character also possesses an immeasurable love for beauty and wisdom, personified by the wise Vasilisa. Russian boys often dream of marrying her. Folklore suggests that living with her will bring happiness, while forgetting her will result in unhappiness. This love for Russian beauty also reflects a profound, melancholic affection for the vast and mysterious Russian landscape, cherishing souls as pure as a “silver plate”, not only in the gentle Russian maidens but also in the Russian men and the expanse of the cosmos.

In summary, spontaneity, a love for beauty, wisdom, suffering, God, holiness, as well as prophecy and idealism, are bold and prominent traits in the Russian character. These characteristics are deeply ingrained in the Russian way of life and are vividly expressed in the works of authors like Gogol and, notably, Dostoevsky. As the saying goes, “sow an action, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny”. The Russian character has shaped the destiny of Russia, as history has borne witness on numerous occasions when these dreams, as foretold in folklore, became reality. These are the defining attributes that constitute the Russian national character.

## 5.2. Japanese personality

When discussing Japan, one cannot ignore its remarkable achievements in economic and scientific development, deserving of admiration. These accomplishments are deeply rooted in Japanese culture, stemming from the national character of the Japanese people. According to research findings, the attributes of national character can be categorized based on the principle of “ethnic community - group of people - individual”.

### 5.2.1. The ethnic community

Japan exhibits national characteristics marked by a profound love for labour and fervour in all spheres of work-related activities. The Japanese engage in labour with selflessness and enthusiasm, and their inherent beauty shines through even in the process of working.

Japan possesses a unique word, “furu” (flowy), composed of two hieroglyphs: “fu”, signifying wind, and “ryu”, representing flowing water. This concept of “wind and flowing water” encapsulates aesthetics, which, according to the Japanese writer Tetsuzo Tanikawa, is the core characteristic of the Japanese nation. It forms the foundational trait around which all others gather [12].

Additionally, tradition, or rather the tradition, has profoundly influenced Japanese behaviour, thoughts, and aspirations, becoming a paramount feature of the nation's character. Traditions deeply rooted in Japanese society not only reflect the ideology of inheritance in social activities but also reinforce national, cultural, and life elements. The Japanese hold a reverent attitude towards their cultural heritage from the past, preserving classical theatrical arts, the tea ceremony, and the art of flower arrangement (ikebana). It is evident that, in contemporary Japan, great attention is given to tradition and ancient cultural artefacts. The Japanese exhibit a special reverence for established ways of life, as well as cultural heritage. Their attention extends not only to the substance of manners but also to the external expressions and mannerisms, resulting in unusually stable social conduct. The current state of Japan underscores the vitality of traditions in Japanese political thought and social behaviour. The traditional character of the Japanese profoundly influences many aspects of Japan's social and political activities.

### 5.2.2. The behavioural characteristics of a group of people

A “group of people” is defined as a collection of individuals based on various criteria such as age, occupation, gender, and so forth. Social psychology considers a group as an entity where individuals share a sense of belonging, albeit to varying degrees. The concept of a “group of people” functions as a “micro-environment” with distinct characteristics. This phenomenon holds true for any ethnic community, with the degree of solidarity being the distinguishing factor. In Japan, this level of solidarity is exceedingly high. Within the realm of Japanese group behaviour, discipline, loyalty to authority figures, and a strong sense of duty stand out prominently.

Group behavioural characteristics manifest through discipline, loyalty to authority, and a sense of duty. In Japanese interpersonal relationships, discipline is exemplified as a desire for harmony and adjustment. This characteristic necessitates strict adherence to established order, socially acceptable conduct, diligent fulfilment of duties, and genuine respect for superiors and elders.

The Japanese are renowned for their exceptional discipline. They show profound respect for rules and principles, not out of fear of punishment or other consequences, but rather out of a deep reverence for the law itself. This discipline is particularly evident in their commitment to queuing. Regardless of the context, whether purchasing everyday essentials or cutting-edge technology, orderliness prevails. The world admired the Japanese discipline during the earthquake and tsunami that struck the country in 2011 when, amid life-and-death situations, Japanese citizens maintained orderly queues to receive essential supplies [14].

Loyalty has also played a central role in Japanese culture. In the Tokugawa period, Japanese scholar Zoken Nishikawa wrote in his book *The Peasant Farm* (1721), “Because the lower classes lack the capability to govern the country, they have a duty to obey”. In 1879, Interior Minister Hirobumi Ito declared that “granting political judgement to the masses would spell disaster for the nation”. Submissiveness is rooted in fear of authority, including fear of the police, government officials, and the military. In Japanese thought, the government is seen as “something long and solid”. By nurturing the desire to rely on something “long and solid”, rulers have cultivated submission and obedience [12].

Submission to authority has become a defining feature of many Japanese individuals, forming the foundation of their unwritten code of conduct, which they adhere to meticulously. This code is consistently reinforced by a sense of duty, manifesting as the diligent fulfilment of personal responsibilities. All these principles are accompanied by intricate rituals that, in the present day, have adapted to new circumstances and hold a significant place in the hierarchy of human values, reflecting responsibility stemming from a sense of duty.

As a result, the centuries-old spirit of submissiveness has bestowed upon the Japanese a unique psychological disposition, akin to a source of gratification.

### 5.2.3. About personal characteristics

In terms of personal traits observed in daily life, individuals are expected to exhibit qualities such as politeness, punctuality, self-control, thrift, and curiosity [15].

Politeness stands as one of the paramount principles governing everyday life in Japanese culture, constituting a fundamental aspect of the Japanese way of life. Every word, gesture, and action of the Japanese people, no matter how routine, is imbued with politeness. For instance, even in situations where a small or moderately sized store appears to be unattended, with the salesperson perhaps concealed in a comfortable corner, a customer typically announces their presence with the phrase “Gomen kudasai” (Sorry!). Customers are encouraged to peruse the merchandise at their leisure, pose detailed inquiries, and unfailingly receive courteous responses. Prior to handling an item, it is customary for the Japanese to express apologies and seek permission from the proprietor. Polite discourse represents an unwavering fixture in Japanese communication, permeating all facets of interpersonal relationships in Japan.

### 5.3. Vietnamese national characteristics

Objective research into the personality traits of Vietnamese individuals is reflected in several works on Vietnamese psychology, culture, and history.

Research on the Vietnamese national character reveals the unity and mutual transformation of opposites. Key traits considered as traditional values among the Vietnamese people include a commitment to promoting collective and community spirit, an ethos of gratitude, and a strong disposition towards studiousness [16].

#### 5.3.1. Respect of community

Respect of the community represents a fundamental and enduring trait within the Vietnamese national character. It serves as a cornerstone value in Vietnamese culture, underpinning the development of patriotism, national unity, solidarity, and collective consciousness. Given the perennial challenge of combating natural disasters, which afflict the region annually, as well as confronting foreign adversaries far superior in strength, community has played an integral role throughout Vietnamese history.

Vietnam, located in a region prone to numerous natural calamities such as floods, storms, and droughts, has faced irreparable damage and losses. Nevertheless, the response has consistently involved the spirit of “good leaves cover torn leaves” and the notion that “a sick horse leaves the whole ship to leave

the grass”. Such expressions of communal solidarity are characterised by a readiness to aid and share the burdens of those in need within the same community. Vietnamese individuals exhibit a willingness to sacrifice personal interests and possessions for the greater good of the community and for the community, there are many practical actions showing noble gestures. It is a fact that, when facing a natural disaster, the Vietnamese people always offer assistance to those in areas affected by flash floods, enthusiastically contributing and supporting them with both material and spiritual support enveloped in the love for their compatriots.

In the face of war and foreign invasion, a recurring reality in Vietnam's history, the Vietnamese people, despite their relatively small size and limited resources, have relied on the unity of their collective spirit, deep-seated patriotism, and the pursuit of national sovereignty to resist foreign powers and fend off separatist ideologies and oppression. This unwavering solidarity has served as a potent weapon for building and safeguarding the nation. The essence of this unity is most vividly manifested in the modern era, particularly during the two resistance wars against the French and the Americans.

Vietnam's history is replete with instances where the spirit of collective solidarity and patriotism has endured despite considerable losses, sacrifices and deprivations of property and lives, and numerous hardships. This resilience has paved the way for the advancement of patriotism and a strong national spirit, ultimately thwarting the designs of brutal foreign invaders and their attempts at annexation. It is this solidarity and mutual assistance during difficulties that have become the starting point and the basis for the development of patriotism and national spirit of the Vietnamese people.

#### 5.3.2. Respect of affection

The ethos of gratitude is a deeply ingrained attitude among the Vietnamese people, perpetuated through generations. To this day, elders regularly instil the importance of this tradition in the younger generation. The truth remains that even in contemporary Vietnamese society, which has embraced market mechanisms, this tradition continues to wield significant influence. It fosters communal cohesion, nurtures a harmonious, open, and compassionate way of life, and upholds the principles of “love people as if you love yourself”, “a horse hurts the whole ship to leave the grass”, “leaf leaves”, and “heal torn leaves”. However, it is essential to recognise that this value, like all others, carries both positive and negative aspects.

H.S. Quy (2006) [17] notes that the top value for the Vietnamese people is gratitude, but warns against overlooking its potential drawbacks, which are the disregard for morality and affection. This value carries inherent duality and, in many cases, it can still be valuable but outdated. Regarding the excessive veneration of gratitude, as expressed through proverbs such as “banana fish are immersed in their children”, “although they are different, they share the same truss”, “a drop of blood is thicker than a pond of water”, and “father’s bones and mother’s skin”, while often positive, may not hold true in all circumstances. The sentimental value placed on love, taken to extremes, possesses a dual nature. The positivity or negativity of this attitude hinges on the specific context. In the endeavour to construct a socialist rule-of-law state, idealistic perspectives that disregard constitutional law and regulations, notions like “the king’s law is inferior to the village’s rule” and “one hundred reasons do not equal a little love” become challenging to reconcile. Instead, they may lead to nepotism and a “descendant” mindset, contributing to disparities in the treatment and assessment of individuals. Furthermore, idealism may hinder scientific progress by discouraging critical thinking and the acceptance of scientific and revolutionary criticism, making it difficult for countries with this tradition to embrace such principles.

### 5.3.3. *The spirit of learning*

Vietnamese individuals are renowned for their studious spirit, coupled with an “innately intelligent” disposition and a longstanding educational tradition. Vietnam has produced numerous world-class scholars in various fields. Nevertheless, despite the recognition of the Vietnamese people’s dedication to learning, the country lags behind in terms of global recognition for its scientists, relative to other studious nations. Therefore, while the studiousness of the Vietnamese people possesses certain limitations and negative aspects, it is unequivocally regarded as one of the positive facets of their personality.

## 6. Conclusions

In conclusion, the intersection of ethnicity and psychoanalysis may appear unconventional at first glance, seemingly unrelated fields. However, a deeper exploration reveals that the national character is ultimately governed by elements residing within the collective unconscious. Consequently, approaching the study of national character through the perspective of psychoanalysis provides us with a comprehensive and multifaceted perspective.

## CRediT author statement

Nguyen Quynh Huong: Writing; Nguyen Vu Hao: Methodology, Writing, Editing.

## COMPETING INTERESTS

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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