

## Turchin's Historical Dynamics – Chapter 3

### **How this chapter fits into the book/Turchin's theory:**

This is the first chapter in which the author starts to really construct his theory. In the last chapter he found that geography and macro factors cannot explain the dynamics of imperial collapse by themselves. Here, he starts from the ground up, people, and traces the connections from people to all the way to empires, the basic units of the geopolitical model he is constructing.

### **Summary:**

Justification: Groups of individuals is a valid unit for analysis.

1. People form groups, which act as more than the simple sum of their parts.
2. Empires can be thought of as nested hierarchical groups.

First link: Individuals-to-groups: Two important features of groups are social boundaries and altruism or intra-group cooperation.

How do individual actions give rise to social boundaries? All kinds of things: language, speech, clothing, phenotype. All these things can be thought of as social markers.

How do individual actions give rise to intra-group cooperation? Well, people Modeling of the evolution of culture has included simulations which indicate that group selection exists (selection on the group as a whole and not individuals directly) and that selection for intra-group cooperation can exist.

These two features seem to be intrinsically related as social factors such as norms and enforcement of norms are part of the theory of how group cooperation evolves. Also, some theories connect the evolution of social markers to group interactions.

Second link, small groups to larger groups: Ethnic groups.

These differ from smaller groups only in scale. The mechanism which stabilizes them is still social markers.

Even though they are larger than the smallest human groups, intense solidarity may exist within an ethnic group.

Third link, ethnicity to empire: Ethnic groups are at a scale above small groups. Above ethnicities can be larger groups, metaethnicities, in an apparently arbitrarily deep hierarchy.

Fourth link: Empires to geopolitics. Empires have boundaries and fight over them.

Now that the author has mapped out some of the connections between the different elements, the theory starts to take shape.

Ibn Khaldun, asabiya: Develops under conditions of communal hardship. Fades as intra-elite competition for resources becomes widespread.

Solidarity should make you more successful in war.

Softening of solidarity related to empire collapse.

War is a hardship which creates solidarity.

Gamilov: Regarded as kind of wacky, but he introduces the ideas of ethnogenesis and passionarity. Ethnic groups are born and one can find evidence of it happening.

Other, sociology-based theories.

Turchin's theory is based on and uses terminology of asabiya, but is broadened and enriched by the other theories.

**Fascinating bit:** Culture-based social units seem to have no natural upper bound.