TO LIVE CONSCIOUSLY IN THE SHIVA WORLD
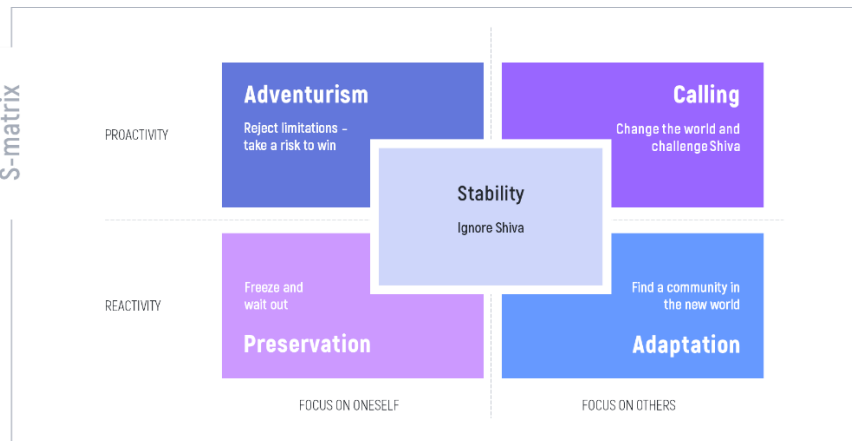
Mark Rozin

Summary

This policy paper can be summarised in two charts:

1. The world has changed – we live in the SHIVA world now:

2. In the SHIVA world, we need new conscious strategies. We have to choose them based on the S-matrix:

You can read about it in more detail below. But be warned, it is a long read. However, the real long read – a book – is yet to come out.

Prologue

When people think about the fate of the world, they tend to have two premonitions, which either alternate or, in some cases, exist simultaneously. The first one is to expect a global crisis, the Apocalypse, the end of the world. The dates of the Apocalypse were calculated multiple times, and although in the designated time, nothing extraordinary happened, it did not stop people from believing in the next prophecy. Apocalyptic expectations are not always religious in nature. Today, many people expect a global crisis, which will not precede the Second Coming of Christ but will be caused by climate change, the collapse of the dollar and the world economy, the rise of artificial intelligence, or the start of the Third World War.

> **People expected the end of the world in:**
>
> - 1000 (1000 years since the birth of Jesus Christ)
> - 1037 (1000 years since the death of Jesus Christ)
> - 1038 (Easter fell on Annunciation)
> - 1492 (7000 years since the creation of the world)
> - 1584 (conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn)
> - 1604 (conjunction of Jupiter and Saturn again)
> - …

Just as often, or perhaps, even more often, you can come across a completely different attitude – faith in the stability and immutability of the world. I have lived through a radical change of eras on a national scale: the fall of communism and the dissolution of the Soviet Union. Not only did the country's contours on the map, its name, and its political regime change, but the rules of the game changed completely as well. The last became the first: many of those with status, power, and money in the USSR failed to adapt to the new reality, while many passional young men and women rose from the lower classes, earned billions and formed new elites. Several years before 1991, neither I nor people from my social circle could even imagine the impending tectonic shift. Even though Perestroika was launched in 1985 and there were many precursors of future changes (from political declarations to hippies and punks in the streets), no one, except for few eccentrics, believed that the Soviet Union would collapse. Everyone assumed that it would be limited to cosmetic reforms.

I think that both public sentiments – expecting a global crisis or believing in the stability of the current order – rarely predict future reality. The end of the world does not come on the appointed dates, and radical transformations start when no one expects them to.

Part 1. The world we live in

The second half of the XX century was not only a time of technological progress as the understanding of the value of human life increased with the significant humanisation of society. In 2011, Steven Pinker wrote his book *The Better Angels of Our Nature: Why Violence Has Declined*. Based on extensive statistics, he showed

that violence was declining and argued that the times of war were over. And that is what he said in 2018: "Fewer of us are killed, assaulted, enslaved, exploited or oppressed by the others. From a few oases, the territories with peace and prosperity are growing and could someday encompass the globe."

Ideas of comprehensive and rapid progress as a new fundamental feature of humanity have firmly entrenched in people's minds. I have personally witnessed this belief grow in the business world over decades. Over the last twenty years, I have organised hundreds of strategy sessions: we always started with market forecasts, and absolutely all the charts showed rapid growth in consumption in virtually all areas for ten or even twenty years ahead. The economic crisis of 2008? An accident. Opinion leaders and ordinary people believed that the world economy had overcome contradictions and was ready for endless growth, and new technologies would only accelerate this process. Almost all small, large and extra-large companies based their strategies on these assumptions, and individuals did, too, readily taking out loans in hope for career success and the development of our country's economy.

As is often the case, an opposite attitude emerged simultaneously – a sense of the instability of our world. In the business world, this was reflected in the formula VUCA: Volatility, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguity.[1] However, for many decades – and I can attest to that – this concept, although mentioned during strategic discussions, remained little more than a footnote as it had no impact on actual decision-making. Decisions were made based on a certain and very optimistic worldview.

Something began to change in the public mood in the 2010s or a little earlier. Nassim Taleb provided a theoretical framework for these inchoate feelings by introducing the concept of "the black swan." He urged people to prepare for unpredictable events of great significance that could have a dramatic impact on the world.[2] Interestingly, in Taleb's definition, a black swan is not always a bad event, just an extremely rare and highly influential one, either positive or negative. Nevertheless, the term is strongly associated with disruptive phenomena, and this fact, coupled with the book's immense popularity, proves that Taleb struck a chord of emerging catastrophic expectations of Western society.

The 2010s witnessed increased warnings about the end of the world as a consequence of climate change. By labelling this as an expectation rather than an

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[1] The concept of VUCA was developed by Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus in their book *Leaders: The Strategies for Taking Charge* (1985). It was first used in US Army College in 1987 but became popular only in the XXI century.

[2] Nassim Taleb, *The Black Swan: The Impact of the Highly Improbable*, 2nd ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 2010).

immutable fact, I do not mean to say that the climate is not changing or that it will not cause serious problems for humanity. Conversations with leading American climate scientists have convinced me that the scientific evidence suggests serious problems are inevitable, but that humanity is quite capable of adapting to them – global warming is not a universal disaster it appears to be to the young people whose ideas are voiced by Greta Thunberg. And yet, talk of a climatic "end of the world" has spread, although it has only been "scheduled" for the 2050s, which is certainly very close, but not tomorrow.

Another sign of changing public sentiment in the 2010s was dissatisfaction with the VUCA formula as too appeased. In 2016, American anthropologist and futurologist Jamais Cascio decided to toughen the diagnosis. The world was not just Volatile, he said, but Brittle – it was about to break. Not just Uncertain, but Anxious. The characteristic Complex also seemed too soft to Kashio, so he replaced it with Nonlinear. And to finally lambaste the supporters of eternal progress, he added the characteristic Incomprehensible. The abbreviation changed from VUCA to BANI.

Volatility	Brittle
Uncertainty	Anxious
Complexity	Nonlinear
Ambiguity	Incomprehensible

Yet, no truly disastrous events happened in the 2010s. The 2008 stock market crash scared everyone, but not for long, as the recovery was rapid. Brexit and Donald Trump's presidency were unpleasant surprises, but still, neither was the end of the world.

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I am writing this article in the autumn of 2024. The COVID-19 pandemic is now behind us; the hostilities in Ukraine have been going on for three years, and the conflict in Palestine, for almost a year. For the first time since the Cold War, we hear threats of nuclear weapons. Is there anything special about the current state of affairs? One could say there is not. A long war in Europe and the conflict between Israel and Palestine leave few people indifferent, and therefore, they are discussed much more than previous ones; still, both wars are regional, and regional wars have never stopped. Nuclear rhetoric is frightening, but it can very well remain empty words. And COVID-19 has long been forgotten. The once omnipresent formula "the world will never be the same" has dissipated without a trace: no masks can be seen in Europe, and almost no one continues with vaccinations. Wars are raging on, but markets are growing, and the exchange rates of key currencies are stable. Isn't this proof that deep

down, the majority of people believe in the immutability of the existing state of affairs? Or are people full of foreboding about a global crisis?

Together with Mikhail Balakshin (ECOPSY partner), we decided to examine what people really think about the future. We conducted a small study, which we called "Sociology of Global Presentiments."[3] It does not allow us to draw statistically reliable conclusions, but it does allow us to formulate hypotheses.

We interviewed 655 people, 558 of whom were from Russia, plus a small number of Russian speakers permanently residing in the CIS countries, 78 were emigrants from Russia who had left in the last 2 years, and 19 – a very small number – were residents of Great Britain, the USA, Colombia, the Netherlands, Norway, and Italy. We will further refer to those groups as "Russia," "Emigrants," and "the West." The questionnaire was available in Russian or English. Our respondents are managers who are capable of reflection and aspire for self-development; the questionnaire was distributed among graduates of business schools and subscribers of telegram channels about management.

The first question was an open-ended one: "How would you define the current state of humanity in just a few words?" The overwhelming majority of responses (78%) were highly negative. Here are a few answers that particularly impressed me: "a blind man on the edge of a cliff," "a blind tightrope walker," "a crash test," "a nightmare," "regression to the medieval way of thinking," and "feast during the plague." And here is my favourite: "a cat in a carrier" – you can feel the fear and nausea of a cat being carried somewhere in a closed bag. There were positive answers too, but they only amounted to 15%, such as: "a new round of human development," "a window of opportunity", or "a disturbing fate leading to harmony". Neutral answers ("nothing new," "rather ordinary work routine and surmountable difficulties") were only 7%.

We then asked some close-ended questions. "Do you believe that humanity will change for the better in the coming decades?". There were 17% of those who believe that and 38% of those who are sure that there will be no improvements or doubt their possibility. That is, there are twice as many pessimists as optimists.

The opposite question: "Do you believe that humanity will face existential risks in the coming decades?" – 47% said yes, and 5% said no. Here, there are 9 times

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[3] See in more detail: https://www.ecopsy.ru/insights/zhdut-li-sovremennye-lyudi-apokalipsis-sotsiologiya-globalnykh-predchuvstviy-issledovanie-ekopsi/

more pessimists than optimists, and the question was not about ordinary risks but about "existential" ones.[4]

We also decided to directly ask about the expectations of not just a crisis but a cardinal transformation of the world: "Do you think that humanity is on the threshold of a global transformation comparable to the transition from antiquity to the Middle Ages or from large colonial monarchies to democracies or authoritarian states?". These examples for comparison are undoubtedly subjective, but we needed to emphasise the scale of change. 52% agreed, and 8% disagreed.[5]

We decided to also look at emotional attitudes and used a metaphor from a song by Boris Grebenshchikov. The question was as follows: "A famous rock musician sang in his recent song: 'A storm is coming that will tear apart the very essence of being.' Do you have similar premonitions?" 56% agreed, and 44% disagreed. The perception of a metaphor is highly individual: some people may dislike it for aesthetic reasons, not in terms of its meaning; therefore, we assumed that in reality, more than 56% of the sample agreed with the message.

For a further, more detailed analysis, we introduced an apocalyptic attitudes index (AAI), which allowed us to compare different categories of respondents. The AAI ranges from 0 to 100, where 0 encompasses extreme versions of optimistic answers, such as "I believe that humanity will change for the better" and "I do not believe in the existential crisis of humanity," 50 includes answers implying that nothing in the world will change dramatically in the coming decades, and 100 is the highest degree of apocalypticism – the belief that civilisation is facing a crisis that will result in a radical transformation of humanity.

The AAI of the entire sample is 63 out of 100. Women turned out to be more "apocalyptic" than men in the West and emigration, but not in Russia. The highest AAI was shown by people who identified as "free artists" or "public servants," and the lowest, by entrepreneurs.

In general, more than half of our respondents expect the end of times. We do not have data from ten years ago for comparison, but we are convinced that 10 years ago, the AAI would have been below 50 as the public attitudes fluctuated between

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[4] The scale consists of 7 items, and in the 47% of pessimists, we counted those who gave two extreme answers: "I am sure we are facing a global crisis that threatens the very existence of civilisation" (this answer was chosen by 11% of respondents) and "There is a high probability of a global crisis" (36%).
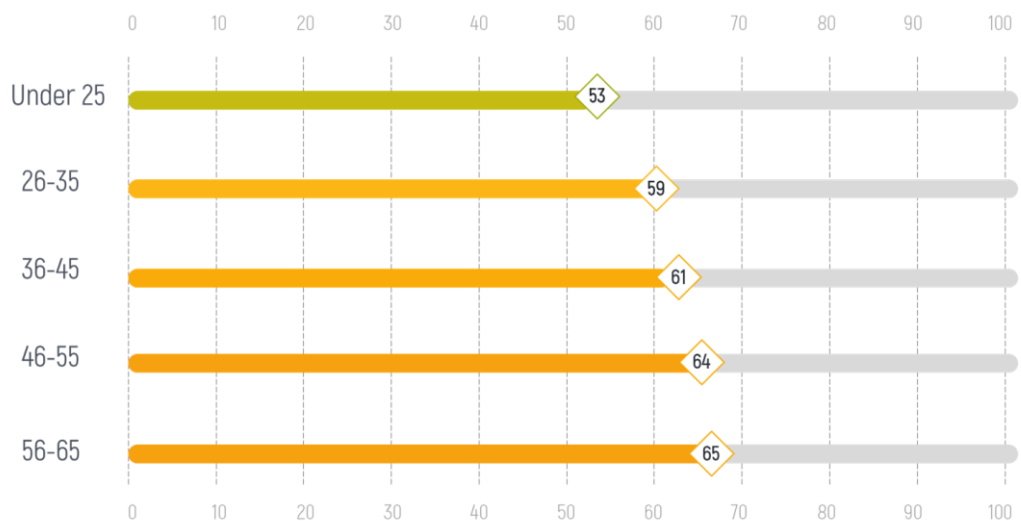
[5] Again, we compared two extremely negative answers with two extremely positive ones.

"progress awaits us" and "nothing will change." Today, however, it is between the "nothing will change" and "apocalypse" points.

However, there are two trends that can be interpreted positively. First, the AAI is highest in Russia, a country involved in a military conflict, slightly lower in emigrants from Russia who moved away from the danger zone, and even lower in the West.

Russia — 62

Emigration — 61

West — 49
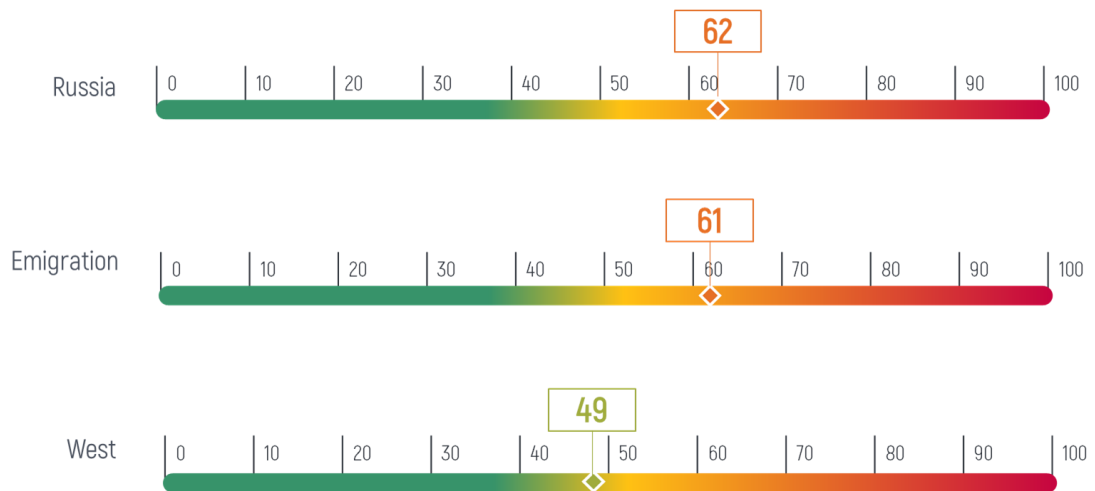
Secondly, AAI grows significantly with age.

Age group	AAI
Under 25	53
26–35	59
36–45	61
46–55	64
56–65	65

Why is it so? Is it the wisdom of experienced people who better understand the state of the world around them? Or is it that the further one gets from the active phase of life, the more often one feels that things are getting worse so that already at the age of 50, one starts the typical senile grumble: "The world is going to hell"?

Apocalyptic expectations are lower among young respondents, who are only about to start their lives, people from the USA and Europe, nowadays little affected by regional wars, and also among men. Does this mean we can relax as collective forebodings indicate that everything will be fine? Or, on the contrary, should we not relax because the most intelligent and perceptive people closest to the flashpoints can

sense the major crisis coming: women, the elderly, and Russians, who are the best barometer for predicting the world's weather? There is not and cannot be any data that will allow us to give precise answers to these questions and know the future. So, we are left to operate with hypotheses.

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The hypothesis I will put forward will be disappointing (yes, I remember – I just said that predictions do not come true). I believe that the pessimists are right. The era of stability and progress that began in the second half of the XX century has ended, and humanity has entered a period of turbulence that will radically change it. We cannot know what the next era will be and when it will stabilise – in ten or a hundred years – but there will be no return to the calm life in the coming decades. The storm has begun, and it will only grow.

The Volatile and Brittle world cracked – it is not yet broken, but a series of cracks split it apart. Volatile and Brittle changed to **Split**. Humanity has split into the collective West and the global South and East, and the tension between these parts has never been more acute.

The main crack runs through the countries. Russian society is divided. Political scientist Yevgeny Minchenko speaks of the existence of four Russias, radically different in their values and understanding of current events: Russia at War, Emigrant Russia, Capital Russia and Deep Russia.
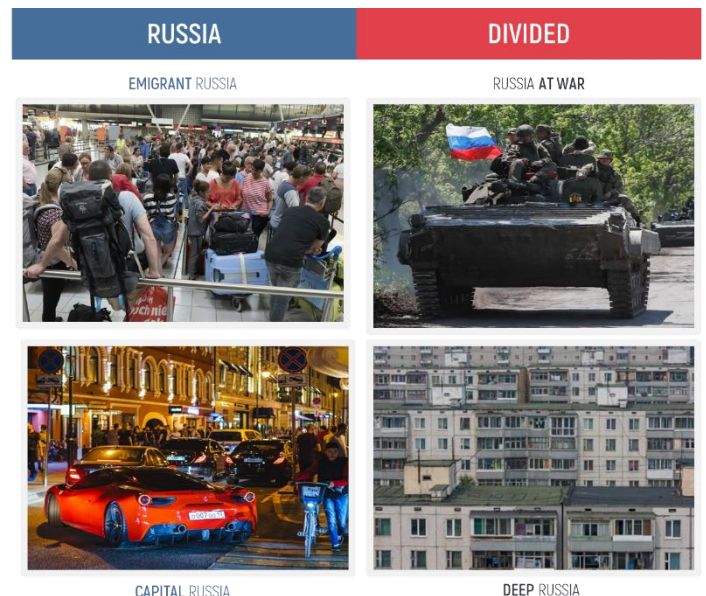
The West is no less divided: the right – the supporters of traditional values – and the left – the advocates of the new agenda – have radically diverged. In 2021, Elon Musk explained with a drawing how he had shifted from left to right:

Elon Musk: what happened to the left
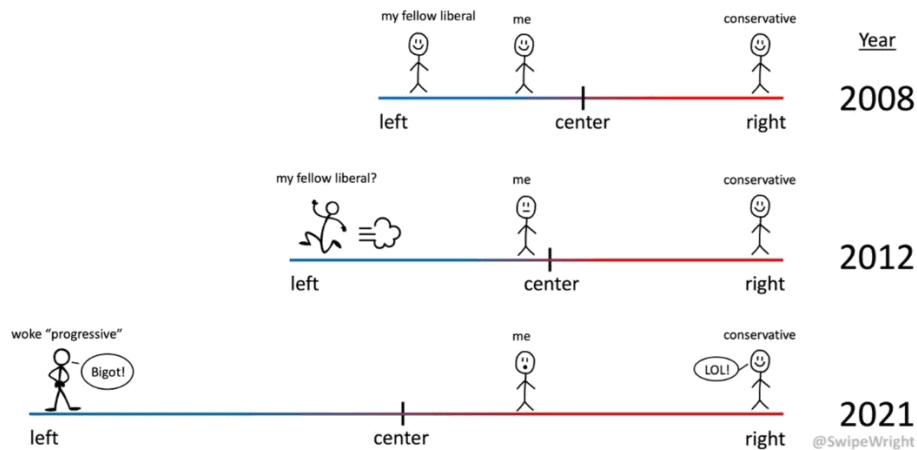
In Musk's view, his views did not change – he remained in place while the left "woke up" and radicalised. As a result, the distance between the left and the right has at least doubled. And they all live in the same country. This division might pose the greatest risk to the current world order.

Does the anxious uncertainty persist – is it still the era of Uncertain and Anxious? Unfortunately, concerns became a reality: the world turned from Anxious to **Horrible**. People may be on different sides of the conflict, but all of them can see that the events that have taken place in recent years and keep happening every day right now have gone beyond humanity and violated ethical norms that seemed immutable five years ago. Only recently, during the pandemic, we were trying to save the life of every elderly person, and today, in front of the world, people are killing each other by the hundreds and thousands every day.

Is the world still complex and nonlinear, ambivalent and incomprehensible? Yes, it is. Every year, we find it more and more difficult to predict the future. And every day, more and more events, which seemed completely unrealistic not so long ago, keep happening. Billions of people locked in their homes because of the pandemic? That used to be the kind of thing you could read about in sci-fi novels. Tank battles between Ukrainians and Russians? Now people are getting used to it, but three years ago, it was impossible to imagine this. The world became **Inconceivable**. If we add another feature – **Vicious** – we will have a set of characteristics of our times: Split, Horrible, Inconceivable и Vicious, – SHIV.

However, one quality is missing. If the hypothesis I formulated above is correct, then the crack through which horrible, inconceivable and cruel events burst into our world marks the time of change – the end of one era and the emerging preconditions for a new one. And then it would make sense to talk about rebirth – **Arising**. The abbreviation is thus complete: SHIVA.

From VUCA to SHIVA

Cold War	Climate change, Trump, Brexit	COVID-19, Division between the West, the East and the South. New regional wars.
VUCA	**BANI***	**SHIVA**
From the 1980s	From 2020	From 2019
The world became unpredictable	Risks are building	The brittle world has cracked – it is a time of change now

V	VOLATILITY	B	BRITTLE	S	SPLIT
U	UNCERTAINTY	A	ANXIOUS	H	HORRIBLE
C	COMPLEXITY	N	NONLINEAR	I	INCONCEIVABLE
A	AMBIGUITY	I	INCOMPREHENSIBLE	V	VICIOUS
				A	ARISING

*This acronym was coined by the leading world researcher Jamais Cascio by the analogy with the terms SPOD and VUCA.

SHIVA world

SHIVA world

SHIVA

SPLIT	HORRIBLE	INCONCEIVABLE	VICIOS	ARISING
Unprecedented polarisation of humanity: between the West, the East, and the South, as well as within each country	Events beyond reason and ethics	Such a world was unimaginable just five years ago	Humanitarian principles are left in the past	Humanity is undergoing transformation; one era is coming to an end, and another one is emerging

The teaching of three divine entities can be found not only in Christianity but also in Hinduism: Brahma created the universe, Vishnu preserves it (in this sense, Vishnu is the "essence of being" itself), and Shiva, the god of destruction, clears the space for new creation.[6] Dancing his horrible dance with his entourage of evil spirits and demons as backup dancers, Shiva destroys the "essence of being."

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[6] Trimūrti (Sanskrit त्रिमूर्ति) means "the whole of three forms"

The image of the god Shiva fully embodies the hypothesis about the emerging shift between the eras I discussed above. Shiva, together with the spirits and demons of war, makes space for a new world order. Yes, it is a **Horrible** and **Violent** dance, but it leads to rebirth – **Arising**.

I have already quoted Boris Grebenshchikov's lyrics: "A storm is coming that will tear apart the very essence of being" – they are about foreboding Shiva. The storm has already begun; it is coming, but its main blow is yet to come. Shiva's storm will destroy the very essence of Vishnu's being so that Brahma will be able to create a new universe. A dreadful foreboding indeed. In the next line, Grebenshchikov sings: "The storm is me." Thus, he suggests controlling one's life and destiny by assuming the role of God. Yet, is it but an illusion? The title and refrain of the song "Not Meant to Be" imply that control is impossible.

One of the key symptoms of the time of Shiva is a change in the behaviour of black swans. According to Nassim Taleb, a black swan is a highly unlikely and impactful event. And it is indeed in the stable Vishnu era. When Shiva comes, however, the black swan becomes a highly probable event. We do not know what will happen next year, but what we can be sure of is that the black swan will come soon.

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How did the new era of SHIVA begin? Shiva comes when the current world order accumulates too much tension (metal fatigue), and a crisis is triggered, which, if not destroying humanity, allows it to shift to a brand new state. I will leave a serious analysis of the sources of this tension in the world beyond the scope of this article – much has been written about it, yet I think that the most important conclusions have not been made yet as too little time has passed. I will only highlight the role of COVID-19, which is barely discussed. In my view, the pandemic was the trigger that set off the changes. It was not the virus per se but the response of societies and nations to the pandemic. There was a chance to approach it as an ordinary epidemic and fight it with the usual methods. However, society was already expecting a disaster, and politicians, in response to the acute social stress, took extraordinary measures – first of all, restricting personal freedoms (again, I will refrain from assessing how justified this was).

Extraordinary measures pushed the world beyond what is permitted, thrusting it from normality to abnormality. Before that, the limits of the permissible were clear, but in 2020, they disappeared. If you can put a billion people under house arrest (lockdown) without trial, why can't you start a war? The conditions for wars were formed not by the pandemic and before the pandemic, but it was COVID-19 that

pushed the boundaries of the permissible. Azerbaijan was the first to start a new regional war, and it was successful. This, in turn, provoked the following regional wars. Yes, in the pre-COVID world wars had been increasingly seen as an oddity, but in the abnormal world of lockdowns and masks, they became possible again. Politicians' noble urge to save people from the virus prompted them to break conventional norms, thus opening a window for Shiva.

I will point to another mechanism that has caused the cracks. I will not be original – it is social media. The speed of information dissemination and algorithms that show people what they like create information bubbles – consolidated communities where people's views radicalise. It is this insularity and rigidity of social bubbles that shaped the first characteristic of the SHIVA world – **Split**. The flourishing of social media converged with the stress of the pandemic, and the brittle world cracked.

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Now, let us rise above the present moment and review the history of the past centuries. When did we or our ancestors last meet Shiva? In my opinion, the answer is obvious: in the first half of the XX century. Many historians believe that the two world wars are closely connected: having failed to settle the score in the first one, the countries continued to fight in the second. Mankind got wars, totalitarian regimes, mass repressions on national or class grounds, displacement of peoples, more than 100 million dead – and how many more unborn, how many wounded, how much suffering of those who survived... Shiva danced from 1914 to 1945; one can also extend it to 1949 – for five years after the war, humanity licked its wounds. These were thirty-five years of Shiva's undivided rule, and black swans came so often that nobody cared to count them.

There is an interesting idea that one of the reasons (though not the most important one) for the disasters of the first half of the XX century was the invention of radio, which came to every home. The speed of information dissemination increased many times over, and this is what allowed the formation of totalitarian regimes that were able to manipulate the consciousness of hundreds of millions of people. I remember my grandmother's stories about the radio that was always on. Everyone knew the voices of the presenters (listen to Levitan's hypnotic voice). Radio brought sorrows and joys into the house, completely determining the public mood. If we compare the invention of radio with the social media boom of the present, it is plausible to argue that Shiva comes at a time when the speed of information dissemination makes a leap for which humanity is unprepared.
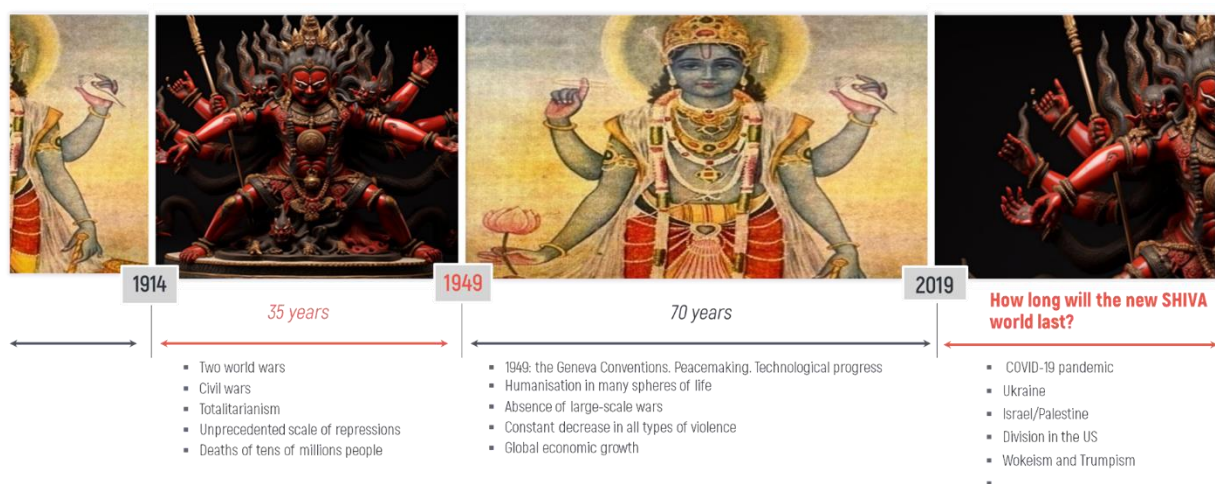
Let us return to the XX century. Did Shiva really usher in a new era in 1914–1945? Let us remember the very beginning of the last century: royal dynasties in Europe, aristocracy, balls, horse-drawn carriages on the city streets, and universal religiosity. In the middle of the century, there were republics, cars, aeroplanes, telephones and radios in every house; kings and princes, counts and barons disappeared, and atheism spread. In 35 years, monarchies collapsed or faded into the background, borders and names of states changed, and decolonisation began apace. The idea of the equality of people and nations took hold of people's minds around the world. These were truly cardinal changes.

The next period was relatively stable, and, most importantly, year after year, decade after decade, people's lives improved while morals became softer. So much so that the already mentioned Steven Pinker declared the beginning of eternal prosperity. This was the era of the god Vishnu, that is, of stability and gradual progression towards prosperity, when black swans came very rarely indeed.

In the 2010s, black swans became more frequent: think Brexit or Donald Trump – but back in 2019, people believed these were accidents. Only with the pandemic in 2020 did a new time begin – an era of change, which, as we know, is an unenviable lot.

Vishnu ruled for exactly 70 years – twice as long as the previous Shiva. How long will the new SHIVA period last? What trials are still ahead of us? Will humanity survive this time? I do not know the answers. But I assume that we are only at the very beginning of a new phase.

The alternation of the Vishnu and Shiva eras

1914	35 years	1949	70 years	2019	How long will the new SHIVA world last?
	▪ Two world wars ▪ Civil wars ▪ Totalitarianism ▪ Unprecedented scale of repressions ▪ Deaths of tens of millions people		▪ 1949: the Geneva Conventions. Peacemaking. Technological progress ▪ Humanisation in many spheres of life ▪ Absence of large-scale wars ▪ Constant decrease in all types of violence ▪ Global economic growth		▪ COVID-19 pandemic ▪ Ukraine ▪ Israel/Palestine ▪ Division in the US ▪ Wokeism and Trumpism ▪ …

Or maybe I am wrong. The world will be in turmoil, which will only be limited to local disasters. I would be glad if that were the case. Still, we, and more importantly,

our children, need to be prepared to live in different circumstances. In times of change dominated by Shiva, we need different strategies.

Part 2. S-matrix. Personal strategies in the SHIVA world

So, given: we are to live in a world where…

1. long-term, medium-term and even short-term forecasting is hindered;

2. frequent catastrophic events happen that no one expects – black swans arrive;

3. the rules of the game are in flux – no one knows what will lead to success in the coming decades;

4. ethical norms are transforming (the past Shiva radically changed the ethics from religious to atheistic and even psychoanalytical; now the shift in the familiar ethics is happening before our eyes as the new "woke" worldview is struggling with conservatism that has radicalised[7]);

5. large numbers of people are suffering (wars have already caused the plight of tens of millions of people).

How can we live in a world like this?

The first intuitively obvious strategy is to freeze and stay still. Wait it out. Preserve what you have. Not to start new projects because it is easy to go bankrupt. Not to change jobs because there is no way of knowing which company will be more sustainable. Not to spend money on travelling or renovations, but save it for a rainy day (although it is unclear how to save it). Not to have children until things stabilise. Limit oneself temporarily. Preserve oneself and one's family. Not to go out of a quiet harbour into a stormy sea, wait until the storm calms down. Let us call this strategy – **Preservation**. It corresponds to the basic instincts of a huge number of people who have caught the scent of Shiva. Sensed it and lay low. It is a sensible strategy. And yet it is sad as it will probably claim the best years of one's life.

The second strategy is the exact opposite of the first. "All large fortunes are ill-gotten" – this phrase is attributed to different people, but what is certain is that this belief is shared by adventurers from all over the world. And they feel that with Shiva, their time has come. At the moment of transition from one way of life to another; at the moment when some rules are no longer working and others are not working yet; at the

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[7] Woke ideology is a set of far-left views encompassing anti-colonialism, equality and multiplicity of genders, justice for people of colour and indigenous people, etc. "Woke" is a slang term derived from the verb "to wake up.".

moment of wars and chaos, it is possible to go into another orbit: to build wealth, to jump not steps but a whole flight of stairs in a career, or to seize power. There are people – few of them – who are active, enterprising and courageous, and many also unscrupulous enough to take advantage of Shiva's opportunities. In the previous Vishnu era, there were far fewer such opportunities. Let us call this strategy **Adventurism**. Are these people always unprincipled? Can adventurism be ethical? I think so. However, the passions that motivate these people quite often drive them beyond the boundaries of conventional morality. Adventurers become the very demons that accompany Shiva and exacerbate chaos and destruction during times of change.

Both of these strategies, **Preservation** and **Adventurism**, are self-centred. One thinks about oneself and closest people: how to preserve the well-being (one's own one's family's) or increase it. However, Shiva also evokes strategies focused on others. The sheer amount of suffering and injustice causes a desire to help.

Uncertainty, coupled with a sense of impending disaster, calls for people who try to fill the ideological vacuum and offer ways of salvation. Let us combine these strategies and label them **Calling**. In essence, we are talking about a kind of missionaries. People may hold different, including opposite, political views, but what they have in common is that in difficult times, they choose to help others, to organise a movement to save humanity (or a country or any other community), as they see it. Among them, there are both leaders of social movements and their rank and file. They may go to the front, help the wounded, raise money for social projects, organise demonstrations, fight for the environment and minority rights, or engage in opposition

politics. In all cases, these are people driven by large-scale ideas in which they believe and which are centred on others rather than themselves.

An important premise of such ideas is the desire to change the status quo: people of **Calling** fight against the god Shiva as they try to interrupt his dance or compensate for its destructive consequences. In reality, however, their activity often becomes another dance that, despite their good intentions, increases, alongside endeavours of adventurers, contradictions and chaos in the world.

Now let us identify the most common strategy – **Adaptation**. Not to freeze, not to start adventurous projects, not to save anyone, but to adapt to the new times. What does this require? Joining the mainstream. The best way to adapt is to be with the majority and act like it. To emigrate with everyone else or join them in supporting the regime. The collective that people join can be anything. But in all cases, it is a community-focused strategy, and it implies synchronising with the social trend rather than trying to change it.

These four strategies form a matrix:

|	Focus on oneself	Focus on others
Change	1. **Adventurism** — reject limitations, take a risk to win • Emigrate • High-yield but high-risk projects • Create or take over a business • Rise to power	2. **Calling** — quest – to change the world and challenge Shiva • Save people • Stop evil • Social projects • Socio-political activities
Preserve	3. **Preservation** — freeze and wait • Be frugal • Avoid large expenses (apartment, car, etc.) • Save money • Avoid marriage • Have no children	4. **Adaptation** — find your place in the new world • Support the mainstream • Find your community and become a part of it/integrate into it further • Find a socially approved vocation

One dimension is the focus on oneself or others, and another one is conservation and dissolving into the mainstream or resistance to it. Self-centredness and conservation form **Preservation**: hiding. Proactive focus on others is **Calling**:

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essentially missionary work, a bold, though often hopeless, attempt to change the world and resist the destruction that Shiva brings. The proactive focus on the self is the courage of the **adventurers**. And, finally, the focus on others, coupled with the urge to preserve, is the desire to find salvation from the storm within a community – to **adapt** and survive turbulent times together, which is much easier than doing it alone.

The two-by-two matrix suggests that the number of strategies is limited to four. However, if we take a look around, we find another common strategy. The SHIVA world affects many people, but still not everyone. My father is a philosopher, he works on methodology, writes books, and teaches students. His wife was once asked how he felt about Perestroika and the 1990s. She replied, "He didn't notice them." And it is true: he was fortunate to be so busy with his philosophical pursuits that he didn't notice much change in the country. He was doubly lucky: he had not only a distracting and all-consuming occupation but also a stable income that had not decreased enough to force him to pay attention to the reality around him; no rockets hit his house, he did not become a refugee, his wife could always buy food. Passionate about philosophy, my father didn't care much about watershed historical events. Some people can "slip" between the many arms of Shiva without noticing them. Let us call this strategy **Stability** and add it to the matrix as the third dimension.

In its final form, the matrix of personal strategies for living in turbulent SHIVA times, the S-matrix, is as follows:

S-matrix
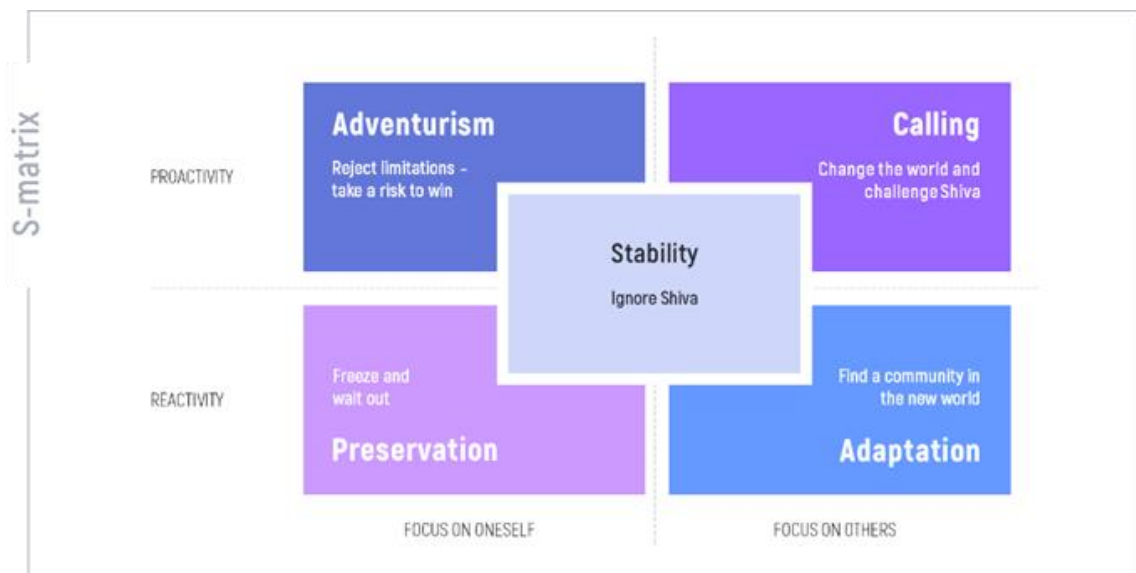
All five strategies can be effective in helping one to survive turbulent times by realising their values. Even **Preservation**, the saddest scenario, can prove to be very useful. However, every scenario has its flip side. Saving the detailed discussion of

constructive and destructive variations of these scenarios for my book, I will now only outline a few versions. The **Preservation** strategy is reasonable when the risks of inaction are lower than those of action. However, there are people who, gripped by uncontrollable anxiety, continue to hide when it is obvious that they will be found. In this case, **Preservation** turns into catatonia: the inability to move even when necessary – and this is a destructive scenario. **Adventurism** is good when one is able to control the risks and stop on the edge. Otherwise, it can become a form of suicide. Moreover, extremely unpleasant is **Adventurism** mixed with cynicism and devoid of any dignity. **Stability** – the denial of Shiva – works as long as the disaster does not directly affect the person. Otherwise, it leads to a life of illusion – many such cases of descending into madness have been described. **Adaptation** is an extremely useful scenario, but when does it turn into criminal conformity? This question has been much discussed in relation to the compliance of ordinary Germans in the crimes of the Nazi regime.[8] And even the most sympathetic strategy of **Calling** can deteriorate into senseless and merciless fanaticism.[9]

The most destructive scenario, however, is to rush between strategies. One day, you join a society to save someone (**Calling**); the next day – you lock yourself at home, ridden with fear (**Preservation**), and after that, you buy a plane ticket to flee the country with the others (**Adaptation**) only to return a month later, convinced now that you had overreacted (**Stability**).[10] The only way to avoid this is to have a conscious approach – and that is what the title of this article is about.

Now, let us invigorate the schematic versions of these strategies with some examples. Imagine a small provincial town that happens to be close to a war zone. Gardens used to bloom there in summer, girls used to walk the streets in short skirts, and action and romantic movies were on in cinemas. But now an action movie has become a reality show: shelling began, people learned where bomb shelters were,

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[8] See, for example: Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil* (London: Faber & Faber, 1963).

[9] […] Don't fear prison or beggary,
Don't fear plague or hunger,
But only fear the one
Who will say "I know what to do!"
Who will say "Follow me!
I will teach you what to do!"

And fawning on everyone,
And pledging in love,
He will plough the earth with steel
And drown it in blood."
(Aleksandr Galich)

[10] "If you are lying, keep lying; if you are seated, remain seated; if you are walking, keep walking; most importantly, don't rush about in vain." (Zen wisdom)

concrete covers were put up at bus stops, many businesses closed, and many men were mobilised or volunteered for the war. Shiva reigns.

Andrei, 45 years old, lost his job. He decided not to search for a new one, and neither did he become a contracted soldier. Instead, he went to the countryside where he had a garden plot, gathered food supplies in his basement, minimised his needs and so hoped to wait out the war. His strategy is **Preservation**.

Nikolai, 33, started assembling drones in his garage. He travelled to China and signed a contract with a firm that supplied him with components. He reached out to the military and negotiated a good price. Then, he joined the army and quickly rose through the ranks. At his own risk, without the permission of his superior officer, he organised a raid behind enemy lines. He was noticed at the very top, moved to the capital and received an important position. Before the war, he was a simple engineer, today, he is a top-level official and a billionaire. His strategy is **Adventurism**.

Sveta, 25, started working in a hospital as a nurse, treating the wounded. She set up a workshop to make bandages, but not for profit – the workshop does not bring her any money. Together with her team, Sveta works around the clock to alleviate the suffering of soldiers. Her strategy is **Calling**.

Petr works in the city council. The nature of his work has not changed. But he now spends increasingly more time in the office. Petr's relationship with his team has changed. In the past, he kept his distance from his colleagues, but now he feels a part of the team, he roots for its successes and takes part in new projects. His strategy is **Adaptation**.

And finally, Grigory. He teaches literature at school. More than anything else, he loves to read ancient literature. He knows everything about the war that ended three thousand years ago – and nothing about today. Gregory keeps reading ancient books and does not follow the news. His strategy is **Stability**.

How frequent is each strategy? I only have the data from a small study "Sociology of Global Presentiments," that Mikhail Balakshin and I conducted among managers who are capable of reflection and aspire for self-development. We asked a direct self-assessment question: "What personal strategy do you choose?" We understand that the strategies are not equally appealing, which means that the data is probably skewed by the social desirability bias, that is, people's desire to look good both in their own eyes and in the eyes of researchers. I assume that people overestimate the role of the **Calling** strategy in their lives because they perceive it as noble and the **Adventurism** strategy because it appears to be romantic. People may find other strategies less attractive. The **Preservation** strategy is likely to be particularly underrepresented as few people would be willing to admit to it. A more in-

depth study of the prevalence of these strategies should be conducted using indirect questions. Now, with all the caveats in mind, let us take a look at the data:

The prevalence of the S-matrix strategies

	Focus on oneself	Focus on others
Change	**Adventurism** **16%** ↓	**Calling** **18%** ↓
	Stability **24%** ↑	
Preserve	**Preservation** **10%** ↑	**Adaptation** **32%** ↑

The arrows indicate my assumptions about whether the real prevalence of a certain strategy would be higher or lower than the given figure if we eliminated the social desirability bias. But even without adjusting the data, we can see that the most common strategies are **Adaptation** and **Stability**.

The survey also revealed the following trends:

1. **Adventurism** decreases with age and **Calling** increases (which is only logical).

2. Women more often choose **Adaptation** and **Calling**, while men, **Stability**.

3. Emigrants more often choose **Stability** and **Adventurism** (the latter is logical, and the former is probably a coping mechanism – "nothing has changed," – although for emigrants, life has obviously changed a lot).

4. Residents of Western countries choose **Calling** slightly more often.

5. Residents of Russia choose **Adaptation** slightly more often.

6. Civil servants more often choose **Adaptation**, entrepreneurs, **Adventurism** (this is quite logical), and teachers, **Stability** and **Calling**.

Part 3. Applying S-matrix to business and HR strategies

The model I propose provides a new perspective on many management issues. I will further outline only a few possible applications of this model.

Business strategies in the SHIVA world

There is a traditional analytical approach to developing a business strategy: analyse the market and all the factors at play, do a SWOT analysis or look at Porter's five forces and, based on this research, select strategic products and target markets. You can, for example, hire McKinsey to conduct such research and present the strategy in a long document with numerous tables and graphs.

In recent years, the approach to strategising has been changing significantly. It now takes into account the increasing uncertainty of the world and the tremendous speed of technological development. The new approach is based on two key elements: analysing customers' grievances and experimentation. Instead of extensive analytical work, the suggestion is to go to actual or potential customers and ask them what ails them. Then, based on their needs, quickly create a prototype of a new product to offer to the customers. Often, they will turn their noses up at it, but without clinging to your initial idea, you need to rebuild or reinvent your product and then test it again. This is flexible strategising based on constant contact with the customer and experimentation. It also prompts to approach larger tasks, such as developing new markets and opening new businesses, in a similar way.

There has always been a third, visionary approach: to "see" the future without McKinsey, without deep analytics, without experimentation, and to create a visionary product, unheard of and not based on any clients' existing ailments. It means not to follow the market but to shape it, which, of course, is rarely successful and most often fails. We all know successful visionaries, such as Steve Jobs or Elon Musk.

Let us now take a look at these approaches with the SHIVA reality in mind.

Analytical strategising works very poorly today. It suggests that the market is quite stable, and its development can be predicted in the long term. With the advent of Shiva and the acceleration of technology development, this approach can only be used by businesses with a very long investment cycle (when, for example, you need to model the return on a new factory) – for most companies, it no longer works.

Experimentation, based on studying customers' ailments and constantly collecting and analysing feedback is an approach certainly better suited to the new
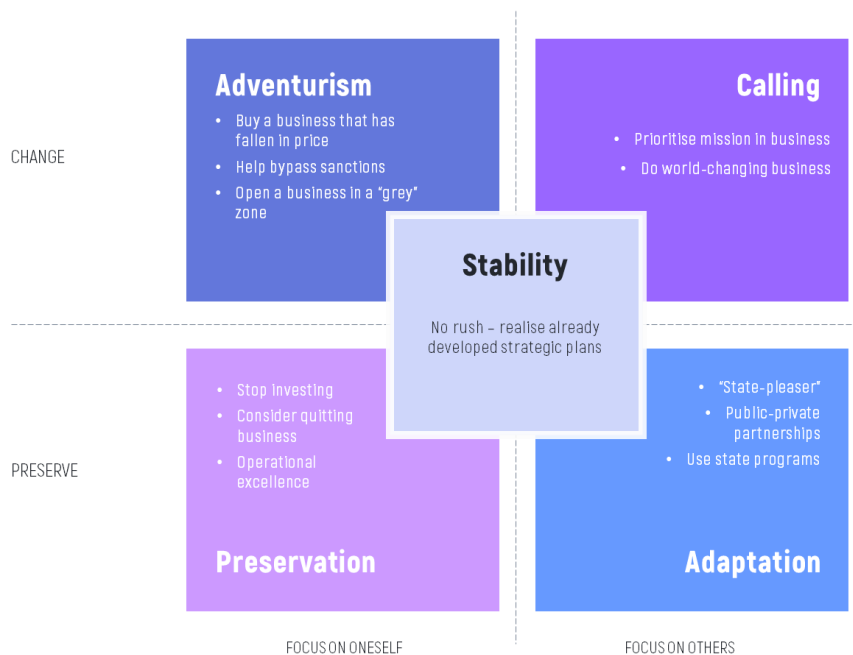
era: the time horizon is shrinking, and we are taking small steps to find what the customer needs here and now.

The visionary approach always works, but there are few real visionaries. And of those who are, many are insane or are believed to be insane because they happen to be wrong in their vision.

All three approaches do not take into account the most important feature of the SHIVA world: in times of change, familiar reference points disappear, and matters of value become more acute.

Shiva reveals and brings to the surface core personal traits and values that would otherwise remain hidden. This applies directly to business leaders. Therefore, I argue that *in times of SHIVA, business strategy becomes a personal matter.* What do I mean by this? The possibility to approach business development rationally (first of all, analytically) is diminishing, and the importance of personal factors and values is soaring. Business strategies become personal – and they correlate with the five responses to Shiva described above. If the owner is an **Adventurer** by nature, it is likely that in times of SHIVA, his business strategy will be adventurous, a combination of experimentation and the visionary approach. If the owner is a Missionary (the **Calling** strategy), the company will engage in social business, perhaps sacrificing profits; this approach could be called a "value-based visionary approach." Many businessmen choose the **Preservation** strategy for their enterprises: they reduce investments and focus on improving operational efficiency – and this is primarily determined by their psychological traits, which translate into the business strategy. Finally, some people try to run their businesses in the **Stability** paradigm to the last, ignoring the turbulence and implementing those long-term plans that were developed in quiet times.

S-matrix. Business strategies

Adventurism	Calling
• Buy a business that has fallen in price • Help bypass sanctions • Open a business in a "grey" zone	• Prioritise mission in business • Do world-changing business

CHANGE

Stability

No rush – realise already developed strategic plans

Preservation	Adaptation
• Stop investing • Consider quitting business • Operational excellence	• "State-pleaser" • Public-private partnerships • Use state programs

PRESERVE

FOCUS ON ONESELF · FOCUS ON OTHERS

Which of these approaches is the right one? Which one will better help you to retain and grow your business? The answer to these questions does not exist. In SHIVA times, strategising becomes a personal matter, that is, psychological and value-driven. To choose the right business strategy, you need to reflect and become aware of the core characteristics of your nature, your personality traits and your values. The S-matrix can help with this, among other things.

The optimal approach to business strategy development today appears to be:

1. Start with a personal strategy session for the business leader, which will help him/her to reflect on his/her values and choose a personal strategy for the period of turbulence (including using the S-matrix for self-assessment).

2. Analyse the strengths and weaknesses of the company and the market based on the chosen personal strategy (how to minimise risks if one's personal strategy is **Preservation**, or what business initiatives have a chance of success if one's personal strategy is **Adventurism**).

3. Outline the principles of business development (they will depend heavily on the S-matrix strategy) and a set of experiments – initiatives that the company will launch in the initial period to test its opportunities within the selected principles.

4. Finally, of course, agree on all this with the team.

Leader's competencies in the SHIVA world

In recent years, the concept of competencies has been increasingly criticised because it does not accurately predict a manager's performance, although it was originally designed for it. Pavel Bezruchko, my colleague and managing partner of ECOPSY, has proposed an alternative: to assess not competencies or behaviours but roles – the performance of a set of related tasks. The most important advantage of the role-based approach is the stability of the set of roles, as it does not depend on either the circumstances or the strategy chosen by the company. At any time and in any company, a top manager must fulfil the roles of Corporate Strategist and Politician, and a line manager the roles of Organiser of Work, Agent of Change and Team Leader.[11] It is the ability to fulfil these roles that determines the success of a manager, and therefore, it makes sense to primarily base the assessment on them.

Competencies are the behaviour patterns that lead to success. In essence, they define a manager's style in fulfilling roles. Each CEO will fulfil the role of Corporate Strategist differently depending on whether he/she has developed the competencies of "Analytical Thinking" or "Value-based Leadership" – he/she will lead the company to different strategies. The success of the style, however, largely depends on both the circumstances and the strategy.

In stable times, a good Corporate Strategist will have well-developed analytical competencies, while in the SHIVA period, a manager with "Value-based Leadership" competence will be more successful in this role. To an even greater extent, the competencies depend on the chosen strategy: managers in companies implementing the **Adventurism** and **Preservation** strategies need to adopt completely different behaviours. All roles should be performed differently depending on the chosen strategies of the S-matrix.

Such great variability of competencies renders it more difficult to develop a universal profile. A universal competence profile does not take into account either circumstances or strategy, and therefore, cannot accurately predict the effectiveness of a manager in a particular company and at a particular moment in time. What would be the solution? I have already mentioned the first one – it is to switch to assessing roles that are truly universal. The second is to assess, in addition to roles, those competencies that are relevant to the SHIVA era and the chosen strategy.

A first outline of the competence model based on the S-matrix is presented in the table.

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[11] Further read in: https://www.ecopsy.ru/insights/otsenka-po-rolyam-alternativa-kompetentnostnomu-podkhodu/?sphrase_id=1091365

S-matrix. Competencies
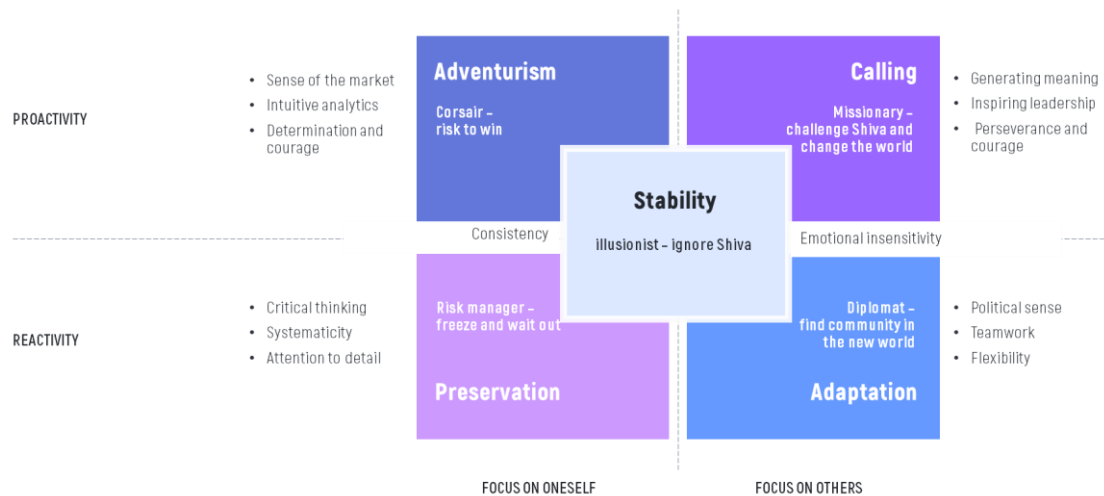
Epilogue

In turbulent times, many traditional approaches to management change. In this article, I have only made the first step in describing tools that help us to reflect on and design our personal strategy as well as business and HR strategies in the new era. If I were to distil the main message of the proposed approach, it comes down to four points:

1. Turbulent times have come – and for long.

2. Now is the time to think and choose your path anew. Effective SHIVA-world strategies are very different from those that worked in times of stability.

3. There is no universal successful life model for the SHIVA era. There are several significantly different options described in the S-matrix.

4. In the coming years, the direction of the business will be determined more than usual by the values and personality of its leader.

The choice of personal and business strategies is not entirely rational, so it is not entirely within our power. There are instincts at work here, as well as messages from our grandparents who lived in the previous SHIVA era. The time of change has just begun, and I think for most of us, the final self-determination is still ahead. I would like this choice to be, as much as possible, if not rational, then at least informed. The concept outlined in this article is there to help you.