

The CULTURAL and POLITICAL CHARACTERISTICS of RUSSIANS and UKRAINIANS

Yves Perriard – June 2025

As Christians, are we obliged to identify the sinful characteristics of our own nation? I believe we are. Although Paul was ready to die for his own people, he never backed off to tell them what was wrong with them. And he did not stop with one nation. For instance, he said of the Cretans that they were always liars, evil brutes and lazy gluttons. When we see sinful patterns in a nation, it does not mean that everybody is like this nor that we do not love that nation. On the contrary, it means that we want to better understand which sins hurt and destroy them, and as such we can better minister to them. For instance if you study the letter to Titus, you see specific instructions that had to do with the negative national characteristics of Cretans.

In other words, if you want to better love Slavic people, you should not only know their positive sides, but their negative ones as well!

So, what are the common cultural characteristics and differences of Russians and Ukrainians? Russians and Ukrainians have in common a deep longing for freedom and order, but they differ on how to obtain them.

At the very core of their identity Ukrainians cannot really work well together as they all want to be **free Cossacks who are independent from each other. As a result there is a lot of disunity, endemic corruption and total chaos.** As Ukrainians cherish freedom over anything else, they will not seek for one tsar among them, but an outside Protector who will defend their freedom. Already 3 centuries ago Voltaire wrote that “Ukraine had always aspired to libertyand was obliged to choose a protector, and consequently a master.” This historical cycle of protection and oppression has been going on for centuries. Three years ago the Ukrainians rejected their Russian Protector and now they have their hopes set on a new one, the Western world, the EU or America. In a few years they will reject that Savior-Master and look for another.

Russians, unlike Ukrainians, are strongly attracted to the kind of forceful and controlling leader who centralizes everything and everyone around him. For them this is the only way to make things happen. With this style of authoritative leadership comes the rule of law, some stability and a sense of national pride. Eventually, as internal opposition grows and civil liberties decrease, the regime becomes more and more totalitarian. After a few generations the people can no more take it, and they overthrow everything with a revolution. This historical cycle of control and uprisings can be observed with the tsars, the communists and one day it will happen again with the present regime.

Ukrainians, for their love of freedom, will tolerate a huge amount of chaos, chose an outside protector, and they will end up being oppressed by this outsider.

Russians, for their love of order, will chose their own tsar, tolerate increasing control, and they will end up in dictatorship.

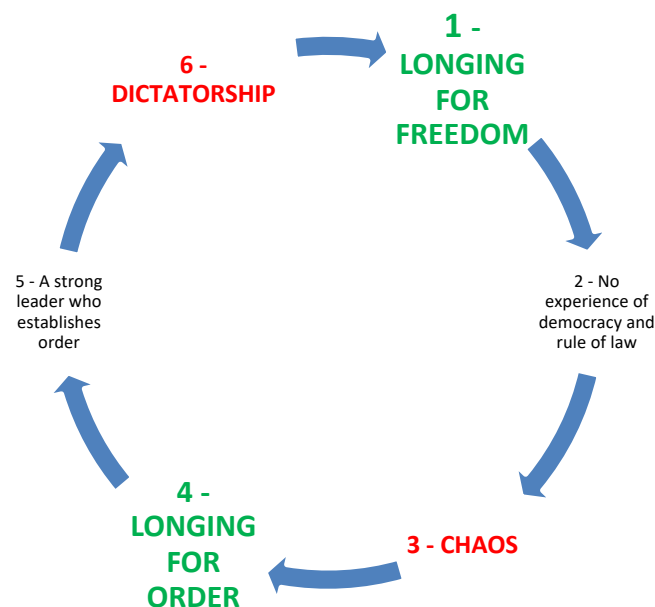
Years ago, in Kiev, those two world views clashed against each other and are fully revealed in the present conflict. Russians see only one way to restore order and stability in Ukraine and that is through geo-political control. Ukrainians see only one way to have freedom and that is through a western Protector.

In other word, don't naïvely believe that all of this has to do with politics. It has to do with the very soul and spirit of those nations. So let us see this more in detail:

What is the cultural pattern of Russians?

Aggressive Control !

Russians, for the sake of order, will chose one tsar, tolerate increasing control, and end up in dictatorship



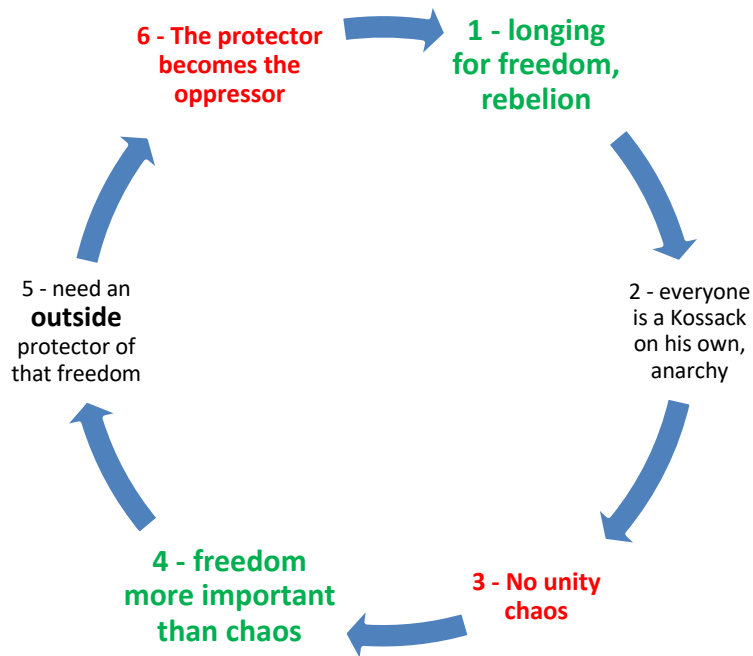
Explanation of the above diagram about the Russians:

- 1) Russians can no longer bear any form of oppression: they make a revolution in order to have freedom and democracy, and they open themselves to Western ideologies and influences (the revolutions of 1825, 1905, 1917 and 1991).
- 2) They set themselves free but have absolutely no historical experience of democracy and working well together because all they have ever known is decades of oppression and mutual distrust.
- 3) As a result, their freedom quickly ends up in chaos, anarchy and lawlessness (for instance the years before and right after the communist revolution or the years with Boris Yeltsin).
- 4) As a result of disunity, Russians long to be united under tsar, one nation and even one religion. They desperately want a very forceful and controlling leader, because in that culture this is the only way to turn things around.
- 5) That strong leader centralizes everything around him, he brings order and the rule of law, and he grows in popularity and authority. For instance Putin has brought socio-economic stability, a sense of security and strong national pride and most people like him. But with more bread comes less freedom: democracy slowly shrinks, they revert back to pro-Russian and therefore anti-western ideologies, the army is strengthened, and Russians feel emboldened to control and attack their neighbors. This pattern started since Peter the Great, the communists only expressed it with a different ideology, and Putin only revived it. There is absolutely nothing new under the Russian sun.
- 6) Eventually control all ends up in dictatorship. "It is much safer to be feared than to be loved" Machiavelli wrote, an observation that the Russian leader and generations of his predecessors have taken to heart. At the present stage most Russians do not perceive this as a danger, and in fact they welcome it as they connect political control with economic stability. Eventually, as internal opposition grows and civil liberties decrease, the government becomes more and more totalitarian. This is the historical model they inherited after centuries of despotic rule under the Tatar Mongol, the tsars and the communists. Finally, within one or two generations, Russians cannot any more tolerate too much control and they overthrow everything through a revolution. The cycle starts all over again back at #1.

What is the cultural pattern of Ukrainian?

Chaos and Freedom !

Ukrainians, for the sake of freedom, will keep on tolerating chaos, chose an outside protector, and end up being oppressed.



- 1) Ukrainians can no longer tolerate an outside influence, they rebel and become completely united in their fight (the countless uprisings over the centuries, and of course the last one, the Maidan protest in Kiev)
- 2) They cannot work well together as they deeply prefer being the free Cossacks who are all independent from each other.
- 3) With such a lack of unity they have chaos, anarchy and rampant corruption. This has been the socio-economic and political pattern of the last 30 years.

- 4) As Ukrainians prefer freedom over anything else, they will not seek for one tsar among them
- 5) So they will seek an outside Protector to defend their freedom. Already 3 centuries ago Voltaire wrote that “Ukraine had always aspired to libertyand was obliged to choose a protector, and consequently a master.” For the last few centuries Ukrainians had Russians, Polish, Lithuanians or other nations as their friendly Protectors or despotic Master, depending on how they behaved.
- 6) Years ago Ukrainians did not want the increasing political and economic control of Moscow. They feared they would lose their freedom, so they decided to exchange their Russian Protector for the EU and the western world. As a result, the former Protector became the Oppressor, and it took Crimea and East Ukraine. Ukrainians united against the outsider, and we are all back to #1 with a revolt.

In conclusion:

To have enough bread, Russians will choose a strong control even if they have less freedom. As a result they will choose a tsar among them who will bring them stability and less civic liberties. To have enough freedom, Ukrainians on the contrary will prefer a lack of political control even if they have less bread. As a result they will choose themselves an outside Protector who will eventually end up oppressing them.

Of course those two cultural patterns are a bit exaggerated, and they are more diffused as both nations have mutually influenced each other for centuries. For instance many Ukrainians desire the order of the Russians and many Russians long for the freedom of the Ukrainians. And Ukraine itself is more fragmented as its eastern and southern regions have a strong influence of the Russian cultural pattern. This in part explains the easy annexation of Crimea as well as the ongoing conflict. But the overall characteristics tend to prevail.

What should be the political solution?

Any Russian leader should carefully choose very loyal and competent regional leaders and very slowly delegate their authority to them. For a few years they should train them to become very effective in their own regions AND train them as well to work together for the common interest of the nation. Over time this pattern of unified pluralism would show to Russians that democracy is really possible. And it would give them a pool of capable leaders they can choose from. Now, it should be strongly emphasized that delegation should be made very gradually. If a lot of freedom and authority is given too quickly, a lot of chaos and corruption follows, as the

past examples under Yeltsin have proven it. But if on the contrary, there is not a clear plan to progressively delegate power, most Russians will keep on believing that the only viable political pattern is to have only ONE tsar.

Ukraine should on the contrary imitate what Russia does, at least initially. There should be one strong leader together with a unified group of leaders, who come to a consensus and takes full control of the nation. They should centralize everything around their vision and forcefully impose every change in the country. At the present stage this is the ONLY way to tackle effectively the huge problems of endemic corruption, oligarchy and internal divisions that continually destroy the country from within. Over time they will have to decentralize but initially control and centralization are the only solutions.

What should be the spiritual model for the Slavic world?

What I propose is the biblical blueprint that is demonstrated in the New Testament. Apostles and evangelists, whenever they started a church had a high degree of control over their congregations, but over time they released it to the local leaders they appointed, and then they went on. Practically it means the following:

In the early stage, church leaders should be very forceful and controlling, as it is the only way to start and establish anything in the Slavic culture. In the later stage they should progressively trust and train leaders so that they can fully delegate their authority to them.

Their goal is to leave behind them a collegial form of church government where strong leaders can all work well together. This is the leadership model that the Church should give to the Slavic world, and by the way it is the best platform that would foster pluralism and democracy within a society.