

The 10 Cultural Traits of Most Russians

Yves Perriard — June 2025

As Christians, we must love our nation while also clearly recognizing its sinful aspects. For instance, Paul was willing to die for his own people but never hesitated to point out their flaws. He didn't limit his criticism to one nation. For example, he called the Cretans liars, evil brutes, and lazy gluttons.

Recognizing sinful patterns in a nation doesn't imply that everyone shares those characteristics or that we don't love them. It means we want to understand which sins cause harm and destruction, enabling us to better minister to them. (For instance, the letter to Titus begins by highlighting the negative national traits of the Cretans, allowing Titus to effectively minister to them.)

So, let us love Russians and simultaneously identify what hurts and destroys them!

It must be immediately said that most Russians are well known for their **strong family values, very warm and generous hospitality, rich artistic heritage, deep respect for education, unbelievable resilience, and strong sense of community**. These qualities have allowed Russian culture to flourish in music, literature, and science despite centuries of hardship.

But at the same time they have negative aspects that you will rarely—if ever—find addressed publicly, and certainly not on the internet:

10 Negative Socio-Political and Psychological Generalizations About Russians:

I must immediately emphasize that despite the patterns mentioned below, Russia has the unexplainable paradox of millions of wonderful exceptions, which for the most part suffered persecution, jail, or exile (think of most writers like Dostoevsky or most political or religious dissidents). As Dimitry Likhachov said about his own people, *"Russians can only be explained through their extremism."*

1. Russians feel good and strong when they can aggressively control others

It is in their DNA and you see this desire for control today at every level of their society, whether it is parents with their grown-up children, bosses with employees, government with their citizens, or even pastors with their churches! Russians never had a time in their history

when they experienced genuine freedom and democracy. All they had is centuries of mutual oppression (They abolished serfdom only in 1861!)

In other words, the only political and psychological model they have is control. So the idea that Ukraine could choose a different path, outside of the political control of the big brother, is totally foreign to them.

It is difficult for Russians to think in terms of "win-win" (win-win means: "you are strong, we are strong, we can treat each other as equals, make compromises and everyone is a winner"). In Russia, you only win if the other one loses. Most relationships have to do with asserting your domination and control, whether in businesses, politics, or even in churches where most pastors are highly controlling.

No one said it better than Dostoevsky:

In his masterpiece, *The Brothers Karamazov*, he clearly defines the underlying rationale for the mental despotism that has for centuries burdened the Russian people. In the famous chapter, *The Grand Inquisitor*, the middle brother, Ivan, relates an allegory he has written, set during the Spanish Inquisition, in which Jesus has returned to earth and is immediately imprisoned for bringing a dead girl back to life. The wizened Grand Inquisitor lectures the silent Jesus on the folly of freedom and individual choice and says to him, *"There are three forces, the only forces that are able to conquer and hold captive forever the conscience of these weak rebels [the people] for their own happiness—these forces are: miracle, mystery, and authority."*

These three things are generic to the traditional Russian character: the idea that good, if any, will come from some unexpected outside source (*miracle*); that man is not ordained to be responsible for his own welfare and progress (*mystery*); and that guidance and protection come only from constant dependence on and obedience to someone else (*authority*).

In other words, for Russians, authority is never shared, as the following joke illustrates it so well: Two sailors, one a Russian and the other Ukrainian, were walking down the street in Sevastopol and on the sidewalk they find a ten-dollar bill. The Russian says, "Great, let's share this like brothers." The Ukrainian however says, "No, let's split it 50/50."

Their Aggression is a mask for Insecurity: This need for control stems from an internal insecurity. For many Russians, controlling others is the only way they can feel secure, as their history has taught them that only through dominance can they feel stability. Aggression is often a way of hiding their fear and vulnerability, allowing them to project strength while masking their inner uncertainties.

2. Russians only understand the language of force and intimidation.

Similar to Arabs, Russians only respect strength. They absolutely do not respect the language of win-win and mutual compromise. It is only when your opponent is on his knees that you can

start to negotiate, doing this before is showing yourself to be weak. Therefore, the idea that Ukraine can have its share of the cake, we have ours, and everyone is happy is totally foreign to them. This is why this war was inevitable.

3. Russians have an insatiable psychological need for imperial conquest

Nina Khrushchev, the very granddaughter of Nikita Khrushchev had incredible insights when she said the following:

"Putin believes he is righting historical wrongs. Gorbachev collapsed the Soviet Union, and Putin is painstakingly putting it back together to have a greater country."

Why did Putin say that the demise of the Soviet Union was the biggest geo-political catastrophe of the 20th century? Why would the largest and potentially richest country on earth constantly attack ALL their neighbors? Because Russians only feel great as a nation when they can be huge and dominating. In other words, the invasion to Ukraine had nothing to do with its land or resources; it was about the glory and the greatness of Russia!

Over the past century, every country bordering Russia has been invaded and occupied, with not a single exception to this pattern. Consider the experiences of the Finns, Baltic countries, Poles, Czechs, Hungarians, Ukrainians, Georgians, Chechens, and even the Japanese. All of them have been attacked by Russia! This is why these nations swiftly sought to join NATO, recognizing the urgent need for protection against a powerful bully. For these small nations, it's a matter of existential threat, while for Russians, it's a setback because they can no longer attack them without risking retaliation from the alliance.

This also explains why the Russians constantly bring up historical grievances to justify their aggressive imperialism. Russia must portray itself as an innocent victim to evade the consequences of its actions and maintain a sense of moral superiority.

4. Centralised Nationalism Is the Only Way Russians Can Preserve Unity

The Russian national tendency toward unity and strong group behavior has been deeply ingrained throughout history, where the idea of a single, unified nation was often tied to a singular religious and cultural identity. Tsar Alexander III epitomized this view, famously declaring:

"Russia can only have one faith, one Tsar, and one people."

This mindset of national homogeneity has led to suppression of diversity and intolerance of dissenting views. Throughout history, Russia has sought to consolidate its people and power under a unified Russian Orthodox identity, often to the detriment of its minorities and

neighboring nations. For example, the Soviet Union attempted to blend different ethnic groups under a communist ideology, but it also led to the forced assimilation of non-Russian cultures and languages, with religion being heavily controlled.

The notion that "one people" must be unified under one banner, whether political or religious, has often been a source of domination and oppression in Russia. The idea of strong group behavior has been central to this pursuit, leading to authoritarian regimes that enforce conformity through both political power and religious doctrine.

5. Russians easily and gladly submit to forceful and controlling leaders

This is in their DNA and their history. Since Putin has brought some economic prosperity and restored national pride after the disastrous chaos of the 90's, they are more than willing to follow him at any price. Whatever he says, they will blindly trust him.

(But this heavy control will not last too long. Eventually, most Russians will no longer be able to tolerate it, and then they will be ready to make a revolution again. This time the different regions of Russia will want far more autonomy, instead of the heavy centralization towards Moscow. I predict this will happen within the next 20–30 years).

Additionally, the love and hate for their leaders have led to significant suppressed individuality. This constant submission to controlling leaders is linked to a long tradition of suppressing individual thought and expression. From childhood, Russians are conditioned to follow orders and not question authority, until they can no longer endure it.

This explains why Russians repeatedly experience a historical cycle of 2-3 generations of oppression followed by a revolution that grants them a few years of freedom and chaos. During this brief period, they seek strong leaders to escape their social chaos, and once they find one, they fall back into the same pattern of oppression. This cycle is exemplified by the revolutions of the Decembrists, 1905/1917, and 1991.

6. Russians refuse to learn anything painful from their past, on the contrary, they constantly idealize it.

Chekhov, the Russian writer already said a century ago: *"Russians adore the past, detest the present, and fear the future."*

Or as Nina Khrushcheva, the niece of Nikita Khrushchev, said: *"Russians never learn from the past, they just repeat it. History for Russia is not a teacher, but a haunting ghost."*

She says later on: *"Russia doesn't learn. It doesn't repent. It doesn't apologize. It doesn't move forward because all of it is wrapped up in the past".*

Just read the schoolbooks of today: they see nothing fundamentally evil with the Tsarist regime, the Soviet Union, or even with Stalin! On the contrary, they want to restore the “greatness” of those regimes, which partially explains why they wanted to invade Ukraine.

7. More than half of the Russians have an addiction to alcohol

Alcoholism in Russia is connected to emotional repression. In a society where there is so much suffering, alcohol becomes a way to numb and avoid dealing with emotional pain. This repression leads to a society where many struggle with unresolved feelings, often manifesting in behaviors like blame-shifting and denial.

This damning fact, which has plagued Russian society for centuries, explains why Russians so easily accuse their own leaders and other countries for their own problems instead of taking responsibility for themselves (Denial and blame-shifting are the hallmarks of alcoholics).

Additionally, alcohol easily explains the “DARVO” behavior typical of most alcoholics. (Deny, Attack and Reverse Victim and Offender). Just hear how most Russians explain their situation today: they have never done anything wrong with Ukraine, instead, they are the innocent victims and the whole world is to be blamed.

8. The difference between truth and lies is never clear and always dangerous

In Russia, seeking and proclaiming the truth has always been dangerous. Under the tsars, it meant exile, under the communists—death, and under Putin—prison. If you add to all this alcoholism, where reality is always denied, you create the Russian world where lies, deceit, and half-truths all perfectly coexist.

This situation has led to a society characterized by high distrust of others and low social trust. The absence of truth in Russian society fosters distrust, as people become cautious about trusting anyone when truth is frequently manipulated or concealed, making it difficult to discern what is genuine.

Additionally, this lack of truth normalizes corruption. In an environment where honesty is rare and the government cannot provide any guarantees of protection, bribery, nepotism, and double standards thrive. In other words, the only way to do business is through personal connections.

9. No other country has suffered more than Russia! This explains their deep insecurities and fatalism

There is no other country on earth and in history that has proportionally suffered so much at the hands of its own leader. In other words, the worst enemies of the Russians are the Russians themselves. An estimated 80 to 100 million lives were lost during the 70 years of Soviet oppression. This history has made Russians highly resistant to suffering, unfortunately leading to a perception that human life is undervalued. This perception has resulted in similar treatment towards each other and towards other nations.

This mindset has also fostered extreme pessimism among most Russians, who feel powerless and fatalistic about changing their circumstances. Consequently, this learned helplessness may contribute to violent or oppressive behavior, as they perceive themselves as having no control over their situations.

10. Russians tend to take everything to the extremes

Their famous academician Dimitry Likhachov said that *“Russians can only be explained through their extremism.”*

If they make a revolution, they destroy everything good that was before. If they drink, it has to be until they are dead drunk. If they love, they idolize. If they hate, they dehumanize. If they follow a leader, they worship him. This national temperament leans toward absolutes, not balance.

Conclusion:

The Russian character is a deep paradox. This is why Russians will easily paraphrase Pushkin as saying “Russia cannot be understood with the mind, one can only believe in her”.

On one hand, it is a people marked by **warmth, hospitality, resilience, and brilliance**—a cultural richness seen in their arts, families, and sacrifices. On the other, it is shaped by **historical trauma, centralized oppression, and extreme psychological patterns** that reinforce cycles of control, denial, and imperial nostalgia.

What emerges is a civilization of profound beauty and unbearable contradiction. Understanding Russia means holding both truths in tension: the nobility of its people, and the darkness of the systems they have endured—and sometimes embraced. If you want to understand where Russia is heading, you must understand its past, its values, and the unhealed wounds that continue to shape its soul today.