



The Russian Mindset Map



Historical Insight

- Rule of the Tsars – 1547 – 1917
- Bolshevik 25 October 17 Revolution under Lenin
- Civil war 1917 – 23 between the 'Reds' and 'Whites'
- 30's Stalin (1879 – 1953): 1928 – 1934 Collectivisation of Agriculture; Surge for Industrialisation and Five Year Plans; 1936-38 'The Great Terror'- show trials + Gulags; Atheism
- The Great Patriotic War – (WW2) claims 5.5 million German dead and 30m Russian lives (many building factories east of the Urals – 25m left homeless)
- 1964 – 82 Brezhnev Era
- 1985 Gorbachev - Glasnost – Openness / Perestroika – Restructuring
- With the collapse of the USSR, 25m Russians are marooned in 'foreign' countries.

Primary Belief Systems

- Russian Orthodox Christianity
- State promoted Atheism
- Blocks of Islamic States in South Russia
- Small Jewish population

Geographical Influences

- Population 148.5 m - Male life expectancy 58yrs
- Covers 11 time zones
- 140 different nationalities in the FSU
- Vast – 'Obsession with untrammelled spaciousness'
- 'Un-patrollable eternity' – 'Ungraspable formlessness'
- Bigger than N. America – Pop per Sq Km – 9
- 90% of Russian land is closer to the North pole than the equator
- No benefit from Gulf Stream > further East = colder
- Omyakon coldest place in Russia –70C (same latitude as the Shetlands)
- Half Russia's land is locked in perennial permafrost
- Has more than 1/3 of the worlds gas reserves

Economic & Political Conditions

- Triple transition:
 - From dictatorship to democracy
 - From centralised economy to free market
 - From four century-old empire to nation state
- Parliament consists of:
 - Federal Council (178 appointed representatives)
 - State Duma (450 elected members)
- Current dominance in rank order: Communist, Reformers, Extreme Nationalist, others
- Factional power game: The President / Military and Industrial complex / The Prime Minister / Regional and City bosses / Mafia / Security Council
- Less than 8% of annual taxation is collected
- Ukraine + Germany are biggest trade partners

Russian Mindset

- Primacy of the collective – for sheer survival
- Survival Instinct - Tenacity
- 'A medieval mindset until very recently'
- Government of the collective by tough leadership
- Performance of work in energetic bursts
- Capitalist Encirclement
- 'A giant bear in a hornets nest'
- Coercion is a legitimate form of progress

Life Style Aspirations

- Architectural influences – open landscapes, sweeping vistas, and high ceilings.
- Urban Russians - Small flats as necessary evil – preference for living in Dacha when climate allows
- Efficiency? Under Communism, Russians spent 9 billion hours a year standing in queues
- Vodka – from the Russian word voda (Water) – literal translation is 'a drop of water' – distilled from cereals
- Aeroflot est. 1923 'Service with a scowl'

Characteristics of Society

- Russia is described as a 'pre modern society' which 'cruelly forfeited the entire 20th century' Solzhenitsyn
- Paradox - 'The poverty of the soil undermines the people, while the vast riches underneath are a great source of power to the regime' (Kapusinski)
- Paradox – Phd Biochemists are now car salesmen, bouncers and barmen 'highly trained minds roaring round a rim of despair'.

Educational Structures

- Free education, and highly sophisticated
- Preference for learning based on formal presentation with a definite answer
- Difficulties with student-centred approach
- 'We are here to learn, not discuss our problems'
- In 2002 Russia spent for the first time ever more on education rather than defence
- Sharing experience is an unfamiliar part of the national psyche
- There are laws governing economic development.

Language

- 126 different language groupings in FSU
- The Cyrillic alphabet originates from St Cyril of Thessalonika who devised the alphabet so that Slavs could read holy scriptures.
- To the French language is a tool of analytical logic To the Russian language is a great emotional resonator
- Many names for one person / 33 different forms of Papa
- Russians love proverbs