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MENTAL AND HISTORICAL RATIONALE FOR PRINCIPAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE UKRAINIAN AND RUSSIAN NATIONS – INTRODUCTION

Oleksandr Radchenko

Department of Public Administration, National Aviation University, Lubomyr Husar 1, 03058 Kyiv, Ukraine, ORCID: 0000-0002-0437-6131
Institute of Socio-Economic Geography and Spatial Management, University of Gdańsk, Bażyńskiego 4, 80-309 Gdańsk, Poland
e-mail: oleksandr.radchenko@ug.edu.pl

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1. Introduction

After the end of World War II, George Orwell published a famous bestseller-dystopian *1984* (Orwell, 1949) where he far-sightedly described a future authoritarian society with total power propaganda and totalitarian control of the state over each action and even thought of an average citizen. In 2009, the British newspaper “The Times” called the novel of *1984* “the most important book published within the last 60 years” (Sutherland, Marsh, 2009), because George Orwell ingeniously anticipated the consequences of totalitarisation of the state life built on the principles of “war is peace”, “freedom is slavery”, “ignorance is power”. Such phrases from the book as “Big Brother is watching you”, “The Ministry of Peace concerns itself with war, the Ministry of Truth with lies, the Ministry of Love with torture and the Ministry of Plenty with starvation” have become globally famous and widely cited (Orwell, 1949).

Although, formally the events in the book were supposed to occur in Great Britain, the majority of readers guessed easily that the described state was

the Soviet Union, and even the images of the dystopian key characters (the leader is Big Brother and state enemy No.1 – Emmanuel Goldstein) were easily read as Stalin and Trotskyi. However, now it becomes more obvious that the current Russian Federation continues living following the postulates and principles of Orwell’s Oceania.

It is the Russians who call themselves “Big Brother” with regard to Ukrainians, forgetting that the Moscow tsars did not found Kyiv, but a grandson of the Kyiv Prince built Moscow in the northern outskirts of the mighty Kyiv state!

In absolute compliance with Orwell’s “freedom is death”, Putin declared “liberation of the Russian-speaking Ukrainians” and “denazification”; however, he does not wage war in Western Ukraine (where there are particular nationalistic sentiments) but in the Eastern part where he kills peaceful Russian-speaking Ukrainians who he was going to “liberate”.

The Russian propagandistic machine re-writes and falsifies history in total compliance with the canons of Orwell’s Ministry of Truth, replicating for the

whole world deceitful narratives like “Ukrainians and Russians are one nation”.

That is why this special issue of *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society* is devoted to an attempt to unmask Russian propagandistic myths, revealing to the European reader the truth about profound and principal differences in values-and-mental world-views of the Russian and Ukrainian nations, their historical lifestyle, understanding the environment, forms of organization of a social and political life, etc.

2. Results

In the context of the purpose set in the special issue, Halyna Kuts, a Professor from Kharkiv, stresses that the basic parameters for the Ukrainian political identity were individualism, intolerance of the authoritarian trend, love of freedom, etc. Instead, in the mentality of Muscovites, servility has always been considered as a virtue, and the deceit and ability “to lie beautifully” as a sign of cleverness.

Inna Semenets-Orlova from Kyiv reveals the differences between the Russian and Ukrainian national mythology as fundamental nature of people’s subconscious. The Professor stresses that the postulate of short connection between the State and the Nation is intrinsic to the Russian mythology. It contradicts the system of complicated representative and lawful mechanisms where one “nation” is possible only on condition of the availability of a state structure which gives it an identity mandate for a right to be called “nation”, and the power justifies its legitimacy, referring to a symbolic representativeness on behalf of the whole “nation”. By contrast, in Ukraine, like in other western democracies, the principles of democracy and freedom are enweaved into the heroic myth.

Olexandr Lytvynenko, the main consultant of the National Institute for Strategic Studies of Ukraine, discloses the propagandistic provisions of the modern Russian political discourse, the matter of which lies in tendentious interpretations of the Russian history and the history of Ukraine, and which turn into open and systemic manipulations with historical memory to justify the aggressive politics of Russia with regard to Ukraine, proving its legal right to determine the destiny of the Ukrainian nation and to establish the vectors of foreign politics of the Ukrainian state.

Andrii Kuzyshyn and Inna Poplavska from Ternopil characterize the peculiarities of the political identity of Ukraine’s population through the prism of electoral preferences and state that polarization of Ukraine by a regional principle is artificial,

a consequence of the Russia-provoked idea of recovering the former imperial lifestyle of the USSR, and is based on dependent political forces engaged in the election process to neutralize the principles of the political identity of the Ukrainian state.

Professor Ihor Todorov from Uzhhorod justifies historical-and-psychological roots of the Ukrainian reasonableness in decision making, tolerance in interpersonal and international relations, husbandry with certain cost-effectiveness, individual form of goal-setting and personal responsibility for the consequences of the implementation of objectives, which is a pre-requisite of the appearance of a person able to consciously build the civic society. At the same time, authoritarianism, paternalism and immanent permanent hesitation, splitting and non-admission of either eastern or western standards and values are intrinsic to Russians. The scientist specifies that, in fact, the Russian Federation rejects the right of Ukraine for existence as an independent state and pursues its final aim – the complete destruction of Ukraine as a subject of international law and geopolitical reality.

3. Discussion

In our opinion, the mental and historical rationale for Ukrainians’ and Russians’ worldview difference go back to ancient times of the beginning of the Slavic word-building when the first words meant not only and not so much a thing or a phenomenon itself, described by this word, but its essence. Moreover, fundamental postulates of the value-and-mental worldview of the Russian and Ukrainian nations (the same as in the majority of other nations in the world) are described in the most concise form of folk wisdom – fairy-tales, songs, semantics of words formation, etc., because as L. Czinpîn’ specifies:

As the essence of the people’s folklore, the folk tales are one of the oldest literary genres brightly reflecting characteristics and mentality of one nation’s culture. In each country the folk tales obtain their peculiarities as if they get dressed in the national costume which relates to national everyday realia. Moreover, it is easier for us to watch and research the culture and mentality of this nation through the study of fairy tales. (Czinpîn’, 2019, p.135).

Since the beginning of the human civilization, the most important value priority for all the nations has been people and the family; as a rule, when transferring to the state-organizational life, relations in the family were always interpolated to the relations in the state. In the depths of history, the king or another sovereign were perceived by citizens as a “father”

of the nation, a wise or a strong ruler, a protector and a caregiver. However, with the development of guilds and social strata in Europe, a widened circle of representatives of political, economic or religious establishment, the king started to be perceived as “the first among equal”, and then the state stopped being the ownership of the sovereign. The widening of democracy led to fixation in the European mentality of understanding the state not as a caregiver but as a service provider. Thus, Europeans began to connect the responsibility for their future mostly with themselves, with own actions and deeds, which fixed positive individualism in the mentality.

With this regard, the Russians and Ukrainians have “got stuck” so far at the mental perception of power as a “father taking care of his children, and the state as the family where everybody is cared for and the conditions for implementation of creative potential are made” due to long-term traditional lifestyle and other historic consequences” (Semčuk, 2019, p. 242). Indeed, how the monitoring data of the Institute of Sociology NAS of Ukraine 1992-2016 certify, the value-based mentality of Ukraine’s citizens is characterized with dominating traditional vital values, related to family, children and welfare (Ukrains’kie..., 2016).

However, it is where the first principal line of value discrepancy related to the peculiarities of traditions in family lifestyle and education of descendants lied. Until the 20th century, the Russians lived in big families where the father was the head, and he often used quite totalitarian methods like compulsion and physical punishment not only to children but also to his wife (that is where a famous Russian people’s saying comes from: “beating a wife is a sign of love”). Thus, the Russians want to see this archetypical “father-tyrant” accustomed to them: tsar, General Secretary of the Party or current president. That is why, the majority of the Russians are unconscious apologists of traditionally conservative, rigidly centralized power of one-man charismatic type. Thus, the main hero of the Russian fairy tales is Ivan the Fool, lazybones and an idler, a person with absolute absence of personal responsibility, to whom the fabulous presents are given “from above”, from “the destiny”; the hero of the Russian fairy tale does not have to stretch himself – desired rewards will come to him themselves, like the bins from the well went after Yemelia “as if by magic” (Russian: “po shchuchiemu veleniu” – literally: “by the pike’s command”) (Po šuč’emu..., 2020), i.e. from a powerful sacred force. This fabulous sacral nature of supreme forces gradually transformed into mental sacralisation by the Russians of the state and state rulers, “by the command” of whom the people receive their benefits.

The Ukrainian men were not so tightly connected with the place of long-term living and with their families. They often had to go on military campaigns and be at wars, “be a Cossack”, “go to Crimea for salt” or to be far away earning money in conditions of military campaign brotherhood, equality and wide self-government and self-determination. That is why, in mentality of the Ukrainian men love of freedom and an inclination to maximum decentralization of the power, even anarchism was fixed (Vsevolod Volin-Eikhenbaum, Petro Arshynov-Marin, Aron Baron-Kantorovych), and its outstanding practitioners, for example, “Batko Makhno” (father Makhno), came from Ukraine or operated in its territory). O. Hordiichuk, in his work entitled “Ethnogenesis and the main features of the Ukrainian mentality: social-and-philosophical context”, specifies:

an anarchic dominant of the Ukrainian mentality is an individual point, which shows itself ambiguously:

- 1) as one of important values of the Ukrainians because exactly these “uncontrollability”, immediacy, spontaneity and disobedience to oppressors trigger confrontations and revolutions aiming at free existence and approval of the state political course between the representatives of the power and the Ukrainian nation;
- 2) as one of the major vices of the Ukrainian character combined with the inability to take independent political decisions, which is exposed in non-ability to long-term volition and mental efforts, consolidation of required forces to reach a common purpose; it appears to be especially harmful and tragic for the whole nation in the form of short-sightedness, unreadiness of their political elite to substantial strategic planning with further goal-oriented implementation of the planned objectives. The demonstrative examples are B. Khmelnytskyi and Cossacks’ highest ranks, leaders of the Central Council of Ukraine, V. Yushchenko and his team, etc. (Gordijčuk, 2021, pp. 57–58).

Consequently, the men-heroes of the Ukrainian fairy tales are not stupid but, on the contrary, crafty fellows. Moreover, they got accustomed to work and obtain rewards for themselves and their families from the childhood. This is what our fairy tales of Kotyhoroshko or Ivasyk-Telesyk are about – a little boy who went fishing to the river and fed his old grandmother and grandfather, and when the witch caught him by deceit, he befooled the witch’s daughter, escaped and making efforts, reached his home (Ivansik-Telesik..., 2022).

One more principal difference between the two nations comes from the same traditional lifestyle of family being and is seen in social importance and significance of the woman. This importance was reflected at a semantically-semiotic level of the word

defining a man and a woman who come into marital relations.

Russians call them “husband” – “supruh” and “wife” – “supruha”. The Old Slavic word “supruh” originated from the word of “zapriahaty” (English: “horse a carriage”) and thus, at the mental level, the breadwinner of the family was denoted – a horse, the main draft animal of the Russian village. The horse was collared (in Russian: “khomut”) and pulled a cart. The head of the family began to be called the same in the folklore allegorism – a man who got collared himself to pull a cart of life and be the main breadwinner of the family. This is a root for an interesting saying about a woman who forced or forced by deceit a man to marry her without his wish – “zakhomutala khloptsia” (English: “collared a guy”). Later, the old Slavic “supruh” was substituted by the word of “muzh” (English: “husband”), and this new word only increased the role and significance of the man because “muzh” means “powerful”, “understanding” (Šanskij, 2000); moreover, it also means a state rank – “statesman” (Russian: “gosudarstvennyi muzh”) – “man” (Russian: “muzhchina”).

At the same time, the word “supruha” (English: “wife”) in old Slavic meant a mare walking near the draft horse – i.e. it was tied to the draft, to the main draft horse and thus, played a secondary, subordinate role. The more current synonym of “supruha” is “zhona”, which in old Slavic meant a “woman” – an impersonal woman, a person of a female sex (Šanskij, 2000), who does not have individuality and who can be beaten like a draft mare (one more moral excuse of the saying “beating your wife is a sign of love”).

Hence, the Russians who come into marital relationships are divided into a powerful individual – “husband” and impersonal, subordinate and secondary “wife” at the level of self-designation.

In the Ukrainian historical tradition, the situation is completely different: the Ukrainian family was developing during several previous centuries in the conditions of long-term absence of a significant part of fathers-men when the main burden of children’s education and housekeeping was put on a woman-wife. That is why, the Ukrainians who come into marital relationships are called “cholovik” (English: “a husband”) and “druzhyna” (English: “a wife”). In these words-names, the impersonality of the former catches an eye at once, because “cholovik” is simultaneously a married man and a person of the male sex (Hrinchenko, 1909, p. 469).

At the same time, the word of “druzhyna” (English: “wife”) does not have only one meaning in Ukrainian. This is not only a woman who married a man. These are also regular troops of Kyivan princes in the beginning of the first millennium; this is

a machine or princely power of those times! This is simultaneously free comradeship, a team, voluntary union established with a particular purpose (Velikij tlumačnij..., 2022). It is obvious here that already not a man (like Russians) but a woman – “druzhyna” is a source of force and the main subject of the family with an impersonal man! That is why, a man will not hit a Ukrainian woman, it is she who can strike with a fire iron, a frying pan or a rolling pin. A Ukrainian husband is a bit of afraid his wife. What can one say about an ordinary man! A devil, as a representative of the power of evil, the personification of the evil of the male sex – is also afraid of a Ukrainian woman! At least, this is what Ukrainian fairy tales say (Baba i čort, 2015), and I have not seen similar fairy tales where the personification of the absolute evil is afraid of an ordinary woman in the folklore of European nations and especially the Russian one.

4. Conclusion

Deep historic roots of principal mental, psychological, social and spiritual differences can be found between the Ukrainian and Russian nations. First of all, a historically determined dramatic difference was found in understanding, perception and conventional social roles of archetypes of a woman and a man in the people’s folklore of Ukrainians and Russians as a basis of nations’ value-based worldview and a derivative social-and-emotional idea of the state and the foundations of state management.

The love of freedom of the Ukrainian nation that verges upon anarchism and celebrates personal freedom, recalcitrance and a possibility to choose one’s life oneself stands against inclination of paternalistic Russians to the authoritarian power with a sacral ruler of the state. This is what scares the Russian political elite as an example of awakening of the Russian people from despotism and justifies the sacredly important to the Russian power ideas of subjugation of the Ukrainians as the main pre-requisite of restoration and saving the imperial type of the Russian state, which was the real reason for unleashing a long-lasting bloody war of Muscovites against Ukraine in 2014–2022.

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