

UNIVERSITY OF TARTU
Faculty of Social Sciences
Johan Skytte Institute of Political Studies

Olena Denysenko

MOBILIZING HISTORY: A LONGITUDINAL STUDY OF
THE CHANGING DEPICTIONS OF UKRAINE AND UKRAINIANS
IN RUSSIAN HISTORY TEXTBOOKS, 1995-2023

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr Catherine Gibson

Tartu 2024

Authorship Declaration

I have prepared this thesis independently. All the views of other authors, as well as data from literary sources and elsewhere, have been cited.

Word count of the thesis: 29,743

Olena Denysenko, 20.05.2023

Non-exclusive license to reproduce thesis and make thesis public

I, Olena Denysenko (personal code: 49804020069), herewith grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive license) to the work created by me, *Mobilizing History: A Longitudinal Study of the Changing Depictions of Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russian History Textbooks, 1995-2023*, supervisor Dr Catherine Gibson,

- to reproduce for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- to make the work specified in p. 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright;
- I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in p. 1;
- I certify that granting the non-exclusive license does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

Abstract

This thesis is devoted to the examination of the changes in the Russian national narrative contained in the state-approved history textbooks published from 1995 to 2023 with regard to the portrayal of Ukraine and Ukrainians. The scope of the work includes an analysis of 12 textbooks covering the highly contested historical period from 1914 to 2014. The study aims to understand how Russian national narratives and depictions of the past have been reconstructed under the influence of modern political developments in Russo-Ukrainian relations.

This thesis adopts a holistic approach to textbook analysis, directing focus to all parts of a textbook. Additionally, thematic content analysis is conducted with the help of the MAXQDA software program to code the selected texts. Both thematic and structural narrative analysis are utilized to explore what content is included in the Russian national narrative about Ukraine and how it is presented.

This study argues that a new war-mobilization narrative appears in Russian history textbooks regarding the portrayal of Ukraine and Ukrainians. This narrative shift aligns with and supports the current Russian state's objectives during the ongoing war. The new 2023 textbooks, compared to older ones, present an increasingly negative depiction of Ukraine through various past historical events, particularly focusing on the episode of the Great Patriotic War (GPW). Limitations of this study and directions for future research are proposed.

Acknowledgments

I would like to acknowledge the unconditional support I received while working on this thesis. I am extremely grateful to my supervisor, Dr Catherine Gibson, and all the invaluable feedback that she has provided me with. Her insightful comments and challenging questions enabled me to write a thesis that I am truly proud of.

I also wish to extend my gratitude to all my fellow graduate students, who became my closest friends. We spent countless hours discussing our theses and helping each other shape our work. Special thanks go to Aart Christianen, Belén Padrón Salinas, Elli-Maria Luud, and Yeva Bushuieva, who probably heard every little detail of my thesis and more, yet never got tired of it (or at least never said so).

Throughout the writing of this thesis, I faced periods of self-isolation, and at times, I was not the most attentive daughter, aunt and friend to the dearest people in my life. Yet, my loved ones were patient, understanding, and accommodating. As such, I wish to express my gratitude to my parents, Vadym and Halyna, my precious niece, Veronika, and my best friend, Zarina. Your unwavering belief in my abilities and regular check-ins meant the world to me.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the bravery and resistance of the Ukrainian people, who are engaged in the very fight for the right to tell the stories of their past, live the days of their present, and secure their nation's future.

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|-----------|
| <i>Abstract</i> | <i>i</i> |
| <i>Acknowledgments</i> | <i>ii</i> |
| <i>List of Abbreviations</i> | <i>iv</i> |
| | |
| <i>Introduction</i> | <i>1</i> |
| <i>Memory, Narratives, and National Identity: Exploring Narrative Construction in History</i> | |
| <i>Textbooks</i> | <i>6</i> |
| 1.1. Constructivism | <i>6</i> |
| 1.2. Construction of a Nation and National Identity | <i>9</i> |
| 1.3. Collective Memory | <i>14</i> |
| 1.4. Narrative Organization of Collective Memory | <i>16</i> |
| 1.5. History Textbooks as the “Vehicles of National Memory” | <i>18</i> |
| <i>History and Memory Politics in Modern Russia</i> | <i>20</i> |
| 2.1. Memory Politics in Russia | <i>20</i> |
| 2.2. From Kyivan Rus' to Putin: the Portrayal of Ukraine in Russian Narratives | <i>24</i> |
| 2.3. Russian History Textbooks as the Containers of National Narratives..... | <i>29</i> |
| 2.4. Theoretical Assumptions | <i>32</i> |
| <i>Research Design and Methods</i> | <i>34</i> |
| 3.1. Thematic Content Analysis and Frequency Analysis | <i>34</i> |
| 3.2. Structural and Thematic Narrative Analysis | <i>36</i> |
| 3.3. Sources | <i>37</i> |
| 3.4. Research Limitations | <i>38</i> |
| <i>Analyzing Narrative Shifts in Russian History Textbooks</i> | <i>40</i> |
| 4.1. Russia during the First World War and the Great Russian Revolution, 1914-1922 | <i>43</i> |
| 4.2. Soviet Union, 1920-1930s | <i>47</i> |
| 4.3. The Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945..... | <i>51</i> |
| 4.4. USSR, 1945-1991 | <i>57</i> |
| 4.5. Russian Federation from 1992 to the early 2020s | <i>61</i> |
| 4.6. Analysis Discussion | <i>64</i> |
| <i>Conclusions</i> | <i>69</i> |
| | |
| <i>References</i> | <i>72</i> |
| <i>Appendix</i> | <i>82</i> |

List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------------|--|
| ATO | Anti-Terrorist Operation |
| CIS | Commonwealth of Independent States |
| DPR | Donetsk People's Republic |
| EU | European Union |
| GPU | State Political Directorate (preceding agency of NKVD) |
| GPW | Great Patriotic War |
| LPR | Luhansk People's Republics |
| NKVD | People's Commissariat of Internal Affairs (Soviet secret police) |
| OUN | Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists |
| RSFSR | Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic |
| SMO | Special Military Operation |
| Ukrainian SSR | Ukrainian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic |
| UPA | Ukrainian Insurgent Army |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| WWI | World War I |
| WWII | World War II |

Introduction

“Who controls the past, controls the future: who controls the present, controls the past... The mutability of the past is the central tenet of Ingsoc. Past events, it is argued, have no objective existence but survive only in written records and in human memories. The past is whatever the records and the memories agree upon. And since the Party is in full control of all records, and in equally full control of the minds of its members, it follows that the past is whatever the Party chooses to make it.”

George Orwell, 1984, p. 194

George Orwell, in his famous dystopian novel, described a fictional authoritarian state ruled by The Party, which employed mass surveillance, propaganda, and falsification of history to seize control over its population and suppress any form of individualism and critical thinking. In his portrayal of the totalitarian state, Orwell drew inspiration from Nazi Germany and Stalin’s regime in the USSR, which both no longer exist. However, one might argue that Orwell’s vision of a totalitarian society persists in the current Russian political landscape (Anderson, 2023).

In his recently published book, Ian Garner (2023) raised the question of how the Kremlin accumulated so much support for the brutal war against Ukraine, especially among young people. Similarly, Jade McGlynn (2023), in her book *Memory Makers: The Politics of the Past in Putin's Russia*, wondered how the Russian state managed to produce such indisputable historical narratives that ordinary Russians were not expressing bigger outrage over Putin's invasion of Ukraine. There are many reasons why people in authoritarian societies support the state’s agenda, such as fear of repression (Young, 2019), social pressure and conformity (Feldman, 2003), or economic dependence on the state (Slater & Fenner, 2011). National narratives, which are deeply embedded in collective memory, can offer another possible explanation for this phenomenon because they hold the power to shape a shared identity and historical understanding that legitimizes the regime's authority. By connecting the regime’s agenda with national identity, these narratives create an emotional and cultural bond that is difficult to break, reinforcing conformity more effectively than fear, propaganda, or economic incentives alone. Thus, to protect the positive image of their nation and avoid feelings of guilt, individuals justify even those actions of the state that are ethically questionable (Bilali, 2013).

National narratives are a powerful political tool that enables states to influence how people perceive the world and their place in it. Such narratives have frequently been employed to rally the masses for war, while wars have been simultaneously used as the core of the creation of national narratives (Grever & Van der Vlies, 2017). Central to the construction and dissemination of national narratives are educational textbooks, which wield considerable influence over the perceptions and beliefs of young minds (Vanhulle, 2009). Through textbooks, children – the future of society – get exposed to the events of the past in a way that imprints objectivity, factuality, neutrality, and thus the *truth* of the given portrayal (Issit, 2004).

Ever since the early 2000s, history textbooks in Russia have been under close state scrutiny, and in many instances, ideological goals overpowered historical accuracy (Zajda, 2007). This ideological battleground intensified in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, when Vladimir Medinsky, the Kremlin's aide and former Minister of Culture, advocated for an urgent overhaul of history textbooks and the “mobilization” of all resources in history education (Tsvetaev, 2022). As a result, two new compulsory history textbooks were published, in which a revisited coverage of events from the 20th century to the present day is offered. One might wonder why, in the middle of the war, Russian authorities called to mobilize not only their economic and human resources but also history. But as essential it was for the Russian authorities to produce a revisited depiction of the past, it is crucial to study these depictions. Such studies can provide timely insights into how state narratives are constructed and manipulated during periods of war, highlighting the use of textbooks as a tool for political influence, national identity formation, and mobilization of younger generations. As

History textbooks not only reflect state-sanctioned perspectives but also have the potential to shape the attitudes and beliefs of future generations. Since September 2023, a generation of Russian high schoolers has been taught history using these new textbooks. It is potentially the same generation that Putin expects to “march in step with the regime,” and should the war in Ukraine persist, these very students may find themselves on the frontlines (Garner, 2013, para. 4). Thus, it is essential to study what is being put in the heads of these young Russians, as well as Ukrainian kids, who either remain on Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories or were forcibly transferred to the areas under Russian control and have no choice but to learn history from the new textbooks.

The publication of the two new Russian history textbooks in 2023 sparked interest among some scholars and many journalists,¹ who studied the content of these “new tools of Putin’s warfare” (Gudz et al., 2023, p. 174). However, these new textbooks have yet to be analyzed in a comparative study with older Russian history textbooks to assess how the Russian national narrative has changed and evolved, especially with regard to the way Ukraine is incorporated into the narrative. The research puzzle of this thesis is predominantly empirical, seeking to address a literature gap regarding the changes in the portrayal of Ukraine in Russian historical narratives, particularly in light of the recent publication of the two new textbooks. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to produce the answer to the following question: how have Russian historical narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians represented in state-approved history textbooks changed over the years (1995-2023)?

Drawing on the constructivist paradigm and literature review, I formulated the first foundational assumption of this thesis, which states that historical narratives of the Russian past get reconstructed depending on the present agendas. The past stays the same, yet its perception and portrayal are subject to change. Given the substantial shifts in the relationship between Russia and Ukraine, it is anticipated that these alterations will be mirrored within the Russian national narrative as well. To guide my analysis, I have developed two additional sub-questions based on empirical assumptions:

1. With regard to what past events have the mentions of Ukraine and Ukrainians been omitted or added in the new 2023 history textbooks?
2. How has the language regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians changed in Russian history textbooks over the years (1995-2023)?

It is important to note that not only remembering, but also forgetting, plays a role in the construction of collective memory and its narrative organization. Given Russia's foreign policy and ongoing war, I anticipate that newer textbooks will contain fewer mentions of Ukraine and Ukrainians that support their right to a sovereign state or highlight the differences between Ukrainian culture and language compared to Russian. At the same time, I expect that the 2023 textbooks may introduce new narratives and historical figures.

Additionally, noting the importance of language in narrative construction, I anticipate that the language used in the new 2023 textbooks will reflect the emotional rhetoric that has

¹ There were many articles published in Politico, New York Times, Washington Post, Reuters, The Guardian, Foreign Affairs, The Kyiv Post, BBC, CNN, and other outlets. Amnesty International and The Atlantic Council released reports condemning the Russian state for unlawfully indoctrinating school children with the new history textbooks.

been applied by the Russian political elites. Yet, I must clarify that my thesis follows an interpretive paradigm. Thus, these theoretical assumptions will not be tested in a positivist sense.

The thesis is structured in four parts. In the first chapter, I develop the theoretical framework of this research. I am working within a constructivist paradigm, and I do not adopt one single theory. Instead, I am developing a theoretical framework using ideas from various prominent scholars. Through the constructivist paradigm, I outline the complex interplay of collective memory, history, and national narratives. Later, I argue why history textbooks offer an important lens through which to study the construction and dissemination of state-approved national narratives. In the second chapter, I review the existing literature on history and memory politics in Russia, with a focus on studies analyzing Russian history textbooks and the portrayal of Ukraine in them. In the third chapter, I present the research design and methodology of my thesis, detailing how I compiled the data and which methods I used to analyze it. For my analysis, I selected 12 Russian history textbooks, published from 1995 to 2023, which together encompass over 4,000 pages of narrative. With the help of the MAXQDA software program, I conducted thematic content analysis and frequency analysis. Additionally, I employed thematic narrative analysis to study *what* was written in these textbooks about Ukraine and structural narrative analysis to examine *how* it was written. Finally, in the fourth chapter, I introduce the findings of the analysis, offering insights into the changes in the portrayal of Ukraine in Russian history textbooks that emerged over the years and how it related to the context when these changes occurred. I connect my findings with previously introduced theoretical and empirical literature.

It is also important to mention that while conducting my research I expressly refrained from engaging in the verification of facts or the refutation of specific assertions within the selected textbooks. The objective was fundamentally centered on executing a narrative analysis to discern and interpret the representations of Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russian state-approved history textbooks. It is imperative to highlight that the narratives within these texts were considered exclusively in their portrayed form. Consequently, my analysis did not endeavor to evaluate the factual accuracy of the historical events or assertions detailed, nor did it seek to validate or invalidate their authenticity. The primary focus was directed towards an in-depth examination of the narratives as constructed within the selected texts, examining how they have changed over time, and carefully analyzing the context in which these changes occurred. In doing so, I aimed to mitigate any potential bias stemming from my personal background as a Ukrainian, thereby ensuring a more objective analysis.

In conclusion, my thesis builds upon the existing studies and provides an updated picture of the depiction of Ukraine in the Russian national narrative. At large, it contributes to the study of national narratives as portrayed in history textbooks and, more specifically, to the changes and shifts in these narratives, which I trace by adopting a longitudinal approach. Moreover, it supplies constructivist research and showcases how authoritarian states establish control over national narratives to adjust them in correspondence with the demands of the present by changing the perception of the past.

Memory, Narratives, and National Identity: Exploring Narrative Construction in History Textbooks

In this chapter, I will present the theoretical foundations of this research. First, I will formulate the overall conceptual framework of this thesis by elaborating on the main concepts utilized and the links between them. I will elaborate on the concepts of nation and national identity as perceived through the constructivist paradigm. Following this, attention will be directed toward unraveling the complex interplay of collective memory, history, and national identity. Building on the previously discussed concepts, I will introduce the concept of narratives and the narrative organization of collective memory, which is often transmitted through textbooks. Later, I will describe why history textbooks are used to analyze state-approved national narratives.

As the body of scholarship on the topic is vast and it is beyond the scope of the thesis to examine every dimension of it, I have selected the most relevant literature for my particular study focus and approach. The decision is mostly practical and does not diminish the significance of the multitude of authors who contributed to the development of the discussed concepts. In my selection, the emphasis has been placed on authors who have actively contributed to the discipline of social and political studies.

1.1. Constructivism

My thesis is grounded in a constructivist approach, which provides a framework for understanding the dynamic construction of national narratives and identities within the social and political context. However, constructivism is not a unified theory. It is a multifaceted theoretical perspective, with various interpretations existing to reflect the complexities of social and political phenomena. In this subchapter, I will briefly introduce the origin of constructivism and its theoretical development in social and political sciences and formulate the main constructivist assumptions that are relevant to my examination of the construction of historical narratives.

As a theoretical framework, constructivism delves into epistemological inquiries about knowledge's nature, scope, and justification, challenging the positivistic notion of objective and universally applicable knowledge. This paradigm shift began in the early 20th century, with developmental theorists like Jean Piaget and Lev Vygotsky. Piaget (1932) emphasized children's active role in constructing knowledge through interactions with their environment, while Vygotsky (1934) stressed the importance of social and historical factors, particularly language, in knowledge production and transmission.

Eventually, constructivist ideas gained momentum in social theory. George Herbert Mead's (1934) symbolic interactionism highlighted the role of symbols and language in shaping social interaction and the construction of selfhood. Mead (1926, p. 382) argued that "man lives in a world of meaning," and this meaning is not inherent in objects or events but is constructed through social processes. Meanwhile, Harold Garfinkel's (1967) ethnomethodology challenged the orthodox Durkheim-inspired sociological postulates that social facts are objective and instead proposed the idea that the social order is the result of human-made arbitrary rules.

Erving Goffman (1956), another prominent sociologist, drew parallels between social interactions and theatrical performances, asserting that individuals strategically manage their self-presentation to shape the impressions they convey to others. His works have contributed to the study of identity construction on an individual level and on a macro level, especially in the field of international relations (Schimmelfennig, 2002). Additionally, Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1966) have further developed constructivist ideas in sociology, introducing a dynamic model of the social construction of reality. They stressed that the construction of reality is possible because of the objectification of subjective meanings in physical objects and symbols, especially in language (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 51-52).

Through these diverse contributions, constructivism has become a foundational paradigm in understanding the dynamic interplay between subjective consciousness, social interactions, and constructed realities across various disciplines within the social sciences. After laying out the foundational origins of constructivist ideas within social science, and before I proceed with elaborating how they emerged in political science, it is essential to explore how these concepts intersect with contemporary thinkers who have further enriched our understanding of the social construction of reality and knowledge.

Michel Foucault's insights into the interplay between knowledge and power have shaped constructivist perspectives and are important to the theoretical framework of this thesis. Similar to previously described ideas, Foucault (1972) argued that knowledge is not simply a reflection of objective reality. Instead, in his works, it is established that knowledge is shaped by systems of power and discourse. Power, according to Foucault (1985), is something that emerges from cultural practices and interactions among people rather than something owned by individuals or specific groups. This power, according to Foucault, operates at a small scale in everyday life, influencing how people behave and interact with each other. Yet, institutions, such as the army, family, schools, police, hospitals, and the state-regulated administrative bodies of such institutions, play a role in reinforcing this power by shaping people's perception

of what is “knowledgeable” and “truthful.” By analyzing this intricate relationship between power and knowledge, Foucault (1995, p. 27) claimed that they “directly imply one another.”

Thus, through Foucault’s works, it becomes evident that all forms of human-generated knowledge, including history and recollections of the past, are essentially constructed phenomena. By applying the genealogical method to the studies of knowledge, Foucault (1972) opens the discussion on the non-existence of a factual and universal understanding of history and events of the past. Overall, Foucault’s ideas challenge essentialist views of knowledge and truth, emphasizing the contingent and historically situated nature of both. His critical analyses of power, discourse, and subjectivity offer valuable insights for constructivist approaches. All these ideas will be helpful for the understanding of the more specific concepts (introduced later) in my research, such as collective memory, national narratives, and the role of history textbooks as custodians of “factual” truth, shaping societal understandings of the past and perpetuating particular narratives for the present.

Having explored some of the foundational roots of constructivist thought within social science, I now turn to examine how these ideas have permeated into political science, shaping our understanding of international relations and political behavior. The infusion of constructivist ideas into political science, particularly in the field of international relations, began to gain momentum in the late 20th century (Hurd, 2009). Constructivism emerged as a response to traditional approaches, such as realism and liberalism, which focused predominantly on material factors in explaining state behavior and international outcomes (ibid.). Constructivism introduced a novel perspective by taking “a sociological perspective on world politics, emphasizing the importance of normative as well as material structures, the role of identity in the constitution of interests and action, and the mutual constitution of agents and structures” (Price & Reus-Smit, 1998, p. 259).

From the works of social theorists discussed previously in this chapter, we can conclude that individuals learn about the social reality and how they should act within this reality through social interactions, mediated by language and other systems of symbols that help them to prescribe meaning to different objects. Through a multitude of such daily interactions, individuals acquire knowledge about their reality. Alexander Wendt (1999), a prominent political scholar, adopted several fundamental principles of constructivism and applied them to the field of international politics. In line with the constructivism notions from the social theory, he argued that “the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by shared ideas rather than given by nature” (Wendt, 1999, p. 1). Stemming from that, he proposed that the national interests of states are also constructed by such shared ideas rather than material

factors, as has been insisted by theories of neorealism and neoliberalism (Wendt, 1999, p. 96-109). Moreover, Wendt (1999) argues that states can hold both shared and private knowledge (which comes preliminary from the domestic context) that guides them and their actions in the arena of international politics. Additionally, the author claims that history plays a pivotal role in the construction of national interests and relations among the states since it contributes to the accumulation of knowledge:

They know something about each other's grievances and ambitions, and thus about whether they are status quo or revisionist states. They know something about each other's styles of dispute resolution. And they even know something about the conditions under which these conditions might change (Wendt, 1999, p. 108).

Another concept that Wendt (1999) suggests has an impact on the construction of states' national interests and, moreover, on interlapping national and individual interests is the notion of collective memory. He alleges that such collective memories, which are being sustained over generations through ongoing processes of socialization and ritual practice, provide groups with a sense of continuity and identity over time, connecting the past with the present (Wendt, 1999, p. 163). Wendt (1999, p. 163) concludes that "as long as individuals see themselves as having an allegiance and commitment to the group, collective memories will be available as a resource for mobilizing collective action even if they are not believed, in a phenomenological sense, by individuals." Since collective memory contains the power to mobilize a nation, states are interested in shaping and mediating the narratives in which this collective memory is contained. This argument will be further developed in the following subchapters.

Based on the reviewed literature on the development of constructivism ideas in the social and political sciences, I will formulate three key takeaways that are foundational for this research. First of all, knowledge is socially constructed. Secondly, language plays a pivotal role in the social construction of our realities. Lastly, the construction of knowledge is a politically driven process. In the next subchapter, I will elaborate on the concept of nation and the construction of national identity.

1.2. Construction of a Nation and National Identity

The definition of a nation and national identity is a subject of intense and ongoing academic discourse within the realms of social, political, and philosophical studies. This debate has given rise to a plethora of perspectives and theoretical frameworks, each offering a unique

interpretation of the concepts.² In this thesis, however, I will analyze how the theoretical foundations of constructivism have been applied to the study of nations and national identity.

As I have established in the previous subchapter, applying a constructivist lens, individuals are social creatures, and only through social interactions do they gain knowledge about their realities. Moreover, the very premise of the social sciences is based on studying individuals in social settings as “there is no way to think of human individuals outside some social context, because the very definition of what it means to be an individual must contain reference to some social whole” (Sztompka, 1991, p. 94). By living in society, individuals are linked to many different social groups, such as “family, tribe, local community, nation, professional group etc.” (Sztompka, 1991, p. 94). Membership in various social groups gives individuals a sense of belonging and further shapes their identities.

Some scholars, for example, Robert Wilson (2005), argue that nations represent one of the most significant social groups that individuals get affiliated with for several reasons. Firstly, it gives individuals a means for self-identification by proclaiming their national belongingness. Secondly, due to the state's control over most of the resources, governments have the power to reinforce national identity among their population, even when individuals don't primarily identify with their nation (Wilson, 2005, p. 233). Indeed, the construction of national identities is often perceived as a politically motivated process that allows dominant groups to secure and retain their privileged position within society (Verdugo & Milne, 2016).

Yet, Rogers Brubaker (2000) urges scientists to go “beyond identity.” He argues that the concept of identity has been used in sociopolitical studies to explain and analyze a phenomenon that is too broad. For the sake of conceptual clarity, he suggests that additional terms must be introduced to better equip researchers in their analytical work. In collaboration with Frederick Cooper, Brubaker (2000, p. 5) claims that identity politics can be studied and analyzed without using “identity” as a category of analysis. Otherwise, such intellectual practices could lead to the reification of identities, coincidentally implying that identities exist as real, tangible entities, which would clash with their constructivist understanding (Cooper & Brubaker, 2000, p. 5). To avoid this, they suggest deploying additional concepts, one of which is “identification.” The authors elaborate that identity refers to the condition, the stable

² Due to limitations of space, in this literature review I only discuss ideas about nations and national identity that align with the constructivist paradigm, however, I acknowledge that alternative approaches exist. For example, from the primordialist perspective, nations and national identities are understood not as constructed concepts but as innate and fixed entities based on primordial ties such as ancestry, language, and culture (Eller & Coughlan, 1993).

enduring aspects of self-definition or group affiliation, while identification refers to the process by which individuals or groups attach themselves to certain affiliations.

Additionally, the introduction of the term identification “invites us to specify the agents that do the identifying,” such as states (Cooper & Brubaker, p. 14). According to the authors, the process of identification can be carried out by specific identifiers, as well as “more or less anonymously by discourses or public narratives” (ibid., p. 16). This idea correlates with Foucault’s vision of how power operates through discursive practices to shape subjectivities and social categories and of how this power is diffused throughout society and embedded in cultural practices. Still, the state remains among the powerful identifiers “not because it can create “identities” in the strong sense [...] but because it has the material and symbolic resources to impose the categories, classificatory schemes, and modes of social counting and accounting” (ibid., p. 16).

When discussing the formation of collective identities, such as national identities, Brubaker and Connor (2000) introduce the terms commonality, connectedness, and groupness. The authors describe groupness as “the emotionally laden sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded group, involving both a felt solidarity or oneness with fellow group members and a felt difference from or even antipathy to specified outsiders” (ibid., p. 19). A strong sense of groupness that is foundational for the emergence of national identity is dependable not on connectedness, which implies relational bonds that tie individuals together, but rather on “a powerfully imagined and strongly felt commonality” (ibid., p. 20).

Perhaps the most famous application of a constructivist approach to the study of nations is the work of Benedict Anderson, who proclaims, in a similar fashion to Brubaker and Connor, that nations are “imagined communities” because “the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). Anderson (ibid.) elaborates that all nations are imagined as limited, sovereign, and as a community. By limited, he implies that even the largest of nations have their boundaries in terms of number of people and territorial constraints. The sovereign aspect of a nation describes the notion of freedom and independence of each nation. And lastly, nations are envisioned as communities because, despite the existing inequalities and exploitation within them, there is a pervasive perception of deep, horizontal solidarity among their members. Ultimately, it is this sense of brotherhood that has pushed countless individuals throughout the past couple of centuries to willingly sacrifice their lives for these collective ideals (ibid., p. 7).

In his work, Anderson highlights the role of three main institutions, census, map, and museum, that were instrumental in shaping “the way in which the colonial state imagined its dominion – the nature of the human beings it ruled, the geography of its domain, and the legitimacy of its ancestry” (Anderson, 2006, p. 164). He argues that census data shaped social reality, maps visually reinforced national unity, and museums embodied the cultural dimension of the imagined community and played a crucial role in presenting and preserving selected narratives. These tools initially supported colonial administration and later helped craft national identities (ibid., pp. 164-185). In line with Anderson’s idea, in my thesis, I perceive textbooks as one of such tools that are used by nation-states in their nation-building endeavors.

Furthermore, Anderson declares that political leaders consciously model civil and military education systems on the basis of nationalism (Anderson, 2006, p. 135). During the process of nation-building, states resort to the deliberate propagation of nationalist ideologies and the cultivation of national identities by exploiting educational systems and printed mass media (ibid. p. 163). However, the author argues that despite the antagonistic roots of nationalism “in fear and hatred of the Other,” it also produces self-sacrificing love that is often encapsulated in various forms of art (ibid. p. 141). The fatalistic devotion to a nation is what persuaded millions of people to kill and sacrifice their lives for the good of the nation in the great wars of the 20th century (ibid. p. 144). Similarly, Mead (1929) pondered the role of wars in the process of the nation realization. He claimed that “the case for war does not lie in the fighting itself, but in that for which compels us to fight” (Mead, 1929, p. 392). Thus, while being pitted against the “Other” and by partaking in the destruction of the foreign community, one gains an understanding of one's own community and nation. He also proposes that the urge to fight other nations stems from the feeling of uncertainty about one’s own nation and because of injustices committed within the nation to different groups of people and social classes (ibid. p. 406-407).

In the field of international politics, Wendt (1999) further develops this idea of rivalry among nations by suggesting that states do not blindly engage in armed conflicts. Instead, they differentiate other states into friends, rivalries, and enemies, which affects the way they interact with each other. In the opinion of Wilson (2005), the commemoration of war-related events, both victories and hardships, is crucial to the construction of national identity. Furthermore, it showcases the efforts states resort to in order to “not only shape our view of a shared past but direct our collective views of a shared future” (Wilson, 2005, p. 233). Acknowledging the significance of conflict and war in the process of nation-building is imperative for this thesis. This is because the analysis presented in chapter three concerning the changes in the Russian

narrative regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians will be carried out with due consideration of the current war situation.

As has been previously discussed, the construction of national identity has a multifaceted nature, with various factors contributing to the realization of a nation. Reflections on the role of wars in this process underscore the complex interplay between conflict, identity, and community. Wars not only pit nations against each other but also serve as catalysts for self-reflection and the reaffirmation of national identity. However, the formation of national identity extends beyond the realm of conflict. In line with constructivist postulates, Anderson (2006) proposes that the very notion of a nation is shaped not just through political or geographical boundaries but through a system of shared symbols, rituals, and narratives (p. 135). By diving into history and tracing the development of print capitalism, he argues that languages took up the main role in fostering a sense of national identity by uniting communities with shared languages and, at the same time, separating them from other nations (ibid. p. 135-140). Anderson's view of the role of languages in delineating boundaries between nations and shaping national identity aligns with the constructivist postulates that I have established earlier in this thesis.

History is another crucial tool that is used to justify and give meaning to the construction of nations and their identities. According to Renan (2013), the "possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" from the past is as important for the existence of a nation as its present (p. 261). German philosopher Reinhart Koselleck (1985) examined how historical consciousness is construed by the interplay between past experiences (*Erfahrung*), present actions, and future expectations (*Erwartung*), which are mediated through language and symbols. He illustrated the connection between the chronological past and the given present, elaborating that each living present was once an imagined former vision of the future. Similarly, the construction of the future vision takes place in the present moment based on past experiences. This idea underscores the pivotal role of history and the past in the construction of nations and how their aspirations for the future are being shaped. Meanwhile, Renan (2013) claims that it is not only preserving and remembering the past moments that contribute to the construction of a nation but also the opposite of it – "the act of forgetting (...) is an essential factor in the creation of a nation" (p. 251). At this point, it is fitting to delve into the concept of collective memory, which is pivotal to the research focus of this thesis.

1.3. Collective Memory

For the longest time, in the field of cognitive and biological sciences, the concept of memory was primarily understood as a mental activity that can be realized only by individuals (Funkenstein, 1989, p. 6). However, in social sciences, the concept of memory is applied to a collective level to provide explanations for social phenomena (Wilson, 2005). Numerous scholars have contributed to the studies of collective memory, but in a way that did not create a unanimous definition of the concept (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008). This prompts the question of what exactly is meant when we talk about collective memory. According to James Wertsch and Henry Roediger (2008), the sole universally acknowledged aspect is that “collective memory is a form of memory that transcends individuals and is shared by a group” (p. 318).

The first mention of the term “collective memory” was given by Maurice Halbwachs in his *The Social Frameworks of Memory* (1925). Halbwachs (1980) differentiated between collective memory and individual memory, which he referred to as “autobiographical”. He argued that collective memory takes precedence over autobiographical memory because historical/collective memory creates social frameworks and sets the context in which individual memories are created (Wilson, 2005, p. 230). According to Halbwachs, memory is a “synergist of social meaning and action, and of individuality and collectivity” (Narvaez, 2006, p. 58). Drawing back to Mead’s (1926) claims that men live in a world of meaning, memory can be understood as one of the sources from which individuals acquire the needed meanings, explanations, and a sense of being. As argued by Halbwachs (1980), collective memory gives meaning to social groups and their members and strengthens the boundaries between different groups. It contributes to the formation of both individual and group identities by creating a sense of “we” and “them” (Narvaez, 2006, p. 65).

Some scholars further develop the concept of collective memory by adding a dynamic dimension to it. From this perspective, the term collective memory encompasses a static concept of a base for knowledge, while collective *remembering* is a dynamic concept that describes “the repeated reconstruction of representations of the past, a process that is often quite contentious” (Wertsch & Roediger, 2008, p. 319). In my thesis, I use the concept of collective memory based on the second perspective. I use this term to refer to a space for political or social contestation rather than a static corpus of information. Wertsch and Roediger (2008) elaborate that through the dynamic perspective of collective memory, we can study how “local groups engage in an ongoing struggle against elites and state authorities to control the

understanding of the past” (p. 319). Thus, the dynamic understanding allows me to include the political dimension and political influence on the construction of collective memory.

According to Aleida Assmann (2009), the term “collective memory” is too vague and aims to explain too broad a spectrum of social phenomena. Instead, she suggests distinguishing between individual memory, social memory, cultural memory, and political memory (Assmann, 2009). Such differentiation allows for more accurate conceptualization and, thus, precise usage of the term in scientific research. In light of Assmann's classification, the interest of this thesis is on the dimension of political memory. Compared to individual and social memories, which are embodied in human interactions and are tied down to human existence, political and cultural memories are more durable as they are founded on “carriers of external symbols and material representations; they rely not only on libraries, museums, and monuments, but also on various modes of education and repeated occasions for collective participation” (Assmann, 2009, p. 216). Similarly, Susan Sontag (2003) argued that individual memory is unique and perishes when its holder dies, meanwhile “what is called collective memory is not a remembering but a stipulating: that *this* is important, and this is the story about how it happened, with the pictures that lock the story in our minds” (Sontag, 2003, p. 86). Such stipulation enables political memory to be transgenerational.

Another important feature of political memory is its institutionalization and top-down production (Assmann, 2009, p. 216). Contrary to individuals, institutions and social groups, such as nations, do not possess their own memories. Instead, they construct their memories with the help of symbols, languages, rituals, and objects that become carriers of meanings (ibid.). Political memory is also mediated because the process of its construction involves “selection and exclusion, neatly separating useful from not useful, and relevant from irrelevant memories” (ibid., p. 218). This process of selection leads to the remembrance of certain past events and the erasure of others. As has been argued earlier in my thesis, the construction of a nation too heavily relies on the act of remembering as much as on the act of forgetting (Renan, 2013). Wilson (2005) asserts that “the collective erasure or manipulation of the past provides one means by which group identities can be consolidated or weakened” (p. 232).

At this point, it is fitting to establish who is in charge of the construction of political memory. According to Kubik and Bernhard (2014), so-called mnemonic actors are the ones who shape political and cultural domains by participating in the construction, dissemination, and contestation of narratives about the past. These actors are involved in the strategic selection and presentation of historical events, themes, and symbols to influence how the nation or group remembers and interprets its history. Initially, it was the historians who were managing the

preservation of knowledge and selection of events that were important and worthy to be included in the chronicles. However, in memory studies, the pool of memory agents has increased with the addition of political and social elites, who participate in the shaping of past events to fit the requirements of the present (Gedi & Elam, 1996). Circling back to Foucault's (1995) ideas that have been presented earlier in my paper, knowledge and power go hand in hand, coproducing and reinforcing each other. Drawing from this, it is safe to assume that the more power certain agents hold, the more capacity they have for the production of knowledge and, thus, the construction of favorable political memories that would further solidify their status in society.

1.4. Narrative Organization of Collective Memory

In order to convert fleeting social memory into enduring collective memory, capable of being passed down through generations, it must undergo elaboration and organization in diverse formats, such as narratives. As argued by Aleida Assmann (2008, p. 55), “emplotment of events in an affectively charged and mobilizing narrative” is one of the ways of transforming individual social memories into long-lasting collective memory. Hayden White (1984) claimed that narrative is a universal and natural aspect of everyday human life. Narratives are intricately linked to our understanding of culture and to the core characteristics of human existence. He believed that while fully grasping the particular thought patterns of other cultures may be challenging, it is comparatively easier to comprehend their narratives (White, 1980, p. 5). Because of that, White labels narrative as a universal human metacode that enables the transmission of messages among different cultures (White, 1980, p. 6).

Furthermore, White viewed narration and narrativity “as the instruments by which the conflicting claims of the imaginary and the real are mediated, arbitrated, or resolved in a discourse” (White, 1980, p. 9). Viewing narration and narrativity as instruments for mediating conflicting claims between the imaginary and the real provides a powerful tool for reconciling divergent perspectives, offering means to construct cohesive and resonant representations of events. Such an immersive and persuasive nature of narratives can lead to the manipulation or distortion of historical events. The inherent subjectivity in constructing narratives can result in biased interpretations, contributing to the creation of distorted collective memories. Political leaders can create suitable narratives to reconfigure collective memory, such as a narrative of victimization, and use the past to justify the goals of the present (Müller, 2002, p. 21).

Margaret Somers (1994) claims that narratives posit a social epistemological concept through which we receive our knowledge, comprehension, and interpretation of the social world, and it is through the creation of narratives that we shape our social identities (Somers, 1994, p. 606). She advocates that narratives not only portray individual memories but also, in a meaningful way, shape social actors and the social environment in which they operate. Additionally, she argues that it is not reasonable to assume that individuals with similar attributes, such as class, gender, or occupation, will share the same life experience or act in similar ways, unless they also share similar narrative identities (ibid., p. 635). With the addition of narrative to identity formation, Somers insists that social action is understood only by the stories (narratives) through which people create their identities, as well as the structural and cultural relations in which they are embedded (ibid, p. 624). Furthermore, she addresses the fluidity and change in narratives, as well as the identities they create, by stating that “in another time or place, or in the context of a different set of prevailing narratives, that sense of being could be entirely different because narrative identities are constituted and reconstituted in time and over time” (ibid, p. 624). Somers asserts that narratives play a fundamental role in shaping social identities and interpreting the social world.

James Wertsch (2002), in his works, in a way, produces a symbiosis of historical aspects of narrative as described by White, as well as the identity-shaping power of narratives as introduced by Somers. Wertsch's (2002) main contribution to the development of the concept of narrative can be traced to his introduction of the term “schematic narrative template,” which he differentiates from “specific narratives.” Specific narratives revolve around certain dates, settings, and actions, while schematic narrative templates serve as broader structures employed to generate multiple specific narratives sharing a common basic plot (Wertsch, 2008a, p. 140). Tying his innovative concept of schematic narrative templates to collective memory, Wertsch suggests that the particular power of narrative templates over the formation of collective memory lies in their abstract nature that is not visible (Wertsch, 2008a, p. 142). Those engaged in the reproduction of certain narrative templates might not be aware that they are employing certain narratives due to them not being transparent and being a fundamental part of the group identity (Wertsch, 2008a, p. 142).

Furthermore, Wertsch argues that schematic narrative templates can help fill in blank spots in collective memory (Wertsch, 2008c, p. 58). Due to a particularly strong emotional attachment to national schematic narrative templates and identity commitments associated with such narratives, a deep collective memory is created that can overcome “narrative rifts” that appear when unfavorable historical episodes become publicly known (Wertsch, 2008c, p. 68).

National narratives are a powerful political tool that enables states to influence how people perceive the world and their place in it. According to Donald Pease (1997), national narratives possess a profound impact, transcending surface-level impressions to penetrate the very psyche of individuals: “As collectively experienced fantasies, these narratives extended the reach of state regulatory mechanisms into the individual psyche, where these fantasies have historically performed functions that are both extensive and complexly interrelated” (Pease, 1997, p. 4-5). This highlights the durability of collective memory that is rooted in narrative.

1.5. History Textbooks as the “Vehicles of National Memory”

Education has always been one of the main instruments employed by the states to promote their political agendas (Podeh, 2000). Many prominent social scientists argued that during the process of socialization in educational institutions, pupils acquire not only factual knowledge but also important sociocultural information about their society. Podeh (2000) adds that when this process of “implanting knowledge and values in the younger generation” is successful, it “turn[s] young people into loyal citizens and (...) instill[s] a shared identity” (65). Therefore, because of its ideological implications, states and political elites have always paid extra attention to national education.

With regard to the creation and spread of national narratives, certain school subjects, such as history, particularly stand out. The teaching of history in educational institutions has been used to legitimize the nation-state as part of the ongoing nation-building project (Berger et al., 2002). According to Edward Said (2000, p.176), the study of history is often used to shape a desirable understanding of one's country, tradition, and faith and to foster nationalistic sentiment by promoting loyalty among its citizens. While the manner in which history is taught in schools may differ based on various factors such as classroom dynamics, pedagogical approaches of teachers, and regional or cultural influences, the content of history textbooks primarily remains under the direct control of the state (Terra, 2014).

Aleida Assmann (2008, p. 64) metaphorically described history textbooks as the “vehicles of national memory” and “weapons of mass-instruction,” highlighting their unprecedented power to create a universal and favorable understanding of the past among the entire generation. History textbooks, with their impersonal and objective style, offer students a transparent framework that is perceived as a true portrayal of historical events, further solidifying the transmission of national memory (Olson, 1980). Furthermore, through the selection and interpretation of past events, textbooks reflect the political agenda of the present,

influencing the formation of national identity among the students (Podeh, 2000, p. 66). By analyzing the content, language, and presentation of historical events in textbooks, researchers can gain insights into how historical knowledge is curated, interpreted, and transmitted to future generations. Through the analysis of history textbooks, scholars are able to gain a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing national narratives and how they are aligned with the political interests of those in power. This method of inquiry enables scholars to identify the underlying ideologies that shape these narratives, as well as the ways in which they are constructed and reinforced through the use of language and rhetoric.

To sum up, in this chapter, I have laid out a theoretical framework for my future analysis. From the perspective of constructivism, I started by introducing the idea that memory is a dynamic social construct. Later, I analyzed the complexities of the construction of political memory and the role of memory agents, such as political elites, in the creation of national narratives. Moving on from these abstract ideas, I have reached the point of examining the role of history textbooks as tangible objects that embody national narratives and thus shape political memory, which affects the construction of nation and national identity. With this knowledge, I will be transitioning from theory to practice by introducing a concrete empirical case study.

History and Memory Politics in Modern Russia

In the following pages, I will discuss existing studies on history and memory politics in Russia, specifically focusing on studies that analyzed Russian national narratives, examined Russian history textbooks, and studied the portrayal of Ukraine in Russian narratives and textbooks. Finally, building on top of the theoretical framework and reviewed empirical studies, I will formulate my assumptions about the shifts in the Russian national narrative regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians that have evolved over time.

2.1. Memory Politics in Russia

As I have established in the theoretical part, all states, albeit to a different extent, rely on history and collective memory to construct desirable perceptions of the past that will positively contribute to the nation-building process and justification of the present political agendas. In this case, Russia is no exception. However, some scholars argue that memory politics in Russia is an extreme case because of the “ferocity, variation and pace of the competition” (Pearce, 2021, p. 1).

Throughout centuries of its history, the Russian state had to revise its past and rewrite it according to contemporary needs at least four times: in the 15th century, during the reign of Catherine the Great, when the USSR was established, and lastly, after the collapse of the Soviet Union when the modern Russian state was created (Pearce, 2021, p. 1). Even though these revisions were conducted under different circumstances, most of the time, they served the same purpose – to shape and mold the historical narrative “with tales of greatness and an ‘organic’ depiction” in a manner that ensured the consolidation and perpetuation of state power and national identity (ibid, p. 1).

Frances Nethercott (2021) studied the development of Russian historiography in the 19th century and highlighted its two distinctive features. First, despite the emergence of the positivist approach to history writing “in Russia, the ties between history, as a university-taught discipline, and literature remained constant” (ibid., p. 187). That is why the “literary-historian fusion” in the works of imperial Russian historians was not perceived as a breach of academic standards, but instead, it was regarded as “the hallmark of the true scholar” (ibid., p. 75). Secondly, Nethercott showcased how academic freedom was dependent on the political climate, with more conservative Tsars demanding historians to write history in a way that

would legitimize the existing power structure and censor the discussion of controversial topics, such as serfdom and revolutions.

In his analysis of cultural memory in Russia, Alexander Etkind (2004, p. 56) introduced the idea of magic historicism to describe how Russian history itself has become the main source of fictional fantasies: “those bizarre manipulations of history that are designed by these authors [here he is referencing Russian writers such as Bulgakov, Nabokov, and Pelevin] as experimental settings, transforming the identities of their characters and, implicitly, themselves into an alternative cast of historical products ” (ibid., p. 44). This once again highlights the literary-historian fusion that Nethercott noticed in Russian historiography of the 19th century and which continues to affect the way history is framed in Russia today.

Francis Fukuyama (1989), in a Hegelian fashion, famously proclaimed the end of history, yet he argued that certain nations might remain stuck in it. As such, shortly before the collapse of the Soviet Union, he said that “it [the Soviet Union] can start down the path that was staked out by Western Europe [...] or it can realize its own uniqueness and remain stuck in history” (Fukuyama, 1989, p. 17). Fukuyama’s argument has been challenged by other scholars. Thus, Robert Kagan, in his *The Return of History and the End of Dreams* (2008, p. 1), argued that modern nation-states are still faced with the choice of “whether they want to shape history or let others shape it for them.” Russia chose the former. After establishing these broader trends and legacies in how the past is approached by the Russian state, in the remainder of my literature review, I will focus primarily on the historical transformations and manipulations conducted in the modern Russian state, particularly after Vladimir Putin started his first presidency in 2000. After all, Putin is known for his obsession with history and for presenting himself “as the defender of objective historical truth” (Edele, 2017).

Researchers suggest that in the early 2000s, many post-communist states, including Russia, became interested in their national histories as they were faced with the need to write a back story for the newly emerged nation-states and ground it in history (Bækken & Enstad, 2020). James Pearce, in his recent publication, *The Use of History in Putin’s Russia* (2021), suggests that the nexus of history and politics in post-Soviet Russia is a highly contentious topic, and the usage of history there plays a crucial role in the still ongoing state-building process. He points out that the Russian state treats its past as a resource, similar to how all resources are treated in Russia, by monopolizing it. When this resource is consolidated in the hands of the state, it enables the creation of one cohesive narrative, irrespective of any challenges.

Meanwhile Jade McGlynn (2023, p. 2) elaborates that “Russian official and societal obsession with sanitizing history and moulding it into something usable to prove exclusive heroism and victimhood, is fuelled by an insecurity borne of changing ideological regimes and the senselessness of the historical traumas Russia experience in the twentieth century.” Other former Soviet member-states endured the same traumas, yet the historical narratives of these countries often diverged from Russia's, with the newly established regimes perceiving Russia as the ancestor of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union and casting it as the primary antagonist in their national histories (Pearse, 2021).

The national narratives of Ukraine, Poland, and the Baltic states often conflicted with the Russian national narrative by emphasizing Russian past acts of violence, aggression, oppressive policies, and destructive actions toward other nations. Meanwhile, such depictions of the past were not welcomed by the Russian state. Disagreements over the interpretation of historical events and the memories associated with them led to political clashes that became known as the “history wars of post-communist Europe” (Pearce, 2021, p. 7). Historical disputes between Russia and Poland have arisen regarding the memory of the massacre in the Katyn forest in 1940.³ Similarly, Ukraine and Russia have experienced strained political relations over historical disagreements, even prior to the annexation of Crimea and the beginning of the Russo-Ukrainian war, with Holodomor and Ukraine’s nationalist movement during the Second World War being the most salient topics that caused historical friction. Meanwhile, relations between Estonia and Russia were strained in 2007 when a Stalin-era bronze soldier monument was relocated from central Tallinn, sparking riots and cyberattacks against Estonian state institutions. These are just some examples of how historical disputes had real-life implications and caused tensions between Russia and its neighbors, and as Jade McGlynn (2023, p. 2) has noted, “Russia will never be at peace with its neighbors until it can be at peace with itself and its history.”

Scholars have noted that “the intensity of the regime’s efforts in the memory domain peak whenever it feels that its legitimacy is threatened” (Wijermars, 2018, p. 226). During the color revolutions that took place in Georgia and Ukraine, memory politics in Russia became more intense. These peaceful democratic protests alarmed the Kremlin and spread fear among political elites that a similar action might occur in Russia. Meanwhile, Russian state-controlled media drew a picture of these protests as provoked and paid action by Western interest groups

³ On the significance of the memory of Katyn in Russian and Polish historical narratives, and how it has been shaped, contested, and manipulated over time, particularly during the Soviet era and in post-Soviet Russia, see Etkind et al. (2012).

seeking to overturn the government and impose their own rule. Thus, Russia must protect itself from the “cat’s paws of foreign forces seeking to undermine and destroy the Russian state” (ibid., p. 7). In this “preventative counter-revolution,” the Russian state “relied on the mobilisation of history to strengthen its position and discredit its opponents” (ibid., p. 226).

After Putin’s reelection in 2012 and the start of his third presidency, the Kremlin shifted towards even more conservative and autocratic ruling, establishing tighter state control over media, and attacking opposition TV channels and news outlets (McGlynn, 2022). The emergence and spread of counter-narratives that would challenge the state-approved vision was framed by the Kremlin as an effort to disrupt the stability of Russian society and threaten the country's national security. Thus, memory politics in Russia are at the forefront of the state agenda, and the interpretation of history has become a subject of the securitization (Bækken & Enstad, 2020). Securitization roughly refers to the process by which states or interest groups transform certain issues into matters of national security. When applied to the concept of memory, it describes a process “of making certain historical remembrances secure by delegitimizing or outright criminalizing others” (Mälksoo, 2015, p. 221). As such, Russia’s National Security Strategy (2021) stipulates that the “defense of historical truth, preservation of historical memory, continuity in the development of the Russian state and its historically established unity, and counteraction to the falsification of history” is one of the tasks that the Russian Federation must accomplish to achieve its foreign policy goals. Securitization allows the Russian state to justify desired historical narratives and frame unfavorable perceptions of history as existential threats to national security and identity.

One of the characteristics of memory politics in Russia is the active involvement of the legal system in the protection of national narratives. Memory laws refer to government legislative measures “formulated to proclaim authoritative versions of some invariably sensitive history” (Heinze, 2016, p. 5). These laws often impose limitations on the expression of opinions, recollection of facts, and remembrance of controversial or sensitive events, particularly those related to a country's past. While memory laws are not unique to Russia and are present in many other European countries, the Russian approach stands out for its increasingly punitive and non-democratic nature (Pettai, 2018). For example, in the Russian Federation, it is punishable by law to compare the actions of the Soviet Union with the actions of Nazi Germany during the Second World War, to deny the exceptional and decisive role of the Soviet people in the victory over Nazi Germany, and to intentionally spread the false information about the actions of the Soviet Union and Soviet war veterans during the Second World War (Edele, 2017). Mark Edele (ibid., p. 20) argues it is a “partially cynical, partially

sincere embrace by an increasingly authoritarian government of a fundamentally apologetic and positive narrative about a war”, which provides the state apparatus with the means for “the exploitation of the popularity of Great Patriotic War nostalgia for purposes of national mobilization.”

Such radical protection of the state-approved portrayal of the events of the Second World War is not surprising, as for modern Russia, it remains one of the, if not the most important, episodes in its national memory and thus foundational for the construction of national identity. According to Ivan Kurilla (2014, p. 4), “Russian identity is centered on the sufferings, martyrdom, and victory of the Great Patriotic War”. Similarly, Russian historian Nikolay Kuposov (2017, p. 207) stated that the “primary incarnation [of the Russian state] rests in the celebration of the heroic memory of World War II.” Mariëlle Wijermars (2018, 220) highlights that “the political mobilisation of the memory [of the Second World War] has gone hand in hand with restriction of public debate on the topic.” The more important this event has become in the memory politics of modern Russia, the more control the state imposes on the interpretation and framing of the past.

In conclusion, the ab(use) of history in Russia is a highly contested and critical element in its state-building process. Over centuries, the Russian state has repeatedly revised its history to suit contemporary needs, consistently shaping narratives that emphasize greatness and national identity to consolidate power. The state's manipulation of historical narratives to serve its present political agendas has been a recurring theme throughout modern Russia's history, marked by tensions with neighboring countries and efforts to secure national narratives through legal measures. The state's monopoly over history has enabled it with the means to produce and control desirable national narratives, which I will delve deeper into in the following subchapter.

2.2. From Kyivan Rus' to Putin: the Portrayal of Ukraine in Russian Narratives

In the following subchapter, I will give an overview of the existing research on Russian national narratives, specifically focusing on the portrayal of Ukraine. Both Ukrainian and foreign scholars have been interested in the national narratives of modern Russian since the early years of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the emergence of the new independent states (Velychenko, 1992; Prizel, 1998; Smith, 1998). This early research was primarily focused on the narratives regarding the Russian post-communist transition into a new democratic state and the occurring nation-state building challenges (Urban, 1994; Humphrey 1996). Even if the depiction of Ukraine was not the primary focus of this early research, to some extent, it was

still mentioned in most of the studies, because, as Timothy Snyder (2022) noted, the histories of Ukraine and Russia are undeniably linked through their shared past via the Soviet Union, the Russian Empire, and Orthodox religion, among other things.

The centuries of shared history and Russia's succession from the Soviet Union as a global power have shaped the study and perception of Ukraine, primarily through a Russocentric lens, viewing it as a former colonial periphery of a former metropolitan center (Ryabchuk, 1999). This “distorted Russia-based perspective” contributed to the solidification of one of the oldest and strongest Russian national narratives of Russo-Ukrainian unity, which origin can be traced all the way back to the 17th century:

The imperial “grand narrative” combined dynastic, religious, imperial, and Russian national history in order to present a virtually unbroken thousand-year story of “Russia” and the “Russian people.” It is in this narrative that Ukrainians and Russians are treated as offshoots of the same people sharing a common historical legacy, a common Orthodox faith, and, therefore, a common national destiny (Kohut, 2001, p. 70).

This narrative of Russo-Ukrainian unity holds profound significance within the broader Russian narrative of its origin and identity (*ibid.*). This is why Russia's political interest in Ukraine is so fervent and often contentious. As one of the challenges that the Russian state faces today in constructing its national narrative is its continuity, a depiction of “one long uninterrupted march from the days of Kyivan Rus’ to Putin” (Pearce, 2021, p. 17).

The portrayal of Moscow as the heir to Kyivan Rus’ and of Ukraine as a part of Russia's historical and cultural heritage is an integral part of the modern myth of the origin of the Russian state, as well as the construction of Russian national identity (Ismailov & Ganieva, 2013). The origin from Kyivan Rus’ is also foundational to another widespread Russian narrative of Moscow as the Third (and last) Rome. By connecting its origin with the days of Kyievan Rus’, Russia can further establish itself as the protector of traditional and religious values in the fight against the corrupted collective West (Savat, 2022). Furthermore, as has been argued by Ismailov and Ganieva (2013, p. 381) in their research using Russian school history textbooks, “the Orthodox Church [is] perceived as the natural and even indispensable component of the Russian state and its identity.” However, to further solidify this narrative, the Russian state must deal with its competition, as Ukraine also claims to be the heir of the Kyivan Rus’ (Kuzio, 2015). This is another point of tension in the master narratives of these two states. That is why the Russian national narrative regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians is grounded in the idea that Russians and Ukrainians, together with Belarusians, are one nation that “live[s] in one union or within a common cultural space such as that defined by the “*Russkii Mir*” (Russian

World)” (Kuzio, 2016, p. 3). Any challenge to this narrative, particularly from Ukraine asserting its own distinct identity, is perceived as a direct threat to Russia's historical narrative and identity (Lieven, 1999).

Timothy Snyder (1998, p. 1) noted that “national conflicts, then, are best predicted not by the actual precedent of bloodshed, but by the interactions of the narratives of neighbouring nations which have recently attained sovereignty.” In line with the previous argument, Heiko Pääbo (2011), in his comparative study of Russian master narrative with Estonian, Ukrainian, and Georgian master narratives, stated that Russian and Ukrainian master narratives are incompatible, with “the strongest potential of identity conflict” (p. 303). Pääbo analyzed history textbooks from the selected states and the master narratives portrayed in them. Regarding Russian master narratives, he claimed that it has many assimilating elements that justify the sameness of Russians and Ukrainians. Ukrainians in the Russian master narrative are portrayed as a part of the Self, while in the Ukrainian master narrative, Russia is viewed as a distinct “Other.” Furthermore, in its national narrative, Russia claims Ukraine’s territory “as the historical homeland of Russians” (ibid., p. 301). Additionally, Pääbo found the two master narratives to be mutually antagonistic, which exacerbates the likelihood of international identity conflict. And as history has shown us, such conflict translated into a full-on war.

James Wertsch (2022, para. 13) claims that Putin, in his political actions, has relied on this narrative of unity of the two nations “in the early, relatively peaceful stages of his efforts to reincorporate Ukraine.” This narrative was colorfully painted and thoroughly developed in Putin’s article *On the Historical Unity of Russians and Ukrainians* (2021), where he argued that essentially there were no differences between the two nations and that the cultural settings as well as the languages and faith of the two peoples were the same. However, it appeared not to be as effective and impactful as he might have hoped.

In the years preceding the Maidan revolution, the narrative of Russian and Ukrainian unity was challenged by Ukraine’s pro-European shift (Saari, 2014). As such, the Orange Revolution in Ukraine was portrayed in the Russian narrative as a Western-funded coup (ibid.). Meanwhile, Ukrainians were painted as a gullible and immature nation, and Ukrainian peaceful protests were often mocked in the Russian media (A’Beckett, 2013). Overall, the use of jokes and mockery within Russian national narratives to portray Ukrainians reflects a complex interplay of power dynamics and cultural hegemony. These narratives construct a colonial image of Ukraine, positioning it as an integral part of the Russian cultural sphere (Korkach, 2022). In the analysis of Russian anecdotes that were popular in the 90s and early 2000s, Ukrainian scholar Korkach (2022) found the depiction of Ukrainians to be stereotypical and

one-dimensional. In Russian anecdotes, Ukrainians were mostly portrayed as selfish people who were incapable of cooperation, and Ukraine's independent status and national symbols were often ridiculed as well (ibid.). As such, even in the narrative of the unity of the two nations, Ukrainians are not depicted as equal to Russians, but quite often, they are referred to as the "Little Russians" (Kuzio, 2016, p. 3). This Russian view of Ukrainians is chauvinistic in its nature. It portrays Ukrainian culture as underdeveloped compared to the great Russian culture and the Ukrainian language as a mere dialect of Russian (ibid.).

Svitlana Baturina (2011), a Ukrainian historian, in her analysis of the representation of Ukrainian history in the didactic literature of the Russian Federation, published from 1993 to 2007, reached a similar conclusion. She concluded her research by claiming that there were two prevailing tendencies in how Ukrainian narratives are presented in textbooks. The first tendency was about incorporating Ukrainian history within a broader Russian context in terms of territory, events, and personalities. The second tendency involved assessing Ukrainian historical figures and significant events through the lens of "loyalty versus betrayal" to the Russian state (ibid.).

In the following analysis of Russian history textbooks published from 2009 to 2015, Baturina (2016) discovered that the portion dedicated to Ukrainian history in modern textbooks has become smaller. The newer textbooks briefly touch upon the Orange and Maidan Revolutions, portraying them as influenced by external forces from the US and the EU, which are once again interfering in the sphere of Russian influence. Baturina (2016) also notes that in newer textbooks, the collapse of the Soviet Union is interpreted as a global event that had overall negative consequences, particularly for the former republics, which struggled to establish "genuine national revival in their territories" (p. 475). Meanwhile, for the Russian Federation, this event was a tragedy as it left at least 25 million Russians vulnerable abroad in other CIS countries (ibid., p. 475). Hence why Russia found itself involuntarily involved in several national conflicts as it had to protect the interests of Russian minorities. Overall, the separation of Russians and Ukrainians in the Russian national narrative is understood as a "great common misfortune and tragedy" that is partially "the consequences of our [Russian] own mistakes made at different periods of time" and partially "the result of deliberate efforts by those forces that have always sought to undermine our unity" (Putin, 2021).

Such interpretation corresponds with the "expulsion of foreign enemies" narrative template that was introduced by James Wertsch (2008a) in his examination of the Russian narratives. Wertsch argues that this narrative template plays a crucial role and assumes a distinctive form within the Russian narrative tradition, shaping its collective memory. The

fundamental storyline of this narrative template remains consistently stable and depicts the story where peaceful Russia is being provoked/attacked by a foreign enemy, almost gets defeated but eventually through “heroism and exceptionalism” wins over the foreign enemy (Wertsch, 2008a, pp. 142-143). Russia has employed the "expulsion of foreign enemies" narrative template in depicting some of the most significant events in its history: the Mongol invasion of Kyievan Rus', the Russo-Swedish War, Napoleon's invasion, and the Second World War (Wertsch, 2008a). Wertsch (2021, p.100) adds that this narrative template should not be perceived as the “fabrications or figments of the imagination of the Russian mnemonic community.” It is indeed grounded in the factual suffering of the Russian people, which took place in the past. But nowadays, “having inherited the narrative of victimhood at foreign hands and the need for a strongman leader to realize Russia’s destined greatness,” Russian political elites, embodied by Putin, are overusing this narrative to justify the internal shift to an authoritarian state and external aggression and Russian imperialism (Wertsch, 2022, para. 2).

In the Russian history textbooks from the 2009-2015 period, the events of WWII pertaining to Ukraine are depicted in a way that highlights the activity of collaborationist groups, such as the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), which were operating within the territories of the USSR during the war (Baturina, 2016). In these past events, Ukrainians were perceived as traitors who were collaborating with German Nazis or as actors “working on behalf of foreign powers” (Kuzio, 2016, p. 4). Such depictions were less present in earlier textbooks, and that is not by accident. As the Maidan Revolution was unfolding and Russo-Ukrainian relations were intensifying, the Russian state used history to “contextualize political events in the present” (p. 1059). Jade McGlynn (2023) calls this technique “historical framing” and notes that through this technique, the Kremlin managed to make “history relevant to people watching *right now* by pretending that desperate traumas and euphoric triumphs from the past were being repeated in real-time” (p. 4). Particularly, in Russian media, the events in Ukraine were compared with the Great Patriotic War (GPW), which is one of the building blocks of the national identity of modern Russia. Therefore, the depiction of Ukrainian people in the Russian national narrative has shifted from the “brotherly nation” to the ‘branding of the Ukrainian population as Nazis and enemies of the Russian state’ (Modin, 2022, p. 1). The emergence of this narrative goes deep into the importance of the heritage of the memories from GPW and Russia’s victory over the German Nazis.

Moreover, the framing of Russo-Ukrainian relations from the perspective of the GPW continued post-Maidan to the beginning of the full-scale invasion in 2022 and to the present

day. Branding Ukrainians as neo-Nazis enables Russian authorities to craft such messages that would justify the ongoing war and resonate with its population that has been brought up on the constructed collective memory with the victory in the GPW as its key element (Davlikanova & Kostenko, 2023). Such a strategic narrative allows the Russian state to create a devised perception of Ukrainians among its population and justify the killing of the once brotherly nation (Modin, 2022, p. 27-29).

Additionally, there has been a noticeable increase in the Russian narrative regarding Ukraine, which portrays the other country “as a non-existent state” (Davlikanova & Kostenko, 2023, p. 91-94). From the brotherhood of nations and still, to some extent, acceptance of their sovereignty, the Russian national narrative transitioned to the idea that Lenin created modern Ukraine. Such a depiction of Ukraine fully emerged in Putin’s speech, in which he recognized the Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) and Luhansk People's Republics (LPR) as sovereign states. Putin, with the usage of aspects of the traditional victimization narrative, claimed that “this process [creation of Ukrainian state] started practically right after the 1917 revolution, and Lenin and his associates did it in a way that was extremely harsh on Russia – by separating, severing what is historically Russian land” (Plokhii, 2022, para. 3). It can be seen as an example of the use of history to craft new national narratives to justify the state’s agenda and actions (Davlikanova & Kostenko, 2023).

The national narratives regarding the portrayal of Ukraine and Ukrainians that have been introduced in this sub-chapter are contained in various mediums, such as presidential speeches aimed at both domestic and international audiences, expert opinions, history textbooks, and other forms of media. Some of these narratives have existed for decades, while others have emerged recently as strategic solutions for present demands. Some narratives are used as temporary solutions to distract from certain events or frame them in a favorable way, while others are more durable and represent long-term state goals. In the following subchapter, I will cover the production of history textbooks in Russia and justify why analysis of history textbooks is suitable for the study of more stable state-controlled national narratives.

2.3. Russian History Textbooks as the Containers of National Narratives

The production of history textbooks in Russia has gone through different periods, reflecting shifts in educational policies, ideological frameworks, and societal values. During the Soviet era, history textbooks were tightly controlled by the state, with a unified textbook published for each school subject, including history (Donskaya, n.d.). All textbooks were published by

Prosveshcheniye, the biggest and one of the oldest publishing houses in Russia, which was established in 1930 and functions till the present day. According to Forbes, in 2020, the company controlled 82% of the market for school educational literature and essentially had no competitors (Terentiev, 2023). In the Soviet Union, history was infused with the official communist ideology, emphasizing the triumphs of communism and downplaying or omitting events that contradicted the state narrative (Donskaya, n.d.).

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia underwent a period of transition where ideological restrictions loosened. Thus, new textbooks began to emerge, offering a more diverse perspective on historical events, including discussions of previously taboo topics such as repressions after WWII. However, this newfound freedom did not last long. Joseph Zajda (2007) noted that schools in Russia, compared to other more democratic countries, were under stricter state control ever since the early 2000s and had an “officially defined status as instruments in the Russian process of ideological transformation and nation-building” (p. 291). School textbooks became one of the main tools for building a national identity and fostering patriotic values among Russian youth (Zajda, 2014). In response to “numerous” complaints from the veterans of the Second World War regarding the unfavorable portrayal of the WW2 events, in 2003, President Putin initiated a comprehensive review of history textbooks in Russian schools (Zajda, 2007). This review led to the establishment of the Federal Experts Council on History, tasked with evaluating and approving textbooks based on rigorous criteria. Since then, only state-approved textbooks have been allowed to be printed and used in classrooms (ibid.).

However, according to certain Russian researchers, the quality of textbooks was still not satisfactory, and the authorship of certain textbooks was suspicious (Samygin & Tymaikin, 2014). As such, at the All-Russian Scientific Conference of Teachers of the Humanities and Social Sciences in June 2007, Putin found fault with the fact that “many textbooks are written by people who work for foreign grants” and thus represent foreign interests instead of national ones (Bagdasarian et al., 2009, p. 7). At this point, the idea of going back to a unified history textbook has emerged. As Russian scientists claim, another reason for the creation of a unified history textbook was the analysis of history textbooks of 12 countries of the post-Soviet space, which was conducted in 2009 by researchers from Moscow State University (Samygin & Tymaikin, 2014). Apparently, the findings of this research have shown that except for Belarus and, to a lesser extent Armenia, every other country chose to teach the younger generation a nationalist version of history that is based on myths about their people's ancient origins, their ancestors' cultural significance, and a portrayal of Russia as their "sworn enemy" (Bondarenko

et al., 2009, p.16). Allegedly, such teachings of history fueled nationalist sentiments in those countries, and the Russian state had no choice but to counteract these actions. Hence, the creation of a unified history textbook was a strategically important solution to the emerging problem, as it would satisfy the need for an adequate understanding of the past and for the establishment of productive socio-political and economic ties between countries in the present (Samygin & Tymaikin, 2014, p. 191).

In response to these challenges, in 2013, Putin called for the development of a unified history textbook to ensure consistency and accuracy, urging that the new textbooks must be “designed for different ages, but built within the framework of a single concept, within the logic of continuous Russian history, the interconnection of all its stages, and respect for all pages of our past” (Sysoiev, 2013, para. 8). In 2014, after the annexation of Crimea, or as it is described in Russian narratives the “reunification” of Crimea with Russia, Putin urged for subsequent revisions to the history curriculum and demanded the context of textbooks to highlight the historical significance of this event and include information about the role of Crimea and Sevastopol in the fate of the Russian Empire, the USSR and modern Russia (TASS, 2014). The efforts to create a unified history textbook led to the adoption of three different lines of history textbooks, each published by different publishing houses (Prosveshcheniye, Russkoe Slovo, and Drofa). By the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year and up until 2022, Russian pupils were taught history using these three textbooks’ lines (Metcel’, 2015).

Later on, in March 2022, not even a month after Russia invaded Ukraine, the former Russian Minister of Culture advocated for another urgent overhaul of history textbooks and the ‘mobilization’ of all resources in history education (Kurbak, 2023). As a result, two new state-approved history textbooks were published. These new textbooks were written by Vladimir Medinsky, who believes that “facts by themselves don’t mean very much. [...] Everything begins not with facts, but with interpretations. If you love your homeland, your people, then the story you write will always be positive” (Zygar, 2023). This assertion underscores the constructivist notion that historical narratives are constructed and perpetuated based on the values, beliefs, and motivations of those who write them.

Russian history textbooks have received considerable interest from scholars, who have studied nation-building (Zajda, 2014), value transmission (Khasanova, 2005), identity formation (Shardakova & Pavlenko, 2004; Ismailov & Ganieva, 2013), ideology (Lisovskaya & Karpov, 1999), patriotism (Tsyrlina-Spady & Lovorn, 2015) and history education (Erokhina & Shevyrev, 2006). Moreover, history textbooks have been extensively used in comparative studies, where interpretations of certain historical events from Russian and other

nations' perspectives have been juxtaposed, contributing to the research of the so-called memory wars in the post-Soviet space (Caroli, 2023; Klymenko, 2016; Korostelina, 2010; Kurguzova, 2012). The portrayal of Ukraine in Russian narratives is also a topic that researchers have paid some attention to (Baturina, 2011; Pääbo, 2011; McGlynn, 2023; Baturina, 2016), with the interest in this field of research increasing following the intensifications of the Russo-Ukrainian relations.

The introduction of new state-approved history textbooks for Russian high schoolers in 2023 marks a significant juncture in the ongoing battle of the Russian state to control the perception of history and spread of desirable narratives (Safronova, 2023). The generation of Russian high schoolers that is already being taught using the new history textbooks is potentially the same one Putin expects to “march in step with the regime,” and in the event of the Russo-Ukrainian war continuing, they may find themselves on the frontlines (Garner, 2013, para. 4). Thus, it is essential to study now what is being put in the heads of these young Russians. The publication of the two new Russian history textbooks in 2023 sparked interest among many scholars, who studied the content of these “new tools of Putin’s warfare” (Gudz et al., 2023, p. 174). However, these new textbooks have yet to be analyzed in a comparative study with older history textbooks. My thesis will build upon the existing studies and provide an updated picture of the Russian narrative regarding Ukraine, including the two newly published textbooks. At large, it will contribute to the study of national narratives as portrayed in history textbooks and, more specifically, to the changes and shifts in these narratives, which I can trace by adopting a longitudinal approach. As Podeh (2000) argues, “only a comparative analysis of textbooks over a period of time can reveal trends of both continuity and change in historical narrative” (Podeh, 2000, p. 69). By comparing the selected textbooks, I will be able to spot such continuity in the Russian state-controlled narrative and discover whether certain events have been omitted and/or included in this narrative.

2.4. Theoretical Assumptions

Before I proceed to the description of the methodology of this research and the presentation of my findings, I will formulate three assumptions derived from the review of the existing literature that will guide me in my analysis. It must be mentioned that since my thesis follows an interpretive paradigm, these assumptions will not be tested in a positivist sense. Instead, they will serve the purpose of guiding my choice of research methods for analyzing the

textbooks. Additionally, I incorporate an inductive element into my research design thesis to allow the emergence of new insights during the course of analyzing the selected textbooks.

The main research question of this thesis is: “How have the Russian historical narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians represented in state-approved history textbooks changed over the years (1995-2023)?” This question highlights the first foundational assumption of my thesis – that the narratives regarding Ukraine in Russian state-approved history textbooks *have changed* over the years. The past is not changing, but our perception and portrayal of it do. As per the constructive paradigm, national narratives are not fixed but are subject to change over time in response to various social and political factors. As the relations between Russia and Ukraine have gone through major changes, I assume that it would be portrayed in the national narratives as well.

Additionally, in my analysis, I aim to answer two sub-questions. As has been argued in the theoretical framework, it is not only remembering that contributes to the construction of collective memory and its narrative organization but also forgetting. Thus, my first sub-question is, “With regard to what past events have the mentions of Ukraine and Ukrainians been omitted or added in the new history textbooks?” My expectation is that in alignment with Russian foreign policy and the ongoing war, in newer textbooks compared to the older ones, there will be fewer mentions of Ukraine and Ukrainians that would justify their right to a sovereign state or mention Ukrainian culture and language in a way that showcases its difference from Russian. Additionally, I expect that new narratives might be introduced in 2023 textbooks.

Moreover, as has been argued previously, language is a powerful tool for shaping perceptions, attitudes, and meaning-making. In the construction of the narrative, language is of the utmost importance. Thus, my second sub-question is: “How has the language regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians changed in new Russian history textbooks?” In the context of Russian state-approved history textbooks, I anticipate that the language used will reflect the emotional rhetoric that has been recently applied by the Russian political elites. I expect to observe a linguistic shift in the portrayal of Ukraine and Ukrainians in new textbooks, with the increased usage of emotionally charged words and more transparent elements of victimization, villainization, and glorification.

Research Design and Methods

In the following chapter, I present the research design of this thesis and justify the choice of methods to collect and analyze my data. Further, I describe how I compiled the sources that were used in my analysis and mention the research limitations.

This research is a qualitative case study of Russian school history textbooks. Since, in my research question, I ask how the Russian historical narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians represented in state-approved history textbooks have changed over the years (1995-2023), it implied that I should select textbooks that were published and used in Russian schools throughout these years. Thus, I implemented a longitudinal approach to this research and selected a variety of state-approved school history textbooks.

In this thesis, I analyzed history textbooks that cover the events of the 20th century and modern times. This decision was informed, first of all, by the fact that this timeframe is addressed in the new 2023 history textbooks. Therefore, I selected older textbooks that also covered this period to facilitate meaningful comparisons. Secondly, and more importantly, the history of the 20th century is the subject of intense political scrutiny in discussions surrounding memory politics and national narratives (Müller, 2002) and a source of events that are foundational for European East/West memory divides (Stone, 2013; Troebst, 2011). Hence, textbooks that cover this era provide an opportunity to delve into the intricacies of a particularly contested period of history. The exact timeframe of the analyzed events spanned one hundred years, from 1914 to 2014.

One of the emerging trends in the analysis of narratives portrayed in history textbooks is the adaptation of a holistic approach and the analysis of all aspects of a textbook (Grever & Van Der Vlies, 2017). The holistic approach studies the textbook as “an integrated whole” and includes in analysis not just of the context of the textbooks but also their “composition, periodization, visual intertextuality, and chapters that do not at first glance appear to focus on national history” (ibid., p. 286). All these details might be of crucial importance for uncovering the changes in Russian narratives. Thus, in my thesis, I deployed the holistic approach to history textbook analysis and used various methods to study the perpetuation of the Russian narratives regarding Ukraine.

3.1. Thematic Content Analysis and Frequency Analysis

Qualitative content analysis has often been applied to various studies of text and has been proven to be a useful tool in going beyond the surface of words and deriving “meanings, themes

and patterns that may be manifest or latent in a particular text” (Zhang & Wildemuth, 2009, p. 1). This method allows researchers to gain subjective insight into social reality using a systematic approach. The goal of the first step of qualitative content analysis is to become familiar with the selected sources (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). In my analysis, the first step consisted of reading through the selected textbooks and jotting down all mentions of Ukraine/Ukrainians. The first read consisted of scanning through the textbooks to get familiar with their context and conducting a quick keyword search to find especially relevant parts. The keywords that I used in this initial search were Ukraine, Ukrainian, and Crimea.

During the second reading, guided by the main research question and the two sub-questions, I began the coding of the selected textbooks. All the coding was done using the software program MAXQDA. As I was exploring the sources, I was conducting a theoretical thematic analysis based on the theoretical framework and literature review, as well as an inductive analysis to remain open to gaining new insights (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). In my analysis, I used open coding, meaning that I did not prepare any codes before the analysis but instead kept creating and editing them throughout the coding process.

For the open coding phase of the analysis, the initial step involved systematically identifying and coding all explicit mentions of "Ukraine" and all its derivatives within the selected textbooks. Later, I extended this coding to encompass Ukraine-related places, including cities and towns situated within the Ukrainian state border, as officially recognized in 1991. This entailed coding all mentions of Crimea and cities such as Kyiv, Kharkiv, Odesa, Luhansk, Sevastopol, and others, irrespective of their historical status at the time referenced in the texts, whether as part of the Russian Empire or the USSR, and the historical forms of their names (for example, Galicia for western parts of Ukraine, Voroshylovhrad for Luhansk). This approach ensured a comprehensive capture of references directly associated with Ukraine within the texts. Acknowledging the multicultural heritage of Ukraine and the many nations that have lived on its territory, particularly Poles and Jews, I did not include the mention of these nations in the analyzed textbooks in my coding. It is explained by the fact that the selected textbooks did not prominently feature these groups in the context of the narrative concerning Ukraine and Ukrainians. Thus, to shape the scope of this study and to address the main research question I focused primarily on the depictions of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

Moreover, when coding mentions of historical figures, a nuanced approach was adopted. Only those individuals who were explicitly identified as Ukrainian or mentioned to have worked within Ukraine in at least one of the selected textbooks were coded as related to Ukraine. Meanwhile, certain historical figures who are recognized as Ukrainian in various

other sources were not coded as related to Ukraine if they were not identified as such across the selected textbooks. This approach aimed to maintain consistency with the narrative presented within the selected educational materials, reflecting how these figures are portrayed within the Russian narrative. For instance, individuals like Volodymyr Vernandsky, Igor Sikorsky, or Borys Paton, who are frequently associated with Ukraine, were not explicitly identified as such within the selected textbooks. Thus, in my analysis, they also were not coded as related to Ukraine. However, if even in one of the books, a certain historical figure was regarded as a Ukrainian, while in the rest of the books, this fact was omitted, I coded these mentions as Ukraine-related in all the textbooks and highlighted the act of omitting.

Acknowledging the multicultural heritage of Ukraine and the many nations that have lived on its territory, particularly Poles and Jews, I did not include the mention of these nations in the analyzed textbooks in my coding. It is explained by the fact that the selected textbooks did not prominently feature these groups in the context of the narrative concerning Ukraine and Ukrainians. Thus, to better shape the scope of this study and to address the main research question I focused primarily on the depictions of Ukrainians and Crimean Tatars.

Additionally, the following data was extracted from the selected textbooks: text (and pictures in cases where it was possible) related to the portrayal of Ukraine, the total number of pages, and the number of mentions of the word “Ukraine” and all its derivatives. The amount of content focusing on Ukraine within the analyzed textbooks allowed me to conduct a frequency analysis and reflect on the emphasis placed on events regarding Ukraine. Frequency analysis is one of the basic quantitative content analysis techniques, that can be integrated into the qualitative analysis to enrich the findings of the research (Mayring, 2014). Calculations of how often certain events are mentioned showcase their importance, and in the case of my research, it can highlight the increase or decrease of the portrayal of Ukraine in the Russian national narratives. It gave me a numerical dimension to describe the changes in the amount of content related to Ukraine in Russian textbooks over time.

3.2. Structural and Thematic Narrative Analysis

Having thus established a basic overview of the chosen textbooks and a basis for comparison using thematic content and frequency analysis, I moved to interpret the meaning and importance of the codes and themes in greater depth using narrative analysis. Analyzing narratives is an effective method for revealing the inherent ideologies within stories (Rodriguez, 2016). When conducting a narrative analysis, it is possible to examine “how and

why incidents are storied, not simply the content to which language refers” (Riessman, 2008, p. 11). In my analysis, I deployed a thematic narrative analysis and a structural narrative analysis.

In thematic narrative analysis, prior theoretical findings are used as guidelines for interpretation. While thematic narrative analysis focuses on *what* is presented in certain stories, structural narrative analysis examines *how* it is presented (Riessman, 2008). When conducting a structural narrative analysis, extra attention is paid to the language in which the narrative is contained. Riessman (2008) suggests that the combination of both approaches can strengthen the analysis and enrich the findings. Structural narrative analysis was predominantly employed to find the answer to the second sub-question of this thesis (How has the language regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians changed in Russian history textbooks?) As such a particular focus was devoted to examining the rhetoric, tone, and terminology used in the textbooks describe Ukraine and Ukrainians and the linguistic changed that emerged over time.

3.3. Sources

Russian state-approved history textbooks are the main focus and source of analysis for this research. Overall, I analyzed 12 Russian history textbooks that have been published from 1995 to 2023. The selection of textbooks was driven by the research question as well as by data accessibility. The majority of the older textbooks were available in digital format free of charge, while the two most recent history textbooks that were published in 2023 were available to be purchased on the website of the publishing house Prosveshcheniye. Reference lists from the previously conducted research on Russian textbooks were used as guidelines in compiling a list of textbooks that would fit the aim of my research. To collect all the materials needed for my analysis, I used various sources, such as online libraries and internet archives

To set the scope of the selection, I decided to include in my analysis only the school history textbooks that have been published by the Prosveshcheniye publishing house, which has been operating in Russia for 94 years. For over 60 years, it was the sole publisher of all school textbooks in the Soviet Union and was owned by the Russian state until 2011, when it was privatized.⁴ Following the enactment of the Education Law in 2012, the provision of textbooks became the state’s obligation, prompting the Ministry of Education to enforce stricter

⁴ The extensive report on how the act of Prosveshcheniye’s privatization is nothing but another one of Putin’s schemes of “divid[ing] up the nation’s strategic industries among a small and malleable circle of allies” can be read in the New York Times article *Putin’s Friend Profits in Purge of Schoolbooks* from 2014. See here: <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/02/world/europe/putins-friend-profits-in-purge-of-schoolbooks.html>

criteria for selecting textbooks eligible for inclusion in the budget procurement plan (Becker & Myers, 2014). Due to the new rigorous culling process, many books from Prosveshcheniye's competitors failed to meet the criteria, resulting in Prosveshcheniye securing approximately 70% of the state contracts for new textbooks in the Russian Federation in 2014 (ibid.). Moreover, from 2013 to 2017, a Russian billionaire and Putin's childhood friend, Arkadiy Rottenberg,⁵ was the head of Prosveshcheniye's board of directors (Becker & Myers, 2014). As of 2020, Prosveshcheniye controlled over 80% of the school educational literature market. In 2023, the two new history textbooks were exclusively published by Prosveshcheniye. In short, ever since the Soviet era and up until the present time, this publishing house has been strongly aligned with state interests, and that is why the textbooks from Prosveshcheniye satisfy the main criteria of my analysis, which is to study state-approved national narratives.

Moreover, in the selection of sources I focused on those textbooks that explicitly cover the history of the Russian state. Immediately after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, there was a transitional period in history teaching in Russian schools, which has also reflected in the content of history textbooks. In her research, Olga Konkka (2016) argues that the authors themselves were uncertain about which state's history to write in their textbooks. These challenges were reflected in the neutral titles that were used for the early history textbooks produced after 1991. The most common titles were *History of the Fatherland or Domestic History* (ibid.). One of the first school history textbooks to include Russia in its title was published by Prosveshcheniye in 1995, authored by Danilov Kosulina. Since covering the transitional period is not a part of my research interest, textbooks published preceding 1995 were included in my analysis. The full list of selected textbooks is provided in Table A1 (see Appendix).

3.4. Research Limitations

One of the potential limitations of this research is that the nature of the sources does not enable consistent comparisons of the representation of the latest events in different school textbooks. Some events that are included in the 2016 and 2023 textbooks are not mentioned in earlier textbooks due to them simply not happening at the moment when the older textbooks were published. However, the majority of the historical events that occurred in the 20th century are

⁵ Arkadiy Rottenberg is widely known for being one of Putin's closest allies and business partners. Thus, he has been under international sanctions by the European Union, USA, Great Britain, and several other countries since 2014, after the annexation of Crimea (Apuzzo & Bradley, 2022).

covered in all the selected materials, and it still allowed me to trace the shift in the narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians.

Another limitation lies in the format of the two oldest textbooks, *Istoriya Rossii, XX vek* by Danilov and Kosulina (1995) and *Rossiya v 20 veke. 10-11 klassy* by Levandovsky and Shchetinov (1997). Unfortunately, I was able to find these books in a format that contains only text without any of the visual materials, such as maps and images. Therefore, I won't be able to analyze the visual changes of the narratives in these two textbooks. Furthermore, these two textbooks are formatted in a way that does not include page numbers. Thus, it might be challenging to give direct references with the page numbers to quotations and mentions from these textbooks.

Additionally, it is imperative to clarify that the aim of this thesis is not to engage in fact-checking or to debunk specific statements presented within the selected textbooks. Rather, the focus lies on conducting a narrative analysis to discern and interpret the depiction of Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russian state-approved history textbooks. It is essential to underscore that the information provided in these textbooks is treated solely as the narrative portrayed within the selected texts. My analysis does not assert the veracity of the historical events or claims presented, nor does it aim to confirm or deny their accuracy. Instead, the emphasis is placed on understanding the narratives constructed within these educational materials, examining how they have evolved over time, and paying careful attention to the context in which these changes occurred. This includes considering such significant modern events as the Orange Revolution, the annexation of Crimea, and the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war, which have influenced relations between the two states, as well as the portrayal of Ukraine in Russian history textbooks. By adopting this approach, I seek to contribute to the broader discourse on the construction and dissemination of historical narratives without personally validating or refuting the content contained within the textbooks. Thus, I aim to eliminate the conscious element of subjectivity that could arise from my personal background as a Ukrainian who was educated in Ukraine and initially learned the history of the analyzed events from the perspective of the Ukrainian national narrative.

Analyzing Narrative Shifts in Russian History Textbooks

The textbook analysis will follow the structure of the latest 2023 history textbooks. Older textbooks, though differently organized, have been restructured to match the timeframes outlined in the 2023 editions for coherence. The analysis consists of five subchapters, mirroring the chapter titles of the 2023 textbooks. The first chapter covers Russia's history during WWI, the Great Russian Revolution, and the ensuing Civil War. The second chapter explores the Soviet Union in the 1920s and 1930s, focusing on Stalin's rise and the totalitarian regime. The third chapter delves into the Great Patriotic War (GPW) from 1941 to 1945. The fourth chapter examines USSR history from 1945 to 1991, including the Cold War and the Soviet Union's collapse. Finally, the fifth chapter discusses modern Russian Federation history. But before diving into the concrete discussion of the Russian narrative and the way Ukraine is portrayed in it, I will mention some major differences that I have spotted in the analyzed textbooks, regarding their size and the number of mentions dedicated to Ukraine.

First of all, the selected textbooks, despite covering the same timeframe, were designed for different grades. This can be explained by the changes in the Russian system of history teaching. Until 1993, Russia utilized a linear system for teaching history in schools, where the material was presented chronologically from ancient times to the present, progressing from lower to higher grades. However, later on, a transition to a concentric system was initiated, whereby the entire history course was taught up to 8–9th grades, while in 10–11th grades, pupils circle back to all the previous studied materials, albeit with a more sophisticated methodological basis. The year 2015 witnessed the reintroduction of the linear system due to the implementation of a single history textbook, reinstating the teaching of history in a sequence from ancient times to the present day (Baturina, 2016).

Because of such developments, the analyzed textbooks that were published from 1995 to 2013 were produced during the period of the concentric system, while those published from 2016 and 2023 are products of the linear system. Consequently, variations exist in the grades for which these textbooks were designated. For instance, textbooks from 1995, 2000, 2005, and 2007 by Danilov and Kosulina were intended for 9th graders as part of the comprehensive history course, while those from 1997, 2001, and 2013 by Levandovsky and Shchetinov were prescribed for 10th and 11th graders for a more detailed study of the same historical events. Textbooks published in 2016 and 2023 were released after Russia reverted to the linear system. Notably, the 2016 textbook, authored by Gorinov and others, is divided into three separate volumes with a total of 511 pages. All three books are intended for 10th graders. Meanwhile,

the 2023 textbooks, authored by Medinsky and Torkunov, are divided into two volumes, with 496 and 447 pages, respectively. The first volume is prescribed for 10th graders and covers the period from 1914 to 1945, and the second volume is designed for 11th graders, covering the period from 1945 to the present. It is a peculiar detail that the same amount of material, which used to be taught within one school year in the past (regardless of whether the history curriculum followed a concentric or linear teaching approach), has now been stretched into two years with the introduction of the 2023 textbooks. The changes in the sizes of the analyzed textbooks⁶ are depicted in Figure 1.

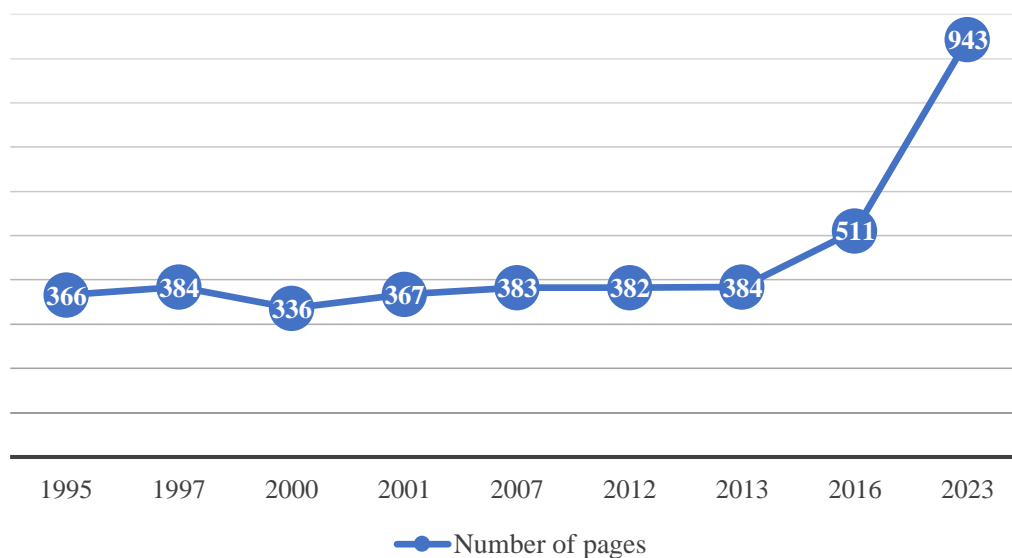


Figure 1. The Size of the Analyzed Textbooks (in number of pages)

By comparing the sizes of textbooks published at different points in time, I can discern the extent to which historical content has been expanded or condensed over the years. As can be seen in Figure 1, the fluctuation in the size of textbooks from 1995 to 2013 remained relatively stable, with minimal changes in the length of these materials. Until 2013, the textbooks were slowly getting smaller in size. However, a notable shift occurred in 2016 and an even bigger one in 2023, indicating a substantial expansion of content related to the events of the 20th century in Russian history textbooks. It underscores the heightened significance attributed to historical events and developments during this period in the Russian national

⁶ I have analyzed 12 history textbooks that cover the period from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day. However, when I consider the criteria that the same historical period must be covered in all the selected materials, then I have a total of 9 complete books, as the textbooks published in 2016 are split into three volumes, and the ones published in 2023 are split into two.

narrative. Similarly to the expansion of the size of the textbooks, there was a notable increase in the portrayal of Ukraine within the selected materials, as it is shown in Figure 2.

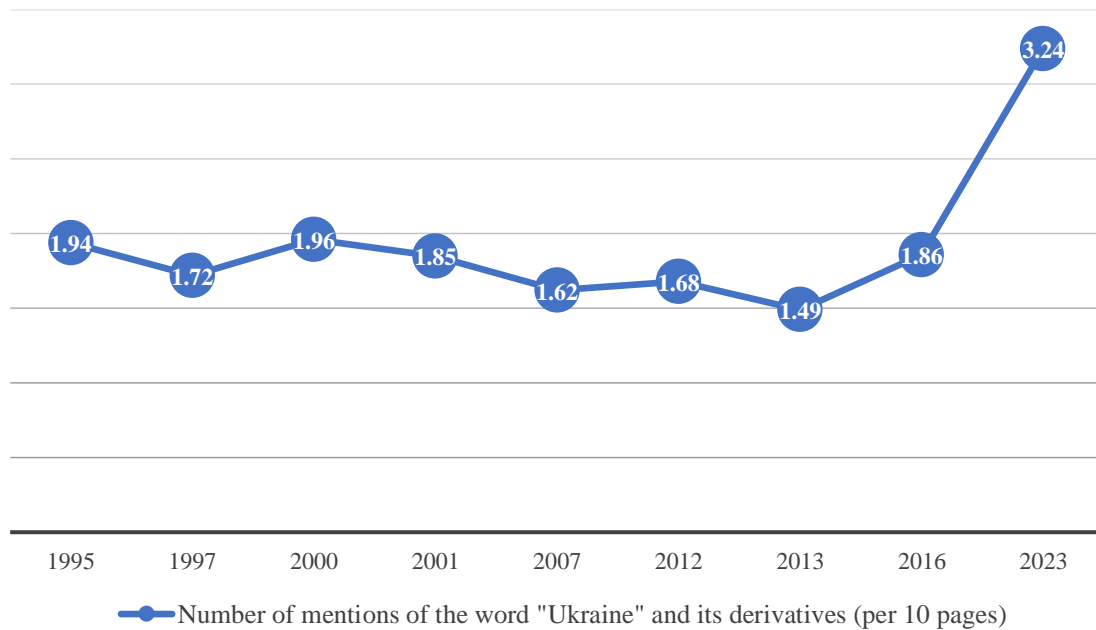


Figure 2. Mentions of “Ukraine” and its Derivatives in Russian History Textbooks

The increase in the portrayal of Ukraine suggests a deliberate emphasis on Ukraine-related events in Russian educational materials, reflecting the evolving dynamics between Russia and Ukraine and the changing historical perspectives embedded in the textbooks. Throughout the period spanning from 1995 to 2013, there existed a relatively stable, yet somewhat descending, trend in the portrayal of Ukraine within the selected textbooks. The increase in the frequency of mentions pertaining to Ukraine in the 2016 textbooks, which were published after the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, followed by the Russian annexation of Crimea and the start of the war in Donbas, was not that substantial. However, in the 2023 textbooks, crafted in the aftermath of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, mentions of Ukraine reach their highest point. This uptick reflects the heightened attention drawn to the Ukrainian part in Russian history and the evolving Russo-Ukrainian relations following the war. This surge in the portrayal of Ukraine underscores the profound impact of recent geopolitical events on historical narratives, revealing a heightened focus on Ukraine within the Russian educational discourse, particularly in response to the escalating relations between the two nations.

4.1. Russia during the First World War and the Great Russian Revolution, 1914-1922

Seven of the analyzed textbooks that were published from 1995 to 2013 commence their narrative with descriptions of the Russian Empire at the turn of the 20th century and include extensive coverage of the First Russian Revolution of 1905 and other events preceding WWI. In contrast, textbooks from 2016 and 2023 directly delve into the discussion of WWI. To ensure comparability of the selected materials, the coverage of the events that took place before 1914 in older textbooks was not included in the analysis.

At the start of the narrative portrayed in the selected history textbooks, Ukrainians were factually mentioned as one of the three biggest ethnic groups (together with Russians and Belarusians) that resided within the Russian Empire and amounted to 33.4 million people or 18.1% of the population of the empire (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995, p. 5; Danilov & Kosulina, 2000, p. 5). Meanwhile, in the 2013 textbook, the given percentage of Ukrainians living in the Russian Empire is slightly smaller – 17,8% ((Levandovsky et al., 2013, p. 7). In all the other analyzed textbooks, there was no mention of the national composition of the Russian Empire. Instead, the dominant narrative was of the united multinational Russian nation (Danilov et al., 2007, p. 5; Danilov et al., 2012, p. 5; Gorinov et al., 2016a, p. 27; Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 482).

The portrayal of the events of World War I (WWI) in the analyzed textbooks was framed within the broader narrative of the Russian Revolution, highlighting the interconnectedness of these historical episodes. The upheaval and social transformations brought about by the Russian Revolution are contextualized against the backdrop of the challenges and tensions of WWI. In the chapters that cover the period of the Russian Revolution of 1917, which marked the overthrow of the Tsarist autocracy and the rise of the Bolsheviks, the narrative concerning Ukraine is deeply intertwined with the broader Russian narrative.

Over the years, there has been a noticeable decrease in the share of depiction of these events in Russian history textbooks. Initially, in earlier books, a bigger proportion of the content was dedicated to exploring the events of WWI. However, as time progressed, there appeared to be a reduction in the coverage of WWI in the analyzed textbooks (see Table A2 in Appendix). With regard to WWI, there are mostly factual mentions of Ukrainian territory where the battles took place. However, whenever the signing of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was mentioned in Russian history textbooks Ukrainian territories were depicted as an important resource and a so-called “breadbasket” (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995; Danilov & Kosulina, 2000, p. 98, p. 122, p. 124; Levandovsky & Shchetinov, 2001, pp. 139-142, p. 159; Danilov et al.,

2007, p. 102, p. 122; Danilov et al., 2012, p. 96; Gorinov et al., 2016a, p. 52, p. 59; Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 86, p. 88, p. 118). This narrative also appeared in the portrayal of Ukraine during WWII and the collapse of the Soviet Union. This portrayal underscores the significant agricultural and economic importance attributed to Ukrainian territories within the Russian narrative. In 2023 textbooks, the treaty of Brest-Litovsk was described as “humiliating, predatory, and threatening the foundations of Russian independence.”⁷ The emerging food crisis and the following policy of grain confiscation in 2023 textbooks were also attributed to the loss of Ukrainian territories (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 86). Additionally, for the first time in the same textbook, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was called the “Bread Peace,” and it stated that under the terms of this treaty, Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire recognized the sovereignty of Ukraine in exchange for food supplies (ibid., p. 118).

The portrayal of the period of the Civil War (1917-1922) illustrates significant political upheaval and social transformation throughout the Russian Empire, including Ukraine. It is noteworthy that in this period, the first references to Ukrainian autonomy and independence began to emerge within the Russian national narrative. Particularly with regard to the activity of the Central Rada. In all the textbooks, the attempts of Central Rada to establish Ukrainian independence during the period of the Revolution and Civil War were portrayed through the prism of intervention (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995, p. 104; Danilov & Kosulina, 2000, p. 104, p. 122, p. 124; Levandovsky & Shchetinov, 2001, pp. 143-144; Danilov et al., 2007, pp. 118-120; Danilov et al., 2012, pp. 113-114; Gorinov et al., 2016a, p. 52, p. 59; Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, pp. 88-90, p. 98, pp. 116-118, p. 138). However, in earlier textbooks, especially those authored by Levandovsky and Shchetinov (1997; 2001), the Central Rada was presented in a neutral way as just one of the many political actors that emerged during the turbulent period in the fight for power. Contrarily, in the 2016 and 2023 textbooks, the Central Rada is portrayed in more negative lighting, describing how it was established by nationalists with separatist intentions (Gorinov et al., 2016a; Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a).

The 2016 textbook contains the most extensive description of the activity of the Central Rada, including its creation and the declaration of Ukrainian autonomy. However, peculiarly, all this information is included in a special chapter titled “Materials for Independent Work.” In the introduction to the 2016 textbook, it is stated that there are two versions of the text:

⁷ Author’s translation: “Ещё одним поводом для начала Гражданской войны стал заключённый советским правительством Брестский мир, расценённый многими как унижительный, грабительский, угрожающий основам независимости России” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023, p. 88).

traditional paragraphs and materials for independent work, and all the chapters that cover national issues fall under independent work. It raises the question if these materials, irrespective of how extensive they are, have any influence over the students' perception of the events if they are not included in the main text and presumably are expected to be studied by students on their own. Yet, the claims made in this textbook are that the Ukrainian population did not support the Central Rada nor any other political powers that ruled over Ukrainian territories at that time and that the national issues were not important to Ukrainian peasants (Gorinov et al., 2016a, pp. 73-74).

In older textbooks, it was explicitly stated that the process of establishing Soviet control in national regions, including Ukraine, was conducted not simply through political maneuvering but predominantly through military means, as initially the Bolshevik party had limited influence in many of the national regions. Concurrently, in the 2016 and 2023 textbooks, it was mentioned that the Bolshevik Party managed to unite different segments of society, and its fight for power was successful because of “the presence of a significant number of people who sought to restore a unified state.”⁸ Additionally, in the 2023 textbook there were several mentions regarding the lack of consensus of the Central Rada about what part of the former Russian Empire should be considered Ukraine. And all in all, Central Rada was described as the Ukrainian “puppet government,” which was controlled by German and Austro-Hungarian troops (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 98). The emergence of Ukrainian aspirations for self-determination during this period was presented as disorganized, incompetent, and instilled by foreign influence.

The Ukrainian historical figure who got the most exposure in the texts covering the 1914-1922 years was Nestor Makhno, a Ukrainian anarchist revolutionary and the leader of the peasant movement in Ukraine. Although the portrayal of Makhno changed over time. In the earliest analyzed textbook, Makhno was extensively mentioned in a rather positive light. Makhno was credited with providing significant assistance to the Red Army in the fight against the White Army. However, it was mentioned that despite giving support to the Red Army, he was still “[taking] an independent political position, establishing his own rules, ignoring the instructions and orders of the central authorities”.⁹ Moreover, the 1995 textbook mentioned

⁸ Author's translation: “Эта задача [установление советской власти на Украине, в Белоруссии и Прибалтике] была выполнена довольно быстро, чему способствовали три обстоятельства: 1) наличие значительного числа жителей, стремившихся восстановить единое государство [...]” (Gorinov et al., 2016a, p. 73).

⁹ Author's translation: “Махно занимал независимую политическую позицию, устанавливая свои собственные порядки, игнорируя указания и распоряжения центральных органов власти” (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995).

that Makhno was by exactly one month ahead of Lenin when it came to the adoption of a decree regarding the liquidation of landownership, nationalization of all land in the district, and its division among peasants. In all subsequent textbooks, this was not mentioned. In the textbooks published from 1997 to 2016, Makhno was briefly introduced as the leader of the anarchist leader of the largest peasant movement in Ukraine. His political views and actions were not mentioned. Later on, the portrayal of Makhno in the 2023 textbook expanded, but compared to the 1995 textbook, he was portrayed in a less impressive and influential way. For example, in the 1995 textbook, it was mentioned that “by February 1919, the Makhnovist army had increased to 30 thousand regular fighters and 20 thousand unarmed reserves, which, if necessary, could be raised to arms overnight. Under his control were the most grain-producing districts of Ukraine [and] a number of the most important railway junctions.”¹⁰ To compare, in the 2023 textbook, it was written that “his rebel army either grew to 50 thousand people or scattered to their homes, hiding their weapons”¹¹ and “the rebels did not have any specific political program.”¹² The narrative regarding Makhno has shifted from an initial portrayal of him as an influential figure, praised for his assistance to the Red Army and his early adoption of radical land reform measures, to a more nuanced assessment in later textbooks. While the earliest textbooks depicted Makhno in a rather positive light, highlighting his military prowess and the territory under his control, subsequent editions gradually downplayed his importance and omitted details about his contributions and achievements.

Two additional figures related to Ukraine emerge in the texts covering the period from 1914 to 1922: Symon Petliura and Pavlo Skoropadskyi. However, compared to Makhno, Petliura and Skoropadskyi were mentioned sparingly. Skoropadskyi was consistently portrayed as a puppet figure installed by the Germans to head the Ukrainian government. Petliura, on the other hand, appeared only in the 2016 and 2023 textbooks. In the 2023 edition, Petliura was depicted in a particularly negative light, accused of trading Ukrainian territories with Poland and engaging in the ethnic cleansing of Jews (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 121). The latter argument marked one of the first instances in the 2023 textbooks of the emerging depiction of Ukrainians as anti-semites.

¹⁰ Author’s translation: “К февралю 1919 г. махновское войско увеличилось до 30 тыс. регулярных бойцов и 20 тыс. невооруженного резерва, который в случае необходимости можно было собрать под ружье за одну ночь. Под его контролем находились самые хлебодородные уезды Украины, ряд важнейших железнодорожных узлов” (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995).

¹¹ Author’s translation: “Его повстанческая армия то разрасталась до 50 тыс. человек, то рассыпалась по домам, пряча оружие” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 93).

¹² Author’s translation: “Повстанцы не имели какой-то определённой политической программы” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 93).

4.2. Soviet Union, 1920-1930s

In the texts that cover the 1920-1930s period, Ukraine is mentioned with regard to the formation of the Soviet Union and its political and socioeconomic reforms: the indigenization policy, industrialization, and collectivization of the agricultural sector. The portrayal of Ukraine in this chapter starts with the formation of the Soviet Union. Among the reasons that pushed the states to unite, Russian history textbooks mention the economic interdependence and interconnection of national regions that had developed over centuries, foreign policy prerequisites, and “the historical memory of peoples,” which contributed to their desire to revive a unified state.¹³

In each analyzed textbook, there were segments with tasks and questions addressed to the reader, which usually appeared at the end of each chapter. By posing questions, textbooks invite readers to actively engage with the text and reflect on key concepts, events, and interpretations, fostering a deeper understanding of the given subject. Regarding the establishment of Soviet rule, the older textbooks posed the question in the following way: “Tell us about the prerequisites and the process of uniting the Soviet republics into a single federal state - the USSR. What was the significance of the creation of the USSR?”¹⁴ Meanwhile, in the 2023 textbook, a new question appeared, urging readers to answer: “Why was Soviet power established relatively quickly in Ukraine, Belarus, and the Baltic states?”¹⁵ Such formulation of the question confirms the narrative that the establishment of Soviet rule in Ukraine and other mentioned republics was a relatively swift process. Instead of asking *how* this process went and giving students a chance to reach their own conclusion, whether it was relatively quick, the question urges them to justify *why* it was indeed so. Such framing of questions that partially introduces a desired answer is common all across the 2023 textbook.

Drastic differences were also spotted in the analyzed textbooks when it came to the explanation of why the Soviet Union eventually collapsed. Most of the textbooks, after illustrating the story of the creation of the USSR, followed it with short reflections on the foundational pressures that eventually led to its dissolution. However, when compared, the given reasons were diametrically opposed. As such, in the 2000 textbook, the collapse of the Soviet Union was attributed to several factors, including the concentration of state power

¹³ Author’s translation: “Стремлению к возрождению единого государства способствовала и историческая память народов” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 168).

¹⁴ Author’s translation: “Расскажите о предпосылках и процессе объединения советских республик в единое федеративное государство — СССР. Какое значение имело создание СССР?” (Danilov & Kosulina, 2000, p. 144).

¹⁵ Author’s translation: “Почему советская власть была достаточно быстро установлена на Украине, в Белоруссии и Прибалтике?” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 121).

within the Communist Party, the lack of genuine autonomy for the republics within the federation, and the failure of policies aimed at fostering national unity. It highlighted the tension between the formal federal structure of the USSR and the growing aspirations for national sovereignty among its constituent republics. The text suggested that the cracks in the foundation of the Soviet Union, present since its inception, widened over time and ultimately led to its collapse (Levandovsky & Shchetinov, 2001, pp. 190-191).

On the other hand, the 2023 textbook emphasized the role of the right to secede from the USSR, granted by the Soviet Constitution, as a catalyst for the collapse of the Soviet Union. It portrayed the dissolution of the USSR as a consequence of the Union republics' demands for independence. Moreover, in 2023 textbooks, the emergence of such demands was partially blamed on the Soviet policy of *korenizatsiya* (indigenization or nativization), which goal was to integrate the indigenous population into the governments of their national republics (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 170, p. 176).

The first mentions of the results of the indigenization policy in Ukraine appeared in the 2007 textbook. The policy was described as contradictory. On the one hand, it led to the “unprecedented flowering of Ukrainian culture and language,” but on the other hand, the requirement to know the Ukrainian language in order to occupy government positions caused discontent among the Russian and Jewish populations.¹⁶ Further elements of the victimization narrative with regard to the indigenization policy were portrayed by such statements as “the policy of indigenization often resulted in infringement of the rights of other nationalities, primarily the Russian population. Russian specialists, even the most highly qualified, were sometimes expelled from institutions and left without a piece of bread.”¹⁷ A similar description of the consequences of this policy was included in the 2012 and 2016 textbooks.

In the 2023 textbook, however, the indigenization policy is assessed even more critically. As such, there were claims that national languages were often artificially created and then introduced in schools by force (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 174). Such a portrayal of the spread of national cultures and languages in the 1920s suggests that it was not a natural process. With regard to the indigenization policy in Ukraine, the 2023 textbook introduces the term “Ukrainization” and further solidifies the victimization narrative portraying the Russian-

¹⁶ Author's translation: “20-е годы были временем невиданного расцвета украинской культуры и языка” (Danilov et al., 2007, p. 148).

¹⁷ Author's translation: “Но политика коренизации нередко оборачивалась ущемлением прав других национальностей, прежде всего русского населения. Русские специалисты даже самой высокой квалификации подчас изгонялись из учреждений и оставались без куска хлеба” (Danilov et al., 2007, p. 148).

speaking population as such that suffered because of this policy. It stated that even the most highly skilled and qualified Russian specialists were sometimes dismissed from their jobs and transferred to low-paid positions. These claims were supported by a newspaper fragment from April 1927, which reported on the decision to dismiss several employees from their jobs because of their lack of knowledge of the Ukrainian language (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 175). This narrative aligns with the statements of the modern Russian government regarding the discrimination of Russians in the former Soviet Union republics and, in a way, showcases the continuity of the unjust treatment of the Russian-speaking population in Ukraine.

With respect to the industrialization reform, Ukraine is portrayed in two different lights. First, predominantly in older textbooks, Ukrainian contribution to the economic growth of other republics was mentioned. Industrialization in the underdeveloped national republics was made possible because of the “generous contributions from Russia and partly Ukraine.”¹⁸ Such representation is aligned with the previous depiction of Ukraine as an important resource. Contrarily, in the 2016 and 2023 textbooks, such mentions disappeared, and instead, Ukraine was mostly pictured as the one receiving the investments and help from the Russian Soviet Republic (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023, p. 213, p. 237). It shifts the narrative into one where Ukraine is depicted as a recipient rather than a contributor to the industrialization efforts, emphasizing its perceived dependence on the centralized Soviet system and the Russian Soviet Republic.

The portrayal of the collectivization reform and the ensuing famine of 1932-1933 in Russian history textbooks has also evolved over the years. The 1995 and 2000 textbooks authored by Danilov and Kosulina, highlighted that the peasants, particularly in regions like Ukraine, have protested against the collectivization of the agricultural sector and refused to join *kolhozes*, the state-controlled farms. The coercion used by the state to enforce collectivization was emphasized, and the 1932-1933 famine was acknowledged as a consequence of the imposed policies. Moreover, there were statements that the Soviet government was hiding the scale of the tragedy, prohibited mentioning it to media and continued to export the grains despite the famine. 1997 and 2001 textbooks by Levandovsky and Shchetinov do not include direct mention of Ukraine with regard to the famine, but they provide generalized information by saying that it took the lives of over 5 million people. Additionally, there, the Bolshevik leadership was addressed in a more critical tone, and their

¹⁸ Author’s translation: “Специфика их индустриализации заключалась в том, что львиную долю материальных средств они получали за счет щедрых взносов России и отчасти Украины” (Levandovsky & Shchetinov, 2001, p. 204).

pursuit of ideological goals at the expense of human lives was condemned. The 2007 and 2012 textbooks kept identical depictions of these events as the 1995 and 2000 textbooks. However, a new document, a diary entry of the Russian writer K. Chukovsky, was added with regard to the famine in Ukraine:

Yesterday the barber, while shaving me, told me that he had fled from Ukraine and left his daughter and wife there. And suddenly hysterically: “There is extermination of humanity there! Ex-ter-mi-na-tion of humanity. I know, I think that you serve in the GPU (!) [Soviet intelligence service and secret police], but I do not care: the extermination of humanity is going on there. Nothing, the same thing will happen here. And I will be glad, that is what you deserve!”¹⁹

The inclusion of such a document served as an example of the firsthand account of the famine and its impact on individuals living in Ukraine during that time. It provided insights into the human desperation and despair caused by the devastating consequences of the famine. Textbook readers were urged to engage with Chukovsky’s diary entry and write a reflection essay on the topic “Hunger and collectivization: a man-made tragedy?”²⁰

In the 2013 textbook Ukrainians were mentioned alongside Russians and Kazakhs as the nations who suffered from the famine. It claimed that from 7.5 to 10 million people died from hunger in 1932-1933 years (an increased number compared to the information given in 1997 and 2001 textbooks). In 2016 and 2023, the narrative remained consistent in acknowledging the tragic consequences of collectivization and the famine. However, there was a major shift in the understanding of what caused the famine. While the negative consequences of the collectivization policy were still mentioned, the blame for the famine was shifting toward the adverse weather conditions and the peasants’ protests, which sometimes took the form of the extermination of livestock and the refusal to give it to collective farms (Gorinov et al., 2016a, p. 138). The ongoing export of grains or the state’s attempt to hide the scale of the famine were not mentioned. Instead, in the 2023 textbook, there was an inclusion of a new document, “On rural assistance to collective farms in Ukraine and the North Caucasus,” which highlighted the state’s efforts to provide the regions that were most affected by the famine with help. This shift in the narrative suggests a move away from a critical perspective on the Soviet

¹⁹ Author’s translation: “Вчера парикмахер, брея меня, рассказал, что он бежал с Украины, оставил там дочь и жену. И вдруг истерично: «У нас там истребление человечества! Истребление человечества. Я знаю, я думаю, что вы служите в ГПУ (!), но мне все равно: там идет истребление человечества. Ничего, и здесь то же самое будет. И я буду рад, так вам и надо!»” (Danilov et al., 2007, p. 182).

²⁰ Author’s translation: “Голод и коллективизация: рукотворная трагедия?” (Danilov et al., 2007, p. 182).

state's actions and policies, instead presenting a view that emphasizes external factors and relief efforts, aiming to portray the Soviet government in a more positive light.

Similarly, a narrative shift was traced in the way Stalin's regime and its crimes were depicted in the analyzed textbooks. In all the textbooks published from 1995 to 2016, Stalin's atrocities were unequivocally condemned, and Stalin's direct fault was highlighted. As such, in the 2016 textbook, it was stated that after the period of mass repression in the 1930s had ended, Stalin did not take the blame upon himself and instead shifted it upon the NKVD staff (Gorinov et al., 2016a, p. 145).

Meanwhile, the 2023 textbook fully adopted Stalin's view of the events and, in an attempt to diminish his fault, claimed that the authorities from local party authorities in the Union republics "did a lot to intensify repression."²¹ Besides shifting the blame from Stalin to other party officials, the 2023 textbook expands its "narrative of unity" with regard to the repressions and argues that the majority of Soviet people perceived those repressions to be justified, considering the "difficult international situation."²² Whenever the repressions and their results were explicitly mentioned in the 2023 textbook, it was either preceded or followed by an explanation for why such actions were warranted, as if to ensure that not only the Soviet people who at that time "did not know and did not imagine their [repressions] true scale"²³ but so that modern-day Russian kids while reading the textbook would get the same impression. Overall, the 2023 textbook no longer portrays Stalin in a predominantly negative view with regard to the Great Terror, as it has been done in previous textbooks. Instead, it offers a nuanced interpretation of his figure. Unlike the older textbooks that critically depicted life under Stalin's rule, the 2023 textbooks presented a narrative that could be described as a "yes, but", indicating a deliberate attempt to redeem his regime and downplay the severity of his crimes.

4.3. The Great Patriotic War, 1941-1945

As has been mentioned in the literature review, the Great Patriotic War (GPW), is the fundamental source of Russian national pride, and it plays a pivotal role in shaping Russian national consciousness and identity. Hence, the share of the coverage of this event in Russian

²¹ Author's translation: "Немало для усиления репрессий сделали местные партийные власти" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 233).

²² Author's translation: "При этом для основной массы советских людей репрессии в условиях сложной международной обстановки казались обоснованными" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 234).

²³ Author's translation: "Миллионы простых граждан не знали и не представляли их истинного масштаба. Популярность Сталина в народе не только не уменьшалась, но всё больше возрастала" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 234).

history textbooks has always been significant and, to an extent, overrepresented. However, the attention paid to the depiction of the GPW has further increased in the 2016 and 2023 textbooks, as can be seen in Figure 3.²⁴

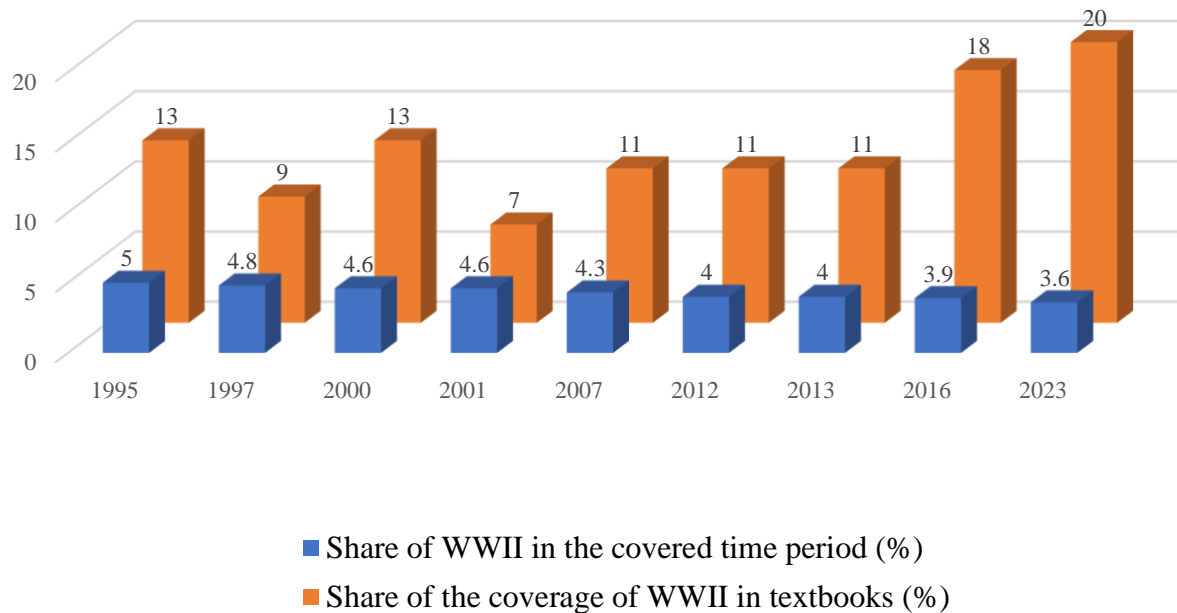


Figure 3. Representation of the GPW in the Russian History Textbooks (1995-2023)

The increased overrepresentation of the GPW in 2016 and 2023 textbooks, which were published after the Revolution of Dignity, annexation of Crimea, and the start of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine, confirm the mobilization of the memory of the GPW with regard to the portrayal of the present events, as has been noted by many scholars before. Such mobilization was spotted in the analyzed history textbooks, as well.

Most of the older textbooks start the narration of the events of the GPW with the portrayal of the state of the world a few years prior to the war and include a mention of the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact²⁵ (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995, Danilov & Kosulina, 2000; Danilov et al., 2007, Danilov et al., 2012). In the 2016 textbook, which is separated into three volumes,

²⁴ To calculate the overrepresentation, I compared the share of the GPW covered in each textbook with the overall timeframe depicted in each textbook. As the textbooks were published in different years the covered timeframe was gradually increasing, with more recent events being included in newer textbooks. I acknowledged that in my calculations.

²⁵ The Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, also known as the German-Soviet Non-Aggression Pact, was a treaty signed between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union on August 23, 1939. The pact contained agreements for non-aggression and secret protocols dividing Eastern Europe into spheres of influence, enabling Germany to invade Poland without fear of Soviet intervention, which led to the outbreak of World War II.

the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact is brought up in the first volume, while the events regarding the GPW start only in the second volume. As such, it not only conceptually but physically divides the materials regarding the perception of the start of the war and the role that the Soviet Union might have played in it.

Following the signature of the pact, the western territories of Ukraine, which at that time were under Polish control, became a part of the Soviet Union. The wording regarding the portrayal of this episode in the analyzed textbooks varied over time. From a neutral and factual “the Red Army crossed the Polish border and took control of [...] Western Ukraine”²⁶ in the 2000 textbook, to a more critical “in violation of the current norms of international law and official treaties signed by the USSR [...] Soviet troops entered the eastern lands of the Polish state [...] Western Ukraine and Western Belarus were annexed to the USSR”²⁷ in the 2001 textbook, to an almost noble depiction of the actions of the Soviet Union “The Ukrainian, Belarusian, and Jewish populations residing in Western Ukraine and Western Belarus came under the protection of the Red Army”²⁸ in the 2023 textbook. With respect to the role of Ukraine in WWII, textbooks by Levandovsky and Shchetinov once again highlighted the importance of Ukrainian resources by mentioning that “Stalin was convinced that the Nazis, in their war against the USSR, would seek primarily to seize Ukraine to deprive our country of its economically rich regions and to capture Ukrainian grain, Donetsk coal.”²⁹ However, such mentions were not present in any of the other textbooks.

All of the textbooks portrayed the GPW through Wertsch’s “expulsion of the foreign enemy” schematic narrative template. Similarly, in all the analyzed materials, the exceptionality and heroism of ordinary Soviet people were highlighted as one of the main reasons for the Soviet victory. Collaborationism of the Soviet people with German Nazis was mentioned but predominantly portrayed as instigated by the enemy, which despite their efforts, could not shake the unity and friendship of the Soviet people (Gorinov et al., 2016b, p. 54). As

²⁶ Author’s translation: “Красная армия перешла польскую границу и взяла под свой контроль [...] Западную Украину” (Danilov & Kosulina, 2000, p. 196)

²⁷ Author’s translation: “В нарушение действующих норм международного права и подписанных СССР официальных договоров [...] советские войска вошли на восточные земли [...] Польского государства. К СССР были присоединены Западная Украина и Западная Белоруссия” (Levandovsky & Shchetinov, 2001, p. 230).

²⁸ Author’s translation: “Под защиту Красной Армии попало украинское, белорусское и еврейское население, проживающее на Западной Украине и в Западной Белоруссии” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 283)

²⁹ Author’s translation: “Сталин был убеждён, что гитлеровцы в войне с СССР будут стремиться в первую очередь овладеть Украиной, чтобы лишить нашу страну богатых экономических районов и захватить украинский хлеб, донецкий уголь” (Levandovsky et al., 2013, p. 185).

such, separatists and nationalist movements on Ukrainian territories during the GPW were not excessively pointed out in older textbooks.

However, it was no longer the case in the 2023 textbook, which still emphasized the oneness of the Soviet people in the fight against German Nazis, but at the same time included significantly more mentions of Ukrainian nationalists or so-called *banderovtsy*. Stepan Bandera, or the derivative of his name, was not mentioned at all in the 1995, 2000, 2007, and 2012 textbooks. While in the 2016 and 2023 textbooks, the term *banderovtsy* was included in the vocabulary, where it was described as “a collective term for Nazi collaborators among Ukrainian nationalists; they are named after one of the leaders of the Ukrainian nationalist movement in Poland.”³⁰ Both the 2016 and 2023 textbooks contained way more mentions of Ukrainians during the war to spotlight their negative character. As such, in the 2016 textbook, in a chapter that described the helping role of religion and faith during the war, a sentence was thrown in that “Ukrainian nationalists, with the assistance of the Germans, ruthlessly dealt with priests who supported the Moscow Patriarchate.”³¹ Meanwhile, in the 2023 textbook, some of the failures of the Red Army were also blamed on “gangs of Ukrainian accomplices of the Nazis – *banderovtsy*,” who contrary to the rest of the local population, which was voluntarily helping Soviet troops, were ambushing and killing Red Army soldiers.³²

One of the characteristics of the new 2023 textbooks is the inclusion of references to the present day during the discussion of the past. As such, with regard to *banderovtsy*, in the chapter that covered the GPW, after excessively describing the crimes and atrocities that Ukrainian nationalists were committing at that time, there was a remark that:

With the help of British and American intelligence services, many Ukrainian nationalists were able to escape retribution. In several countries, such as Canada, an entire "Banderite" diaspora emerged, whose members were actively recruited by the intelligence services of Western countries for reconnaissance and sabotage activities on the territory of the USSR after the war.³³

³⁰ Author’s translation: “Бандеровцы — собирательное наименование пособников нацизма из числа украинских националистов; названы по фамилии одного из руководителей украинского националистического движения в Польше” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 483)

³¹ Author’s translation: “Украинские националисты при содействии немцев безжалостно расправлялись со священниками за призвание Московской патриархии” (Gorinov et al., 2016b, p. 40)

³² Author’s translation: “Однако в некоторых районах западной части УССР наши тыловые части были вынуждены вести бои с бандами украинских пособников гитлеровцев — бандеровцами” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 410)

³³ Author’s translation: “При помощи британских и американских спецслужб многие украинские националисты смогли уйти от возмездия. В ряде стран, например в Канаде, сформировалась целая «бандеровская» диаспора, членов которой спецслужбы западных стран активно привлекали для

In a way such portrayal creates a narrative of continuity by linking past atrocities to ongoing hostile activities, suggesting that Ukrainian nationalists have consistently been enemies of Russia, supported by Western powers. This framing reinforces the idea of an unbroken line of antagonistic behavior from the GPW to the present, perpetuating the notion of a persistent threat from "Nazi" Ukrainians and their Western allies.

In the 2023 textbooks, Ukrainians during the GPW were depicted as traitors and explicitly as weak enemies on the battlefield:

Dozens of enemy divisions were defeated, including the nearly completely annihilated SS division "Galicia" composed of Western Ukrainian fascists recruited by the Nazis. The Red Army destroyed "Galicia" without even noticing it.³⁴

With the use of dismissive and derogatory language, the text aims to perpetuate a longstanding narrative that paints Ukrainian nationalism as inherently traitorous. In a way, the portrayal of Ukrainian soldiers as weak and not a worthy opponent of the Red Army also serves the present need to bolster the confidence and resolve of the Russian soldiers and citizens, reinforcing the perception of the superiority of the Russian army compared to the Ukrainian one.

Another change that I have noticed in the analyzed textbooks is the increased use of visual materials over time. This change is exemplified in Figure 4, which presents the calculations of the number of images used in the chapters covering the events of the Great Patriotic War.³⁵ The 2023 textbook used ten times more images than textbooks from 2000, 2012, and 2013, and three times more than the 2016 textbook. Moreover, all of the older textbooks, in the chapters that covered the episode of the GPW, used exclusively archival photos that were taken during that time. On the contrary, the 2023 textbook included not only archival photos but also contemporary ones, which mostly depict commemorative monuments, memorials, and events that took place in the present time. The interspersed modern photos in the text revealing the events of the GPW effectively bridges the past with the present, reinforcing the enduring significance of the GPW in the Russian national narrative. The selected images are presented in Table A3 (see Appendix)

разведывательной и диверсионной деятельности на территории СССР после войны" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 351).

³⁴ Author's translation: "Были разбиты десятки вражеских дивизий, в том числе почти полностью уничтожена набранная гитлеровцами из западноукраинских фашистов дивизия СС «Галиция». Красная Армия уничтожила «Галицию», даже не заметив этого" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 414).

³⁵ Textbooks that were published in 1995, 1997, and 2001 were not included in the graph because of their format. As I mentioned previously, I was able to find these books in a format that contains only text without any of the visual materials, such as maps and images.

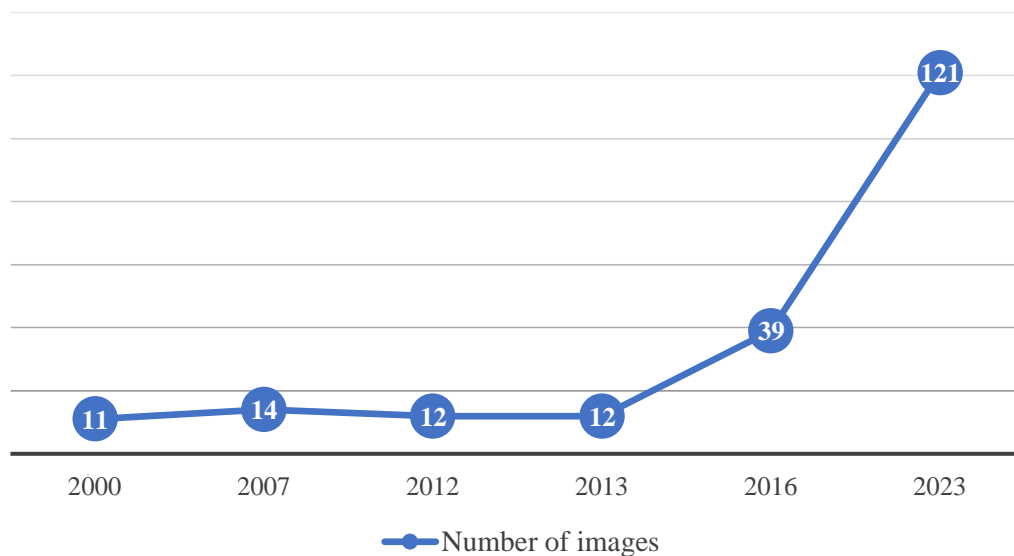


Figure 4. Number of Images Used in the Chapters Covering the Great Patriotic War

Moreover, the rhetoric adopted in the 2023 textbook juxtaposes the way Russia preserves the memory of WWII to other countries, claiming that they [other states] “are trying to erase and slander the memory of true heroes.”³⁶ Ukrainian authorities, together with authorities from other European countries, were portrayed in a negative light for committing “acts of vandalism” against memorials that were erected in honor of the Soviet soldiers-liberators, which means “not only oblivion but also **betrayal** [...] of the memory of the victims of Nazism.”³⁷

Such a narrative suggests that while Russia honors and preserves the memory of WWII, other countries disrespect it and fail to honor the legacy of Soviet contributions to the victory in the war. In a way, Russia claims the moral high ground as the guardian of WWII memory, historical accuracy, and heroism of its people, while Ukraine is portrayed as a revisionist state engaged in historical betrayal of the memories of WWII. By incorporating parts of Putin’s speech in the textbook, this narrative is further developed as not just a historical crime against the past, but also as an ongoing attack on Russia (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 473). In

³⁶ Author’s translation: “Мы видим, как в ряде стран безжалостно и хладнокровно разрушают мемориалы советским воинам, сносят памятники великим полководцам, создают настоящий культ нацистов и их пособников, а память о подлинных героях пытаются стереть и оболгать” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 473).

³⁷ Author’s translation: “Сегодня акты вандализма в отношении этих мемориалов означают не только забвение, но и предательство современными властями Польши, Чехии, Прибалтики, Украины и других стран памяти о жертвах нацизма” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 40).

general, the depiction of the past events of the GPW in the 2023 textbook were pierced with an all-pervading mobilization narrative for the present.

4.4. USSR, 1945-1991

In the older textbooks, in the chapters that depicted the post-war recovery, Ukrainians were first mentioned with regard to the second wave of Stalin's repressions and deportations. It was stated that the victory in the war had raised the hope among the population of the Union republics, including Ukraine, that Soviet national policy would be improved (Danilov et al., 2007, p. 260). Instead, many Ukrainians, especially those living on the western territories that the Soviet Union acquired shortly before the start of World War II (WWII), were branded as the "enemies of the people," and at least 300 hundred thousand of them were deported, exiled, or arrested (Danilov et al., 2007, pp. 261-262).

A completely different narrative was presented in the 2023 textbook, where the very first mention of Ukrainians in the post-war context once again showcased them as Nazi collaborators who "against the backdrop of objective difficulties in the early post-war years" were forming "gangs and criminal groups engaged in murder and robbery" which led to an increase in crime rates.³⁸ That is a completely new spin of the events and depiction of Ukrainians at that time which was not present in any other analyzed textbooks. Comparatively, the older textbooks also mentioned that, after the war, Ukrainians were engaged in partisan movements and resisted newly instated Soviet rule. However, the reasoning for such actions was more nuanced, and Soviet repressive rule was included as one of the reasons for that. In the 2013 textbook, it was mentioned that "both committed nationalists relying on support from Western intelligence services and ordinary people who had suffered greatly under the new regime, losing their homes, property, and loved ones" were engaged in anti-government resistance.³⁹ Additionally, the earliest analyzed textbook from 1995 criticized that shortly after the war, Soviet authorities were spotlighting Russian people as the "most outstanding nation among all the nations within the Soviet Union," which further intensified international tension

³⁸ Author's translation: "На фоне объективных трудностей в первые послевоенные годы резко возросла преступность. Только в 1945—1946 гг. было ликвидировано более 10 тыс. националистических вооружённых формирований, банд и криминальных группировок, промышлявших убийствами и грабежами. Львиная их доля находилась в Прибалтике («лесные братья») и на Западной Украине (бандеровцы)" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 11).

³⁹ Author's translation: "Ситуация усугублялась открытым вооружённым сопротивлением советской власти в присоединённых накануне войны республиках Прибалтики и западных областях Украины и Белоруссии. Антиправительственное партизанское движение втянуло в свою орбиту десятки тысяч бойцов - как убеждённых националистов, опиравшихся на поддержку западных спецслужб, так и простых людей, много претерпевших от нового режима, потерявших дома, имущество, родны." (Levandovsky et al., 2013, p. 238).

within the Union.⁴⁰ Russian nationalism was mentioned in some other textbooks as well, but more so from the perspective of a reaction to the emerging threat from nationalistic tendencies of the other republics.

The deportation of Crimean Tatars was also included in all the analyzed textbooks. In the 2016 textbooks it was mentioned that the living conditions of deported nations were tough and what made it even more negative was the decision of the Soviet authorities that the conducted deportation had a forever effect “without the right of return to their former places of residence.”⁴¹ However, similarly to the portrayal of all the national issues in the 2016 textbook, it was not included in the main text of the book, but put under the “independent study” section.

And once more, the 2023 textbook presented a revisited interpretation of the deportation of Crimean Tatars and other nations. Initially it was stated that deportation occurred based on the facts of the collaborations with the German Nazis during the war, but due to the collective form of the punishment “not only bandits and collaborators of the enemy were repressed, but also many innocent people.”⁴² And even though “their life was very difficult, although local authorities made the maximum efforts” to make it better.⁴³ Additionally, in the 2023 textbook, references to Soviet crimes or negative actions were typically accompanied by remarks emphasizing that such actions were not unique to the Soviet Union, but were also committed by other countries. For instance, the section discussing the deportation of Crimean Tatars is followed by a special section titled "Important Facts," which elaborates on similar actions taken by the American government:

Forced resettlement of social and ethnic groups was carried out by the authorities not only in the USSR but also in many foreign countries. For example, after the start of the war with Japan, the American government decided to intern all US citizens of Japanese descent. Over 120,000 people, including women and children, were forcibly relocated from the Pacific coast to the interior regions of the country.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Author’s translation: “Одновременно власти начали выделять русский народ в качестве «наиболее выдающейся нации из всех наций, входящих в состав Советского Союза» (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995).

⁴¹ Author’s translation: “Переселение в отдалённые районы Советского Союза [...] крымских татар и др. произведено навечно, без права возврата к прежним местам жительства” (Gorinov et al., 2016b, p. 102).

⁴² Author’s translation: “В результате были репрессированы не только бандиты и пособники врага, но и множество безвинных людей” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 351).

⁴³ Author’s translation: “Их жизнь была очень тяжёлой, хотя местные власти предпринимали максимум усилий, чтобы наладить их питание и быт” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 10).

⁴⁴ Author’s translation: “Принудительное переселение социальных и этнических групп осуществлялось по решению властей не только в СССР, но и во многих зарубежных государствах. Так, после начала войны с Японией американское правительство приняло решение о заключении в концлагеря всех граждан США японского происхождения. Свыше 120 тыс. человек, в том числе женщины и дети, были насильственно переселены с тихоокеанского побережья во внутренние районы страны” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 351).

It portrayed a narrative that aimed to deflect blame from the Soviet regime by highlighting similar actions taken by other countries, thus implying a sort of moral equivalence. This tactic of pointing fingers at others to diminish the severity of Soviet atrocities is a recurring theme in the 2023 textbook's depiction of historical events.

Above all, none of the analyzed textbooks mentioned the transfer of Crimea to the Ukrainian Soviet Republic in 1954, indicating a lack of significant emphasis on this event in the Russian narrative. However, in the 2023 textbooks, following Russia's annexation of Crimea, this event was introduced for the first time, framing it as follows:

In 1954, on the personal initiative of N. Khrushchev and **without observing the norms of Soviet legislation, Crimea was transferred from the RSFSR to the Ukrainian SSR.**⁴⁵ No one asked the opinions of the Crimeans, the absolute majority of whom were ethnic Russians. [...] Historical justice was restored only in 2014.⁴⁶

In the 2016 textbook, which was also published after the annexation of Crimea, the fact of Crimea being transferred to Ukraine in 1954 was not mentioned. However, it is important to consider the context surrounding the publication. This omission could potentially be explained by the fact that a special methodical material was given to Russian history teachers, specifically addressing Crimea. However, that supplementary text was not part of my analysis.

Throughout the parts of all the analyzed textbooks that covered the Soviet Union in the 1960s-1970s, Ukraine was rarely explicitly mentioned. Overall, the presented information in those chapters was of a generalized nature and showcased the development of events in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin, the following political changes in the Communist Party, newly adopted economic reforms, and the policy of *Glasnost*. In the 2023 textbook, Ukrainians got mentioned with respect to the national composition of the population of the USSR. It was mentioned that the number of Russians, Tatars, Bashkirs, Chechens, Armenians, Belarusians, Uzbeks, Azerbaijanis, Tajiks, and Turkmens *increased*, meanwhile with regard to Ukrainians, another wording was used – “the number of people *identifying as* Ukrainians also increased by 11 million (from 31 million to 42 million).”⁴⁷ While the increase in the population of other

⁴⁵ In the original text in the book, the selected words were also highlighted in bold.

⁴⁶ Author's translation: “В 1954 г. по личной инициативе Н. Хрущёва и **без соблюдения норм советского законодательства Крым был передан из состава РСФСР в состав Украинской ССР**. Мнения крымчан, абсолютное большинство которых составляли этнические русские, никто не спрашивал. [...] Историческая справедливость была восстановлена только в 2014 г.” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 66-67).

⁴⁷ Author's translation, “Численность русских выросла с 78 млн до 137 млн человек в основном за счёт того, что дети в смешанных браках русские. На 11 млн человек стало больше людей, считающих себя украинцами (с 31 млн до 42 млн человек). При этом в разы выросла численность татар, башкир, чеченцев,

ethnic groups gets perceived as a result of natural population growth, the increase in the number of Ukrainians suggests that Ukrainians are perceived as a group of people who identify with a particular national identity rather than constituting a separate nation in their own right. The choice of wording in the 2023 textbook reflects a perspective that downplays or questions the distinctiveness of Ukrainian national identity, aligning with the narratives and ideologies that prioritize a unified Russian identity and minimize the autonomy of Ukraine as a separate nation.

Chronologically, the next Ukraine-related mention appeared in connection with the depiction of the Chernobyl disaster that took place in 1986 on Ukrainian territory. This event was portrayed almost identically in all of the textbooks, where the Chernobyl disaster was mentioned in the context of criticizing traditional Soviet approaches that relied on worker enthusiasm without adequate technical support and training, which in turn led to increased number of accidents across various sectors of the Soviet economy. Ukraine was either mentioned alongside other affected regions, or, as in textbooks authored by Levandovsky and Schetinov, not mentioned at all. In the 2023 textbook, the Chernobyl disaster is depicted as a tragedy with catastrophic consequences, and Ukraine is explicitly mentioned as one of the affected regions, alongside the RSFSR and Belarusian SSR. However, an explanation as to why the tragedy happened or how it might be tied to the unsuccessful economic policies that were adopted in the Soviet Union at that time is no longer present. Instead, the 2023 textbook links the Chernobyl disaster to the significant financial burden it imposed on the country's budget (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 213).

Regarding the collapse of the Soviet Union and its causes, there was also a change in the narrative, with more blame shifted towards the national republics, including Ukraine, in the 2023 textbook. As such, most of the older textbooks foreshadowed the dissolution of the Soviet Union and portrayed its collapse as inevitable. Some textbooks highlighted Gorbachev's policies of *perestroika* and *glasnost* as one of the reasons behind the collapse. Additionally, the incapability to respond effectively to “fundamental challenges of its time and external environment” was portrayed as another important factor that contributed to the collapse.⁴⁸ Yet, the 2023 textbook puts more blame on national politics and on the very fact of the right of the Republics to secede from the USSR:

армян, белорусов, узбеков, азербайджанцев, таджиков, туркмен” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, pP. 186-187).

⁴⁸ Author's translation: “Исторический опыт показывает, что любая общественная система, неспособная эффективно реагировать на принципиальные вызовы времени и внешней среды, рано или поздно входит в полосу общего кризиса и разложения” (Levandovsky et al., 2013, p. 248).

It was precisely the right to freely secede from the USSR that became the pretext for the union republics to demand independence from Moscow, ultimately leading to the collapse of the Soviet Union.⁴⁹

Moreover, the 2023 textbook focused more on the role Ukraine played in the collapse of the Soviet Union, once again portraying it in a negative light as partially responsible for “the largest geopolitical catastrophe of the 20th century.”⁵⁰ While the Ukrainian referendum on the Act of Declaration of Independence was portrayed in a way that denied its legitimacy: “In the Ukrainian referendum on December 1, 1991, organized in violation of both the USSR and Ukrainian SSR constitutions, the majority voted for independence.”⁵¹ Such claims further play into another widespread narrative in Russia that Ukraine is not a legitimate state. This narrative gained momentum in 2014 after the Revolution of Dignity occurred. But in the 2023 textbook, it is portrayed as if the sole independence of Ukraine is illegitimate as it was proclaimed in violation of two constitutions.

4.5. Russian Federation from 1992 to the early 2020s

In my analysis of the selected Russian history textbooks, which were published from 1995 to 2023, I found the comparison of the portrayal of the events of the 20th century a feasible task. However, the comparability became progressively challenging concerning the depiction of the period of modern Russia and its relations with Ukraine post the collapse of the Soviet Union. This difficulty arose due to variations in the coverage of these events across the analyzed textbooks, influenced by their respective publication dates.

As such, the textbooks published in 1995 and 2000, included only one paragraph on the last page to describe the Russo-Ukrainian relations, which were developing “particularly dramatically.”⁵² Both textbooks highlighted nuclear missile weapons that remained on Ukrainian territory (which Ukrainian authorities tried to privatize) as one of the points of tension in Russo-Ukrainian relations following the collapse of the Soviet Union. Meanwhile, in the 2023 textbook, new details were added, which claimed that Ukraine “tried to delay the

⁴⁹ Author’s translation: “Однако спустя 70 лет именно право свободного выхода из СССР стало предлогом для союзных республик требовать независимости от Москвы, что привело в итоге к краху Советского Союза” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 170).

⁵⁰ Author’s translation, “Распад СССР стал крупнейшей геополитической катастрофой XX в.” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a p. 266).

⁵¹ Author’s translation, “На Украинском референдуме 1 декабря 1991 года организованом с нарушением Конституции как СССР, так и УССР, большинство высказалось за независимость” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, pp. 263-264).

⁵² Author’s translation: “Особо драматично развивались российско-украинские отношения” (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995, p. 366; Danilov & Kosulina, 2000, p. 336).

withdrawal of missiles from its territory” as it “hoped that it would thereby be able to blackmail both Moscow and Washington in order to obtain economic and political benefits.”⁵³ The division of the Black Sea Fleet was also mentioned as a key disagreement in Russo-Ukrainian relations (Danilov & Kosulina, 1995, p. 366; Danilov & Kosulina, 2000, p. 336). Overall, in all the analyzed textbooks, what Russia was left with after the dissolution of the Soviet Union was portrayed with notes of discontent. As such, in the 1997 and 2001 textbooks, it was claimed that Russia was facing a “geopolitical trap” as “the economic ties of European Russia with the outside world [...] now depend on transit through Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, and Kazakhstan.”⁵⁴ The Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was depicted as a possible solution to overcoming such challenges and establishing mutually beneficial relations with former post-Soviet republics. In the 2007 textbook, Russo-Ukrainian relations were still framed in the narrative of unity based on many economic and cultural ties that connected these two states (Danilov et al., 2007, p. 380).

However, already in the 2012 textbook appeared a new portrayal of modern Ukraine with regard to the Orange Revolution, which was described to have happened with “the direct participation of the United States, the European Union and NATO”.⁵⁵ Comparatively, in the 2007 textbook, which was also published after the Orange Revolution took place, the details of the involvement of the West in “orchestrating” the 2004 revolution in Ukraine were not included. Yet in the 2012 textbook, the new Ukrainian government under the presidency of Viktor Yushchenko, which was instilled as a result of the Orange Revolution, was described as such that ignored the interest of its own people and “intensively ousted the Russian language from the media, film distribution, and education system [consequently] from year to year, cultural contacts with Russia were curtailing.”⁵⁶ The same description of the Orange Revolution was included verbatim in the 2016 textbook (Gorinov et al., 2016c, pp. 93-94).

In the 2023 textbook, all of the abovementioned events were also included. However, Russian relations with other post-Soviet republics, including Ukraine, were depicted with

⁵³ Author’s translation: “Киевское руководство пыталось задержать вывод ракет со своей территории. Украина рассчитывала, что тем самым сможет шантажировать и Москву, и Вашингтон с целью получения экономических и политических выгод” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 316).

⁵⁴ Author’s translation: “В результате экономические связи европейской России с внешним миром [...] зависят теперь от транзита через Эстонию, Латвию, Литву, Беларусь, Украину, Казахстан” (Levandovsky & Shchetinov, 1997; Levandovsky & Schetinov, 2001, p. 352).

⁵⁵ Author’s translation: “В 2004 г. была спровоцирована кампания непризнания итогов президентских выборов на Украине. При прямом участии США, Евросоюза и НАТО итоги выборов были по сути отменены” (Danilov et al., 2012, p. 373).

⁵⁶ Author’s translation: “Украинские власти усиленно вытесняли русский язык из средств массовой информации, кинопроката, системы образования. Из года в год сворачивались культурные контакты с Россией” (Danilov et al., 2012, pp. 373-374).

increased elements of victimization, claiming that the former Soviet Republics emerged after the dissolution of the USSR in a better position:

Russia inherited the Union's huge external debt, the volume of which grew significantly under Gorbachev. The former Soviet republics, which became independent states, were accepted into the UN and other international organizations without debts or any obligations, taking control of all armed forces, industry and all natural resources on their territory. The 14 new states that emerged seemed to have started a new life with a "good start."⁵⁷

Meanwhile, Russia received a "serious blow [...] to the country's defense capability" as the modern weapons that were located along the USSR's borders were "passed into the hands of Russia's new neighbors," including the Navy base in Ukraine.⁵⁸

Ukrainian political elites were portrayed as immature, "constantly rocked by scandals," and increasingly influenced by the West, which "offered loans [to Ukraine], but with the condition of restructuring the economy and politics of Ukraine according to its scenarios."⁵⁹ On several occasions in the 2023 textbook emerged a notion that modern sovereign Ukraine was being molded into an "anti-Russia" that was hostile to Russia and fully controlled by the West (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 321, p. 397). The hostility towards Russia was showcased by the introduction of "anti-Russian" teachings in Ukrainian schools and universities, distortion of the memory of the GPW, and declaration of "war criminals (Bandera's supporters) [...] the new "heroes" of independent Ukraine."⁶⁰

The Revolution of Dignity that took place in Ukraine in 2014 was described as the coup d'etat and "a bloody armed rebellion" that "occurred in Ukraine with the direct support of the

⁵⁷ Author's translation: "Россия унаследовала и огромный внешний долг Союза, объём которого значительно вырос при Горбачёве. Ставшие независимыми государствами бывшие республики СССР были приняты в ООН и другие международные организации без долгов и каких-либо обязательств, взяв под свой контроль все вооружённые силы, промышленность и все природные богатства на своей территории. Возникшие 14 новых государств, казалось, начали новую жизнь с «хорошего старта» (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, pp. 265-266).

⁵⁸ Author's translation: "Серьёзный удар был нанесён по обороноспособности страны. Наиболее боеспособные силы Советской Армии находились вдоль границы СССР. Их современное оружие и техника перешли в руки новых соседей России. Военно-морской флот лишился хорошо оборудованных баз в Эстонии, Латвии, Литве, на Украине, в Грузии, Азербайджане, Туркмении" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 314).

⁵⁹ Author's translation: "Политическую элиту в Киеве постоянно сотрясали скандалы. Споры перерастали в драки. Украинская власть всё больше попадала под контроль «экономистов» из США, МВФ и западных «не-правительственных» фондов (например, фонда Сороса). Запад предлагал кредиты, но с условием перестройки экономики и политики Украины по его сценариям" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 321).

⁶⁰ Author's translation: "Для школ и вузов киевское руководство внедряло образовательные программы антироссийской направленности. Подвиги советских героев, прежде всего Великой Отечественной войны, замалчивались либо преподносились в извращённом ключе. При этом военные преступники (бандеровцы) были объявлены новыми «героями» независимой Украины" (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 321).

West” and resulted in the junta coming to power.⁶¹ In the 2016 textbook, these events are briefly mentioned in the context of the reunification of Crimea with Russia and referred to as the “acute political crisis in Ukraine,” which resulted in nationalists taking hold of power in Kyiv.⁶² As such, Russian-speaking population in the southern and eastern regions of Ukraine protested in order to defend their rights. Meanwhile the referendum was held in Crimea in which the majority of Crimeans and Sevastopol residents “spoke in favor of the reunification of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia.”⁶³ Thus, the annexation of Crimea is portrayed as a people's initiative that the Russian government simply respected and accepted, admitting the Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation.

The annexation of Crimea was the last episode included in the narration of Ukraine-related events in the 2016 textbook. At this point, comparing the portrayal of further events in analyzed textbooks became impossible, as the 2023 textbook was the only one to cover other events that took place in and after 2014, including the start of the Anti-Terrorist Operation (ATO) in Donbas, the signing of the Minsk agreements, and the following Special military operation (SMO) started by the Russian Federation with the goal to “defend Donbas and proactively ensure security of Russia.”⁶⁴ Therefore, in my analysis, I will not discuss the portrayal of these events in the 2023 textbook, finalizing the timeframe of the examined events from 1914 to 2014 and their depiction in all the selected textbooks.

4.6. Analysis Discussion

There was one main research question of my thesis: “How have the Russian historical narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians represented in state-approved history textbooks changed over the years (1995-2023)?” which was accompanied by two sub-questions and three theoretical assumptions that guided me in my analysis. After completing the analysis of the selected textbooks, I am now able to provide answers to all the posed questions.

First of all, the basic assumption that the narratives regarding Ukraine in Russian state-approved history textbooks *have changed* over the years has been found affirmative. Through

⁶¹ Author’s translation: “Переворот 2014 г. на Украине. В феврале 2014 г. на Украине при прямой поддержке Запада произошёл кровавый вооружённый мятеж. Президент В. Янукович был свергнут, к власти пришла хунта” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 398).

⁶² Author’s translation: “В условиях острого политического кризиса на Украине в начале 2014 г. к власти в Киеве пришли националисты” (Gorinov et al., 2016c, p. 104).

⁶³ Author’s translation: “В ходе референдума в Крыму и Севастополе 96,77% крымчан и 95,6 % севастопольцев высказались за воссоединение Крыма и Севастополя с Россией” (Gorinov et al., 2016c, p. 104).

⁶⁴ Author’s translation: “Её [SVO] цели — защита Донбасса и упреждающее обеспечение безопасности России” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 403).

meticulous examination and comparison of the content from different Russian history textbooks published from 1995 to 2023, I managed to trace the shifts that have taken place and examine the changes in the depiction of Ukraine and Ukrainians in Russian narratives. The sole fact of the occurred changes confirms constructivist understandings of knowledge and history, thus highlighting the influence of contemporary socio-political contexts on the construction and reconstruction of historical narratives. This aligns with Foucault's idea of the non-existence of a factual and universal understanding of history, emphasizing that historical accounts are shaped by power dynamics and discourse rather than objective truth.

To answer the **main research question**, Russian historical narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians represented in state-approved history textbooks changed over the years, directly influenced by the prevailing tensions in Russo-Ukrainian relations, and overall, these changes merged into a new **war-mobilizing narrative**. Despite some variances, textbooks published between 1995 and 2013 generally maintained consistency in portraying Ukraine-related events. However, notable shifts emerged in the 2016 textbooks, which were published following pivotal events such as the Revolution of Dignity and the annexation of Crimea, which exacerbated tension between the two nations. The most pronounced changes were observed in the 2023 textbooks, where Ukraine was depicted in an increasingly negative light, hostile towards Russia, influenced by Western powers, and actively opposed to Russian interests. This narrative permeated every aspect of the 2023 textbooks, particularly in their depiction of Ukrainians during the Great Patriotic War (GPW) and in the modern era.

The description of the GPW was rewritten in a way that included more negative depictions of Ukrainians, which marked a significant departure from the narratives in the older textbooks. Highlighting the actions of Ukrainian nationalists and collaborators during the GPW aligns with Russia's modern narrative of demonizing Ukrainian nationalism and legitimizing its own military actions against Ukraine. This selective negative portrayal serves to justify Russia's current policies and interventions in Ukraine while reinforcing negative stereotypes and creating a continuity in the perceptions of Ukrainians as “an aggressive minority” involved in “embittered national, linguistic, cultural violence [...] against the [Russian] majority.”⁶⁵ As such was the definition of “Ukrainian neo-Nazism” given in the 2023 textbook.

The second theoretical assumption of this thesis stated that in newer textbooks, compared to the older ones, there would be fewer references to Ukraine and Ukrainians

⁶⁵ Author's translation: “Украинский неонацизм — это [...] озлобленное национальное, языковое, культурное насилие агрессивного меньшинства над большинством” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 396).

justifying their right to a sovereign state. Additionally, I assumed the new 2023 textbooks to have fewer mentions of Ukrainian culture and language in a way that highlights its differences from Russian. This assumption was only partially confirmed. Overall, there were no explicit claims in older textbooks that supported or justified the Ukrainian state and its independence. However, in the 2023 textbooks, more mentions appeared that cast into doubt or straight up denied the legitimacy of the Ukrainian state. Explicitly, such claims appeared with regards to the events that occurred in Ukraine after 2014, describing the new government as such that illegally seized the power and referring to it as “Kyiv’s junta” and “Kyiv’s regime” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 384, pp, 398-402).

Yet, there were also several paragraphs, which appeared to be randomly spread throughout the textbook, which questioned the whole idea of Ukraine as a sovereign state and Ukrainians as separate people from Russians. For example, under the section titled “Curious details,” it was described that, dating back to the 13th century, the word “Ukraine” was used to describe the “okraina” (periphery) of lands (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 400). In another “Curious details” segment, it was mentioned that in the 19th century, “at the suggestion and with the financing of the Austrian General Staff intelligence, the technologies to create a “Ukrainophile movement” were tested for the first time” with the goal of proving to Slavic people, who dwelled in Austrian empire that they are a separate people from Russians.⁶⁶ Moreover, it was described that Mykhailo Grushevsky in the 19th century created the “scientific basis” of Ukrainophilism in his multi-volume “History of Ukraine-Rus” in which “the “separate Ukrainian people” and the “ancient Ukrainian statehood” were considered separately from Russia for the first time in the history of world science.”⁶⁷ The sporadic inclusion of such notions serves the goal of deliberately undermining the idea of Ukrainian nationhood and its independence.

Ukrainian language and culture were touched upon in all the analyzed textbooks only with respect to the policy of indigenization, with the first mention appearing in the 2007 textbook. From 2007 to 2023 a shift occurred in the way Ukrainian culture and language were portrayed. Earlier textbooks highlighted that the Ukrainian language flourished after the policy of indigenization was implemented, but at the same time, it was discriminative towards the

⁶⁶ Author’s translation: “По предложению и при финансировании разведки австрийского Генштаба впервые были опробованы технологии по созданию «украинофильского движения»” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 398).

⁶⁷ Author’s translation: “В ней «отдельный украинский народ» и «старинная украинская государственность» **впервые в истории мировой науки** рассматривались в отрыве от России” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 398).

Russian-speaking population that lived in Ukraine. In the 2023 textbook, the discrimination aspect is taken even further, and Russian speakers were portrayed as the victims of the policy. Furthermore, even though not claimed explicitly with respect to Ukrainian language, 2023 textbook argues that many national languages were artificially created. Overall, the narrative presented in the 2023 textbooks downplayed distinct Ukrainian identity and sovereignty, aligning more closely with Russian nationalist perspectives that seek to diminish Ukraine's autonomy and separate national identity.

Lastly, I wondered how the language regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians has changed in new Russian history textbooks. My theoretical assumption was that the language used in new 2023 textbooks would be more emotionally charged, with more transparent elements of victimization, villainization, and glorification, compared to older textbooks. This assumption has found its confirmation. The 2023 textbooks, compared to the previously published ones, used a more conversational and emotionally charged style. According to Vladimyr Medinsky, one of the authors of the 2023 textbooks, the textbooks were written in a way to include “radically fewer numbers, dates, dry statistics [and] more stories about people, more about specific real events.”⁶⁸ Indeed, the language used in the 2023 textbooks doesn't aim for the factual and dry portrayal of historical discourse but rather resembles impassioned propaganda, focusing on engaging readers' emotions and feelings. This observation fully supports the literary-historian fusion that was inherent in early Russian historiography and is discussed in more detail in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. Another peculiarity spotted in the 2023 textbook is the abundant usage of scare quotes with regard to Ukrainian independence or autonomy, with those two words often used in quotations (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 46, p. 53, p. 71, p. 72, p. 107, p. 118, p. 121). Particularly, the Ukrainian state during the Great Russian Revolution and Civil War was described with the word “independence” used in an ironic way, signaling skepticism and disagreement with the usage of such a word towards Ukraine.

Another notable feature of the 2023 textbooks is the constant active engagement with the reader in a way that ignites not only a sense of pride over their country, but also a sense of responsibility. For example, the paragraph about one of the heroes of the Great Patriotic War is followed by a call to be responsible for keeping the memory of Russian heroes alive (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 327). Such historical framing aligns with the claims of Jade

⁶⁸ Author's translation: “Кардинально меньше цифр, дат, статистики сухой, больше рассказов о людях, больше о конкретных реальных событиях” (Konstantinova, 2023, para. 5).

McGlynn (2020) that the Russian state actively uses and brings to life the memory of the GPW to make it once again relevant and to frame present events, particularly Russo-Ukrainian war, through such a significant episode of world history. At the very start of the 2023 textbook, the authors address the readers with the call to “[understand] the causes and consequences of historical events, to try to imagine the specific conditions and circumstances in which people had to act,” and to answer the question “How would I myself act in those conditions?”⁶⁹ In the following nine hundred pages the authors guide the students to formulate the correct answer, which would be to support the Russian state in all its endeavors, including the war in Ukraine. In the concluding section, the authors once again remind the students that now the future of Russia is in their hands (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023b, p. 427). While that future and how it will affect Ukraine and Ukrainians remains uncertain, the emphasis on historical responsibility and loyalty to the state with the combination of vilification of Ukraine (and the West) that was portrayed in the 2023 textbooks suggest a continued narrative of opposition and conflict, with far-reaching implications for both nations and the rest of the world.

⁶⁹ Author’s translation: “Разбираясь в причинах и последствиях исторических событий, постарайтесь представить конкретные условия и обстоятельства, в которых пришлось действовать людям. Пытайтесь ответить на вопрос «А как бы в тех условиях поступил(а) я сам(а)?»” (Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 4).

Conclusions

This study emerged as the result of the empirical inquiry into the two new Russian history textbooks that were published amidst the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war in 2023. In reviewing the previously conducted research on Russian history textbooks and the way Ukraine is portrayed in them, I noticed a lack of synthesized study that would have included the newest published textbooks and traced the narrative changes that appeared over time under the influence of deteriorating Russo-Ukrainian relations which culminated in the start of the Russo-Ukrainian war. Armed with the research question, “How have the Russian historical narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians represented in state-approved history textbooks changed over the years (1995-2023)?” I conducted a thorough analysis of twelve pre-selected textbooks.

This thesis provided a comprehensive picture of how Russian historical narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians, as depicted in state-approved history textbooks, have evolved over the years from 1995 to 2023. By examining these changes, the study shed light on the role of national narratives in shaping collective memory and identity, particularly in the context of the current increasing tensions in Russo-Ukrainian relations. The focus on the depiction of the events of the 20th century turned out to be appropriate, as the analyzed past events, particularly the Great Patriotic War (GPW), play a key role in the modern Russian narrative. The findings reveal that the portrayal of Ukraine in the analyzed textbooks has been increasingly influenced by contemporary political agendas, culminating in the emergence of a new war-mobilization narrative in the 2023 textbooks that supports the Russian state's objectives and justifies its current actions. Additionally, the 2023 textbooks depicted Ukraine in an increasingly more negative light compared to older textbooks. Ukrainians were presented as hostile towards Russians, influenced by Western powers, actively opposed to Russian interests, and as a threat to Russian security and national memory.

This research underscores the power of educational materials in constructing and perpetuating state-sanctioned histories, highlighting the intricate relationship between politics, memory, and education. Ultimately, this thesis contributes to the broader understanding of how authoritarian regimes manipulate historical narratives to reinforce their authority and legitimize their actions, resonating with Orwell's assertion that "who controls the past, controls the future." The findings of this thesis demonstrate how the Russian state uses educational tools to foster a particular collective memory of the past and justify its geopolitical strategies. The emergence of a war-mobilization narrative underscores the role of history education in

preparing and conditioning future Russian generations to support and participate in state agendas, including war.

However, one of the possible limitations of this study is the gap between the content of the textbooks and how it is actually taught and perceived in the classroom. While my analysis revealed the Russian state-approved narrative regarding Ukraine, it does not account for the complexities of classroom instruction and individual interpretation of the presented narrative. Consequently, I cannot (and do not try to) conclusively claim that the narratives in these textbooks will directly shape students' minds or influence their national identity and collective memory of the new generation. Yet, textbooks have been argued to have an effect on all of the above-mentioned things (Apple & Christian-Smith, 2017). Still, the true impact of these textbooks depends on various factors, including teaching methods, educators' perspectives, and students' reception. The future direction of this research could focus on exactly that, investigating how the newly published textbooks are utilized in the classrooms and how they are perceived by the Russian students. Of course, such research could be potentially challenging to conduct due to the political sensitivity and restrictions on academic freedoms in the current authoritarian Russian context.

Another, probably more feasible future research could focus on other narrative shifts that occurred in Russian history textbooks over the years. Paul D'Anieri (2023) – a scholar researching Russo-Ukrainian relations – argued that the rhetoric employed by the Kremlin during the ongoing Russo-Ukrainian war implies that Russia has ambitions that extend beyond Ukraine. And such could be a suggestion for the future direction of this research topic. Although it was not the focus of my analysis, I did notice an increased negative portrayal of the Baltic States in the analyzed textbooks. The “forest brothers” which operated in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia and fought against the Soviet Union during the World War II and for some time after it, were portrayed in a similar way as Ukrainian *banderovtsy*. While in the portrayal of modern events, these states were depicted as the ones engaged in history revisionism, glorification of Nazi collaborators, and, similarly with Ukraine, betrayal of the memory of the victims of Nazism. A more thorough analysis could be conducted to study how the Russian narrative has changed over the years with regards to the Baltic States, and especially how it is presented in the 2023 textbook.

Additionally, the findings of this research could be useful for policymakers, educators, and scholars who aim to counteract propaganda, promote historical accuracy, and support critical thinking in educational curricula. Moreover, this research has societal relevance for

Ukraine in terms of compiling crucial information on the dominant and up-to-date Russian national narratives regarding Ukraine and Ukrainians. For Ukraine, it is paramount to keep track of the narratives created and spread within Russian society that are used to justify and legitimize the ongoing war and, therefore, debunk them. As war takes place not only on the battlefield but also in people's minds, understanding and countering these narratives is essential for Ukraine's efforts to defend its sovereignty in the face of external Russian aggression.

References

- A'Beckett, L. (2013). Strategies to Discredit Opponents: Russian Presentations of Events in Countries of the Former Soviet Union. *Psychology of Language and Communication*, 17(2), 133–156. <https://doi.org/10.2478/plc-2013-0009>
- Anderson, B. R. O. (2006). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (Revised ed). Verso.
- Apple, M. W., & Christian-Smith, L. K. (Eds.). (2017). *The Politics of the Textbook* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315021089>
- Apuzzo, M., & Bradley, J. (2022, March 16). Oligarchs got richer despite sanctions but this time may be different. Business Standard. Retrieved May 17, 2024, from https://www.business-standard.com/article/international/oligarchs-got-richer-despite-sanctions-but-this-time-may-be-different-122031700080_1.html
- Assmann, A. (2008). Transformations between History and Memory. *Collective Memory and Collective Identity*, 75(1), 49–72.
- Assmann, A. (2009). Memory, Individual and Collective. In R. Goodin & C. Tilly (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis* (1st ed., pp. 210–224). Oxford University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199270439.003.0011>
- Bækken & Enstad. (2020). Identity under Siege: Selective Securitization of History in Putin's Russia. *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 98(2), 321. <https://doi.org/10.5699/slaveasteurorev2.98.2.0321>
- Bagdasarian, V. E., Abdulayev, E. N., Klychnikov, V. M., Larionov, A. E., Morozov, A. Y., Orlov, I. B., & Stroganova, S. M. (2009). *Shkolnyi uchebnik istorii i gosudarstvennaia politika [School history textbook and public policy]*. TSentr Problemnogo Analiza i Gosudarstvenno-Upravlencheskogo Proektirovaniia [Center for Problem Analysis and Public Management Design].

- Baturina, S. (2011). Do pytannia pro predstavleniia Ukrainskoi istorii v dydaktychnii literaturi Rosiiskoi Federatsii [To the question about the representation of Ukrainian history in the didactic literature of the Russian Federation]. *Istoriografichni doslidzhennia v Ukraini [Historiographic research in Ukraine]*, 21, 315–334.
- Baturina, S. (2016). Ukrainiska istoriia v suchasnykh rosiiskykh pidruchnykakh z istorii (2009–2015) [Ukrainian history in modern Russian history textbooks (2009–2015)]. *Istoriografichni doslidzhennia v Ukraini [Historiographic research in Ukraine]*, 468–482.
- Becker, J., & Lee Myers, S. (2014, November 1). Putin’s Friend Profits in Purge of Schoolbooks. *The New York Times*. Retrieved May 17, 2024, from <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/11/02/world/europe/putins-friend-profits-in-purge-of-schoolbooks.html>
- Berger, P. L., & Luckmann, T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality*. Anchor Books.
- Berger, S., Donovan, M., & Passmore, K. (Eds.). (2002). *Writing National Histories* (0 ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203053638>
- Bilali, R. (2013). National Narrative and Social Psychological Influences in Turks’ Denial of the Mass Killings of Armenians as Genocide. *Journal of Social Issues*, 69(1), 16–33. <https://doi.org/10.1111/josi.12001>
- Bondarenko, D. Y., Vdovin, A. I., Zhykov, A. D., & Kolpakidi, A. I. (2009). *Osveshhenie Obshhej Istorii Rossii i Narodov Postsovetskih Stran v Shkol’nyh Uchebnikah Istorii Novyh Nezavisimyh Gosudarstv [Coverage of the General History of Russia and the Peoples of Post-Soviet Countries in School Textbooks on the History of the Newly Independent States]*. https://www.hse.ru/data/2010/07/01/1218886387/doclad_hist_02_light.pdf
- Brubaker, R., & Cooper, F. (2000). Beyond “Identity.” *Theory and Society*, 29(1), 1–47.

- Caroli, D. (2023). History teaching in Russia and Ukraine: the revision of school textbooks in a comparative perspective (1991-2014). *Rivista di Storia dell'Educazione*, 10(2), 45-59.
- Danilov, A. A., & Kosulina, L. G. (1995). *Istoriya Rossii, XX vek [History of Russia, 20th century]* (1st ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Danilov, A. A., & Kosulina, L. G. (2000). *Istoriya Rossii, XX vek [History of Russia, 20th century]* (6th ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Danilov, A. A., Kosulina, L. G., & Brandt, M. Y. (Eds.). (2007). *Istoriya Rossii XX - nachalo XXI veka [History of Russia, 20th – the beginning of the 21st century]* (4th ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Danilov, A. A., Kosulina, L. G., & Brandt, M. Y. (2012). *Istoriya Rossii XX - nachalo XXI veka [History of Russia, 20th – the beginning of the 21st century]* (9th ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Edele, M. (2017). Fighting Russia's History Wars: Vladimir Putin and the Codification of World War II. *History and Memory*, 29(2), 90.
<https://doi.org/10.2979/histmemo.29.2.05>
- Eller, J. D., & Coughlan, R. M. (1993). The poverty of primordialism: The demystification of ethnic attachments. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 16(2), 183–202.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870.1993.9993779>
- Erokhina, M., & Shevyrev, A. (2006, May). Old heritage and new trends: School history textbooks in Russia. In *School history textbooks across cultures*. Oxford: Symposium Books.
- Etkind, A. (2004). Hard and Soft in Cultural Memory: Political Mourning in Russia and Germany. *Grey Room*, 16, 36–59. <https://doi.org/10.1162/1526381041887439>
- Feldman, S. (2003). Enforcing Social Conformity: A Theory of Authoritarianism. *Political Psychology*, 24(1), 41–74. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0162-895X.00316>
- Foucault, M. (1972). *THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF KNOWLEDGE*. Pantheon Books.

- Foucault, M. (1995). *DISCIPLINE AND PUNISH*. Vintage Books.
- Funkenstein, A. (1989). Collective Memory and Historical Consciousness. *History and Memory*, 1(1), 5–26.
- Gedi, N., & Elam, Y. (1996). Collective Memory—What Is It? *History and Memory*, 8(1), 30–50.
- Gorinov, M. M., Danilov, A. A., Morukov, M. Y., Semenenko, I. S., & Tokareva, A. Y. (2016). *Istoriya Rossii. 10 klass. Uchebnik dlja obshheobrazovatel'nyh organizacij v 3 chastjah. Chast' 1 [Russian history. Grade 10. Textbook for general education organizations in 3 parts. Part 1]* (A. V. Torkunov, Ed.; 1st ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Gorinov, M. M., Danilov, A. A., Morukov, M. Y., Semenenko, I. S., & Tokareva, A. Y. (2016). *Istoriya Rossii. 10 klass. Uchebnik dlja obshheobrazovatel'nyh organizacij v 3 chastjah. Chast' 2 [Russian history. Grade 10. Textbook for general education organizations in 3 parts. Part 2]* (A. V. Torkunov, Ed.; 1st ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Gorinov, M. M., Danilov, A. A., Morukov, M. Y., Tokareva, A. Y., & Semenenko. (2016). *Istoriya Rossii. 10 klass. Uchebnik dlja obshheobrazovatel'nyh organizacij v 3 chastjah. Chast' 3 [Russian history. Grade 10. Textbook for general education organizations in 3 parts. Part 3]* (A. V. Torkunov, Ed.; 1st ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Grever, M., & Van Der Vlies, T. (2017). Why national narratives are perpetuated: A literature review on new insights from history textbook research. *London Review of Education*, 15(2). <https://doi.org/10.18546/LRE.15.2.11>
- Gudz, V., Poliakova, L., & Krylova, A. (2023). Shkilni pidruchnyky z istorii v putinskii Rosii yak zasib informatsiinoi viiny z Ukrainoiu [School history textbooks in Putin's Russia as a tool of information war with Ukraine]. *Problems of humanities. History*, 56(14), 173–184. <https://doi.org/10.24919/2312-2595.14/56.19>
- Halbwachs, M. (1980). *The collective memory* (1st ed). Harper & Row.

- Heinze, E. (2016). *Beyond 'memory laws': Towards a general theory of law and historical discourse*. 413–434.
- Humphrey, C. (1996). Myth-making, Narratives, and the Dispossessed in Russia. *Cambridge Anthropology*, 70-92.
- Hurd, I. (2009). Constructivism. In C. Reus-Smit & D. Snidal (Eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of International Relations* (1st ed., pp. 298–316). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199219322.003.0017>
- Ismailov, M., & Ganieva, N. (2013). In Search for the Russian National Identity: Do History Textbooks Hold the Answer? *Journal of Alternative Perspectives in the Social Sciences*, 5(2), 366–392.
- Kohut, Z. E. (2001). Origins of the Unity Paradigm: Ukraine and the Construction of Russian National History (1620-1860). *Eighteenth-Century Studies*, 35(1), 70–76.
<https://doi.org/10.1353/ecs.2001.0060>
- Konstantinova, M. (2023, August 9). Medinsky's Textbook: History or anxious propaganda? *Deutsche Welle*. <https://www.dw.com/ru/ucebnik-medinskogo-istoria-ili-vzvolnovannaa-agitka/a-66481442>
- Korkach, D. A. (2022). Colonial Narrative in Russian Anecdotes in 1990-2000 (On the Materials of the “White Parrot Club” TV Program). *Scientific notes of Taurida National V.I. Vernadsky University, series Historical Sciences*, 4, 70–74.
<https://doi.org/10.32782/2663-5984/2022/4.12>
- Koselleck, R. (1985). *Futures past: On the semantics of historical time* (K. Tribe, Trans.). MIT Press.
- Kubik, J., & Bernhard, M. (2014). A Theory of the Politics of Memory. In M. Bernhard & J. Kubik (Eds.), *Twenty Years After Communism* (pp. 7–34). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199375134.003.0002>
- Kurilla, I. (2014). The Implications of Russia's Law against the “Rehabilitation of Nazism.” *PONARS Eurasia Policy Memo No. 331*, 1–5.

- Kuzio, T. (2005). Nation building, history writing and competition over the legacy of Kyiv Rus in Ukraine. *Nationalities papers*, 33(1), 29-58.
- Kuzio, T. (2016). Russian National Identity and the Russia-Ukraine Crisis. *Federal Academy for Security Policy*, 20.
- Levandovsky, A. A., & Schetinov, Y. A. (2001). *Rossiia v 20 veke. 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th century. 10-11th grades]* (5th ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Levandovsky, A. A., Schetinov, Y. A., & Mironenko, S. V. (2013). *Istoriya Rossii XX - nachalo XXI veka [History of Russia, 20th – the beginning of the 21st century]* (7th ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Levandovsky, A. A., & Shchetinov, Y. A. (1997). *Rossiia v 20 veke. 10-11 klassy [Russia in the 20th century. 10-11th grades]* (1st ed.). Prosveshcheniye.
- Lisovskaya, E., & Karpov, V. (1999). New ideologies in postcommunist Russian textbooks. *Comparative Education Review*, 43(4), 522-543.
- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). *Doing a Thematic Analysis: A Practical, Step-by-Step Guide for Learning and Teaching Scholars*. 8(3).
- Mälksoo, M. (2015). ‘Memory must be defended’: Beyond the politics of mnemonical security. *Security Dialogue*, 46(3), 221–237.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010614552549>
- Mayring, P. (2014). *Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution*.
- McGlynn, J. (2022). Beyond Analogy: Historical Framing Analysis of Russian Political Discourse. In J. McGlynn & O. T. Jones (Eds.), *Researching Memory and Identity in Russia and Eastern Europe* (pp. 141–159). Springer International Publishing.
https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99914-8_9
- McGlynn, J. (2023). *Memory makers: The politics of the past in Putin’s Russia*. Bloomsbury Academic.

- Mead, G. H. (1929). *National-Mindedness and International-Mindedness*. 39(4), 385–407.
- Medinsky, V. R., & Torkunov, A. V. (2023a). *Istoriya Rossii, 1914 – 1945 gody [History of Russia, 1914 – 1945 years]* (1st ed., Vol. 1). Prosveshcheniye.
- Medinsky, V. R., & Torkunov, A. V. (2023b). *Istoriya Rossii, 1945 – nachalo XXI veka / [History of Russia, 1945 – the beginning of the 21st century]* (1st ed., Vol. 2). Prosveshcheniye.
- Modin, L. (2022). *Narratives in Conversation*.
- Narvaez, R. F. (2006). Embodiment, Collective Memory and Time. *Body & Society*, 12(3), 51–73. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1357034X06067156>
- Nethercott, F. (2021). *Writing history in late Imperial Russia: Scholarship and the literary canon*. Bloomsbury Academic.
- Olson, D. R. (1980). On the Language and Authority of Textbooks. *Journal of Communication*, 30(1), 186–196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1980.tb01786.x>
- Orwell, G. (2022). *1984*. Memoria books.
- Pettai, E.-C. (2018). Protecting Memory or Criminalizing Dissent: Memory Laws in Lithuania and Latvia. In E. Barkan & A. Lang (Eds.), *Memory Laws and Historical Justice* (pp. 167–193). Springer International Publishing. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94914-3_7
- Plochy, S. (2008). *Ukraine and Russia: Representations of the past*. University of Toronto Press.
- Podeh. (2000). History and Memory in the Israeli Educational System: The Portrayal of the Arab-Israeli Conflict in History Textbooks (1948-2000). *History and Memory*, 12(1), 65. <https://doi.org/10.2979/his.2000.12.1.65>
- Price, R., & Reus - Smit, C. (1998). Dangerous Liaisons?: Critical International Theory and Constructivism. *European Journal of International Relations*, 4(3), 259–294. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066198004003001>

- Prizel, I. (1998). National identity and foreign policy: nationalism and leadership in Poland, Russia and Ukraine (Vol. 103). Cambridge University Press.
- Renan, E. (2013). *Nation and narration* (M. Thom, Trans.; 1. publ., repr). Routledge.
- Ryabchuk, M. (1999). *UKRAINIAN CASE TO UKRAINIAN CAUSE*.
- Said, E. (2000). Invention, Memory, and Place. *Critical Inquiry*, 26(2), 175–192.
- Samygin, S., & Tymaikin, I. (2014). *Edinyy Uchebnik Istorii kak Element Sistemy Natsionalnoy Identichnosti [Uniform Textbook of History as Element of System of National Identity]*.
- Schimmelfennig, F. (2002). Goffman meets IR: Dramaturgical action in international community. *International Review of Sociology*, 12(3), 417–437.
- Shardakova, M., & Pavlenko, A. (2004). Identity options in Russian textbooks. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 3(1), 25-46.
- Slater, D., & Fenner, S. (2011). STATE POWER AND STAYING POWER: INFRASTRUCTURAL MECHANISMS AND AUTHORITARIAN DURABILITY. *Journal of International Affairs*, 65(1), 15–29.
- Snyder, T. (1998). The Polish-Lithuanian commonwealth since 1989: National narratives in relations among Poland, Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, 4(3), 1–32. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13537119808428536>
- Sontag, S. (2003). *Regarding the pain of others* (1st ed). Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
- Stone, D. (2013). Memory Wars in the ‘New Europe.’ In D. Stone, *The Holocaust, Fascism and Memory* (pp. 172–183). Palgrave Macmillan UK. https://doi.org/10.1057/9781137029539_13
- Sysoiev, G. (2013, June 13). Proekt Edinyh Uchebnikov Istorii Predstavjat na Obsuzhdenie v Sentjabre [A draft of Unified History textbook will be presented for discussion in September]. RIA Novosti. Retrieved April 21, 2024, from <https://ria.ru/20130613/943079027.html>

- Sztompka, P. (1991). *Society in action: The theory of social becoming*. University of Chicago Press.
- TASS. (2014, June 2). Putin poruchil dopolnit' uchebnik istorii RF glavami o Kryme i Sevastopole [Putin instructed to supplement the Russian history textbook with chapters on Crimea and Sevastopol]. TASS. Retrieved April 21, 2024, from <https://tass.ru/obschestvo/1231487>
- Terra, L. (2014). New histories for a new state: A study of history textbook content in Northern Ireland. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 46(2), 225–248.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00220272.2013.797503>
- The war of narratives: Ukraine's image in the media*. (2023). LLC “Vistka” Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung Office in Ukraine.
- Troebst, S. (2011). Halecki revisited: Europe's conflicting cultures of remembrance. In *Cultural Memories: The Geographical Point of View* (pp. 145-154). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.
- Tsvetayev, L. (2022, March 24). *My Jivem v Uchebnike Istorii [We Live in the History Textbook]*. Gazeta.Ru. Retrieved May 17, 2024, from <https://www.gazeta.ru/social/2022/03/24/14663227.shtml?updated>
- Urban, M. (1994). The politics of identity in Russia's postcommunist transition: the nation against itself. *Slavic Review*, 53(3), 733-765.
- Vygotsky, L.S. (2014). *Myshlenie i rech' [Thinking and Speech]*. Directmedia. (Original work published 1934).
- Wendt, A. (1999). *Social Theory of International Politics*. Cambridge University Press.
- Wertsch, J. V. (2021). National Narratives. In J. V. Wertsch, *How Nations Remember* (pp. 87–114). Oxford University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1093/oso/9780197551462.003.0003>
- Wertsch, J. V., & Roediger, H. L. (2008). Collective memory: Conceptual foundations and theoretical approaches. *Memory*, 16(3), 318–326.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09658210701801434>

- Wijermars, M. (2018). *Memory Politics in Contemporary Russia: Television, cinema and the state* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351007207>
- Wilson, R. A. (2005). Collective memory, group minds, and the extended mind thesis. *Cognitive Processing*, 6(4), 227–236. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10339-005-0012-z>
- Young, L. E. (2019). The Psychology of State Repression: Fear and Dissent Decisions in Zimbabwe. *American Political Science Review*, 113(1), 140–155. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S000305541800076X>
- Zhang, Y., & Wildemuth, B. M. (2009). Qualitative Analysis of Content. *Applications of Social Research Methods to Questions in Information and Library Science*, 1–12.

Appendix

Table A1: The List of Russian History Textbooks Selected for Analysis (1995-2023)

| № | Title | Edition | Authors | Year |
|----------|--|-------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------|
| 1 | Istoriya Rossii, XX vek / History of Russia, 20 th century | 1 st edition | Danilov & Kosulina | 1995 |
| 2 | Rossiya v 20 veke. 10-11 klassy / Russia in the 20th century. 10-11th grades | 1 st edition | Levandovsky & Shchetinov | 1997 |
| 3 | Istoriya Rossii, XX vek / History of Russia, 20th century | 6 th edition | Danilov & Kosulina | 2000 |
| 4 | Rossiya v 20 veke. 10-11 klassy / Russia in the 20 th century. 10-11th grades | 5 th edition | Levandovsky & Shchetinov | 2001 |
| 5 | Istoriya Rossii XX - nachalo XXI veka / History of Russia, 20 th – the beginning of the 21 st century | 4 th edition | Danilov et al. | 2007 |
| 6 | Istoriya Rossii XX - nachalo XXI veka / History of Russia, 20 th – the beginning of the 21 st century | 9 th edition | Danilov et al. | 2012 |
| 7 | Istoriya Rossii XX - nachalo XXI veka / History of Russia, 20 th – the beginning of the 21 st century | 7 th edition | Levandovsky et al. | 2013 |
| 8 | Istoriya Rossii. 10 klass. Uchebnik dlja obshheobrazovatel'nyh organizacij v 3 chastjah. Chast' 1 / Russian history. Grade 10. Textbook for general education organizations in 3 parts. Part 1 | 1 st edition | Gorinov et al. | 2016 |
| 9 | Istoriya Rossii. 10 klass. Uchebnik dlja obshheobrazovatel'nyh organizacij v 3 chastjah. Chast' 2 / Russian history. Grade 10. Textbook for general education organizations in 3 parts. Part 2 | 1 st edition | Gorinov et al. | 2016 |
| 10 | Istoriya Rossii. 10 klass. Uchebnik dlja obshheobrazovatel'nyh organizacij v 3 chastjah. Chast' 3 / Russian history. Grade 10. Textbook for general education organizations in 3 parts. Part 3 | 1 st edition | Gorinov et al. | 2016 |
| 11 | Istoriya Rossii, 1914 – 1945 gody / History of Russia, 1914 – 1945 years | 1 st edition | Medinsky & Torkunov | 2023 |
| 12 | Istoriya Rossii, 1945 – nachalo XXI veka / History of Russia, 1945 – the beginning of the 21 st century | 1 st edition | Medinsky & Torkunov | 2023 |

Table A2. Coverage of Different Periods of Russian History in Selected Textbooks (1995 – 2023)

| | Danilov & Kosulina (1995) | Levandovsky & Shchetinov (1997) | Danilov & Kosulina (2000) | Levandovsky & Shchetinov (2001) | Danilov et al. (2007) | Danilov et al. (2012) | Levandovsky et al. (2013) | Gorinov et al. (2016) | Medinsky & Torkunov (2023) |
|---|---------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Before 1914 | 14% | 22% | 16% | 19% | 15% | 14% | 12% | - | - |
| WWI and Russian Revolution (1914-1922) | 22% | 27% | 21% | 26% | 19% | 18% | 20% | 16% | 15% |
| - <i>WWI</i> | 8% | 4% | 7% | 5% | 3% | 3% | 5% | 2% | 3% |
| - <i>Russian Revolution</i> | 14% | 23% | 13% | 21% | 16% | 15% | 15% | 14% | 12% |
| USSR in 1920-1930s | 20% | 17% | 20% | 20% | 20% | 19% | 18% | 20% | 18% |
| WWII (1941-1945) | 13% | 9% | 13% | 7% | 11% | 11% | 11% | 18% | 20% |
| USSR in 1945 - 1991 | 27% | 20% | 25% | 21% | 23% | 23% | 25% | 33% | 30% |
| Modern Russia (Post 1991) | 4% | 5% | 5% | 7% | 12% | 15% | 14% | 13% | 17% |

Source: Frequency analysis conducted in MAXQDA

Table A3: Contemporary images and their descriptions used in the 2023 history textbook that commemorate the Great Patriotic War

| | |
|--|---|
|  |  |
| <p>“T-34 tank at the military parade dedicated to the 78th anniversary of the Victory on Red Square in Moscow. 2023.”⁷⁰</p> | <p>“Monument to the Panfilov heroes at the Dubosekovo crossing (“Feat 28”). Volokolamsky district, Moscow region.”⁷¹</p> |
|  |  |
| <p>“Monument to a soldier and sailor at the Eternal Flame on Cape Khrustalny in the hero city of Sevastopol.”⁷²</p> | <p>“May 9, 2023 Parade in Moscow dedicated to the 78th anniversary of Victory in the Great Patriotic War.”⁷³</p> |

Source: Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 292, p. 328, p. 375, p. 465

⁷⁰ Author’s translation: “Танк Т-34 на военном параде, посвящённом 78-й годовщине Победы, на Красной площади в Москве. 2023 г.” Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 292

⁷¹ Author’s translation: “Памятник героям-панфиловцам у разъезда Дубосеково («Подвигу 28»). Волоколамский район, Московская область” Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 328

⁷² Author’s translation: “Памятник солдату и матросу у Вечного огня на мысе Хрустальный в городе-герое Севастополе” Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 375

⁷³ Author’s translation: “9 мая 2023 г. Парад в Москве, посвящённый 78-й годовщине Победы в Великой Отечественной войне.” Medinsky & Torkunov, 2023a, p. 375