Common Past, Different Visions: The Ukrainian-Russian Encounters Over School History Textbooks 1990s–2010s'

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Summary: This article deals with the Ukrainian-Russian encounters in the field of school history education in 1990s–2010s. The theme investigates the context of the state- and nation-building processes in both countries. Three major topics are considered: history education and textbooks as a tool of civic education and citizenship building, the problem of unification and homogenization of the representations of the past in the light of citizen education, the attempts of Russia to promote a common vision of the past with neighbors, and Ukrainian responses. The major theme ends with the highlights from the most recent developments in the field of school history curriculum and textbooks in both countries in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict and war of 2014–2021.
Keywords: Ukraine, Russia, Historical narrative, history education, memory politics, civic education, textbooks, common history, memory wars

Zusammenfassung: Dieser Artikel beschreibt die ukrainisch-russischen Bemühungen im Bereich des schulischen Geschichtsunterrichts 1990–2010. Dabei werden drei Hauptargumente berücksichtigt: die Schulbildung in Geschichte und ihre Schulbücher als ein Mittel zur Erziehung der zivilen und Bürger*innen-Erziehung, die Versuche Russlands mit den Nachbarn eine gemeinsame Sichtweise zu fördern und die ukrainischen Antworten darauf. Der Hauptteil endet mit den der aktuellen Entwicklung der Schulgeschichtscurricula und der Schulbücher in beiden Ländern auf dem Hintergrund des russisch-ukrainischen Konflikts und Krieges von 2014–2021.
Schlüsselwörter: Ukraine, Russlands historische Erzählung, historische Bildung, Erinnerungspolitik, bürgerliche Erziehung, Schulbücher, gemeinsames Geschichtsverständnis, Kriegserinnerung

1. History and nation-building

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the political and cultural elites of the countries that emerged on its ruins faced one and the same major challenge (among many others): the creation of a politically and culturally homogeneous citizenry. The implementation of the nation-building projects in the post-Soviet as well as in the post-Communist period followed the standard scenario of the "national awakening", which in turn was supposed to lead to the emergence of a nation-state. The task of creating a community whose cultural borders should be congruent with the political ones also pre-

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supposed the creation of the version of the past, which should supply historical arguments for this venture.

Accordingly, the majority of the post-Soviet states have followed the scenario of the "nationalizing state" (Brubaker 1994, 2011), which presumed an introduction and imposition of the ethnocentric version of the past in which the core (or titular) nation turned to be a central actor and agent of history. In this worldview, the state is supposed to be this nation's proper, while a "state-nation" acts on behalf of the "titular nation" (i. e. ethnic-cultural majority).

In Ukraine the dominant narrative of the past proposed and imposed by the state-nation institutes, inevitably assumed that the history of Ukraine should be, first and foremost, the history of ethnic Ukrainians (understood as a community of language, culture, and shared historical destiny, and sometimes – even as a community of kinship).

The national ethnocentric narrative that emerged in the end of 19th – beginning of the 20th century and re-emerged at the beginning of 1990s was and is equal to the representation of the past in terms of the history of ethnic group. History of Ukraine is a history of Ukrainian ethnos (people), semantically the "Ukrainian people", and is congruent with the "Ukrainian nation". The Ukrainian autochthonous people is guarantor and backbone of the continuity of the national history. At the same time, the Ukrainian master-narrative is traditionally loaded with the historical statehood claims: the national history is also presented as a sequence of the statehoods – either acquired or lost by the major actor of the history – the Ukrainian people.

The line of the state-building tradition is traced back from Kievan Rus to Galician-Volhynian Principality, then to Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and the Cossack statehood and autonomy of seventeenth to eighteenth centuries, then to the "national revival" of 19th century, Ukrainian national movement and Ukrainian revolution of 1917–1921 and the history of the Ukrainian independent state from 1991 and on. In the most recent generation of the history curriculum and textbooks, emerged after 2014, the periods of 1917–1920 (when different Ukrainian national states arose and fell apart) and 1991 are presented as the times of *restoration* of the Ukrainian statehood (Ministerstvo osvity i nauky 2018; Pometun / Hupan, 2018, 2019; Vlasov / Kulchytsky 2018, 2019; Hisem / Martyniuk 2018, 2019).

Russia also faces the challenges of the ethnic-centered history, however, in a different manner. The cultural-political homogenization agenda over ethnic-cultural lines based on the idea of a predominance of a "titular nation" is not possible. On the one hand, several subjects of the Federation (for instance, Tatarstan, Bashkortostan, the republics of the Northern Caucasus) saw a return to the classic ethnonational master narrative based on the idea of a distinct and separate national history. Within this framework the imperial and Soviet past often is seen as an obstacle to the normal development

of a nation. By the end of the 1990s, the majority of the national republics of the Russian Federation created or restored classic ethnonational master narratives. Moreover, several non-national subjects of the Federation also demonstrated a tendency toward the regionalization of history and collective/historical memory (Shnirelman 2009) creating their own particularistic narratives.

On the other hand, the federal center cultivated an integrative narrative based on the idea of a supranational/multinational state – in line with the legacy of both imperial and Soviet historical tradition. Statehood constitutes a foundation, a frame for the "common" history. The form of statehood (empire or federation of republics and administrative-territorial units with various levels of real or perceived autonomy) is nonessential in this case; the crux of the matter is the continuity of state history and the subjugation of all components of historical experience to the idea of statehood. This scheme ensures historical continuity and legitimizes claims in respect of the historical heritage of neighbors. Properly, the Russian ethnonational narrative of history and memory dissolved into the imperial and Soviet nostalgic narrative, but the leading role of the Russian people as a cultural background persists.

Accordingly, the official historical narrative and politics of memory should preserve the idea of the ethno-cultural Russian nucleus and the social and political unity of peoples and nations united around it as equal constituents of a political nation (as a community of citizens). The state is the guarantor of the existence of the political nation, it is unifying force in the past, present, and future. History and memory serve as a form of consolidation for Russian nationals (the term *rossiyane*, as opposed to *russkiye*, ethnic Russians, came into use under Boris Yeltsin) or the "Russian nation" (the term voiced by Vladimir Putin). History of Russia therefore is, first and foremost, a history of the state. Russians constitute, according to the Constitution, the state-forming nation (*gosudarstvoobrazuyushaya natsiya*).

Therefore, the desire of the federal center to promote the inclusive, integrating model of history and memory, merging elements of imperial, Soviet, and national/regional histories into a common statist narrative determines the historical politics of Russia.

What is the relationship between these two countries in terms of the nation-building agenda seen through the prism of the school history?

In both countries, the neighbor and its history unavoidably constitute a part of the common past. However, the perception of this past is inevitably different, not to say opposite. For Russian cultural and political elites the "common past" is a source and a solid ground for the perceived and conceived civilizational greatness of Russia, and a basis for claiming a special role in the post-Soviet space, and, in particular, in Ukraine.

Moreover, Russian elites have intrinsic problems with the recognition of Ukraine as the Other. They consider Ukrainians to be part of the greater Russian nation or, at least, a part of a common and historically determined cultural and political space. The Ukrainian aspiration for cultural distinctiveness and their self-assertion as the Other, i. e., separate from the Russian world, breeds cognitive dissonance, exasperation, and non-acceptance in Russia, especially when these assertions are accompanied by Ukraine's move toward another cultural and civilizational space (the "West"). Self-determination for Ukraine is often perceived as a bad joke of history and a fatal mistake. Putin formulated the most radical version of this attitude, the thesis of the unnaturalness and artificiality of Ukrainian statehood and of historical unity of Russians and Ukrainians (UNIAN 2008; Putin 2021).

This vision is broadly presented in the school textbooks. What in Ukraine is presented as Ukrainian separate, sovereign history, in Russia is traditionally seen as an integral, indivisible part of the Russian past. According to the analysis of about one hundred school textbooks on the history of Russia published in 1993–2007, Ukraine does not exist there as a sovereign actor of history. The Ukrainian themes dissolved in the history of the Russian statehood (Baturina 2011). Ukraine appears as a separate entity in the chapters, devoted to the period after 1991. The most recent analysis of the Russian textbooks of a new generation shows no changes in this respect (Udod 2021).

In Ukraine, since the beginning of 1990s, when the first generation of the Ukrainian history textbooks emerged, Russia has been presented as a constitutive Other. The Ukrainian history redesigned and revisited along ethnonational linear narrative confronted different Others (including, for instance, Poles or Crimean Tatars). Russia, as a former imperial power and as a core (and as a legal and voluntary successor of the Soviet Union) constituted the most important part of the past, from which the Ukrainian historical proper should be separated and alienated. The title of the book, written by the president of Ukraine (1994–2004) Leonid Kuchma and published in 2003, in the Year of Russia in Ukraine[1], was telling: "Ukraine is not Russia" (Kuchma 2003).

Moreover, since 1990s Russia has been increasingly presented in the Ukrainian master narrative as an external oppressor, the evil Other obsessed with eternal imperial ambitions (Janmaat 2007; Korostelina 2010). In the long run, the Ukrainian independence is postulated in the textbooks as a

1 "Year of Russia in Ukraine" is the title of a symbolic act of cultural diplomacy. This year was dedicated to massive presentations of achievements of Russian culture, economics, technology in Ukraine through festivals, exhibitions, conferences, concerts etc. For the Russian side it was an occasion to demonstrate historical and cultural unity of Russia and Ukraine.

predestined, natural, teleological aim of national history. The Russian empire and the Soviet Union (which is presented as a Russian project) prove to be major obstacles to the natural way of historical development of Ukraine. The annexation of Crimea in 2014, followed by support of the self-proclaimed republics of Donbass by Russia provided more strength to this perception.

The Ukrainian ruling class and cultural elites looked for the national past, which would turn Ukrainians as a nation into the sovereign agent of the world's history. They introduced the idea of a titular's nation history as a basis for internal unity and coalescence. The Russian ruling elite pursued the same goals with different terms of reference. They put the prevalence of the millennial statehood and glorious imperial superpower past over the ethnic/national lines (however with the leadership of Russian people as a state-forming entity) in the center of the master narrative. Moreover, the claims for a special historical path of Russia in the outside world combined with the necessity to overcome national narratives within the country provoked particular sensitivity towards national ethnocentric narratives.

2. Russia's "single textbook"

The "single textbook" topic might serve as an example of the politics of ensuring an internal unity. The idea of a single textbook emerged at the beginning of 2000s. For a new ruling class, emerging together with Vladimir Putin's accession to power, history and memory were important components of the construction of a vertical power system aimed at a new centralization of the country with more than ninety various national and administrative territorial units.

Moreover, Russia officially declared itself a legal successor of the Soviet Union. Thus, the period of 2000s and 2010s saw an increasingly active restoration of the Soviet nostalgic memory narrative and denunciation of the previous decade's overall criticism of the Soviet era. Moreover, the ruling elite retreated to the restoration of a glorious past of the imperial Russia and the Soviet Union – as an important element of its own legitimization.

These intentions contradicted the relative diversity of views on Russia's past that emerged in the 1990s. On the one hand, inertia in criticizing the extremes of the Soviet period, especially Stalinist terror and repression, persisted. On the other hand, the federal subjects, national republics, and historical regions formed their own national and regional narratives in the 1990s, which cultivated the peculiarity of the regional historical experience.

In August 2001, the prime-minister of the Russian Federation Mikhail Kasyanov publicly criticized textbooks on modern and contemporary history of Russia for different drawbacks and urged the Ministry of Education to

organize a competition for a new, advanced textbook. His criticism, however, had few in common with conceptual issues. The recommendations of the ministry that followed this criticism, were of general nature and did not contain any visible signs of ideological turn. However, very soon the authorities formulated their intentions much more clearly.

In November 2003, the Ministry of Education withdrew its official approval of the most popular, however controversial, textbook on the history of Russia in the 20th century by Igor Dolutskii. The textbook contained a number of critical assessments of the Soviet times, moreover, it provided critical remarks about new country leadership (Sherlok 2007, 168–173). This decision virtually meant a ban for the use of this textbook. Two days after, president Vladimir Putin met with historians and expressed his views on the school history. The textbooks, he said, should not become a platform for a new political and ideological struggle, stressing that it were necessary to present only the facts of history evoking in young people a sense of pride in their country. He also addressed the problem of coordinated approach to the period of common history in the CIS states and urged to develop a new common methodology in the preparation of textbooks on the Soviet period of history (President Rossii 2003). The idea of an agreed upon common methodology was then unsuccessfully transferred into the activities of the Russian–Ukrainian commission of historians while the idea of elimination of the political controversies from the textbooks transformed into continuous attempts to develop a single textbook in Russia.

The first attempt to offer a variant of a single textbook took place in 2007. Addressing the All-Russian conference of teachers of humanities and social sciences, Putin again decided to share his vision of the school history. First, he appealed educators to follow the educational standards. Then, he admitted, that different points of view on certain historical events should be presented in the textbooks. Finally, he blamed the unnamed authors, who wrote their textbooks having support from the foreign grant institutions. According to him, doing this, they danced butterfly polka to satisfy the wishes of customers (Prezident Rossii 2007).

Not coincidentally, Aleksandr Danilov and Aleksandr Filippov presented a manual for teachers at this conference, later followed by the set of textbooks on the history of Russia in the twentieth century. The print run of this particular set vastly exceeded other similar publications. These textbooks received an unprecedented state-led promotion campaign and public attention. The ideological tendency of these textbooks was obvious: the idea of the greatness of Russia, which was inseparable from the greatness of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union, was to become the unifying theme of the historical narrative (Miller 2012).

For a number of reasons, and especially because of perceived attempts to relativize certain Stalinist practices, this manual for teachers and line of

textbooks, heavily criticized by the liberal part of society and by professional historians, did not achieve, even officially, the status of principal textbook (Sherlok 2014, 269–272)[2].

In general, the consistency of the common history offered in textbooks was already ensured by the federal standards and state-approved educational programs on history adopted in 2004, while the diversity of federal textbooks stemmed from commercial interests rather than from ideological diversity. In 2012/2013, the whole number of Russian history textbook and manual titles were 47 while 14 titles were mass-produced (Kasianov / Smolii / Tolochko, 2013, 34).

In August 2009, President of Russia Dmitriy Medvedev proposed to unify interpretations of certain historical events in the school textbooks. He expressed particular concern about faulty interpretations of the history of the Great patriotic War of 1941–1945 (Lenta.ru 2009). In November 2010, the MP from the presidential party *Yedinaya Rossiya* Natalia Yarovaya expressed her concern about different views on Russian history formed by the school history course in different regions of Russia and proposed to introduce a single textbook for the secondary schools (RIA Novosti 2010). Her party colleague Vladimir Medynski formulated the same proposal in his official appeal to the Ministry of Education, saying that different interpretation of history in schools was senseless and harmful. Nevertheless, these suggestions and proposals met resistance from different camps. Publishers resented it due to their material interests. Teachers pointed out, that different schools had different levels and methods of instruction, and a single textbook idea was rather a legacy of the USSR than a necessity (Bolotova / Ziganshina 2010).

The next time the single textbook theme came to the foreground after the dramatic parliamentary and presidential elections of 2011–12, followed by electoral protests. After his reelection as president, Putin formulated it in the following way: "I completely agree that there should be some canonical version of our history. Indeed, if we study one version in the east, another version in the Urals and a third version in the European part of the country, it can destroy – and it surely would destroy – the common humanitarian space of our multinational nation, if I may put it this way. There should be a unified canonical approach to the historical periods, which are principal, fundamental, and vital for our country, and this should be reflected by a single textbook. I do not see anything wrong in this." (NTV 2012) The Russian Ministry of Education, not surprisingly, supported this idea enthusiastically. According to the minister, there were plans to make the new textbook ready in one year; again, he spoke about a "single textbook" (polit.ru 2013).

2 See Thomas Sherlok, *Istoricheskiye narrativy i politika v Sovetskom Soyuze i postsovetskoy Rossii* (Moscow: Politicheskaya entsiklopediya, 2014), 269–72.

The reaction of the state-controlled "non-governmental" organizations to the idea of a single textbook was similar. The Russian Historical Society (headed by Sergey Naryshkin, the chairman of the Russian State Duma), the Association of Teachers of History and the Social Sciences (headed by Alexander Chubaryan, director of the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences), Russian Military-Patriotic Society (headed by Vladimir Medinsky, Russian Minister of Culture), and the All-Russian People's Front (headed by Putin himself) expressed their unanimous and wholehearted support for it.

According to sociological data, the general public also liked the idea of a single textbook. Polls carried out in June 2013 by the Levada Center showed that 71 percent of respondents were "fully positive" or "partially positive" about the idea of a single school textbook. 10 percent were negative, and others found it difficult to respond (Levada Tsentr 2013). According to the Russian Public Opinion Research Center (VCIOM), 52 percent of respondents had not heard about the idea of a single textbook before the survey, and 35 percent had "heard something" about it. However, this lack of information did not prevent 58 percent of respondents from supporting the idea (Sidibe 2013).

Despite both, official and public support, this time again no single textbook emerged. Instead, the scholarly community, experts, and teachers discussed a single Historical-Cultural Standard, which was expected to play an integrative role in the Federation. The standard has been developed (Istoriko-kul'turnyi 2013), in fact repeating the patterns of the previous forms of standardization (Federal State Educational Standard and Federal Basic Study Plan[3]). In 2016/17, new textbooks (three sets selected by experts) arrived in the schools. They did not have any groundbreaking concepts in their worldview and followed general guidelines and prescriptions regarding a millennial history of the Russian statehood.

The next round of debates about single textbooks occurred in 2020–2021. By this time, however, the centralization of the textbook production funded by the state was rather the matter of economic monopolization of the financially attracted budget flows than the issue of ideological conformity. To a great extent, the Historical-Cultural Standard just reflected this conformity, there was no need for a single textbook just due to the fact that various textbooks, with their allegedly various versions of the past, in fact presented different forms and embodiments of a single unified meta-text.

3 Federal education standard outlines basic principles and ideological framework of a teaching content. Federal study plan provides more concrete common guidelines for the content including quota of teaching hours. According to the Federal study plan, the "federal component" should encompass no less than 75 percent of teaching time, while "local component" – 10 percent and "the component of local educational institution" – 10 percent (Ministerstvo obrazovaniya 2004).

The variety concerned methods and forms of delivery, not the content. In this sense, since the beginning of the 2000s, Russia obtained a "single textbook".

3. The Russian-Ukrainian "common textbook"

In the 1990s Ukraine and Russia went through a process of "return to the roots", which in the realm of history meant restoring the national master narrative. Contacts between historians were minimal at this period, as was the mutual interest in the neighbor. The early 2000s were marked by renewed contacts between historians of the two countries and a growing interest in Ukrainian history in Russia. This interest was not purely of academic nature. The war in Chechnya ended, Russia's economic growth began due to favorable global conditions on the oil and gas market, and the Russian ruling class shifted to a policy of restoring the country's role as a regional leader (in the post-Soviet space) and global player.

Ukraine traditionally played an important role in this "Russian renaissance" as a space, considered by the Russian political and cultural elites as a "Russian proper", as a "historical heart" of the Russian state and as a strategically significant, indispensable territory in terms of geopolitics (Trenin 2021).

In May 2002, at a session of the Russian-Ukrainian Intergovernmental Commission (the sub-commission on cooperation in the sphere of humanities), the representatives of Russia proposed establishing a Russian-Ukrainian working group to analyze how textbooks covered the history of Russia and Ukraine, following the examples of the Ukrainian-Polish, German-Polish, German-French, and similar commissions.

In June 2002, at a Russian-Ukrainian conference called noticeably "Russia and Ukraine in the European Cultural Space" held by the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Moscow, the Russian side raised the issue of Ukrainian and Russian textbooks, in particular the presentation of the countries' "common past". A Russian-Ukrainian memorandum was signed, stating, among other things, the need to continue exchanges on the content of history textbooks in Russia and Ukraine.

In Ukraine, this news received the reaction, which might be easily predicted. The opposition, consisting of national democrats, nationalists, communists, socialists, and populists, was in preparation of mass street actions against President Leonid Kuchma under the slogan "Arise Ukraine!". The announcement of a joint project with Russia to revise textbooks was perceived by part of the opposition as an attack on Ukraine's cultural sovereignty while Kuchma himself received a label of the traitor of national interests. Moreover, national-democrats and nationalists started to speak about "joint textbook".

Alexander Chubaryan, the director of the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, informed the media:

> "There was no intention to create a common textbook. We discussed the best way to interpret several controversial issues in Ukrainian and Russian history in textbooks published both in Ukraine and in Russia. In this sense, we considered it useful to continue the exchange of ideas we had started and, possibly, to create (as with other countries) a working group that would continue to research this issue, notably to exchange ideas on textbooks that have already been published as well as on those in preparation. We did not consider producing any common publications." (Ivanova-Gladilshchikova / Sokolovskaya 2002)

Irrespective of intentions, the opposition in Ukraine (national democrats and nationalists) interpreted and used the proposal to establish a Ukrainian-Russian commission of historians as evidence of Leonid Kuchma's pro-Russianness. As a result, a routine initiative created a big stir in Ukraine.

The parliamentary elections of 2002 had just finished, and parties opposed to Kuchma scored results that made the government very uneasy: two opposition blocs, Our Ukraine and the Yulia Tymoshenko Bloc, acquired an unprecedented one-third of seats in the parliament. Echoes of the mass 2001 political campaign "Ukraine without Kuchma" remained in the public consciousness while a new campaign: "Rise up, Ukraine!" was in preparation. In this context, the "harmonization" of textbooks with Russia was used by the opposition to prove that Kuchma was following a pro-Russian course and, thus, discredit him. The title of the article on the establishment of the historians' commission was: "A Scandal Erupts around Russian-Ukrainian Textbooks" (Ivanova-Gladilshchikova / Ya / Sokolovskaya 2002).

The youth branch of the almost extinct People's Movement of Ukraine organized a protest vigil in front of the offices of the Cabinet of Ministers. An opposition website Maidan published an "Open letter of Ukrainian Historians, Intelligentsia, and Community Leaders on the Threat of the Political Revision of Ukrainian history," addressed to the president, the speaker, and the head of government. Several hundred Ukrainian citizens, ranging from secondary school students to professional historians and from artists to former dissidents signed the letter. The signatories believed that "harmonization" was a "violation of the rights of Ukrainian historians to hold independent academic interpretations, which was synonymous with the reestablishment of Russian political censorship of Ukrainian history textbooks" (Майдан-Інформ 2002). The authors expressed their resentment with "Russian political pressure on the Ukrainians' interpretation of their own history" and demanded the dissolution of the Russian-Ukrainian working group (Майдан-Інформ 2002).

This letter is noticeable, because it listed the topics of suggested contest between Ukraine and Russia: the famine of 1932–33 (named Holodomor in

Ukraine) and the events of 1917–20 (named the Ukrainian Revolution in Ukraine). Indeed, in both cases, certain textbooks included interpretations and conclusions of these events that negatively assessed the role of Russia.

On the other side, Chubaryan listed those issues in Ukraine history that were sensitive for Russians (Sokolov-Mitrich 2002):

> "– Historical legacy of Kievan Rus'. (Russia claimed ancient Kyiv to be the capital of Ancient Rus, the predecessor of the Muscovy and the Russian state. Ukraine represented Kievan Rus as a truly Ukrainian historical phenomenon.)
> – Evaluation of some Ukrainian historical persons, especially those from the seventeenth century. (Russians considered Ivan Mazepa as the most embarrasing figure.)
> – Process of reunification of Ukraine with Russia in the seventeenth century. (The Russian side considered so-called Pereyaslavska Rada of 1654 in the manner of the Soviet historiography – as a reunification of non-existent in the 17th century "Russia" and "Ukraine". The Ukrainian side did not want to accept the term "reunification".)
> – The "short-lived" Ukrainian Rada of 1918
> and finally:
> – the Ukrainian national movement during the Second World War, in fact – he meant the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalist and the Ukrainian Insurgent Army."

In November 2002, the website *Maidan* advanced idea to create a public Committee of Defense of Ukrainian History to be headed by the Lviv-based historian Yaroslav Dashkevych, known for his anti-Russian attitude. This committee was never established. Neither did the intergovernmental commission on textbooks get off the ground.

However, a Ukrainian-Russian commission of historians emerged, organized by two academic institutions, Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, and the Institute of History of Ukraine in the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, under leadership of the directors of these institutes.

The efforts of the commission resulted in the synchronous publication of a history of Ukraine in Russian prepared by Ukrainian historians, and a history of Russia prepared by Russian scholars and translated into Ukrainian (Chubaryan 2007; Smoliy 2008). A series of working meetings and conferences conducted during the preparation of the publication confirmed divergences on almost all the problematic historical points listed when the commission was established. Despite this fact, discussions between the scholars were calm, and both sides were given the chance to set forth a version of the controversial topic they considered acceptable.

This episode marked the first case of open confrontation between Russia and Ukraine over the past. For the first time, the public took part in the Ukrainian government's dialogue with Russia on historical politics.

The next round came in 2010. This time the buzz arose around the creation of a common Ukrainian-Russian book for history teachers (the October 27, 2010 decision of the Subcommittee on Cooperation in Humanities between Ukraine and Russia of the Russia-Ukraine Intergovernmental Commission). Due to the opaque statements of officials and the incompetency of journalists, the book was immediately labeled a "common textbook".

Again, the issue emerged amidst of growing political tensions. The "pro-European" parties and movements (national-democrats, nationalists and populists) lost presidential elections of 2010 to Victor Yanukovych, who evidently promoted pro-Russian foreign policy. In the field of the history education, his followers launched a campaign aimed at elimination of the "nationalist extremes" in the curriculum.

In 2010, the Ministry of Education and Science slightly shifted its ideological orientation. The new minister, Dmytro Tabachnyk, was well known for his negative attitude toward nationalized history and for his loyalty to the Soviet nostalgic version. He gleefully shocked the public with his statements and appraisals of the past in which he denounced and ridiculed Ukrainian nationalism. In an April 2010 interview with the BBC, he declared that the textbooks of Ukrainian history suffered from ethnocentric speculations and must be revised and rewritten from an anthropocentric position (Ekonomicheskie novosti 2010). He indirectly alluded to the results obtained by a task force of historians organized under auspices of the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory that had proposed looking beyond the ethnocentric version of Ukrainian history for courses taught in primary and secondary schools.

In June 2010, Tabachnyk published a policy paper on the official website of the Party of Regions. He repeated his assertion about an "anthropocentric approach" to history curricula and declared, that "the interpretation of national and global history cannot change every time when there is a new President or Minister of Education, and it cannot and should not depend on private tastes, fixations, and phobias of any official" (Segodnia 2010). After these words, he immediately gave his own politically motivated interpretation of the history of the Second World War and his assessment of such persons as Stalin, Shukhevych, and Bandera, putting the second and third, evidently, in the category of "impure ones."

Further actions on the "revision of the school history course" had nothing to do with the implementation of anthropocentric history: they went no further than kicking out several undesirable stories and figures from textbooks and reconsidering the interpretations of several events. According to journalists, some textbook authors received confidential instructions to revise their texts. The picture of the Orange Revolution of 2004 disappeared from the cover of one of the textbooks. The formula "man-made Hol-

odomor" disappeared from the text (the term "Holodomor" remained). The description of the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) became shorter. The UPA commander Roman Shykhevych's photo disappeared, and the narrative of Ukrainian events stopped at the year 2004. In another textbook, the description of the UPA also became shorter. The authors said they received instructions to correct their textbooks from the ministry via phone call: the essence of these instructions was to tone down anti-Russian sentiments and reduce the coverage of the UPA (Kapliuk 2010).

It should be noted that all these changes were mostly symbolic; besides, it was technically nearly impossible to modify millions of already printed textbooks. However, in the wake of the changes made to the structure of the eleven-year secondary school program (2011),an ambitious plan to reprint all school textbooks (not only history) was set in motion, but this was based on material rather than ideological interests. A frenetic discussion around the changes made to the history textbooks that flared up in 2010–11 seemed to be a massive provocation, and the targets of these changes, i.e., representatives of the opposition, eagerly responded. In Lviv, an "alternative" school textbook for fifth graders was published which included all the stories and personalities that had been "edited" out of the standard textbooks (Tereshchuk 2012).

Under these circumstances, the idea of the common manual for Ukrainian and Russian teachers, again promoted by the Russian side, was predestined to trigger a new round of debates. In a bizarre discussion the opposition, nationalists, and journalists reiterated affirmations that Russia would dictate to Ukraine how to write history, thus reenacting scenes from 2003. As for historians themselves, they reacted with caution, several respectable Ukrainian academic historians joined the working group (Udod 2010). In February 2011, Alexey Vlasov, director general of the Information and Analytics Center of Lomonosov Moscow State University and a member of the working group, said that the text in preparation was not a textbook, emphasizing that "neither colleagues from Kyiv nor colleagues from Moscow are ready to write a common textbook" (Uroki istorii 2011).

By the same token, Gennadii Boryak, deputy director of the Institute of History of Ukraine, categorically denied the idea of a "common textbook," saying, "historians of both countries clearly realized that in a situation where two national historiographies exist with their own visions of history, their own tools, approaches, assessments, collections of historical sources used by researchers, and so on, the creation of a common textbook would mean destroying the heritage of national academic history heritage from the past quarter century or, at the very least, ignoring it" (Syundiukov 2010). He also described plans to prepare a reference book dedicated to complex issues in Russia and Ukraine's common history, that would contain all the various interpretations of controversial points. Aleksandr Chubaryan, the director of

the Institute of World History of the Russian Academy of Sciences, declared that all previous attempts by various countries to create common textbooks "failed spectacularly" and confirmed that the text to be prepared would be a manual for history teachers, not a "common textbook" (Chubar'yan 2010).

Despite all these affirmations, public discourse never dropped the topic of a "common textbook". Some professional historians contributed to the ideological component of the topic, their basic argument being quite familiar: a common textbook would entail the loss of sovereignty of Ukrainian history and subjugate it to the "Kremlin framework" of history. The titles of the articles speak for themselves: "Common Russian-Ukrainian manual means: Ukraine – is Russia" (Hirych 2010), "Synchronization of history with Russia: a voluntary self-rape" (Halushko 2010).

Curiously, by this time, historians of both countries already had experience cooperating with each other.

In September 2012, the ministers of education of Ukraine (Dmytro Tabachnyk) and Russia (Dmitry Livanov) announced a reader for history teachers called Ukraine and Russia at the Crossroads of History. Once again, the media called it either a textbook or a manual. The text offered a set of "non-controversial" topics from the culture of Ancient Rus' to the history of everyday life in the second half of the 1950s. Tabachnyk declared that even "the most attentive and malevolent critic reading these modules would be unable to find one page of text that does not make a Ukrainian a patriot of Ukraine and a Russian a patriot of Russia" (Ukranews 2012). Alexander Chubaryan called the publication of the manual "a breakthrough" and said that topics were being chosen for a next edition, and Livanov gave notice of plans to create a Russian-Ukrainian commission for expertise in history textbooks (Uroki istorii 2012).

Critics who feared an ideological dictate from Moscow were still discontent when they received a "politically correct" product "without Mazepa and the UPA". One of the articles written about the reader was titled: "The Common History of Ukraine and Russia was Reduced to Folklore, Nobles, the Szlachta, Khrushchev-era Houses, and Cinema" (Ukrains'kyi tyzhden' 2012). One of the authors of the newspaper Den' asked: "even if it is a reader and not a textbook, how safe is it for Ukrainian education and research?" (Den' 2012).

Finally, the whole enterprise under the title "common manual" ended in 2013. The mountain has brought forth a mouse. The whole number of copies of the common manual did not exceed three hundred copies. It has never circulated in schools. Further volumes have never been published.

4. After 2014: school history at war

Since 2014, all joint projects stopped, institutional contacts between historians ended, the Ukrainian–Russian commission of historians ceased to exist. The post 2014 developments in the Ukrainian–Russian relations are now being presented according to the official line in both countries.

The Ukrainian parliament has officially labelled Russia as an aggressor-state (2015). Crimea and Russia-controlled territories of self-proclaimed "people's republics" in Donbass officially called occupied territories (2018). Accordingly, in the Ukrainian textbooks the following terms are in common use: "aggressor state", "Russian aggression", "armed aggression of Russian Federation", "occupation", "hybrid war", "annexation" (Mudryi / Arkusha 2019; Vlasov / Kulchytsky 2019; Pometun / Hupan 2019; Gizem / Martyniuk, 2019; Strukevych / Drovoziuk 2019).

In the Russian school course, the annexation of Crimea described as a voluntary incorporation or return of Crimea to Russia, as an inevitable action caused by the threat to Russian population of Crimea and as a legally grounded act, undertaken in a full compliance with an international law. The "Revolution of Dignity" presented as a forced change of power and as a coup d'état. The history of self-proclaimed republics in Donbass extended to the 19th century as well as to the Donetsk-Kryvyi Rih republic that briefly existed in 1918. Military operations of the Ukrainian army were qualified as an act of state terrorism against the population of Donbass. In the meanwhile, Russia supplies the schools at the territories of unrecognized Donetsk and Luhansk People's Republics with Russian history textbooks and teaching programs and plans redesigned according to the history curriculum of Russia (Udod 2021).

The textbooks on history became a part of the Russian–Ukrainian conflict and an element of memory war.

5. Conclusion

The post-colonial paradigm might be useful framework for assessment of the history of the Ukrainian–Russian encounters, despite the fact that the colonial status of Ukraine in the Russian Empire is still a matter of scholarly debates. The post-colonial stance is too obvious in the representations of the past by the Ukrainian cultural and political elites. It is also visible in the textbooks. Russia conceived and perceived as an external dominant force that slows down the normal historical development of Ukraine, subjugates it to its imperial ambitions, exploits Ukraine's human and natural resources and oppresses its desire for cultural uniqueness and political sovereignty.

Russia embodies cultural and political constitutive Other for Ukraine, the Other, which recently turned to be versioned as an aggressive Alien.

Russian ruling political and cultural elites, on the other hand, do not show any inclination to consider Ukraine as an Other. They can recognize the fact of existence of separate Ukrainian culture and language, however, Ukrainian history is hardly identified as a sovereign field. Ukraine for them is a part of a bigger Russian proper, a Russian World, a common historical, cultural, political and geopolitical space. This, in turn, incites attempts to integrate the Ukrainian history into the common narrative and provides ground for the narrative of the past, in which Ukraine and Ukrainians do not exist as a separate entity, at least at the level of school history.

As a result, it predestines unsolvable contradictions between two versions of the past, which recently turned into the bitter conflict, integrated into the war of memories and the war at the Russian–Ukrainian cultural and political frontier.

The memory war turned into the Russia's large-scale aggressive war against Ukraine after 24 February 2022. Notably, the "textbooks issue" has immediately became a part of this war. The head of Russia's Investigation Committee Alexander Bastrykin charged his subordinates with the task of analyzing the Ukrainian history textbooks focusing on the anti-Russian content there. The Ministry of Education of Russia has launched a public campaign aimed in presenting the Ukrainian textbooks as a source of Nazism and hatred to Russia.

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