

Preface

Globalisation and National Identity in History Textbooks: The Russian Federation offers one of the most profound examples of the rewriting of history, following the geopolitical and cultural change in Russia. The social and political transformation began as *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring) under Gorbachev. It resulted in the unprecedented break-up of the USSR and the collapse of communism in Russia, the formation of the New Independent States of the former republics of the USSR in 1992 and the end to the Cold War era in Europe. All these events needed to be recorded and their respective histories needed to be reinterpreted in line with these new reforms in Russia's new history school curriculum.

Russia today is undergoing vast economic, geopolitical, ideological and social transformation. This task is all the more onerous in Russia, where periods of democracy have been rare, but historians have an enormous wealth of heritage from which to choose those events that seem most appropriate as models for the current generation of students. Difficult choices had to be made. The simple rejection of communist-enforced hegemony in 1992 was not sufficient, since aspects of Russian imperial and colonial history, for example, were closely linked to autocratic rule and conflict with neighbours. Thus, previously taught historical narratives were incompatible with the new socio-political objectives of the Russian Federation.

Many efforts were made in Russia in recent years to ensure that Russian history textbooks for secondary schools are written in an 'objective' manner and present events from more than one point of view. In this regard, in Russia, a great deal has taken place to eliminate national biases on both sides (the Russian versus ethnic minorities), and attempts have been made to apply the same principles to the study of national (ethnic) minorities.

The role of the interpretation of history in shaping the generation's image of their neighbours is seen as crucial to the future of peace and stability in the region. The enormity of the task facing educators and planners in Russia was exemplified by the fact that, in 1992, it found herself surrounded by a set of 'new' neighbours, comprised of former Soviet territories, who were now located in foreign territories—former Soviet Republics. With the fall of the USSR, Russia went through the trauma of the loss of 14 Soviet Republics and still had to face complications with the

remaining hundred or so ethnic minorities in 83 autonomous regions, with increased local autonomy and governance, but revived national consciousness and the sense of a past, which was different to that of pre-1992 Russia.

The new generation of the Russian history curriculum and approved Russian history textbooks promote a new sense of patriotism and nationalism, reflecting what Putin calls the 'national ideology'. This monograph discusses the way this new sense of consciousness of patriotism and nationalism is portrayed in prescribed Russian history school textbooks and documented in the Russian media debate of Russian history textbooks. Specifically, the monograph analyses historical narratives depicting key events between 1812 and 1945. Data for the monograph come from a recent Russian history teachers' survey and interviews, across Russia (from Moscow to Khabarovsk), concerning the politicisation of history textbooks. The monograph concludes by examining current developments in the nation-building process in the Russian Federation within a broader view of global culture.

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Globalisation and National Identity in History Textbooks

The Russian Federation

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2017, XVIII, 139 p. 4 illus., Hardcover

ISBN: 978-94-024-0971-0