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A Curriculum of Ideology: Use and Abuse of Modern History Education in Russia and the United States

Summary: *This paper examines the extents to which students in high school history classes in Russia and the United States are subjected to curricula, texts, images, and symbols that promote patriotic and nationalistic ideology. The authors performed a comparative content analysis of various commonly used Russian and American 20th century history textbooks. This analysis included an exploration of textual attention to ideological agendas, including the heroification of certain political and military figures, and led researchers to a series of implications regarding the impact of this manipulation of content on students' general understandings of history, their country's place in history, as well as an overall effect on their personality and character development. Most notably, analysis of recent textbooks in both countries revealed clear agendas intended to foster and promote national identity and patriotism.*

Keywords: *history, nationalism, heroification, teaching, Russia, United States*

Резюме (Татьяна Цырлина-Спеди, Михаил Ловорн: *Идеологическая образовательная программа: Использование и злоупотребление новейшего исторического образования в России и Соединенных Штатах*): *Данная статья исследует, в какой степени обучающиеся старших классов в России и Соединенных Штатах на уроках истории подвержены влиянию учебных планов, текстов, изображений и символов, содействующих восприятию патриотической и националистической идеологии. Авторы провели сравнительный анализ содержания различных используемых в школьной практике российских и американских учебников истории 20-го века. Данный анализ включает исследование текстуальных отношений с идеологическими аспектами, включая героизацию определенных политиков и военных, и приводит исследователей к открытию ряда аспектов относительно влияния содержательной стороны на общее понимание истории обучающимися, на определение места их страны в истории и на их личность и развитие характера. Прежде всего, анализ новейших школьных учебников в обеих странах обнаружил четкие тенденции в содействии и востребованности национальной идентичности и национального патриотизма.*

Ключевые слова: *история, национализм, героизация, урок, Россия, Соединенные Штаты*

Zusammenfassung (Tatyana Tsyrlina-Spady & Michael Lovorn: *Ein Curriculum der Ideologie: Nutzung und Missbrauch der neueren historischen Bildung in Russland und den Vereinigten Staaten*): *Dieser Artikel untersucht, in welchem Ausmaß Schüler höherer Klassen in Russland und in den USA im Geschichtsunterricht von Lehrplänen, Texten, Bildern und Symbolen beeinflusst werden, die patriotische und nationalistische Ideologien fördern. Die Autoren unternahmen eine vergleichende Inhaltsanalyse von verschiedenen üblicherweise verwendeten russischen und amerikanischen Geschichtsbüchern des 20. Jahrhunderts. Diese Analyse umfasste eine Erforschung der textuellen Beziehungen zu ideologischen Agenden, einschließlich der Heroifizierung bestimmter Politiker und Militärs. Sie führte die Forscher zu einer Reihe von Aspekten hinsichtlich der Auswirkungen der inhaltlichen Manipulation auf das allgemeine Geschichtsverständnis der Schüler, auf den Platz ihres Landes in der Geschichte sowie auf ihre Persönlichkeit und charakterliche Entwicklung. Vor allem zeigte die Analyse der neueren Schulbücher in beiden Ländern klare Agenden der Förderung und Forderung der nationalen Identität und des nationalen Patriotismus.*

Schlüsselwörter: *Geschichte, Nationalismus, Heroifizierung, Unterricht, Russland, Vereinigte Staaten*

Introduction

Long gone are the days when history education encompassed little more than the memorization of names and dates. Most history teachers and scholars now agree that effective study of the past requires practice in focused inquiry, specialized literacy, and historical thinking. Successful history teaching endeavors are no longer marked simply by how well students perform on standardized tests, but by the degree to which they demonstrate deeper understandings of perspective, cause and effect relationships, continuity, and engaged citizenship. It has been argued that textbooks alone are usually inadequate sources for the conveyance of these overarching themes, for example the debates of different modern historians Dolutsky (2004), Sveshnikov (2004), Ferretti (2004) about the role of history textbooks in history education. However, they are still staples of the classroom, commonly referenced as sources of historical accuracy and final authority by students and teachers alike.

Among the many limitations of history textbooks is the rather one-dimensional way they often introduce historical figures, events, or concepts. Virtues and moral exemplars, for instance, are often presented via anecdotal accounts or biographical sketches of famous political figures or military leaders portrayed as “heroes.” This is especially true of national history. Study of the past cannot be divorced from examinations of virtues, nor should it be. However, when the values and moral exemplars being conveyed to students are presented with the primary purpose of augmenting the political or patriotic agendas of the state, history education becomes more about the pursuit of a common ideology and national identity than about the development of critical or historical thinking skills. A recent example from the statement of the Russian first Education Deputy Minister Natalia Tretyak who characterizes a new web portal “People’s Memory” (<http://pamyat-naroda.ru>) as an important “source of additional information for patriotic classes devoted to the Great Victory” (<http://минобрнауки.рф/новости/5535>, 2015). Clearly, such characteristics as “patriotic” and “great” leave no space for an objective or, more so, a critical analysis. Earlier in the same year, the Deputy Minister Tretyak also announced, “Today the core of the state policy in the field of education is constituted by the necessity of shaping a personality who knows and respects history and traditions of his/her homeland” (<http://минобрнауки.рф/новости/4921>, January, 2015).

The purpose of this study was to examine the extents to which students in high school history classes in Russia and the United States are subjected to curricula, texts, images, and symbols that promote patriotic and nationalistic ideology.

The State of National History Education in Russia and the United States

Current Russian history textbooks and curriculum are designed to develop students’ senses of belonging and feelings of pride as emerging citizens of a strong and robust state. This is done in accordance with the current curriculum standards (2009-2012) and reiterated by The 2014 *Concept of a New Instructional-Methodological Set for Teaching History* defines one of the main objectives of history coursework as “shaping students in the spirit of patriotism and respect towards their homeland – a multinational Russian state” (Russian Historical Society, 2014, p. 7). This mandate was recently exemplified by a host of national patriotic events planned and carried out to commemorate Victory Day on May 9. Recently described as “a man who believes in symbols” (Browder, 2015, p. 167), President Putin has taken great interest in delivering this message of patriotic fervor to the nation. Russian flags, WWII posters, large portraits of noble veterans, and elaborate parades showing great military might were used to create a nationwide atmosphere of pride, power, and national defense. During the Red Square Parade, Putin continued along these ideological lines by reminding the nation that “an enlightened Europe did not notice a deadly threat presented by the Nazi ideology,” and boasting

of Russia's greatness while pointing out that "many European states were enslaved and occupied." (<http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/49438>, 2015)

In the United States, much like in Russia, history education has been a political game for decades. The U.S. history classroom is still considered by some to be a prime arena for conveyance of various patriotic ideologies and nation building, and, as in Russia, history textbooks and curriculum have come under fire by politically motivated groups. Unlike, Russia, however, this pressure seems to be coming from the far right. American Conservatives have redoubled their efforts to commandeer the U.S. History curriculum and to present the nation's recent past, particularly that of the 20th century, through an ethnocentric lens of cultural, sociopolitical, military, and economic superiority (Conlon, 2015). Right wing politicians in states including Oklahoma and Georgia have gone so far as to introduce bills to cut or even eliminate funding for public school history education due to, in their opinions, "liberal bias" and a perception that it "emphasizes negative aspects of our nation's history while omitting or minimizing positive aspects" (Rampell, 2015).

As is evident in both countries, political extremists sense the great power in communal identity and hyper-nationalism, and these groups are using similar tactics in their efforts to wrest their national history from the grasps of their political adversaries. As a result of this tug of war, teachers in both countries have been placed in a difficult position.

Data from our October 2014 survey of 113 history teachers across Russia (Lovorn & Tsyrlina-Spady, in press), and recent informal interviews of advanced history teachers in the United States, implied that many educators perceive part of their job as presenting their national history through lens of patriotism. This trend invites a series of questions about the kinds of heroes, values, ideas, and ideals teachers and textbooks are currently delivering to students, and in turn, prompted this investigation, beginning with the following research questions:

1. What sorts of character traits and attitudes are highlighted in the portrayal of late 20th century and early 21st century national heroes and cultural figures as presented in Russian and American history textbooks?
2. What groups from the same period, if any, are underrepresented or missing from the narrative and why?

Status Quo

The 2014 Concept of a New Instructional-Methodological Set for Teaching History [The Concept] composed at the direct order of President Putin and later on approved by him has logically led to the contest among history textbooks' authors, the results of which were reported by the Russian Historical Society in April 2015. This event virtually put an end to any democratic attempts to preserve pluralism in the description of national modern and contemporary history. School history textbooks, as opined by Potapova, became true "instruments of ideologies" (2015, p. 47). The announced winners were three different teams of academics and practitioners; authors of three sets of textbooks published by the following publishing houses: Prosvetscheniie ("Enlightenment" as #1 among them), Drofa, and Russkoie Slovo ("Russian Word"). For analytical purposes, The Concept simplified our task as it specifically indicated "heroes" to be mentioned and described in the textbooks.

We analyzed a list of individuals identified by The Concept as figures of historical and/or political significance at or after the collapse of the Soviet Union as chronicled in Section IX of Russian Federation in 1991-2012 (p. 63). Not at all surprising, of the 34 "most important Russians" analyzed, nearly

half were political or military leaders, countering former President Boris Yeltsin with current President Vladimir Putin. It also included a few curious figures, such as Boris Berezovsky and Mikhail Khodorkovsky; the former of whom was found dead in his London home in March 2013, and the latter of whom was incarcerated for many years.

Our brief analysis of these “leaders/heroes” provides us with a number of noteworthy observations. First, despite several good candidates, the list does not include women. Former governor of St. Petersburg and a current chairwoman of the Federation’s Council, Valentina Matvienko, or current Chairwoman of the Central Bank of Russia and a former federal Minister of Economic Development Elvira Nabiullina, would have been natural selections. Popular singer and composer, Alla Pugacheva, should also have been included. As it is, however, female history students must endure a noticeably unisexual version of Russian history, ironically, in classes that are often taught by female teachers.

Second, we noted that the “List of Personalities,” as it is officially called, includes both heroes and anti-heroes; however, the criteria of choice are not quite clear. For example, the list contains the names of the late Generals Dudaev and Maskhadov, both of whom represented oppositional forces in Chechnya and would later be killed as terrorists, alongside legendary doctor Leonid Roshal, who was leading negotiations with the Chechen rebels and managed to liberate a number of children during the sieges of Beslan school and Dubrovka Theater. (Interestingly, we found Dr. Roshal to be one of the only true moral exemplars on this list.) The list also surprisingly includes former President Boris Yeltsin, as well as Ruslan Hasbulatov, a former chairman of the Supreme Soviet of the Russian Federation and a very odious historic figure.

Third, the list is curious not only for what men are included, but also for who is absent. Of the “most famous Russians,” not one is a known homosexual. The list is also devoid of ethnic minorities, persons with identified disabilities, or noted human rights’ activists. Whistleblower Sergei Magnitsky, for instance, who was jailed for linking the government to allegations of fiscal theft and fraud, and who later died in custody, merits no mention. These clear omissions seem to advance the argument that the list is composed of men who embody an affluent and powerful Russia.

A similar phenomenon is observable in the United States, albeit currently to a lesser degree. Over the past 20 years, politically motivated groups have taken keen interests in high school American history curricula across the country, even leading to some firestorm debates in several states, as mentioned earlier. Much of the latest fervor began with the inception of the National History Standards Project [NHSP] in the early 1990s. As has been well documented, the NHSP originated as a neo-conservative reform movement to challenge the multiculturalism movement that was underway in American schools. Conservative politicians, notably social studies education expert Lynne Cheney and Congressman Newt Gingrich, and other public figures including far-right mouthpiece Rush Limbaugh fueled a nearly two-year controversy about what U.S. history education should and should not encompass, denouncing the work and findings of project directors (Symcox, 2002).

Twenty years later, while many of those particular debates have died down, ownership of the history curriculum is still a topic for discussion and legislation in virtually every state in the Union. The current polarization of American political entities is such that extreme groups have donned themselves the purveyors of historical content and value. Proponents of a nationalist adaptation of U.S. history have worked to lionize political figures including former Presidents Ronald Reagan and George H. W. Bush, and other bastions of conservatism. Even Jerry Falwell, founder of the so-called “Moral Majority” political machine, has been promoted as a person of great contribution to American history. These and other conservative political figures have collectively been presented as defenders of the free

world, usually without fair criticism (or oftentimes even a blemish) of their terms in office or contributions to public political discourse.

Simultaneously, these same groups who fought so diligently to undermine historical multiculturalism seem to have now evoked another culture war of sorts by embarking upon a concerted campaign to minimize or eliminate the teaching of multiple perspectives. It seems clear conservatives want to advance a common, patriotic and nationalistic mind frame and identity among young Americans. This ideological framework, it also appears, is to be spurred by further reductions or the total elimination of negative critical examinations of (mostly conservative) political figures and their policies, particularly those in the second half of the 20th century and the first decade of the 21st century. Disturbingly, some even advocate introducing biblical and “young earth” creationist theories into high school history curriculum (Pierson, Wood, & Thurmond, 2012). We feel this hyper-political climate calls for an investigation of these influences, and our analysis focused on a critical examination of textbooks.

An Emphasis on Textbooks

Our study centered on an analysis of relevant textbooks. We reviewed three of the most widely used Russian history texts for Grade 9, each published under the same title and recommended by the Russian Ministry of Education and Science: *Istoriia Rossii. XX – Nachalo XXI Veka* (History of Russia. 20th – beginning of the 21st Century). Each of these textbooks was written by different authors: (1) Danilov, Kosulina, and Brandt (2014), (2) Kiselev and Popov (2013), and (3) Zagladin, Petrov, Minaikov, and Kozlenko (2014), and was produced by one of only three textbook publishing companies to be officially endorsed by the government.

We also reviewed two popular high school U.S. history texts: (1) *The American Republic since 1877* (2007) authored and edited by Joyce Appleby and published by Glencoe and (2) *The American Pageant, 15th Edition* (2012) authored and edited by David Kennedy and Lizabeth Cohen and published by Cengage Learning. We selected these U.S. History textbooks quite deliberately because they are among the most popularly adopted resources over the past decade.

Textbook publishing in the United States is a multi-billion dollar industry. Each year and across all disciplines, countless textbooks flood U.S. markets with one primary goal: sales. Unlike Russia, there is no single, centrally managed textbook adoption process in the United States. Procedures, instead, are set at the state level, where generally, textbooks are initially reviewed. State representatives then shorten the list to five to ten options. Commonly, these lists are then forwarded to independent districts for consideration, and thus, final selections are oftentimes made at this local level. Textbook adoption cycles generally run seven or eight years, so once a district has made a final selection, that text is used for at least this duration of time.

Decades of localized textbook selection have led to a competitive saturation of the market across all disciplines. School districts have many textbook choices, particularly when it comes to history, and as a result, eager publishing companies are all too willing to present them with history that sells. Interestingly though, such a wide variety of titles does not come with an equal variety of perspectives. Virtually all best-selling U.S. history textbooks take a chronological grand narrative approach written in language that is consistently uplifting, conservative, and nationalistic in tone and design. In our observation, none of the best sellers fosters any meaningful discussion of difficult topics, particularly those associated with failed or controversial American foreign policy.

To further inform this study, we reviewed several excerpts and omissions from the selected Russian and American history textbooks. In examining these textbooks, we focused particularly on historical

accounts from about 1980 to present. One example of our analysis of American “heroes” centered on narrative about and images of former U.S. President Ronald Reagan. Our review was not intended to be an exhaustive examination of the two texts, but rather to make summary observations of its style, content, tone, and undertone in a context of nationalist ideology. For both Russian and American textbooks, we considered 1980-present to be, perhaps, the most dynamic era we could study in this regard. It should be noted that throughout the section that follows, for simplicity, each Russian textbook is referred to only by the lead authors’ name(s).

Analyses of Russian Texts

Following the design of *The Concept*, we proceeded to examine each Russian text with the particular objective of analyzing their coverage of several of those “most important” figures in recent (1991-present) history. At this point, we should say that in general, our cross-text analysis revealed that Zagladin is mostly oriented towards political history, and presents the lengthiest account of policy-changing events during the 1990s and the early 2000s. The textbook includes more images of former Boris Yeltsin and symbols connected with his presidency, such as a photo of tanks in front of the White House during the August coup in Moscow. Zagladin is also the only textbook that mentions the leaders of the “Democratic Choice” Party, Galina Starovoitova (1946-1998) and Sergey Yushenkov (1950-2003) with the dates of birth and death, but it fails to mention that both were the victims of a vicious, unsolved murder, and erroneously places the date of Starovoitova’s death in 1999. Finally, Zagladin is also the only text that presents photos of influential and controversial oppositional leaders, including Gennady Zyuganov, Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, and Grigory Yavlinsky; however, these photos are accompanied by very few details of their legacies or contributions to Russian history.

By contrast, each of the three textbooks clearly seems to make a central focal point out of a strong image of Vladimir Putin for the duration of this time period. Interestingly, while photographs of former President Boris Yeltsin and Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev are included in the textbook, they are not accompanied by any biographical details. President Putin, on the other hand, is represented throughout the text with an impressive photo that is accompanied by a thorough biography of his life and contributions to the Russian Federation, including the following exemplary excerpt from Danilov:

In summer 1999, Putin was appointed Chairman of the Russian Federation Government. Drastic measures to restore a constitutional order in Chechen, fights with terrorists, visits to hotspots, consistent and firm position in defending the country’s unity made him the most popular national politician in no time... While preparing for early elections the authority of the Interim President grew even more due to his election program. As his primary goal Putin announced a rebirth and revival of Russia, meaning to improve people’s living conditions... Without splitting the society into “ours” and “theirs”, supporters and opponents of reforms, he implemented a number of measures that allowed uniting the society (Danilov, 2014, pp. 370-371).

In further examining Kiselev and Popov, we observed an extensive list of political and cultural heroes, complete with many images and informative biographies. Alongside ubiquitous portraits and biographies of Yeltsin, Putin, and Medvedev, Kiselev and Popov have portraits of and some (albeit brief) information on artists, actors, musicians and poets including Brodsky, Okudzhava, Vysotsky, Shukshin, Plisetskaya, among others.

An introductory concept of cultural heroism during this time was among the commonalities we observed when examining the Russian textbooks. Each text made an effort to describe experiences and phenomena that appeared to define or at least point to Russian identity. Additionally, each text also touched on topics of faith and spiritual identity of the nation. Danilov even goes so far as to mark the

restoration of Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior as "a symbol of the spiritual rebirth of Russia" (Danilov, 2014, p. 357), concluding that "the major result of the 1990s is the creation of all necessary conditions for restoration of spirituality in Russia, enriching those eternal values which have been developed by generations of Russians" (p. 357).

As for Russian cultural "heroes," Zagladin prefers using names and/or images of the people themselves or their creations, but all of them are part of the official cultural establishment. Included in the Zagladin text are the President of the Russian Academy of Arts Tsereteli, renowned nationalist artists Glazunov and Klykov, and Art Director of the Mariinsky Theater Gergiev. Interestingly, the Zagladin text also prompts students to reflect upon this "gallery of cultural heroes" and to attempt to answer the following question: "Who out of the most outstanding national writers and poets do you know?" (2014, p. 322).

Analyses of American Texts

As mentioned, we identified two U.S. history textbooks for our analysis in this study primarily because each is widely adopted in districts across the United States. More specifically, *The American Pageant* (Kennedy & Cohen, 2012) was selected because it is the 15th Edition in a series considered to be among the best selling history textbooks of the 21st century anywhere. *The American Republic since 1877* (Appleby, 2007) was selected because of its continued popularity in conservative districts across the United States. Both textbooks are also conveniently available in full text online.

The American Pageant bills itself as "one of the most popular, effective, and entertaining texts in American history," and by many accounts, overall this is an accurate statement. Our research confirmed this textbook is among the more frequently adopted resources across the United States. Publisher Cengage Learning goes on to describe the compilation thusly:

The colorful anecdotes, first-person quotations, and trademark wit bring American history to life. The 15th edition includes markedly deeper explorations of the cultural innovations, artistic movements, and intellectual doctrines that have engaged and inspired Americans and shaped the course of American history. (<http://www.cengage.com/search/showresults.do?N=14+4294922390>)

In fact, our analysis revealed that *The American Pageant* is largely traditional in scope and design in its attention to presenting national heroes. The narrative text follows a predictable chronological orientation of the Reagan and Bush Administrations, for instance, and policies with some attention to social events of the time. Despite the publisher's comprehensive summary, we found little, if any, attention to cultural innovations or artistic movements. Additionally, there were virtually no references to perspectives of the masses or anyone who opposed their presidential policies or agendas.

The American Republic since 1877 emerged during our analysis as the textbook that espoused a definitive conservative ideology. The chapter on the 1980s and 90s (chapter 28) is entitled: "Resurgence of Conservatism," and opens with an impressive and thorough biography of President Reagan. The biography includes various anecdotal references to his formative years, acting career, and early days in politics. One such passage quotes Reagan describing what he learned as a lifeguard when he was a teenager; a clear attempt to establish his track record of moral fortitude (Appleby, 2007, p. 865).

In drawing comparisons between these two texts, we immediately noticed that only select aspects of Reagan's Presidency are recounted in the historical narrative; both texts seemed to use language that either explained away or justified questionable political policies or military actions. The Iran-Contra

Affair, for instance, was a scandal marked by secretive political meddling, illegal international arms exchanges, and televised public hearings that included dramatic testimony, perjury, and talk of a presidential conspiracy. It was also arguably Reagan's greatest political conundrum. By our observation, we determined the Iran-Contra Affair is dealt with in text quite lightly, and any connection to the heroified Reagan is minimized or omitted completely. Historically speaking, first-hand political observers and common citizens alike can easily recall how Congressional hearings ended with the convictions of several of Reagan's military and political advisors. Despite the fact that this multinational scandal made headlines around the world and captivated the American people for months, the whole affair seems to be overly and selectively summarized in the two textbooks we evaluated.

The American Pageant, in a subsection entitled, "Troubles Abroad," gives the affair the following print attention:

A leftist revolution had deposed the long-time dictator of Nicaragua in 1979. President Carter had tried to ignore the hotly anti-American rhetoric of the revolutionaries, known as "Sandinistas," and to establish good diplomatic relations with them. But cold warrior Reagan took their rhetoric at face value and hurled back at them some hot language of his own. He accused the Sandinistas of turning their country into a forward base for Soviet and Cuban military penetration of all of Central America. Brandishing photographs taken from high-flying spy planes, administration spokespeople claimed that Nicaraguan leftists were shipping weapons to revolutionary forces in tiny El Salvador, torn by violence since a coup in 1979. Reagan sent military "advisers" to prop up the pro-American government of El Salvador. He also provided covert aid, including the CIA-engineered mining of harbors, to the "contra" rebels opposing the anti-American government of Nicaragua. Reagan flexed his military muscles elsewhere in the turbulent Caribbean. (Kennedy & Cohen, 2012, p. 984)

168

This textual account is followed by a subsection entitled "The Iran-Contra Imbroglio." We found this use of the descriptor "imbroglio," which, loosely refers to a "complicated situation," to be a curious way to open a discussion on one of the biggest political scandals of the 1980s.

The American Republic since 1877, while similarly selective, does give the reader the idea that there was a more substantial public controversy surrounding the illegal activity and aftermath. The text reports:

Although Congress had prohibited aid to the Nicaraguan contras, individuals in Reagan's administration continued to illegally support the rebels. These officials secretly sold weapons to Iran in exchange for the release of American hostages being held in the Middle East. Profits from these sales were then sent to the contras. News of the illegal operations broke in November 1986. One of the chief figures in the Iran-Contra scandal was Marine Colonel Oliver North, an aide to the National Security Council (NSC). He and other senior NSC and CIA officials testified before Congress and admitted to covering up their actions, including shredding documents to destroy evidence. President Reagan had approved the sale of arms to Iran, but the congressional investigation concluded that he had not been informed about the diversion of the money to the contras. To the end, Reagan insisted he had done nothing wrong, but the scandal tainted his second term in office. (Appleby, 2007, p. 870)

While neither text completely absolves Reagan of any and all wrongdoing, each of the brief accounts is worded in a way that places distance between him and those individuals who committed the crimes. Both texts also redirect the reader's attention to Reagan's already-established stellar moral character and good intentions for the country.

This is only one of several examples we found when evaluating the texts. Other disturbing similarities included glowing, non-critical introductions of extreme right-wing “reformers” such as William F. Buckley, Jerry Falwell, and Pat Robertson. Commonalities among these textbooks also devoted relatively little attention devoted to the experiences or perspectives of common Americans during the period, and virtually no text accounting for political opposition to and protests of the policies and initiatives of these conservative heroes.

Implications and Conclusions

A focused examination of Russian and American history education related to patriotic and nationalist identity lessons from 1980 to the present was quite revealing on several levels. In Russia, for instance, common history themes of today are radically different than those before perestroika. Paraphrasing the late Russian linguist Yuri Lotman (1996), history as portrayed in general textbooks often sharply contradicted the *cultural context* of the Soviet Union. This was especially true in the late 1970s and early 1980s, so much so, in fact, that students regularly noticed and pointed out inconsistencies. Rather humorously, a common practice among school children of that time was to concern themselves more with what the teacher was expecting to hear than with reporting historical accuracy.

Currently, however, the overall public mood among Russians continues to shift and a spirit of jingoism is clearly on the rise. According to our analysis, and as exemplified in the passages cited above, it appears clear that the gap between the history text and the cultural context of modern Russia has narrowed. What’s more, the unavoidable impact of a significantly increasing ideological tone of textbooks has been sharply advanced by the growth of state television and radio (with a limited number of competitors), and an abrasive attitude by political entities towards anyone or anything that espouses an alternative point of view. This disturbing trend shows no signs of slowing in the near future. In a final example, a regional patriotic organization called the “Immortal Regiment” went to great lengths during the 2015 Victory Day Parade to bring people together with photos of their family members who defended the country during World War II (<http://parad-msk.ru>). The 2015 Immortal Regiment was much larger in size and scope, and this time, the marchers were joined by President Putin himself, proudly carrying a portrait of his father (m24.ru, 2015). Immediately after this year’s parade, news outlets reported that in Moscow alone, over half a million people attended the march, most similarly carrying images of family members. Interestingly, however, soon after the rally was over, photos went out on social media of garbage bins full of these family members’ pictures (echo.msk.ru, May 2015), which begs the question: who throws away photos of wartime veteran relatives?

As we have seen, a similar, albeit less intense, fever of nationalistic ideology continues to emerge across the United States. According to our findings, this emergence is taking place at a relatively slower and less dramatic pace. Nonetheless, the heroification of historical and even current political figures is a means by which both Russian and American textbooks present the rather ideological concepts of national identity and patriotism. Again, the textbooks only publish the text they know will sell to school systems and districts, and while this may come as a top-down mandate in Russia, the current political climate in the United States has yielded similar results.

In conclusion, our study revealed a rather disturbing trend of compounded and increased ideological agendas in both countries. This trend included clear attempts to heroify various political and military figures and symbols, and to foster and promote national identity and patriotism. These observations led us to conclude that the manipulation of content on students’ general understandings of history and their country’s place in history is having an ever-increasing impact upon their overall personality and character development.

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