Globalization, and the politics of history school textbooks

Joseph Zajda
Australian Catholic University (Melbourne Campus)
115 Victoria Parade, Fitzroy Vic 3065
Tel: +613 9 563 3268
Fax: +61 3 9699 2040
e-mail: j.zajda@partick.acu.edu.au

and

Rea Zajda
James Nicholas Publishers

Abstract

The main aim of this paper is to provide a new insight into understanding the nexus between ideology, the state, and nation-building—as depicted in history school textbooks. It focuses on the interpretation of social and political change, significant events, and examining possible new biases and omissions in school textbooks. It has been suggested that the historiographies of the new states in Eastern Europe (with parallels in the Russian Federation and China), engaging in nation-building process, continue to be essentially monolithic and intolerant to alternative views as those of their communist predecessors, merely exchanging a communist ideological colouring for a national one. The paper shows that new ideological biases and omissions have been detected in textbooks in Japan, the Russian Federation, Greece and elsewhere. The ‘Europeanization’ of history textbooks in the EU is an example of western-dominated Grand Narrative of pluralist democracy, multiculturalism, and human rights, according to the canon of a particularly European dimension. Recent public debates in the USA, China, Japan, and elsewhere, dealing with understandings of a nation-building and national identity, point out to parallels between the political significance of school history and the history debates globally. The paper demonstrates that the issue of national identity and balanced representations of the past continue to dominate the debate surrounding the content of history textbooks. The paper concludes that competing discourses and ideologies will continue to define and shape the nature and significance of historical knowledge, ideologies and the direction of values education in history textbooks.

Key words: history, citizenship education, democracy, school textbooks, ideology

1. History, ideology and the nation-building process

The main aim of this chapter is to provide a new insight in understanding the nexus between ideology, the state, and nation-building—depicted in history school textbooks, especially the interpretation of social and political change, significant events, looking for possible new biases and omissions, leadership and the contribution of key individuals, and continuities. Nation-building architects make extensive use of history to promote those historical narratives that embody the politically correct teleology of the state. It has been suggested that the historiographies of the new states in Eastern Europe (with parallels in the Russian Federation and China), engaging in nation-building process, continue to be essentially ‘monolithic and intolerant to alternative views as those of their communist predecessors, merely exchanging a communist ideological colouring for a national one’ (Janmaat and Vickers, 2007, p. 270). Janmaat argues that the new post-Soviet government in the Ukraine was only too ready to use history education
to promote a new sense of nationhood, which would maximize Ukrainian distinctiveness and its cultural significance in the former Soviet Union.

1.1 The Council of Europe History Textbooks Projects

International research on school history has been done by the UN, the Council of Europe (Nicholls, 2006: 8). The Council of Europe has played a major role in funding projects to improve teaching history and history textbooks in Europe, particularly in the Russian Federation between 1999-2003. Its latest publication is *History Education in Europe: Ten Years of Cooperation between the Russian Federation and the Council of Europe* (2006). The Council of Europe’s major three-year project (1999-2001) *Learning and Teaching about History of Europe in the 20th Century* (2001) culminated in the final report *The 20th Century: an Interplay of Views* (2001). Among its recommendations on the teaching history in 21st century Europe we find the following principles:

- the need for ‘stronger mutual understanding and confidence between peoples, particularly through a history teaching syllabus intended to eliminate prejudice and emphasising positive mutual influence between different countries, religions and ideas in the historical development of Europe’;
- reaffirming ‘the educational and cultural dimensions of the major challenges in the Europe of tomorrow’;
- stressing that ‘ideological falsification and manipulation of history are incompatible with the fundamental principles of the Council of Europe as defined in its Statute’ (Council of Europe, 2001).

It warned against the ‘misuse of history’, and declaring that history teaching should not be ‘an instrument of ideological manipulation, of propaganda or used for the promotion of intolerant and ultra-nationalistic, xenophobic, racist or anti-Semitic ideas’.

The Council of Europe had offered specific recommendation for history textbooks’ content, to ensure that they reflected the spirit of pluralist democracy, human rights, and promoting the values of freedom, peace and tolerance. Hence the history syllabus content had to reflect the following goals:

- awareness-raising about the European dimension, taken into account when syllabuses are drawn up, so as to instill in pupils a “European awareness” open to the rest of the world;
- development of students’ critical faculties, ability to think for themselves, objectivity and resistance to being manipulated;
- the events and moments that have left their mark on the history of Europe as such, studied at local, national, European and global levels, approached through particularly significant periods and facts;
- the study of every dimension of European history, not just political, but also economic, social and cultural;
- development of curiosity and the spirit of enquiry, in particular through the use of discovery methods in the study of the heritage, an area which brings out intercultural influences;
- the elimination of prejudice and stereotypes, through the highlighting in history syllabuses of positive mutual influences between different countries, religions and schools of thought over the period of Europe’s historical development;
- critical study of misuses of history, whether these stem from denials of historical facts, falsification, omission, ignorance or re-appropriation to ideological ends;
– study of controversial issues through the taking into account of the different facts, opinions and viewpoints, as well as through a search for the truth.

One of the special goals of this three year project was to produce teaching resources for secondary schools which would encourage both teachers and students to approach historical events of the 20th century from a critical and analytical perspective, using the same skills and assessment criteria as historians. Both reports emphasize that no single version of history should be considered as final or correct, and encourage critical thinking and diverse approaches to learning and teaching history (Zajda, 2007, p. 292). The reports also stressed:

- the role of historical interpretation and memory in forming identity,
- history dominated by prejudice and myth

As a result, there has been a degree of ‘Europeanization’ of history textbooks in EU member states, since the 1990s (Han, 2007, p. 392). The new generation of Russian, French, German, and the Ukrainian history textbooks contain a manifest European dimension, as well as increased emphasis on ‘wider European ideals’, such as democracy, human rights and social justice (Han, 2007, p. 393). A vivid example of this ‘Europeanization’ is the case of the Ukraine. From 1996, onwards the Council of Europe, together with the Ministry of Education held a series of seminars that aimed to reform the teaching of history, urging textbook writers to write textbooks that reflect the EU ideals of cultural diversity, social justice, and inclusive pedagogy. The multiple-perspective approach to historical narratives, advocated by the Council of Europe, resulted in the introduction of the new standard in teaching History of Ukraine in the restructured 12-year school system (Janmaat, 2007, p. 320). It mentions the cultivation of tolerance and respect for other nations, and the importance of critical thinking. However, as Janmaat, notes, there are signs that the rhetoric of the reform policy is not ‘filtering down’ in the textbooks. The 2005 new history curriculum for Year 5, as before, presents a strictly linear and chronological Grand narrative of Ukrainian history, continuing myth-making of past historical events, which is at odds with critical thinking and pluralist discourses. A new textbook for Grade 10, by Komatov et al., (2004) on Ukrainian history, produced in cooperation with Euroclio, and international organization of history teachers, reflects western models of innovative pedagogies grounded in pluralist discourses, multiculturalism and social justice.

1.2 The Politics Surrounding Historical Narratives

Continuing public and political debates globally about the role of historical explanation and the development of historical consciousness in schools when dealing with popular understandings of a nation’s growth has given history a significant role in re-positioning competing and ideologically-driven discourses of historical narratives and processes (Manne, 2003; Macintyre & Clark, 2003; Nicholls, 2006; Janmaat, 2007; Kaplan, 2007; Zajda 2007a). Taylor and Young (2003), referring to the role of historical explanation and the development of historical consciousness with respect to a nation’s growth, argues, that the main issues are—national identity, and balanced representations of the past. In Russia for instance, as in other countries undergoing a similar process of nation-building, the three most significant issues defining the re-positioning of the politically correct historical narratives are—preferred images of the past (reminiscent of Anderson’s ‘imagined community’), patriotism and national identity.
Current debates, around the main issues in historiography and the role of historical narratives in nation-building process, echo similar controversies in the UK in the 1980s (Phillips, 1998) in the USA during the 1990s (Nash, Crabtree, and Dunn, 2000), as well as recent debates in Japan, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Greece, the Ukraine, Korea, China, and the Russian Federation. In the USA, for example, on January 18, 1995 the ‘History Wars’ erupted on the floors of the United States Congress. In a debate on national history standards, Senator Slade Gordon (R-Washington) asked the question ‘George Washington or Bart Simpson—which figure represented a ‘more important part of our Nation’s history for our children to study’? He attempted to define the national character of history teaching for future generations (Stearns, Seixas, and Wineburg, 2000, p. 1).

School history texts, as instruments ideological transformation, and nation-building, are currently closely monitored by the state, in counties like Japan, China, the Russian Federation, and Greece, to name a few. In other countries, these processes are still present but in less formal and more ad hoc ways. In the Russian Federation, for example, it represents an ideologically driven nation-building process, and social and political transformation of society, which was overseen by the Putin government until 2007.

2. Historical Perspectives on School History Textbooks

Historical perspectives on school history textbooks include a rich diversity of ideological orientations, ranging from ultra-conservative to neo-Marxist perspectives. The growth of recent nationalist and neo-nationalist movements, especially in Europe, and some parts of Latin America, influence, to a certain degree, the content and the role of history textbooks in schools. Debates over the content and the role of history textbooks, as Nicholls (2006) observes, have become ‘increasingly contentious’ (Nicholls, 2006, p. 43). Some scholars and educationalists suggest that school history textbooks play a significant role in political socialisation, promoting patriotism and the nation-building process (Hein and Selden, 2000; Baques, 2006; Pingel, 2006; Han, 2007; Janmaat, 2007; and Zajda, 2007). Some even argue that history textbooks are central to the ‘transmission of national values…in that they present an official story highlighting narratives that shape contemporary patriotism’ (Hein and Selden, 2000, pp. 3-4). If this is the case, history textbooks may well have acquired a new degree of political and moral dimensions in the 21st century. This is turn suggest the political dimension in education, embracing the curriculum, classroom pedagogy, assessment and educational outcomes. As Ginsburg and Lindsay (1995, p. 8) argue teacher education involves ‘socialization for the political roles that teachers play’. Thus teachers become agents of political socialisation, via disciplines they teach. Political socialisation deals with explanations of political events, and refers to the ‘behaviour, knowledge, values, and beliefs’ of the citizens (Dawson and Prewitt, 1969, p. 5). Also, it important to clarify that the political dimension is not limited to the discourses surrounding ‘the state, governments, parties, constitutions and voting’ (Ginsburg and Lindsay, 1995, p. 4). It extends to all aspects of society, and individuals, ranging from global trade policies to interpersonal dynamics and inter-cultural communication (Foucault, 1980; Corr and Jamieson, 1990; Zajda, 2005; Zajda 2007).

2.1 Textbooks, Historical Events and the Truth
In some countries, history textbooks have become a source of on-going heated debates and controversies, due to their depiction, or ‘air-brushing’ of specific historical events. Foster and Nicholl (2003) believe that Japanese history textbooks appear to be more controversial than those of other countries. This is largely due to the fact that the Japanese government directly monitors, supervises and censors textbook content (Nicholls, 2006, p. 44). Similar degree of government’s control over the content of history textbooks can be observed in the Russian Federation, the Ukraine, Greece, China, and elsewhere. In Japan, for instance, some ultra-conservative historians, like Fujioka (1997) and Nishio (1999) felt that history textbooks over-emphasised Japanese imperialism and wartime atrocities (see Ogawa and Field, 2006, p. 52). They published their own textbooks—History not Taught in Textbooks, and The History of the Nation’s People, justifying Japan’s role in World War II, as one of liberating Asia from Western imperialism. The books became best-selling books in Japan. The Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform circulated its draft of the proposed history textbook for junior high schools—New Japanese History (2000). Again, widespread protests erupted in Japan, China and South Korea, over the presentation of Japan’s foundation myth as historical fact, and its interpretation of Japan’s role in wars to ‘liberate Asia from the Western powers’ (Masalski, 2001, p. 2), and not ‘wars from expansionist motives’ (Nicholls, 2006, p. 53). The Ministry of Education, following the publicity and controversy over the ultra-conservative historical perspectives, its biases and omissions, criticised such textbooks for containing unbalanced accounts of certain historical narratives and requested that revised textbooks should reflect a more balanced content, a more sensitive use of language (eg. ‘military comfort women’ etc), and a more balanced and objective use of critical analysis, and evaluation. However, the swing towards patriotism, nationalism and traditions, promoted by ultra right-wing historians, and policy-makers, has gained the momentum since 2001. A moral education reader A Record of my Inner Development, designed to cultivate a ‘love for the nation’ and patriotism was published in April 2002 and distributed by the government to 12 million junior and senior high school students. In their school report cards, students are graded on a three-point scale as to their ‘patriotic attitude’ and ‘awareness as Japanese’ (Nicholls, 2006, p. 55).

In Greece, similar tensions and anxieties are reflected in the representations and continuities of national identity in school history textbooks. The Greek education system, like those in the Russian Federation, France, Japan, China and elsewhere, is centralized in nature. The government has complete control over the content of the school textbooks:

> It funds their writing, appoints its authors and publishers and distributes the textbooks, free of charge, to all public schools each year. The successive governments during the two significant periods, 1970-1974 and 1997-2005 have attempted to define or re-defined national identity in light of globalisation, wherein globalisation had its most dramatic impact on socio-political change in Greece and on revisions to school textbooks themselves (Meselidis, 2007, p. 8).

Greece has been profoundly influenced by Western models of pluralism, multiculturalism, secularism and tolerance, which are attempting to change Greek ethnocentrism. This, according to Meselidis, has forced Greece to undergo a dramatic social and cultural transformation, and to re-invent itself and its national identity, to some extent, in order to meet these demands:

> …in Greece education has been used as a key weapon to transform national identity, in order to create more competitive, productive and entrepreneurial personalities, while still preserving Greek cultural and historical heritage. For Greece, this has meant changing and revising the school curricula at regular intervals, since 1970, in order to accommodate internal and global change. For instance, the current
government of Kostas Karamanlis (Jnr), which came to power in 2004, as a center right party replacing the previous socialist party of Greece (PASOK), is preparing to launch the new Primary School term, commencing in September 2006, with 30 new textbooks. Each subject at Primary and Secondary school level, has its own ‘standard issued’ textbook, that must be primarily used for the allocated weekly period of instruction in that subject. Assignments, exercises and examinations are based on the curricula content of such textbooks (Meselidis, 2007, p. 9).

The Year 5 and Year 6 Primary School History textbooks, like other history textbooks, had been revised a number of times, by new successive governments since the 1970s. In 1997, Year 5 textbook was revised again in the aftermath of the reformist and pro-globalisation Prime Minister, Costas Simitis, coming to power in 1996. In Greece, although the government has an overpowering control over curricula in Greece, there are other vested interest groups that lobby it for influence on the educational syllabus, especially the Church:

As church and state are not separated in Greece, and Article 3 of the Constitution guarantees this union, successive Church leaders have wanted a say in the content of the textbooks. Archbishop Christodoulos’, the current Head of the Church of Greece, public vocal criticism of aspects of globalisation, as threatening Greek identity, had often made relations with the previous Simitis government (1996-2004) very tense. It encouraged public resistance to that government’s reform measures such as the introduction of the new European identity card in 2000. Church leaders, such as Christodoulos, were outraged when religious affiliation was dropped from Greece’s new national ID card, in accordance with European Union standard practice (Meselidis, 2007, p. 10).

A new Year 6 Primary School history textbook was introduced in the 2006/2007 school year. Its contents included an examination of the history of Greece from the 1400s until 1981. It addressed the rule of the Ottoman Empire over Greece, the Greek war of Independence (1821 – 1827) against the Ottoman Empire and the history of the new Greek state post 1827 until the present, with special concluding emphasis on Greece’s admission to the European Economic Community in 1981 (Meselidis, 2008). The authors of the textbook, in their eagerness to represent Greece’s Ottoman experience in a more reconciliatory ways, made some incredible distortions of historical events involving Greco-Turkish history. One of the glaring “errors” was the textbook’s omission of the carnage against the Greek and Christian civilian population, in Smyrna on the 27th August 1922, when victorious Turkish forces entered the city, having defeated the Greek army. As Meselidis argues that a new and softer narrative of this tragic event was a deliberate attempt to minimise this historical fact and repress from memory this unnecessary war-related genocide:

Most independent historians agree that what followed was a massacre of the Greek people of that city by the Turks (Woodhouse, 1998, p. 2007; Boatswain and Nicolson, 1989, p.211; Clogg, 1992, p.98). However, the textbook only described the tragedy of August 1922 event with the following misleading statement: “On the 27th August 1922, a Turkish army enters Smyrna. Thousands of Greeks crowd at the harbour to enter the ships and leave for Greece” (Repousi: et al., 2006, p.100). The omission of the atrocities against Greek and Christian civilians in Smyrna, in 1922, by the Turks, essentially undermined the authors’ claim to objectivity and thus exposed the 2006-2007 textbook itself to criticism of being ‘a biased’, ideologically driven, piece of work (Meselidis, 2008, p. 8).

The content of the textbook, particularly its representations of certain events, and interpretations of political, social and religious dimensions that shaped and influenced historical processes in Greece, contributed towards a political crisis within the state. The reduced majority at the election of 16th September, 2007, and the failure by the Minister of Education, Marietta Giannakou, and her deputy minister George Kalos, to be re-elected to parliament, together with
the on-going hostility of the Church of Greece and the rise of the ultra-right wing nationalist party of L.A.O.S. (which won, for the first time, 10 seats in Greece’s 300 member chamber of parliament) had resulted in enormous public debate and controversy. Many teachers simply refused to teach the contents of the book. The government was forced to withdraw the book in September 2007, and replace it with the old 1986/2006 textbook to be used during the 2007/2008 school year, until a completely new textbook would be commissioned and written for 2008-2009 (Stylianidis, 2007).

What can we learn from this example, when the state and the Ministry of Education had to withdraw a school history textbook from schools? First, it is almost impossible to fabricate history in a democratic state. Such a problem would not have existed in totalitarian states like the USSR, Nazi Germany and the Imperial Japan. Second, public opinion, and external actors do make a difference. In this case, parents, teachers and community and religious leaders collectively voiced their opposition to a textbook and it contested representation and discussion of certain events. Third, the state needs to consider the dialectic between cultural diversity, human rights, identity and the truth:

If the 2006/2007 textbook was a government attempt to construct a new Greek national identity, by undermining the Church and the Us and Other dichotomy of the Greek in-group and Turkish out-group mentality, then it failed, at least temporarily, with the permanent withdrawal of the book. The predicament of the 2006/2007 textbook revealed that “a top down” attempt by government, via mass education, to “invent” or “manufacture” a new identity, in order to meet the challenges of modernity, is not always possible (Meselidis, 2008, p. 9).

As Meselidis argues, 'It seems that modern Greek identity has a deeper cultural spirit, in time and place, to some extent, than modernist nationalist theory' (see also Anderson, 1991; Smith, 1998; Smith 2001) might suggest (Meselidis, 2008, p. 9).

3. Ideology, the State and School History Textbooks

3.1 The Two+ Historical Narratives as One History

When West Germany and German Democratic Republic (GDR) were reunited in October 1990, history textbooks had to re-written. The parallel development of two dominant narratives in history textbooks was problematic. Was it possible to have two or more dominant narratives in German textbooks? Szalai (1997) asked a similar rhetorical question: ‘Do we need or do we want a modern, new all-German theory for the teaching of history or can and should the old West German approach simply be implemented in East Germany without any changes?’ (cited in Pingel, 2006, p. 76). It became clear from numerous debates and publications that it was not possible to identify a new ‘post-GDR theory’ or an innovative ‘all-German theory’ (Pingel, 2006, p. 76).

The Russian Federation is a vivid and unique example of ideological repositioning of historical narratives, blending certain Soviet and Russian historiography. The new textbooks portray a post-Soviet, national identity, thus signalling a radical ideological transformation, from Soviet to Russian pluralist democracy, and redefinition of what are seen a ‘legitimate’ culture and values in Russia. New school history textbooks particularly set out to overturn the Soviet emphasis on orthodoxy in historical interpretation, by encouraging a critical consciousness among in students.
They do this by approaching history from a multiple perspectives and inviting students to confront certain periods in the country’s past in a questioning and analytical manner (for other discussions of post-Soviet educational reform in Russia, see McLean & Voskresenskaya, 1992, Kaufman, 1994, Polyzoï and Nazarenko, 2004, Zajda, 1998, 1999, 2003, 2005). In the textbooks, pluralism, and critical awareness have replaced Marxism-Leninism as the new dominant discourse.

Despite the above ideological and pedagogical changes, history textbooks, as in the past, continue to promote the spirit of patriotism, and nationalism, in depicting the evolution of Russian national and cultural identity. For instance, in the afterward and conclusion of the Grade 8 textbooks (Rybakov and Preobrazhenski, 1993, Davilov and Kosulina, 2000) students are reminded that history is about patriotism and citizenship, and that Russia became a ‘great nation in the world’:

…To treasure…this heritage—means to cultivate within oneself the love of Rodina (Motherland), the feelings of patriotism, and citizenship.’ (Rybakov and Preobrazhenski, 1993: 273).

XIX century finally created Russia into a great nation in the world…This was achieved through our people’s sufferings and won by a complete defeat [of Napoleon] in the 1812 war…Not a single issue of the world’s politics could be decided without Russia (Davilov and Kosulina, 2000: 253).

Similar comments, concerning the great achievements of Russia and its people are found in Istoriia Rossii, konets XVII-XIX Vek (History of Russia, 17th to the 19th Centuries, 2000), the prescribed history textbook for 10th grade, (recommended by the Ministry of Education), which is one of the key school texts:

Everything that was achieved—is the fruit of the efforts by the Russians. However, taking into the account of the collective achievements of the whole population of the Russian empire, one also needs to consider the contributions of its leading individuals… the history of Russia is infinite, excitingly interesting, full of mysteries…and ‘blank pages’ (Buganov and Zyrianov, 2000: 10)

In the 2001 prescribed history textbook for Grades 10 and 11 (recommended by the Ministry of Education), Rossiia v XX veke (Russia in the 20th century, fifth edition), by Levandovski, and Shchetinov, which is one of the key texts, Russian 16 year-olds are urged to take, which is new, a more analytical and critical approach to history:

The crucial periods of the past will pass by our reflective gaze: Russia with her bright and dark pages of life prior to 1917…the depressing shadow of massive repressions…the growth of our Fatherland, with great achievements and unforgiving errors…More than ever before it is necessary for you to explain…the inner logic of a historical process, and find the answers to the questions why such events occurred… You need to understand historical facts for what they are, rather than guessing and rushing to categorise them in ideological schemes (pp. 3-4).

Nearly half of the 2001 book, which covers over 100 years of Russian modern history, is taken up by the wars and revolutions, reinforcing the image that Russia’s history is one of blood, suffering and anguish, resulting in the needless sacrifice and death of tens of millions of people during the two World Wars alone, not to mention the Civil War and the subsequent Red Terror, and Stalinism. The Civil War, is now described as the struggle between the ‘two evils’—the Reds and the Whites, which resulted in the death of 8 million people, who perished as a result of famine, the Red Terror, or were killed on the battlefields:
For Russia the Civil War became the greatest tragedy. The damage done to the economy was in excess of 50 billion gold roubles. In 1920 the industrial output was seven times less than it was in 1913… (p. 165).

One of the questions students are asked is: “In your opinion, of the ‘two evils’ - the Whites and the Reds, why did the majority of the population of the former Russian empire chose the latter? ‘Was there such a real choice’, the textbooks authors ask? This is an attempt to re-think the role of the masses during the Civil War and to suggest that the victorious Bolshevik army (which grew from 300,000 in 1917 to 5.5 million in 1920) was not necessarily representative of the masses. New archival documents describe the political ideals and manifestoes of the Whites. In the section ‘The ideology of the White movement’, students learn, for the first time in history, about the Whites and their slogan ‘Za edinuiu i nedelimuiu Rossiiu’ (For the united and singular Russia), a slogan that is more applicable today in the post-Soviet Russia (p. 156).

Similar, reflective comments were in the foreword to the 2000 history textbook for Grade 11 Istoriia Otechestva (History of the Fatherland) by Denisenko, Izmozik, Ostrovskii and Startsev: In your hands you have a new history textbook. With its help we suggest that you consider a complex and contradictory past of our country…We hope that you will develop your own view point…Let’s reflect together about our past, so that we could walk bravely the path towards democratic and humane society (Denisenko, et al. 2000: 5).

The concluding comments in another Grade 11 textbook (circulation 30,000 copies), stress the role of history in developing moral values and critical thinking:

Is the re-birth of Russian civilisation possible? The answer is ‘Yes’. The necessary condition for it is the re-birth of national and spiritual culture, which forces us to look inside (ourselves) rather than outside…The moral dimension of understanding becomes foremost. Historical problems are perceived to be a means for self-analysis, self-evaluation, and self-criticism (Ionov, 2000: 312).

In another textbook, Istoriia Otechestva 1900-1940 (History of the Fatherland), a popular Grade 10 textbook, first published in 1999, the authors advocate the discursive analysis of history, focussing on the analysis of the theme of ‘progress’ and a new multi-paradigm approach to the study of history:

We have attempted to depict the specifics of history as a humanistic discipline to be viewed through a personal perspective. For this reason there in no need to be afraid of incorrect answers…Questions are designed for discussions during lessons and do not require the singular ‘correct’ answer. It is not the answer to the question that is important but rather the importance of the question that leads you into other questions and reflection (Mishina and Zharova, 1999: 3).

This also reflected in Grade 11 textbook by Denisenko, Izmozik, Ostrovskii, and Startsev (2000) Istoriia Otechestva, where students are asked to reflect on Russia’s transition, from totalitarianism to democracy (p. 376):

Do you engage in arguments with your family, and friends concerning Russia’s future development? What is dominating during such discussions: arguments or emotions? Do you believe that your generation is likely to play a crucial role in the political, economic and moral and spiritual reirth of Russia?

There is also an attempt to teach feeling and emotions, and the love of one’s country in the study of history in school textbooks. This is clearly defined in the foreword of the newest Grades 6-7 textbook by Preobrazhenski and Rybakov (2001) Istoriia Otechestva (History of the Fatherland,
seventh edition), of which 200,000 were circulated. Here, Russia’s 12 year-olds study narratives, maps and charts to learn about the greatness of the Russian state and its imperial past:

Knowing the history of one’s Rodina (Motherland) is important for every human being. History is correctly called the people’s memory and the teacher of life…The most important thing in the study of history of one’s Motherland—is learning to love her…means to love the country, the geographic space where a person was born. To love the Fatherland means loving one’s people, norms, customs, culture and native tongue… (Preobrazhenski and Rybakov, 2001: 5-6).

One of the goals of teaching history in schools continues to reflect values education and patriotic upbringing, in this case, through the study of WW2. It is ‘mainly through the study of Velikoi Otechestvennoi voiny (the Great Fatherland’s War) that civic and patriotic upbringing is achieved’ (Lebedkov, 2004: 1). Due to problems surrounding a politically correct and preferred portrayal of certain historical narratives and events, Putin (2003) had directed the Russian Academy of Science to examine all history textbooks used in schools throughout Russia. ‘Numerous’ complaints of WW2 veterans served as a basis for the President’s letter. Putin wrote:

I fully share opinions and feeling of all the veterans of the WWII. I am authorizing historians and scholars to examine today's history textbooks. They should be able to report their results to me by February 1, 2004. (http://english.pravda.ru/printed.html?news_id=11904)

This was as a result of a major history textbook scandal involving the 2002 edition of Igor Dolutsky’s (2002) National History: 20th Century for Grade 10. Students were asked to discuss whether Putin’s style of leadership could be considered as an ‘authoritarian dictatorship’, and whether Russia had become a ‘police state’ (p. 351). Dolutsky’s textbook emphasized crimes, and abuses of the Soviet state committed against millions of its own citizens. Putin’s reaction was that Russian history was full of dark spots, but one should not dwell on them, but focus on the bright spots, and some of the great achievements of the nation. Hence, according to him, school history textbooks should depict historical facts:

...that they should inculcate a feeling of pride for one’s country…We should be happy that we departed from a one-party system and a mono-ideological perception of history…We must not allow ourselves to fall into another extreme (http://www.edu.ru/index.php?page_id=5&topic_id=3&date=&sid=471).

Dolutsky’s textbook was stripped of its Education Ministry license in November 2003, just days before the December parliamentary elections. Consequently, due to government’s pressure, some final year history textbooks were even pulped as they portrayed an unfavourable image—huge losses and prisoners of war taken of the Soviet army during the early period of WW2, particularly during the darkest days of World War II for the Soviet Union, when many Soviet armies were either defeated, annihilated or captured (Zajda, 2003: 370-371).

Since then, the Ministry of Education decreed that, in view of new state standards in education, all history textbooks had to be examined and evaluated by panel of experts, including the Federal Experts Council on History, the Academy of Sciences, and the Academy of Education. Approved textbooks would be selected on competitive basis and included on the approved list of prescribed textbooks issued by the Ministry of Education. By 2004, the new history textbooks have returned to traditional symbols of nation-building and patriotism. In the History of Russia and the World in the 20th Century textbook by Zagladin (2004) for Grade 10, photos on the cover carry Soviet propaganda images: Moscow’s soaring ‘Worker and Collective Farm Girl’ statue, a poster
reading ‘The Motherland is calling’ and the Soyuz-Apollo space docking. They tell students the Soviet past was all pride and glory.

Some Russian scholars have examined structural forces and processes exerted by the state and other major stakeholders in defining a ‘new direction for history education’ (Erokhina and Shevyrov, 2006: 11). They illuminate further the complex, and ideologically and culturally saturated landscape of Russian school textbooks, which is grounded in a new approach to comparative historiography and context-specific processes. In Israel, Vera Kaplan (1999) in her study of Russian school textbooks notes that they pay little attention to the Soviet repressions and mass deportations of ethnic groups. Furthermore, many Russians do not like to know of the Red Army’s wartime atrocities and about complete indifference to human life by the Soviet high command.

Given that the students are exposed to so many heroes and role models—from Aleksandr Nevsky (who defeated the Swedes in 1240), to Vladimir Putin, which values are they to internalise on their journey of discovering democracy and citizenship in the Russian Federation in the 21st Century? Russia is not alone in discovering a moral vacuum, and the current absence of a sense of cohesion or a sense of belonging to the civic culture. Similar discoveries have been made in other societies (Torney-Putra, Schwille, and Amadeo, 1999: 14). In general, school history textbooks continue to emphasise the historical greatness of the Russian State—from the ancient Rus, the Imperial Russia, to the Soviet Union, as a super power, during the period between 1950s-1980s. Added to this nostalgia for the past is the new concern for teaching the concepts of participatory democracy, active citizenship, human rights, and social justice, never experienced by the ex-Soviet citizens. There is need for a new hybrid of national identity, and patriotism, as Russia has yet to become a ‘real nation state’ (Bogolubov, 1999: 532). New school textbooks in history have become a major symbol for inculcating a new sense of national identity and patriotism in Russia between after 2003. This is supported by Russian President Vladimir Putin’s policy directive in 2003 on school history textbooks that ‘Textbooks should provide historical facts, and they must cultivate a sense of pride among youth in their history and their nation’ (Danilova, 2004).

Danilevskoi (2005) argues that teaching history in schools is not just to do with changing ideologies, but the fact that new school history textbooks cover a great deal of new data, where every teacher can express his or her views and interpretations:

> History has become one of the most complex subjects to teach in schools. This is simply due to the fact that those who write history textbooks, design curriculum, develop standards and programmes have been influenced by changing ideological perceptions. The catalogue of problems in teaching history has become incredibly daunting... Everybody has their own opinion and offer their own solutions [on teaching history in schools JZ, http://www.ug.ru/?action=topic&toid=12005]

The above account suggests a shift towards a more subjective, personal and inclusive interpretation of historical events. Far more emphasis is now placed on national identity, patriotism, and the need to become familiar with the history of one’s country (Zajda, 2007). It has been argued by some scholars that ‘nation builders rarely make new myths—rather they imagine history and mine the past for suitable heroes and symbols’ (Zajda, 2007: 301). The imagined community is a concept coined by Benedict Anderson (1991), which states that a nation is a community socially constructed and ultimately imagined by the people who perceive themselves as part of that group.
4. The Political Economy of History Textbook Publishing

History teachers in England, Australia, Canada, the USA, and elsewhere have long enjoyed freedom and independence in textbook selection. State-regulated or ‘approved’ textbooks ‘never existed in England’ (Crawford and Foster, 2006, p. 93). Forces of globalisation, marketisation and accountability have affected the nature, and the value of school textbooks. Standards-driven education policy and curriculum reforms in Europe and elsewhere have impacted on publishers and publishing. A State-mandated National Curriculum in the UK (1988), the Core Curriculum in the Russian Federation (1993), National Curricula in France, to name a few, supported by a rigid regime of examinations, accountability, standards, quality, and value-added schooling, has meant that education publishers were responding to the demands of state-controlled and examination-driven accountability-defined education system:

Textbooks today are more than ever packaged and produced to respond to the demands of an increasingly state-controlled education system and an increasingly profit-driven textbook industry (Crawford and Foster, 2006, p. 94).

The emergence of National History Curriculum, State/Federal Standards in History, and increased emphasis on examinations in schools and higher education institutions has meant that education textbook publishers ‘are now acutely aware of the demands of the examination boards’ and produce prescribed textbooks for the state-defined and controlled curricula (Crawford and Foster, 2006, p. 94). Debates in the USA, England, Germany, Japan, Greece, the Russian Federation, and China were particularly intense during the 1990s concerning how and what history particular history narrative and ideological perspective should be included in schools: ‘…champions of both sides of the political divide understood that controlling access to the past had undoubted implications for how pupils perceived the present’ (Crawford and Foster, 2006, p. 94). Similarly, in France, due to its highly centralised education system, school history textbooks are published, according to prescribed history curricula and national examinations. In this sense, history in French schools has the status of a ‘compulsory discipline’, being placed ‘behind French and mathematics’ in the hierarchy of school disciplines (Baques, 2006, p. 105).

5. Conclusion

Recent and continuing public and political debates in the USA, China, Japan, and elsewhere, dealing with understandings of a nation-building and national identity, point out to parallels between the political significance of school history and the history debates globally (Smith, 1991; Macintyre & Clark, 2003; Taylor and Young, 2003; Nicholls, 2006; and Zajda, 2007). Due to these on-going debates concerning the role of history teaching in schools, its content and delivery, history education has become a high profile topic of national and global significance. The above analysis demonstrates that the issue of national identity, and balanced representations of the past continue to dominate the debate surrounding the content of history textbooks. In numerous countries globally undergoing a similar process of nation-building, the three most significant issues defining the re-positioning of the politically correct historical narratives are—preferred images of the past (reminiscent of Anderson’s ‘imagined community’), patriotism and national identity. Competing discourses in historiography, together with a diversity in interpretations of events, and a more analytical and critical approach to the process and content of history in school
textbooks, offer new pedagogical challenges to both students and teachers alike, who have been exposed to traditional, linear, descriptive and authoritarian views of the politically correct historical narrative. These competing discourses and diverse ideologies will continue to define and shape the nature of historical knowledge, dominant ideologies and values in history textbooks.

6. References

Kaplan, V. (1999). The Reform of Education in Russia and the Problem of History Teaching, Education in Russia, the Independent States and Eastern Europe, 17(1), 3-19.


The Author
In April 2004, he received the Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching, Australian Catholic University. He is currently co-chair (2006-08) of the World Council of Comparative Education Societies (WCCES) Publications Standing Committee. He is also on the Board of Directors of the Comparative and International Education Society, USA.

Contact address: Associate Professor Joseph Zajda, Trescowthick School of Education, Melbourne Campus (St Patrick's), Australian Catholic University, 115 Victoria Parade, and Fitzroy VIC 3065 Australia. E-mail: j.zajda@patrick.acu.edu.au