

Coverage of the Second World War in School Textbooks on the History of Ukraine Before and After Euromaidan

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After Ukraine gained independence in 1991, national and post-Soviet historical narratives coexisted in the country's political, scientific, and educational spheres. However, the events of Euromaidan and the beginning of the Russo–Ukrainian War in 2014 – particularly after the legislative changes of 2015, known as the ‘decommunisation laws’ – shifted the situation in favour of a national approach. These events significantly impacted the politics of memory and historical politics in Ukraine. Textbooks and curricula on the history of Ukraine now largely reflect the changes in the perception and interpretation of historical events since 2014. Furthermore, alternations and additions have been made to the interpretation of the Second World War in the newest generation of Ukrainian textbooks, which were published in 2018. Lastly, the full-scale Russian invasion influenced the latest updates to school curricula, which were implemented in 2022.

Nancy Popson points out that “textbooks are the main educational tool by which the values and norms of the political and social system are transmitted to young members of society”.¹ Textbooks also play a crucial role in reflecting the national master narrative. According to Georgiy Kasianov, the national master narrative is “a systematized, canonical version of a nation's past which claims the status and power of the universal norm”.² In Ukraine, national history textbooks are written based on narratives approved by the Ministry of Education and Science, which undergo significant updates over time to reflect the state's memory politics. In this regard, textbook authors do not have absolute freedom in their work; they are bound by school programmes and the changes that these programmes undergo.

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- 1 Nancy Popson, “The Ukrainian History Textbook: Introducing Children to the ‘Ukrainian Nation’”, *Nationalities Papers: The Journal of Nationalism and Ethnicity* 29/2, 2001, 325–350, here 326.
 - 2 Georgiy Kasianov, “National Master Narrative: Vicissitudes of Method”, *AREI: Journal for Central and Eastern European History and Politics* 1, 2022, 108–127, here 110.

Ukrainian and Western researchers have deeply researched Ukrainian history textbooks.³ This has included the influence of the events of 2014 on textbook writing as well as the writing of history textbooks in the context of war (after 2014).⁴ Lina Klymenko, for instance, has studied the Second World War in previous generations of Ukrainian school textbooks, and has examined and compared Second World War narratives in Belarussian, Russian, and Ukrainian textbooks.⁵ Adding to this scholarship, my article analyses textbooks on the history of Ukraine that were published before and after 2014 and reflect changes in the analysis and interpretation of the Second World War. These ‘new’ textbooks focus more on previously ignored or under-evaluated topics. More specifically, this analysis examines the shifts in the politics of memory, new approaches to selecting visual material, the choice of historical sources presented in the books, the topics of individual book sections, terminology, and other relevant factors.

This article compares the textbooks of two generations: those from 2011/2012 and those from 2018. The books from 2018 are currently used in schools. In this study, I only draw examples from a selection of textbooks and am not able to cover all of them. All the current school textbooks are available online.⁶ At the time of writing this article, the newest textbooks have not yet been released, but the 2022 history curriculum updates are available. Lastly, this article considers only textbooks on the history of Ukraine (world history, for example, is taught as a separate subject). Within this study, I see textbooks on national history as sources that “contain an ex-

3 Popson, “The Ukrainian History Textbook”.

4 In the case of the influence of the events of 2014 on textbooks, see: Marta Studenna-Skrucka, “What history? What homeland? The nationalization of history in the school education before the breakthroughs in 2014–15 and after”, in: Tomasz Stryjek and Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin (eds.), *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine: From Reconciliation to De-Conciliation*, London: Routledge, 2022, 85–103. In the case of the influence of the war that started in 2014 on textbooks, see: Kateryna Pryshchepa, “Nation-building and school history lessons in Ukraine after 2014”, in: Tomasz Stryjek and Joanna Konieczna-Sałamatin (eds.), *The Politics of Memory in Poland and Ukraine: From Reconciliation to De-Conciliation*, London: Routledge, 2022, 120–135.

5 For previous generations of Ukrainian textbooks, see: Lina Klymenko, “World War II in Ukrainian School History Textbooks: Mapping the Discourse of the Past”, *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education* 44/5, 2014, 756–777. For the comparative study, see: Lina Klymenko, “Narrating the Second World War: History Textbooks and Nation Building in Belarus, Russia, and Ukraine”, *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 8/2, 2016, 35–57.

6 For examples of relevant eleventh-grade textbooks on the history of Ukraine, see: Instytut modernizatsiyi osvity (Institute of the Modernisation of Education), “4. Istoriia Ukrainy 11 klas” (“4. The History of Ukraine for the 11th Grade”), <https://lib.imzo.gov.ua/yelektron-n-ers-pdruchnikv/11-klas/4-storya-ukrani-11-klas/> [accessed: 31.07.2024].

pression of the self-image of the nation-state, characterized by the representation of national history, which students are required to acquire”.⁷

Memory Politics

The first generation of the textbooks that I analyse – those from 2011/2012 – were published during the presidency of Viktor Yanukovych (2010–2014). Memory politics during the office of Yanukovych’s predecessor, Viktor Yushchenko (2005–2010), typically contained anti-Soviet elements. The goal of memory politics during that period was to unite Ukrainians through the reconciliation of memories around the Second World War. Meanwhile, memory politics under Yanukovych showed a partial return to the ‘Soviet’ model of commemorating the war, which fell close to Russian commemoration.⁸ The 2018 textbooks were published during Petro Poroshenko’s presidency (2014–2019). After Euromaidan, Yanukovych’s rule ended and Russian aggression against Ukraine started. At this point, memory politics changed significantly at state and legal levels. In 2015, the government adopted several laws that consolidated the state’s view of the Second World War. Particularly important was the Law of Ukraine “On the perpetuation of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939–1945”, which justified the change

considering the fact that during the Second World War of 1939–1945, the National Socialist (Nazi) and Communist totalitarian regimes committed numerous crimes against humanity, war crimes and crimes of genocide on the territory of Ukraine, as a result of which Ukraine and the Ukrainian people suffered huge losses, [and] noting the world-historical significance of the victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939–1945.⁹

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- 7 Eckhardt Fuchs and Marcus Otto, “Introduction Educational Media, Textbooks, and Post-colonial Relocations of Memory Politics in Europe”, *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society* 5/1, 2013, 1–13, here 3.
 - 8 Barbara Törnquist-Plewa and Yuliya Yurchuk, “Memory politics in contemporary Ukraine: Reflections from the postcolonial perspective”, *Memory Studies* 12/6, 2019, 699–720, here 704.
 - 9 Petro Poroshenko, “Pro uvichnennya peremohy nad natsyzmom u Druhiy svitoviy viyni 1939–1945 rokiv” (“On the Perpetuation of the Victory over Nazism in the Second World War of 1939–1945”), Verkhova Rada Ukrainy (Ukraine’s Verkhova Rada), 09 April 2015, <http://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/315-19#Text> [accessed 31.07.2024] [author’s trans.].

The Shift of the Second World War Paradigm in Textbooks

Existing since the Soviet period, the term ‘Great Patriotic War’ – the name of the World War II-era German–Soviet armed conflict of 1941–1945 – remained in Ukrainian textbooks for a long time following Ukrainian independence (including in the textbooks of 2011/2012). After a brief break from the term, it returned in 1995 to the new national narrative.¹⁰ It was used much less during the term of Yushchenko, but in 2011, it reappeared in textbooks. Sociological research has shown a widespread use of the term in the last decade. For example, in 2011, more than 66 percent of Ukrainians used Great Patriotic War, while about 29 percent preferred WWII.¹¹ However, after Euromaidan, the term Great Patriotic War was banished from Ukrainian legislation and, afterward, from new Ukrainian textbooks for the tenth grade, which were issued in 2018.¹²

The textbooks of 2011/2012 have a conception of the Great Patriotic War that is somewhat altered as compared to the Soviet period. The Ukrainian version of the Great Patriotic War pays more attention to the feat and suffering of ‘ordinary people’ and the significant mistakes of the military and state leaders during the war.¹³ Usually, the first page of the corresponding section of the textbook carries the main message that the authors want to present. The illustrative material of these pages is also important for the presentation of the main information. In a textbook from 2012, the topic section begins with images of Soviet patriotic posters and photographs.¹⁴ A version of the same textbook that was revised in 2018, however, contains the image of a contemporary Ukrainian poster depicting red poppies and the recent slogan used during Ukrainian celebrations of Victory Day, “We honour. We Prevail. 1939–1945”.¹⁵ Notably, the Ukrainian Institute of National Memory proposes using these new symbols for the purposes of education and commemoration. The symbols were inspired

10 Andrii Portnov, *Istoriyi dlya domashnogo vzhytku: Eseyi pro polsko-rosijsko-ukrayinskyj trykutnyk pamyati* (Histories for Home Use: Essays on the Polish–Russian–Ukrainian Triangle of Memory), Kyiv: Krytyka, 2013, 174.

11 Ibid., 167.

12 UNIAN, “Rada zaminyla u zakoni Velyku Vitchyznyanu vijnu na Drugu svitovu” (“The Rada Replaced the Great Patriotic War with the Second World War in the Law”), 14 November 2017, <https://www.unian.ua/politics/2242759-rada-zaminila-u-zakoni-veliku-vitchiznya-nu-viynu-na-drugu-svitovu.html> [accessed 31.07.2024].

13 Portnov, *Istoriyi dlya domashnogo vzhytku*, 174.

14 Olena Pometun and Nestor Hupan, *Istoriya Ukrayiny: Pidruchnyk dlya 11 klasu zagalnoosvitnix navchalnyx zakladiv* (A History of Ukraine: A Textbook for the 11th Grade of Secondary Schools), Kharkiv: Sycyya, 2012, 5.

15 Olena Pometun and Nestor Hupan, *Istoriya Ukrayiny: Pidruchnyk dlya 10 klasu zakladiv zagalnoyi serednoyi osvity* (A History of Ukraine: A Textbook for the 10th Grade of General Secondary Education Institutions) Kyiv: Orion, 2018, 193 [author’s trans.].

by European commemoration practices. If in 2012 the textbooks present war and victory as heroic, then the later books focus on memorialising the victims of the war. This is evidenced by a quote from a well-known Ukrainian historian, researcher, and Holocaust educator, Anatolii Podolskyi, which is on the first page of the section on WWII in Olena Pometun's and Nestor Hupan's 2018 textbook: "Ukraine should join the European perception of war as a tragedy. We are not responsible for the past. We are responsible for the memory of the past".¹⁶

My analysis of the 2011–2018 textbooks reveals that their main topics include the German–Soviet Nonaggression Pact, the inclusion of part of the territory of what is now Ukraine into the Soviet Union in 1939–1940 (previously this was part of Poland and Romania), the German–Soviet military confrontation on the territory of Ukraine, and the Soviet and Ukrainian national resistance movements. In the most recent textbooks, the general schema has not changed significantly. However, in some cases, new aspects of the 'old' problems and/or new topics that were previously ignored or mentioned without evaluative judgements have been added. Below, I discuss these changes in detail.

The German–Soviet Nonaggression Pact

Traditionally, the section of the textbook dedicated to WWII begins with the German–Soviet Nonaggression (also known as the Molotov–Ribbentrop) Pact of 1939. Both generations of textbooks present the pact negatively – however, the accents change. In the newer generation of textbooks, we can see the impact of current events and recent changes in memory politics. Notable is the appearance of the term 'aggressor state', used broadly in modern legislation and rhetoric.¹⁷ In the new textbooks, this term designates both Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union. Corresponding paragraphs contain information and visual material about the cooperation between these aggressor states at the beginning of the war. Photographs from a joint German–Soviet parade in Brest are present.¹⁸ There is an indication toward the change in Soviet propaganda rhetoric, which earlier expressed a negative attitude towards Nazi Germany. In the 2018 textbook by Vitalii Vlasov and Stanislav Kulchytskyi, a well-chosen historical source characterises this:

From the report of the German ambassador to Berlin in Moscow, dated 6 September 1939: "The sudden turn in the policy of the Soviet Union, after many years of propaganda directed against the German aggressors, is not yet

16 Ibid., 193 [author's trans.].

17 Ibid., 196.

18 Vitalii Vlasov and Stanislav Kulchytskyi, *Istoriya Ukrayiny: Pidruchnyk dlya 10 klasu zakladiv zagalnoyi serednoyi osvity* (A History of Ukraine: A Textbook for the 10th Grade of Institutions of General Secondary Education) Kyiv: Litera LTD, 2018, 244.

very clearly understood by the population. Statements by official agitators that Germany is no longer an aggressor are particularly dubious. The Soviet government is doing everything possible to change the population's attitude toward Germany. The press seems to have been replaced".¹⁹

The more recent textbooks also contain information about ethnic Ukrainians who were in the Polish Army in 1939 and participated in warfare on its side.²⁰

The 2011/2012 and 2018 textbooks' narratives present the 1939–1940 Sovietisation (the politics of the transfer to the Soviet system) of western parts of the territory of present-day Ukraine in two ways. Specifically, the books point to positive aspects of this process (i.e., overcoming unemployment and Ukrainisation) and negative ones (i.e., repression and terror). The textbooks focus, however, on the negative aspects of the Sovietisation. For instance, they indicate that in the Soviet 'occupation zone' in Poland, which was two times smaller than the German 'occupation zone', the population was three to four times more repressed by June 1941..²¹ The 2011 textbooks did not similarly describe the Ukrainian territories annexed by the USSR. The selection of sources for this section includes negative personal recollections. For example, one (called "From the memories of an eyewitness") states: "There were many evil faces in the city, the foul Russian language began to be heard on the streets and in the institutions more often, and simple-minded Russian matrons, officers' wives, washed apples in the toilet bowl and were in awe about how well it washed [them]".²²

The German–Soviet War

In the older and some of the newer textbooks, the section on the German–Soviet War of 1941–1945 begins with the German attack on the Soviet Union, followed by the unsuccessful military actions on the territory of Ukraine, mobilisation (particularly the patriotism and enthusiasm of citizens who joined the army and the people's militia during the first months of the war), the evacuation of factories to the Soviet East, and so on.²³ The recent textbooks also cover these events. However, they also include new details, such as the crimes of the Communist regime, which took place after the beginning of the German invasion. They describe the scorched-earth

19 Ibid., 247 [author's trans.].

20 Oleksii Strukevych, *Istoriya Ukrainy: Ptidruchnyk dlya 10 klasu zakladiv zagalnoyi serednoyi osvity* (A History of Ukraine: A Textbook for the 10th Grade of General Secondary Education Institutions), Kyiv: Gramota, 2018, 179, 180.

21 Ibid., 182.

22 Olha Sorochinska and Natalia Hisem, *Istoriya Ukrainy: Pidruchnyk dlya 10 klasu zakladiv zahalnoyi serednoyi osvity* (A History of Ukraine: A Textbook for the 10th Grade of Institutions of General Secondary Education) Ternopol: Navchalna knyha – Bohdan, 2018, 197 [author's trans.].

23 Pometun and Hupan, *Istoriya Ukrainy*, 2012, 17–24.

policy and the mass repressions of political prisoners, mainly in Western Ukraine. Thus, newer textbooks draw attention to the repressive nature of the mobilisation of Soviet society by the Soviet authorities to fight the Nazis. Under this falls the deliberate detonation of many buildings in the Kyiv city centre, on Khreshchatyk Street. The textbooks emphasise that this led to the destruction of more than 300 historical buildings, great casualties among residents of Kyiv, and the loss of housing.²⁴

Collaboration

The textbook's authors pay considerable attention to the difficult topic of collaboration during WWII. Entire explanatory paragraphs are devoted to this phenomenon. The enumeration of reasons for collaboration is diverse: survival, careerism, and/or the desire to take revenge on the Soviet authorities and to gain Ukraine's independence with the assistance of Germany. Some textbooks provide a list of Ukrainian armed formations that fought on the German side at various stages of the war.²⁵ The textbooks note that for Ukraine, an unequivocal identification of 'cooperation' and 'traitor' is not acceptable. The 2018 *History of Ukraine* textbook (written by Olha Sorochinska and Natalia Hisem) asks students to answer the following questions: "What was the Soviet regime for Ukrainians on the eve of the war? Who was 'betrayed' by Ukrainians?"²⁶ The textbooks separately highlight the activity of self-governing bodies under the German occupation. They indicate that the government was focused on providing adequate conditions for the survival of the civilian population, and the prevention of hunger and epidemics, if the occupation authorities were not interested in these issues.²⁷

The Nazi Occupation Regime and the Holocaust

Generally, both generations of textbooks present the Nazi occupation regime during the war as extremely negative. They refer to Nazis robbing and economically exploiting the occupied territories, referencing *Generalplan Ost*, 'the new order' with its unbelievable cruelty, the life of the inhabitants under the occupation, and forced labour in Germany, among other things.²⁸ The coverage of the Holocaust in the textbooks has evolved significantly.

24 Vlasov and Kulchytskyi, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 212–213.

25 Marian Mydriy and Olena Arkusha, *Istoriya: Ukrayina i svit, Pidruchnyk dlya 10 klasu zakladiv zahal'noyi serednoyi osvity*, (*History: Ukraine and the World, A Textbook for the 10th Grade of Institutions of General Secondary Education*), Kyiv: Geneza, 2018, 244–247.

26 Sorochinska and Hisem, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 219–220 [author's trans.].

27 Strukevych, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 203.

28 Pometun and Hupan, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 2012, 27–32; and Pometun and Hupan, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 2018, 210–216.

The textbooks of the early 2000s typically contain little information about the Holocaust and do not use this term. They provide data on the deaths of Jewish people at the beginning of the occupation and general data on the deaths of civilians and prisoners of the war.²⁹ The next-generation textbooks of 2011/2012 are more concerned with the tragedy of the Ukrainian Jewish population. These revised textbooks use the term 'Holocaust'.³⁰ They also add information about ghettos and the differences in the policies of mass extermination in different zones of the occupation, among other things.³¹ The 2018 textbooks devote much more attention to the 'Final Solution', revealing the causes of the Holocaust and its peculiarities in different countries and zones of the occupation, and individually focus on the tragedy of the Babyn Yar massacre (indicating that the victims were not only Jews but also Soviet prisoners of war and figures of the Ukrainian nationalist movement). The books also discuss resistance to the Holocaust and the history of saving lives, particularly the work of Andrey Sheptytsky, the Metropolitan Bishop of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church.³² Lastly, they pay considerable attention to the Ukrainians called the Righteous Among the Nations (the honorary title given to people who saved Jewish lives). This particularly focuses on Olena Viter, the abbess of a monastery, who cooperated with the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) and was the first among Ukrainians to receive this title in 1976.³³

The Resistance and the Ukrainian National Movement

All the textbooks I studied contain information on the resistance movement in Ukraine during the war years. The focus falls on the Soviet resistance movement, which sought to help the regular army in the restoration of Soviet power, and the Ukrainian nationalists, who aimed to use the German–Soviet War to create an independent Ukrainian state, fighting against both Bolshevism and Nazism. The Soviet resistance receives more attention in older textbooks. Alongside focusing on the Ukrainian nationalists, modern textbooks also pay more attention than older

29 Fedir Turchenko, Petro Panchenko, and Serhii Tymchenko, *Novitnya istoriya Ukrayiny (1939–2001): Pidruchnyk dlya 11-ho klasu serednikh pahalnoosvitnikh navchalnykh zakladiv (The Modern History of Ukraine (1939–2001): A Textbook for the 11th Grade of Secondary Comprehensive Educational Institutions)*, Kyiv: Geneza, 2001, 21.

30 Fedir Turchenko, *Istoriya Ukrayiny: Pidruchnyk dlya 11 klasu zahalnoosvitnikh navchalnykh zakladiv (A History of Ukraine: A Textbook for the 11th Grade of General Educational Institutions)*, Kyiv: Geneza, 2011, 31.

31 Oleksii Strukevich, Ivan Romaniuk, and Stepan Drovoziuk, *Istoriya Ukrayiny: Pidruchnyk dlya 11 klasu zahalnoosvitnikh navchalnykh zakladiv (A History of Ukraine: A Textbook for the 11th Grade of General Educational Institutions)*, Kyiv: Gramota, 2011, 36.

32 Mydriy and Arkusha, *Istoriya*, 247–252.

33 Vlasov and Kulchytskyi, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 225–226.

versions to the different groups of the Polish liberation movement who were active on Ukrainian territories.

The history of the OUN and Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), a Ukrainian nationalist military formation, went from being rarely covered and only in a very negative light during the Soviet era to becoming a key textbook subject. The 2011/2012 textbooks pay more attention to them. They point to the evolution of the OUN's worldview during the war, particularly to its democratisation.³⁴ Since 2014, the OUN's activities are presented positively, but, at the same time, some textbooks point to their denial of democracy, and their recognition of the principle of 'nationalocracy' (i.e., the power of an ethnic nation within the state).³⁵ Generally, the current textbooks present a fuller history of the OUN and the information is accompanied by rich illustrative material.³⁶

Liberation Versus the Expulsion of the Nazi Invaders

There is a change of the titles of the sections devoted to 1943–1944 in the textbooks. It concerns themes describing the hostilities on the front at the time of the Nazi retreat from Ukrainian territory. In 'pre-Euromaidan' textbooks, the term 'liberation' is dominant. The sections are mostly called something like "The liberation of Ukraine from Nazi invaders", although the term 'expulsion' is also used.³⁷ These sections focus on the heroism of and tragedies befalling Soviet soldiers, who often died at the whims of the highest command – for instance, during the liberation of Kyiv, which was meant to be fast and to end before the day of the anniversary of the October Revolution. New textbooks prefer the term 'expulsion' when describing the warfare. This might intend to indicate in a more neutral way that the totalitarian Communist regime replaced the Nazi invaders on Ukrainian lands.

All the textbooks I studied also contain information on the deportation of Crimean Tatars and other Crimean nations, who were accused by the Soviet authorities of collaboration with the Nazi occupiers, to remote regions of the USSR. The 2018 textbooks pay more attention to the Crimean Tatars' deportation. They indicate that the accusations of collaboration (actual collaborators were evacuated with the Germans), the prohibition by the Red Army to live in Crimea, and other events were unjustified. They also noted that the Verkhovna Rada (Supreme Council) of Ukraine recognises the deportations as genocide.³⁸ Overall, the 2018 textbooks pay much more attention to the crimes of the Communist regime. Students learn about the

34 Strukevich, Romaniuk, and Drovoziuk, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 49–50.

35 Mydriy and Arkusha, *Istoriya*, 226.

36 Vlasov and Kulchytskyi, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 230–236.

37 Strukevich, Romaniuk, and Drovoziuk, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 51.

38 Sorochinska and Hisem, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 239.

mass Soviet mobilisation of young people who were in previously Nazi-occupied territory and the creation of infantry units called *chornosvitniki* (people who fight in a peasant's black overcoat), who were immediately thrown into the battle without proper training, leading to mass casualties among them.³⁹

What's Next? The Post-2022 Generation of Textbooks

The full-scale Russian invasion has influenced the next generation of Ukrainian history textbooks. In August 2022, the Ministry of Education and Science confirmed changes to the school history syllabus. The official Ministry communication states that the group working on curricula updates included leading institutions of higher education, state authorities, deputies of the Verkhovna Rada, scientists, school principals, teachers, and representatives of public and nongovernmental human rights organisations and mass media. They relate that history programmes should highlight the intersecting lines from the past that help to explain current events. Part of the curricula changes aims at creating additional opportunities for analogies and comparisons.⁴⁰

This can be seen, for example, in the following titles of educational projects and practical classes: “Models of historical memory about the Second World War and the contemporary world”, “‘For the great Russian people!’: Russian nationalism as a dominant Stalinist ideology and propaganda during the German–Soviet War”, and “Stalin's generals and the price of human life”, among others. In the renewed curricula, the USSR and Nazi Germany are both called ‘totalitarian empires’ (this phrase is absent in the previous textbooks). There is also a reconceptualisation of certain elements of the Soviet Union's participation in the war. For example, the new curricula describe the crimes on the territory of Ukraine as committed by “totalitarian empires – the USSR and Germany”.⁴¹

Russia's instrumentalisation of the current war is also reflected in the curricula updates. In the section devoted to the current Russo–Ukrainian War, students are

39 Strukevych, *Istoriya Ukrayiny*, 215.

40 Ministerstvo Osviti i Nauki Ukrainy (the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine), “Onovleno zmist navchalnyx program ZSO” (“The Content of Educational Programmes of the ZSO Has Been Updated”), 16 September 2022, <https://mon.gov.ua/news/onovleno-zmist-navchalnykh-program-zso> [accessed: 31.07.2024].

41 Ministerstvo Osviti i Nauki Ukrainy (the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine), *Istoriya Ukrayiny: Vsesvitnya istoia 6–11 klas, Navchalna programa dlya zakladiv zagalnoyi serednoyi osvity* (A History of Ukraine: World History for the 6–11th Grades, A Curriculum for Institutions of General Secondary Education), 03 September 2022, 82, 100, <https://mon.gov.ua/storage/app/media/zagalna%20serednya/programy-5-9-klas/2022/08/15/Navchalna.programa.2022.WH.HU.6-11.pdf> [accessed 31.07.2024].

invited to reflect on Russian propaganda terms, such as ‘Banderivtsi’ (the name of a wing of WWII-era Ukrainian nationalists used in current Russian propaganda to define Ukrainians), ‘Ukrainian Nazis’, or the supposed ‘denazification of Ukraine’, which are all labelled as tools used in the modern genocide of Ukrainians. The updated syllabus also includes the new construct ‘Ruscism’ (a contraction of ‘Russian fascism’), which appears to counter Russian propaganda that calls Ukrainians ‘fascists’.⁴² It is possible that this term will be in not only Ukrainian textbooks. The Ukrainian president, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, suggested that in the future, this term will be included in history textbooks around the world.⁴³

Conclusions

To sum up, Ukrainian history textbooks are an excellent marker of the state’s memory politics, particularly as related to the Second World War. Internal political processes, and external influences, namely the brutal war unleashed by Russia, affect state politics in the field of history. A reflection of this can be traced in the dynamics of different generations of textbooks, which, in turn, should be considered in the context of the political realities of a given period.

Textbooks on the history of Ukraine widely cover the Second World War. Regardless of the generation of textbooks, topics such as the German–Soviet Nonaggression Pact of 1939, collaboration, the occupation regime, and the Holocaust are discussed. However, after 2014, the general understanding of the war underwent a significant change. The Soviet title of the ‘Great Patriotic War’ became a thing of the past. Some of the visual components, selections of quotations, and questions for students have also changed.

Primarily, the content of the textbooks has been affected by the shifts in the state’s memory policy. Ukrainian history textbooks have been significantly influenced by Euromaidan, the beginning of the Russo–Ukrainian War in 2014, and the full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. The politics of memory post-Euromaidan became more Ukrainian-centric and oriented towards the European model of remembrance. There was a transition from the heroisation to the commemoration of war victims, and not only those who were ethnic Ukrainians. This is opposed to the Soviet and post-Soviet models of WWII commemoration, which did not consider the crimes committed by the Communist regime during the war. Now, information about this is present in the new generations of textbooks.

42 Ibid., 100, 102.

43 Serhy Yekelchuk, “Naming the war: Russian aggression in Ukrainian official discourse and mass culture”, *Canadian Slavonic Papers* 64/2–3, 2022, 232–246, here 236.

What could be found in the next generation of textbooks? The changes, according to the programme updates, should not be as numerous as those after the start of the war in 2014, but they will be significant as well. In 2022, we might see a radical reflection by Ukrainian society, authorities, and scholars on Russia's aggression. Largely, these transformations are focused on the representation of the Second World War. A common view of the past cannot be seen in Ukraine and Russia in the way it was before the full-scale war, especially prior to 2014. The extreme situation of Russia's war against Ukraine makes a common historical perception and narrative, as well as a united memory politics, impossible in the near future.

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