

Does History Education Really Matter? The Comparative Study of Japanese and Russian History Textbooks ca. 1997-2010

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Abstract

The school history textbook is gaining critical scholarly attention globally as a contested medium of conflicting ideologies and interests. At issue are the roles and the consequences of education and textbooks in influencing the ethos of future citizens. The Russian Federation and Japan are two nations that continue to receive strong criticism over their history textbooks from international and domestic critics for using them to legitimise the ruling government, rather than to foster critical understanding of the past. At the same time, both nations equally face criticism from rightist groups in their own countries for not using history textbooks well enough to legitimise the ruling elites, state power and to promote patriotism. This article provides comparative analyses of narrative strategies and ideologies used in 44 history textbooks, 22 from each country, approved by Russian and Japanese Ministries of Education between 1997 and 2010. Under scrutiny are the causes, the course and the consequences of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05), the first military conflict of the 20th century, where the interests of major political players, the United States, Britain, France, Russia and Japan collided. The main question is how do the narratives of the Russo-Japanese War that students are exposed to at school today reflect the different current readings of histories in each nation?

Keywords: history textbooks, Russo-Japanese war (1904-05).

Introduction

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Although our research is about history textbooks, the *issue* is about history and its impact on contemporary societies. Russia and Japan are making steps towards replacing a decades-old territorial dispute that has held up the signing of a Japan-Russia peace treaty with constructive dialogue. Since taking office in December 2012, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has met with Russian President Vladimir Putin five times. Abe even accepted Putin's invitation to attend the opening ceremony for the Sochi Olympic Games in February 2014, which was boycotted by the majority of Western leaders who justified their decision by the poor record of human rights in Russia. Japan attracts Russian attention as Moscow is looking for outside investments to develop its resource-rich but underpopulated Siberian and far eastern regions. Japan is equally interested, especially after the nuclear disaster at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant in March 2011, in Russian energy suppliers, such as liquefied natural gas and coal. In addition to the economic interests, as Japan experiences increasingly tense relations with China, Tokyo also tries to distract Russia from developing stronger ties with Beijing in order to influence a rapidly developing new geopolitical order in Asia-Pacific. This cannot be achieved without further cooperation between Japan and Russia. These political ambitions of the national leaders are easier to realise and achieve when public opinion or public views of the 'other' nation are positive or at least sympathetic. However, it is right to say that the attitude of Japanese society towards Russia and vice versa demonstrates neither pure confrontation nor empathetic understanding.

The lack of mutual understanding between Russia and Japan lies not only in some thorny issues of the past dominated by the territorial disputes of the Kurile Islands, as they are called in Russia, or *Hoppō Ryodō* in Japan ('Northern territories'), but even more so in ways how historical events that resulted in mutual conflicts are narrated and presented to the public today. History textbooks contribute towards constructing public knowledge and public opinion about a nation's own past, and they equally contribute towards constructing images of other nations.

It is possible to argue that history textbooks undoubtedly have their limitations as a medium of historical knowledge. Today, with the wide spread of the images of the past through, first of all, various forms of popular culture due to ever developing new technologies, it is hard to imagine that history textbook can be anyone's, and particularly young people's, favourite pastime. However, children in Japan and Russia get exposed to the history textbook's narrative at the young age when they first develop their understanding of the world. History textbooks

bear immutable authority on young readers who are often not prepared or simply do not know how to challenge the version of official history introduced at school¹. History curricula certainly matter in this context. Zheng Wang, in his analysis of Chinese history textbooks in recent decades, maintains “that to understand a country, one should visit the country’s primary schools and high schools and read their history textbooks.”² If Wang is correct, his observation reinforces our argument that history textbooks serve as a medium that can influence a nation’s youths in forming perceptions about other countries as well as their own. His caveat underlines often reported tensions between Japan and its East Asian neighbours, particularly China and Korea. Arguably by extending the geographical parameters of Wang’s model, Russia, the nation immediately to the west and north of Japan, can be included in this narrative of ‘East Asia’ too.

Indeed, textbook analysis makes an interesting field of study and is attracting growing academic attention. Recently scholars follow interdisciplinary approaches and analyse the textbook content from various disciplinary angles including sociological models, curriculum policies, linguistics and historiography. A recent call for creating a historiography of history textbooks is a consequence of these interdisciplinary endeavours.³ Eleftherios Klerides argues that the new approach towards analysing textbooks should include the textbook as discourse and the textbook as a genre.⁴ He identifies three types of textbooks according to textbook genre. The traditional history textbooks based on a concept of history as accepted truth. The aim of such textbooks is to construct subjects loyal to the nation state. It is expected the readers uncritically absorb and accept the textbook’s content. The new history textbook’s genre produces texts that teach to think about ‘how’ history evolves rather than ‘what’ happened. Students who use these textbooks have the potential to become active learners engaged in constructing knowledge about ‘the past’.⁵ The author reveals that the majority of textbook writers intend to mix up these two genres. We will attempt to assess how Japanese and Russian textbooks fit in into Klerides’s analysis of textbooks genres. Furthermore, comparative analysis

¹ Bain, Robert, “Rounding Up Unusual Suspects: Facing the Authority Hidden in the History Classroom,” *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 108, No 10 (2006): 2080-2114

² Wang, Zheng, *Never Forget National Humiliation: Historical Memory in Chinese Politics and Foreign Relations* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), 7.

³ Maria Repoussi and Nicole Tutiaux-Guillon, “New Trends in History Textbook Research: Issues and Methodologies towards a School Historiography,” *Journal of Education Media, Memory, and Society* 2, no. 1 (2010): 157.

⁴ Eleftherios Klerides, “Imaging the Textbook: Textbooks as Discourse and Genre,” *Journal of Education, Media, Memory and Society* 2, no. 1 (2010),

⁵ Eleftherios Klerides, “Imaging the Textbook: Textbooks as Discourse and Genre,” *Journal of Education, Media, Memory and Society* 2, no. 1 (2010), 41-45.

of textbooks from more than one country of origin complements the multi-faceted nature of textbook analysis. Cross-national comparisons can shed light on the commonalities and differences in textual representation of history and inform us about the common strategies that textbooks use in conveying officially sanctioned narratives. We do not assume that every word and every piece of overt or covert ideology in texts and curricula would be faithfully transplanted from the textbook to students via teachers. This is a question that teachers are best equipped to probe. The focus of this paper is on textbook narratives.

This paper will start with introducing methodological framework for choosing particular textbooks for the analysis of Russo-Japanese War narratives. The next section provides short historiographical context of the Russo-Japanese War. It is followed by the analysis of the didactic messages to children about the war following the causes, the course and the conclusion of the war as it is presented in 44 selected history textbooks. The underpinning question behind the analysis of the war is the importance of nationalism in framing national histories, particular of conflict. The main argument is about how different nations read the same historical event differently and how within those nations the historical narratives and emphases are also different, and hinge upon the political orientation of those currently in power. We will conclude by answering the question about how the past is manipulated and constructed in the history textbooks to fit contemporary narratives.

Sampling and Methodology

For all students in Japan, the study of history at middle-school (thirteen to fifteen years old) is compulsory. Thus it is here that the greatest exposure to textbook versions of history occurs. The curriculum documents used over the 1997-2010 period feature the Russo-Japan War under a section on Japan's modernisation and rise in international standing during the Meiji era.⁶ Japan's Ministry of Education insist on screening prospective textbooks against the curriculum and numerous criteria prior to granting official approval and publication. The screening rounds took place in 1997, 2002 and 2007. A total of 22 textbooks were approved between 1997 and

⁶ Curriculum revisions are made almost every ten years with a few years of lead-in to allow for textbook revision. The textbooks examined were published when two curricula were in effect; each was implemented in 1993 and 2002. In 2008 a new curriculum was announced for implementation in the 2012 academic year. The three curricula are available on the Japanese Education Ministry's website. Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (Japan), "Gakushū shidō yōryō" [Course of Studies]. http://www.mext.go.jp/a_menu/shotou/youryou/main4_a2.htm, accessed 5 January 2013.

2010. The revision of the curriculum which provides the basis for textbooks happens less frequently.⁷

In Russia the textbook approval by the Ministry of Education happens annually, which is different from the four year approval cycle in Japan. Establishing an exact parallel between Japanese and Russian textbooks proved difficult because history is taught at different ages. The Russian curriculum covers the war mostly in the last two years (Years 10 and 11), age 16-17, of the high school curriculum with some exceptions in the last two years of the intermediate school syllabus in Years 8 and 9, age 14 and 15.⁸ In intermediate school the Russo-Japanese War is included in textbooks on Russian history and World history and in the high school it is included in the textbooks on “Russia and the World”. This age group is slightly higher than in Japan, where the children exposed to these textbooks will be between 13 and 15 years of age.

Similar to the Japanese sample we have selected also 22 textbooks published during 1997-2010 based on how they represented the Russo-Japanese War.⁹ The selected textbooks all include substantive descriptions of the War, from a few paragraphs to two or three pages. In a number of cases textbooks by the same authors were chosen to determine any changes in the narrative. All of the textbooks but one were approved by the Ministry of Education and proved to be popular in schools¹⁰.

The period 1997-2010 was determined by the growing attention to History education in both countries that followed the end of the Shōwa period (1989) and the dissolution of the Soviet Union (1992). In Japan the extant debates on the treatment of the country’s imperial past intensified, and continued to afflict relations with its East Asian neighbours. Crystallising the neo-nationalist resurgence was the inception of *Atarashii rekishi kyōkasho o tsukurukai* in

⁷ Known as *Kyōkayō tosho kentei kijun* [Textbook Screening Standards (hereafter referred in the translated title)] and *Gimukyōiku shogakkō kyōkayō tosho kentei kijun jisshi saisoku* [Textbook Standards Implementation Subsidiary Regulations for Compulsory Schooling Sector], the Ministry has issued standard regulations on textbook screening and standards which tightened the alignment between the curriculum and the textbooks. Ryota Nishino, “The Political Economy of the Textbook in Japan, with Particular Focus on Middle-school History Textbooks, ca. 1945-1995,” *Internationale Schulbuchforschung* [International Textbook Research] 30, no. 1 (2008): 487-514

⁸ High School is optional in Russia. However, those who do not continue to High School usually attend some kind of professional technical schools where the same history textbooks are circulated. It means that the majority of Russian youth do get exposure to the narratives of the Russian history textbooks analysed here.

⁹ A number of the textbooks omit the description of the war completely, only including it in a chronological chart as an important event of the 20th century.

¹⁰ Only Michael Zuev’s textbook analysed in this paper does not have MOE approval. However, this book is popular among the students, who plan to sit the university entry exam in history, due to more extensive and detailed coverage of the school history curriculum. Michael, N. Zuev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishih vremyon do nachala XXI veka* [The History of Russia from the yearly age until the beginning of the 20th century], 8th ed. (Moscow: Drofa, 2005)

1996 (Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform, hereafter Tsukurukai). The group criticized Japanese history textbooks for making excessive references to Japan's wartime responsibility and as a result of this presenting an 'apologetic' history to Japanese youth. According to Tsukurukai school textbooks should instill pride in national history amongst the youth.¹¹ A second time Prime Minister Abe Shinzō echoed the sentiments of Tsukurukai even before his first premiership in 2006: "The purpose of education is to develop people with ambitions and to create a nation with dignity. It is the state's task to revive education."¹² Critics, whose orientation is rooted in the peace education of the early postwar years, charge that Tsukurukai and their sympathisers endorse the state-centred education, and their vision is inimical to the rights of teachers and students as citizens, and Japan's relations with ethnic minorities and neighbouring nations.

In Russia a similar turn towards nationalism and patriotic education accompanies the recent search for post-Soviet and post-Cold War statehood. Vladimir Putin, whose reign as President or Prime Minister continues since his appointment as Acting President by Boris Yeltsin on 31 December 1999, makes an effort to revive Russian identity and strengthen Russian nationalism through history education by correcting liberal mistakes made by perestroika and glasnost in the late 1980s and early 1990s.¹³ Unshackled from the orthodoxy of the state-authored textbook *The Concise History of the USSR*, first published in 1937, in the 1990s numerous textbooks sought to present hitherto suppressed alternative historical visions and pedagogy.¹⁴ However, the will of the writers and publishers did not match the teachers'

¹¹ Numerous sources account for the background and development of the Tsukurukai and its authors. For a recent and detailed analysis, see Steffi Richter, "Historical Revisionism in Contemporary Japan," in *Contested Views of a Common Past: Revisions of History in Contemporary East Asia*, ed. Steffi Richter (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), Ch.1, esp. 39-59; and Sven Saaler, *Politics, Memory and Public Opinion: The History Textbook Controversy and Japanese Society* (Tokyo: Indicum, 2005), 25-59. The debut of the Tsukurukai textbook published by Fusōsha was met with a cold reception from schools. Out of the 543 school boards in Japan, 532 boards rejected it. John K. Nelson, "Tempest in a Textbook: a report on the new middle-school history textbook in Japan," *Critical Asian Studies* 34, no. 1 (2002): 144.

¹² Abe Shinzō, *Utsukushii kuni e* [To the beautiful nation] (Tokyo: Bungei shunjyū, 2006), 207.

¹³ Putin snova rugaet uchebniki. [Putin again criticises textbooks] www.gazeta.ru/news/lenta/2012/02/13/n_2203309.shtml, accessed 12 February 2013.

¹⁴ The original textbook *The Concise History of the USSR* was authored by A. Vladimir Shestakov, a Soviet historian and an active proponent of the Communist Party, and approved by the Soviet Government in 1937 as the main history textbook for high school. This textbook influenced generations of textbook writers in the Soviet Union. Although this textbook was modified and rewritten according to the new political trends in later years of the Soviet regime there is consent among Russian scholars that the narrative, structure, chronology and ideology remained unchanged until the final days of the Soviet Union. A. Vladimir Shestakov, *Istoriyu – v shkolu: sozdanie pervykh sovetskikh uchebnikov* [History to School: making first Russian textbooks] (Moscow: Arhiv Prezidenta Rossiiskoi Federatsii, 2008), 6–12.

readiness to embrace the new intellectual, historiographical and pedagogical paradigm.¹⁵ Public debate on history textbooks began soon after Putin directly intervened to use history education to restore patriotism amongst national youth in the early 2000s. It continues in Russia today, and while the possibility of a return to a single textbook – as in 1937 – exists, it has not yet occurred¹⁶.

In Russia the main history battles revolve around the interpretation of the Soviet era, the role and place of Stalin and Stalin's era in Russian history and the interpretation of the Second World War. At the core of this debate is the question about the meaning of historical knowledge and the role of history education which determines the character of history textbooks. The notion that "history is always partisan, it is always value-laden" as stated in the *Materials for Discussion on the New Concept of History Teaching* of the Department of History of the Russian Academy of Science prevails among Russian textbook authors.¹⁷ Hence since the beginning of 2001, history education has been guided by the government programme of patriotic education, with government authorities exercising their power to shape the contents of textbooks.¹⁸ Patriotic education in this context means education that promotes the unquestionable authority of the Russian state and insists on instilling pride in national history among Russian youth, a motivation it shares with Tsukurukai. Although Russia does not have an official counterpart to Tsukurukai, the Russian President and certain politicians exercise their power to influence directly the Ministry of Education (MOE). The difference between Japan and Russia is that Japan has a strong opposition to Tsukurukai's attempts to revise history, while in Russia the President's voice silences any alternative views. 1997/98 were equally important for Russian history textbooks as they marked the turning away from a liberal period characterised by the perestroika and glasnost of Mikhail Gorbachev in the second half of the 1980s, towards a re-centralised and even 'counter-reformed' history education.¹⁹

¹⁵ For the description of the conflict based on teacher's inability to grasp new and innovative curriculum on history education see, for example, Robert Maier, "Leaning about Europe and the World: Schools, Teachers and Textbooks in Russia after 1991," in *The Nation, Europe and the World: Textbook and Curricula in Transition*, ed. Hannah Schissler and Yasemin Soysal (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005), 138–162.

¹⁶ Natalya V. Shatina, 'Shkolnye uchebniki istorii: politicheskie tehnologii formirovaniya budushhego' [School history textbooks: political technologies behind formation of our future], <http://rodnaya-istoriya.ru/index.php/istoriya-sovremennoie-rossii/istoriya-sovremennoie-rossii/shkolnie-uchebniki-istorii-politicheskie-texnologii-formirovaniya-budushhego.html>, accessed 15 January 2013.

¹⁷ Vera Kaplan, "History Teaching in Post-Soviet Russia," in *Educational Reform in Post-Soviet Russia: Legacies and Prospects*, eds. Ben Eklof, Larry E. Holmes and Vera Kaplan (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 254.

¹⁸ Alexander Shevyrev, "Rewriting the National Past," in *Educational Reform in Post-Soviet Russia: Legacies and Prospects*, eds. Ben Eklof, Larry E. Holmes and Vera Kaplan, (London: Frank Cass, 2005), 287.

¹⁹ Kaplan, "History Teaching in Post-Soviet Russia," 256

While the context for the emergence of state intervention into history is different in the two countries, they share a similar tradition of history writing based on a positivist approach that historical truth should be based on accurate historical facts. In Russia this ‘factocentrism’ seems to contribute to, and not necessarily contradict, the long tradition of understanding history through the lenses of historical materialism, which holds that theory or ideology precedes history. In the 1990s many Russian historians embarked on rewriting history by adding new factual knowledge, believing that history can be represented objectively through the ‘right’ facts²⁰. The desire for constructing one ‘universal’ textbook in Russia that will be factually accurate and convey ‘historical truth’ can be understood in the context of this traditional belief in the power of factual knowledge.

Japan, and to a lesser extent Russia, have been exposed in recently years to postmodern and poststructuralist ideas that historical narratives are constructed and contestable.²¹ However, this postmodern approach to writing history does not really effect the descriptions of the Russo-Japanese War in the history textbooks of both nations, as our analysis will reveal.

We use discourse analysis to analyse textbooks through the three stages of the war: the lead up, conflict phase, and conclusion. This method allows us to interpret the language of textbooks as it is situated in a socio-historic context.

The Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905, a historiographical note

Numerous academic historians devote themselves to narrating the causes, the course and ramifications of the Russo-Japanese War. Consensus among Japanese and Russian academics is that the immediate cause of the war was the breakdown in negotiations intended to resolve their rivalry over the Korean Peninsula and Manchuria. The Japanese government opted for, though not unanimously, the ‘Man-Kan’ exchange whereby Japan conceded the Russian predominance over Manchuria in exchange for Russia accepting the Japanese dominance of Korea. Negotiations between Japan and Russia in 1903 and 1904 only seemed to cultivate mutual mistrust. In February 1904 Japan broke off its diplomatic ties with Russia and declared

²⁰ Marina Erohina and Alexander Shevryev, “Old Heritage and New Trends: school history textbooks in Russia,” in *School History Textbooks across Cultures: international debates and perspectives*, ed. Jason Nicholls (Oxford Studies in Comparative Education: Symposium Book,), 85-86,

²¹ Tessa Morris-Suzuki, *The Past within us: media, memory, history*. (London and New York: Verso, 2005), 10-11

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war.²² During the conflict both Japan and Russia experienced high casualties. Although the Japanese won several key land and naval battles these came at a greater human and financial cost than the Sino-Japanese war ten years earlier. Meanwhile, the Tsarist regime grew anxious about growing public dissent aroused by the war, which would eventually culminate in the First Russian Revolution of 1905-07. The Portsmouth Treaty in 1905, presided over by American President Theodore Roosevelt, concluded the war. Amongst other things, the Japanese secured their hold over Korea. But the absence of any reparations from Russia angered the Japanese public whose lives had been constrained by inflation and tax increases to fund war. The centenary of the war spurred attempts for new interpretations in both countries. As the historian Katô Yôko reports, recent trends in Japan point towards global and regional perspectives of Western Imperialism and Korean and Chinese resistance to the war. More historians also emphasise the diplomatic efforts by Japan and Russia to avert war.²³

In Japan Katsuoka Kanji and his team 'The Association of Parliamentarians to Analyse World History Textbooks' (Sekai no rekishi kyôkasho o kangaeru giin renmei) conduct content analysis of the Russo-Japan War. His team compares Japanese wartime textbooks and current textbooks, and also uses a small sample from Russia, and East and Southeast Asia. Katsuoka's team found that the current Japanese texts portray the Japanese state as the overall culprit in the war, and omit the heroic achievements of Japanese military officers. The researchers find such depictions to be distorting or deleting historical truth, which falls short of the expectations of patriotic education. They refer to the prewar textbooks as the model that contemporary texts should emulate to fulfil such a role.²⁴

While valuable, Katsuoka's and his colleague's analysis illuminates three shortcomings. First, the number of the sampled recent Japanese and Russian textbooks is too small to identify a general trend. The researchers cite the Tsukurukai textbook as the only text devoting adequate space to achieve the goal of instilling patriotism. Second, although bi-national comparisons may not be their original intention, the analysis of Russian texts is brief and concludes that the present texts replicate the Soviet historiography of blaming Japan and

²² Alexander B. Shirokograd, *Yaponia: Nezavershyonnoe sopernichestvo* [Japan: Unfinished Confrontation] (Moscow: Veche, 2008), 78-88; and Harada Keiichi, *Nisshin nishiro senso* [Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars] (Tokyo: Iwanami shoten, 2007), 204-225.

²³ Katô Yôko, *Soredemo nihonjin wa senso o eranda* [The Japanese chose war nevertheless] (Tokyo, Asahi shuppan, 2009), Ch. 2, esp. 166-67.

²⁴ Katsuoka Kanji, *Kyôkasho kara mita nichiro sensô: Kore de iinoka nichiro senesô* [The Russo-Japan War viewed from textbooks: Are the current textbooks appropriate?] (Tokyo: Teneisha, 2004).

exculpating Russia. In contrast with Katsuoka's analysis this project analyses a larger number of textbooks from both nations (22 textbooks from each country), attempting a systematic discourse analysis of their descriptions of the Russo-Japanese war and defining important nuances in textbook narratives.

Gennadii Bordugov and Min Gyon Hyon in their analysis of Japan's representation in Russian history textbooks published during the same period discussed in this paper, conclude that the authors of more liberal textbooks present Russian loss in this war as less dramatic, and also these authors do not connect the Russian loss with the beginning of the 1905 Russian revolution.²⁵ In more conservative textbooks, according to Bordugov and Min Gyon Hyon, the 1905 Russian revolution was the main reason for Russian loss in this war. The absence of agreement about the war among members of the Russian political elite resulted in a lack of war support and Russia finally lost to Japan.²⁶ The authors analysed 27 Russian history textbooks in total but the analysis of the Russo-Japanese war occupies a very small part in their article.

English-speaking scholars branch off from military and diplomatic history and into cultural and social responses to the war.²⁷ The Soviet-era historiography presented the war from military and diplomatic angles – often criticising the putative incompetence of the Tsarist regime and its military strategists.²⁸ The centenary marked a departure from the Soviet-era paradigm. New works opened up socio-cultural dimensions, incorporating public voices including the intelligentsia, soldiers and their families, and journalists. Russian historians showed particular interest in the work of the secret services in both countries and recognised Japan's superiority on this front.²⁹

The beginning of the Russo-Japanese war in Japanese textbooks: War by popular demand

²⁵ [Bordugov Gennadii A. & Min Gyon Hyon, Yaponiya v zerkale rossiiskih shkolnykh uchebnikov po istorii \[Japan as it mirrored in Russian school history textbooks\], in Yaponiya. Ejegodnik \(Moscow, 2010, No 39\). 122-123](#)

²⁶ [Ibid.](#)

²⁷ See for instance, Sandra Wilson, "The Russo-Japanese War and Japan: Politics, Nationalism and Historical Memory," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904-05*, eds. Sandra Wilson and David Wells (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1999). 160-193.

²⁸ Shirokograd, *Yaponia*.

²⁹ Dimitri B. Pavlov, *Russko-yaponskaya voina 1904-1905: Sekretnyue operatsii na sushe i na more* [The Russo-Japanese War 1904-05: Secret Operations on the Land and in the Sea] (Moscow: Materik, 2004) and Alexi V. Shishov, *Neizvestnyue stranisty rusko-yaponskoi voinyu* [Unknown Pages of the Russo-Japanese War] (Moscow: Veche, 2004).

Exploring the explanations for the beginning of the war is worthwhile as it illuminates who was considered responsible for its outbreak. All 22 Japanese textbooks cite popular support as a key factor. The 1997 edition of the textbook by Shimizu Shoin tells us:

Within Japan, voices calling for war with Russia began to emerge. Although Christian Uchimura Kanzô and Socialist Kôtokuu Shūsui maintained pacifist (anti-war) arguments, the public opinion inside the nation leaned towards the pro-war camp. In 1904 Japan declared war on Russia, and the Russo-Japanese War began.³⁰

While the text clearly says Japan declared war on Russia, the sequence of the sentences suggests that the government did the public a favour by responding to its jingoistic sentiments. The textbook seems to suggest the conflict began due to public demand, obscuring the government's role in the declaration of war.

This explanation is also found elsewhere. The 1997 edition by Kyôiku Shuppan (publisher) describes how: "Inside Japan, the voices appealing for war gained force suddenly, and overwhelmed the cautious approach [in dealing with the Russians] and Pacifists."³¹ Although the text says the pro-war voice 'suddenly' began to dominate, it makes no attempt to explain this development. The text also assumes that its ascendancy was sufficient in 'overwhelming' the cautious approach; yet we do not know how and why the sudden change occurred, or who could have been responsible for it. Three editions by Nihon Bunkyo Shuppan replicate this explanation. For instance, the 2006 edition says:

Japan, pro-war and anti-war voices arose. However, owing to antagonism towards Russia following the Triple Intervention, the pro-war voice gained strength. Once the [Russo-Japanese] war began, Ôtsu Kusuoko and Yosano Akiko, from female perspectives, wrote poems deploring the war.

In February 1904 Japan declared war on Russia; the Russo-Japanese War began.³²

Although these texts point out pacifist opposition, the explanation of 'war by popular demand' still remains. The textbooks hint at the possibility of pacifism, but do not highlight the choice

³⁰ Mayuzumi Hiromichi and 11 others, *Nihon no rekishi to sekai: Chigakkô rekishi* [Japan's History and the World: Middle-school History] (Tokyo: Shimizu shoin, 1997), 214. Japanese textbooks are compiled by teams comprising numerous authors. For the sake of convenience the main text refers the Japanese textbooks by the publishers' names.

³¹ Sasayama Haruo and 41 others, *Chûgaku shakai: Rekishi* [Middle School Social Studies: History] (Tokyo: Kyôiku shuppan, 1997), 208.

³² Ôhama Tetsuya and 10 others, *Chûgakusei no shakaika nihon no ayumi to sekai: Rekishi* [Social Studies for Middle-school Students Japan's Footsteps and the World: History] (Osaka: Nihon bunkyô shuppan, 2006), 139.

the government had between declaring war or pursuing diplomatic solutions to avert it.³³

Contrary to these textbooks, the two editions by Tsukurukai narrate how:

Russia, which had a national budget and military capacity ten times larger than those of Japan, had reinforced the troops in Manchu, and constructed military bases in northern Korea. If these had continued unchecked, it would have been patently clear that Russia's military power would have been so strong that Japan could not meet the challenge. The cabinet was afraid of leaving it until too late, and resolved to initiate the war with Russia.

In February 1904, Japan announced the termination of diplomatic relations with Russia, which marked the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War.³⁴

These textbooks accentuate the geopolitical circumstances surrounding Japan. They foreshadow the Japanese declaration of war on Russia as a defensive act rather than an act of aggression by the Japanese military or the cabinet's opportunism.

The beginning of Russo-Japanese war in Russian textbooks: The war begins by Japanese aggression

In contrast to Japanese textbooks, and especially the Tsukurukai one, Alexander Chubaryan's textbook portrays Japan as a threat:

The war was caused by the conflict of interests of two countries in the Far East. Japan, after the successful reforms of the Meiji revolution, was better prepared for the military conflict with Russia who stopped half way with its reforms. Some circles close to the Tsar did not understand the danger of the potential military collision with Japan but, quite the opposite, tried to encourage the conflict and believed that 'the small and victorious war' with Japan would bring together the Russian public and strengthen the monarchy. This was an important factor if negotiations between the two countries were sabotaged.³⁵

He also adds another dimension: the ignorance of the Tsarist regime about the region, and its underestimation of Japanese capabilities. Some close to the Tsarist circles Chubaryan notes,

³³ Kuroda Hideo and seven others, *Shakaika chūgakkō no rekishi: Nihon no ayumi to sekai no ugoki (Saishin ban)* [Middle-School Social Studies History: Footsteps of Japan and of the World] (Tokyo: Teikoku shoin, 2002), 168, and Kuroda Hideo and seven others, *Shakaika chūgakusei no rekishi: nihon no ayumi to sekai ugoki (shotei ban)* [Middle-School Social Studies History: Footsteps of Japan and of the World (First edition)] (Tokyo: Teikoku shoin, 2006), 172.

³⁴ Nishio Kanji and 13 others, *Chugaku shakai atarashii rekishi kyōkasho* [Middle-School Social Studies New History] (Tokyo: Fusōsha, 2002), 222, and Fujioka Nobukatsu and 11 others, *Chugaku shakai kaitei ban atarashii rekishi kyōkasho* [New History Textbook: Revised Middle-School Social Studies] (Tokyo: Fusōsha, 2006), 166-167. The 2006 edition adds that the Japan declared war on the back of support from America and Britain. Ibid., 167.

³⁵ Alexander O. Chubaryan, *Istoriya Rossii XX-nachalo XXI veka. 11 klass* [The History of Russia: 20th Century – Beginning of the 21st Century for Year 11] 4th ed. (Moscow: Prosveshenie, 2007), 32.

also saw the war with Japan as an opportunity to revive the flagging popularity of Imperial rule. The sabotaging of the negotiations, as we are told, was not a one-sided affair.

Nikita Zagladin's textbook, the winner of the first Ministry of Education competition on modern Russian history textbooks in 2002, describes the precipitating events quite differently from Chubaryan:

Using their power in Manchuria, Tsarist officials began extending their influence over Korea and gained forestry concessions along the Yalujian River. This upset Japan which had been building its colonial empire at the time and had placed Korea under a protectorate. The negotiations became futile.³⁶

Zagladin indicates that Russia gained a territorial concession, while Japan is depicted as merely assuming its rule over Korea. The text tells us neither Russia nor Japan were prepared to compromise – rendering the negotiations 'futile'. Likewise, Andrei Levandovskii's textbook sums up the outcome as: "diplomatic relations with Russia were broken."³⁷ The impersonal construction seems to serve two functions. First, it obfuscates the agency behind the events. Second, it seems to suggest that the event was inevitable. The result of diplomatic breakdown leads to a war as a natural and justifiable solution. Such obscurity leads to the absence of responsibility from the Russian side and potentially from Japan as well. The history evolves as a force of nature and not by human actions. Such narratives make it difficult to ask questions about 'how' these events happened as students are only provided with the 'natural cause of history' explanation to describe 'what' had occurred.

The 2010 edition of Vladimir Shestakov's textbook begins with the unequivocal statement that both Russia and Japan were equally involved in the imperial race.³⁸ Such an opening foreshadows the idea that both countries may share responsibility for the war. Further the textbook describes with some detail Russian economic developments in China and finally brings Japan into the picture by providing a geopolitical context.³⁹ Bearing this geopolitical context in mind, it may be asked why a Japanese attack should be a surprise to Russia as Shestakov accentuates. He provides a possible explanation for such ignorance:

³⁶Nikita V. Zagaldin, et al., *Istoriya Rossii XX - nachalo XXI veka. 11 klass* [The History of Russia: 20th Century – beginning of the 21st Century for Year 11] 9th ed. (Moscow: Russkoe Slovo, 2009), 28.

³⁷ Andrei A. Levandovskii and Y.A. Shetinov, *Rossia v XX veke, 10, 11 klass* [Russia in the 20th Century, Years 10 and 11] 6th ed. (Moscow: Prosveshenie, 2003), 23.

³⁸ A. Vladimir Shestakov, *Istoriya Rossii XX - nachalo XXI veka. 11 klass* [The History of Russia: 20th Century – Beginning of the 21st Century for Year 11] 3rd ed. (Moscow: Prosveshenie, 2010), 43.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 43.

In Russia, Japan was never perceived as a strong enemy. The lack of clear information was due to the closed nature of Japanese society and as a result, nobody in St Petersburg believed war with Japan was possible until the very last moment. After unsuccessful negotiations with Japan's ambassador, the Japanese suddenly attacked the Russian squadron in Port Arthur on the night of January 27, 1904. Nicholas the Second then declared through his Manifest the beginning of the war with Japan.⁴⁰

Russia never perceived Japan as a strong enemy. The textbook's narrative shifts the responsibility from Russia to Japan as Japan was seemingly hiding something from Russia. Shestakov, similarly to other authors, does not identify who was responsible for the unsuccessful negotiations. However, the question does not hold much interest to us as finally Shestakov writes that Japanese troops suddenly attacked the Russian squadron in Port Arthur. Japan became the aggressor while Russia was the victim. Russian neglect about the situation in the Far East is concealed, which softens the damage to Russia's self-image. The narrative incorporates both face protection techniques, saving the face of the Russian state, and an ideology of irresponsibility.

Other textbooks also make short comments on geopolitics. "This nation [Japan] aspired to expand its political influence in Asia."⁴¹ Furthermore: "In a very short time with the full support of the United Kingdom and Germany, Japan built a modern army and navy. At first Japan destroyed China (1894-1895) and then Russia was defeated (1904-1905)."⁴² Evgenii Sergeev, the author of the last textbook, downplays Japanese military success by accentuating the role of the United Kingdom and Germany. Hence, China was the first country that was destroyed by the Japanese and finally Russia was defeated. Such a sequence of sentences and the choice of vocabulary help to minimise the damage to Russia's self-image. The use of a geopolitical background seems to bolster the notion that the beginning of the war was a foregone conclusion and that it was provoked by the Japanese.

Oleg Soroko-Tsupa's textbook states: "Japan attacked Russian the fleet in Port Arthur and Chemul'po (Korea) without a declaration of war."⁴³ The combination of 'attacked' and 'without a declaration of war' seems to impregnate the text with animosity towards the

⁴⁰ Ibid., 43.

⁴¹ Ludmila N. Aleksashina, *Vseobshaya istoriya XX – nachalo XXI veka, 11 klass* [The World History: The 20th Century-the early 21st Century, Year 11] 5th ed. (Moscow: Mnemozina, 2008), 31.

⁴² Evgenii Y. Sergeev, *Vseobshaya istoriya, 9 klass* [The World History, Year 9] 2nd ed. (Moscow: Prosveshnie, 2008), 28.

⁴³ Oleg S. Soroko-Tsupa, V.P. Smirnov and A.I. Stroganov, *Mir v XX veke, 11 klass* [The World in the 20th Century, Year 11] 4th ed. (Moscow: Prosveshnie, 1999), 45.

Japanese. Yet, it is unclear about the motive and the processes behind the Japanese attack. The 2004 edition of Valerii Ostrovskii's textbook follows Soroko-Tsupa's:

The historical fact is that Japan became the aggressor. Nearly a week before the Japanese attack on Russia, the Russian government sent an official note to the Japanese government that demonstrated Russia's willingness to compromise and only suggested that Japan must not use Korea for its strategic interests.⁴⁴

The sequence of the sentences is noteworthy. The emphatic attribution of Japan as the aggressor is presented as an inviolable 'historical fact'. The Japanese government is described as being unreasonable or contemptuous of the Russian request for compromise. Chubaryan's textbook narrates:

At night on the 26th of January, 1904, the Japanese fleet suddenly attacked the Russian squadron in Port Arthur. The first war of the Twentieth Century to involve Russia had begun.⁴⁵

These descriptions conjure up an image of Russia as a hapless victim of the unscrupulous Japanese. It also predisposes the reader to sympathise with the Russians while preparing them to be less surprised by Russia's defeat.

One common thread shared by all Russian textbooks is the absence of any information about Korean and Chinese interests, the 'Man-Kan' exchange, before and at the beginning of the war; even though the military actions comprising the conflict took place in the territories of these two countries.

Comparison between Japanese and Russian textbooks

The Russian textbooks devote more space than Japanese textbooks to the imperial 'race' and its aim of territorial expansion. They also present Japan as an aggressor and Russia as a victim of the developing geopolitical struggle in the Far East. The main message in the Japanese textbooks is the popular support and even popular demand for the war. The Japanese textbooks are silent about the role of the state, shifting the responsibility for starting the war to the popular demand. Some Russian textbooks portray the incompetence of the Tsarist regime, which prepares the reader for Russian defeat and shifts responsibility for the loss from the Russian state. The Japanese textbooks seem to rely on impersonal constructions, suggesting

⁴⁴ Valerii P. Ostrovskii, *Istoriya Rossii, XX vek, 11 klass* [The History of Russia, the 20th Century, Year 11] 8th ed. (Moscow: Drofa, 2004), 16.

⁴⁵ Chubaryan, *Istoriya Rossii*, 32.

that war was inevitable. Russian textbooks also focus on states as main historical players while excluding human agency and thus obscuring the questions of responsibility further.

The Course of Russo-Japanese War in Japanese Textbooks: Saving Japanese face and downplaying wartime killing

The textbooks surveyed show contrasts in describing the ways Japan fought during the war. The textbooks identify how the Japanese troops occupied Manchurian territories and defeated the Russians. The 1997 edition of the *Nihon Shoseki* textbook relates:

In 1905 the Japanese military occupied Lushun, and won battles around Mukden. The navy emphatically defeated the Russian Baltic fleet at the Battle of Tsushima. But Japan's military expenditure was nearly ten times as much as that of the Sino-Japanese War; nearly 460,000 casualties resulted and weapons and ammunition ran short. The capacity of troops and finances were so weakened, it became difficult to carry on with the war.⁴⁶

The next edition published in 2002 says:

The Japanese occupied Lushun, and won battles around Mukden. The navy comprehensively defeated the Russian Baltic fleet. [...] But Japan's military expenditure cost nearly nine times than that of the Sino-Japanese War; nearly 460,000 casualties resulted.⁴⁷

The texts use emphatic terms to describe the Japanese victory as being comprehensive. While it is unreasonable to demand the textbooks list every single perpetrator and victim, the closest is 'Japan or the Japanese side producing deaths and injuries'. In contrast the unchanged excerpt from the 2002 and 2006 editions from *Kyōiku Shuppan* note that:

The war against the major power, Russia, was difficult. But the Japanese military defeated the Russians, and advanced into south Manchuria. The Japanese fleet led by Togo Heihachiro comprehensively defeated the Russian fleet at the Battle of Tsushima. [...] The Japanese side, too, had many casualties [...].⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Kodama and 16 others, *Chūgaku shakai: Rekishi teki bunya* [Middle School Social Studies: History] (Tokyo: Nihon shoseki, 1997), 211.

⁴⁷ Kodama and 16 others, *Watashitachi no chūgaku shakai: Rekishiteki bunya* [Our Middle-School Social Studies: History] (Tokyo: Nihon shoseki, 2002), 143.

⁴⁸ Sasayama Haruo and 41 others, *Shūgaku shakai rekishi: Mirai o mitsumete* [Middle School Social Studies: Looking towards the Future] (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan, 2002), 131; and Sasayama Haruo and 41 others, *Shūgaku shakai rekishi: Mirai o mitsumete* [Middle School Social Studies: Looking towards the Future] (Tokyo: Kyōiku shuppan, 2006), 160.

The texts mention the large numbers of casualties on each nation so as to suggest neither nation should be blamed for being more brutal than the other. There is no mentioning of heroic victory in Japanese textbooks.

The Course of Russo-Japanese War in Japanese Textbooks: Russian textbooks promote soldiers' heroism and downplay Russian war losses

A number of Russian textbooks exclude the descriptions of the war from the narrative completely.⁴⁹ Other authors dedicate between a few lines and a maximum of six pages on the course of the war. The common thread in all textbooks, with only one exception of Michael Zuev's textbook, is on accentuating the heroic characteristics of Russian sailors and soldiers.⁵⁰ Alexander Danilov's textbook narrates:

From the complete and devastating defeat Russia was rescued by the heroism and courage of the Russian soldier and sailor. The vessels 'Varyag' and 'Koreets' took part in an unequal battle with the Japanese fleet near the Korean city of Chemulpo which became a legend not only of Russian history. Russian heroes, even the prisoners of war, were paid homage even by their captors, who admired their bravery and loyalty to their military obligation....⁵¹

By emphasising the Russians' 'loyalty to their military obligation' Danilov diffuses humiliating defeat and praises the unnamed soldier, willing to sacrifice himself for his nation. Shestakov's textbook elaborates:

The Russo-Japanese war left in the public memory examples of the unprecedented bravery of Russian soldiers, seamen and officers. The seamen of 'Varyag' and 'Koreets' became symbols of faithfulness for their unequal fight near the Korean port Chemulpo.⁵²

⁴⁹ Aleksashina, *Vseobshaya istoriya*; Alexander A. Kreder and N. A. Troitskii, *Rossia i mir v XIX veke, chast 2, 8 class* [Russia and the World in the 19th Century, Part 2, Year 8] (Moscow: Centre for Humanitarian Education, 2001); Ostrovskii, *Istoriya Rossi*; Alexander M. Rodrigues, *Noveishaya istoriya zarubejnyuh stran XX vek, 11 klass* [Contemporary History of the Foreign Countries, 20th Century, Year 11] (Moscow: Humanitarian Publishing Centre Vlado, 2002); Sergeev, *Vseobshaya istoriya*.

⁵⁰ A military historian Michael Zuev dedicated six pages of his 600 page volume to the description of the war. Zuev's textbook is based on statistical analysis of military ammunition and human and technical losses and avoids emotional descriptions of bravery and heroism. Michael, N. Zuev, *Istoriya Rossii s drevneishih vremen do nachala XXI veka* [The History of Russia from the early age until the beginning of the 20th century], 8th ed. (Moscow: Drofa, 2005), 471-477.

⁵¹ Alexander, A. Danilov and A. V. Philippov, *Istoriya Rossii. 1900-1945, 11 klass*. [The History of Russia. 1900-1945, Year 11] (Moscow: Prosveshenie, 2009), 25.

⁵² Shestakov, *Istoriya Rossi*, 44.

Boris Yakemenko's textbook repeats the same theme: "The defence of Port-Arthur became the symbol of Russian resilience in this war".⁵³ So does Chibaryan's: "In the course of the Russo-Japanese war, Russian seamen and soldiers demonstrated heroism and self-sacrifice [...]."⁵⁴

President Putin at the meeting with Russian historians at the Russian National Library in November 2003 declared that "textbooks should develop pride for its country and its history among Russian youth".⁵⁵ Putin consistently promotes the idea to create a historical memory and historical myth that glorifies the past. The extracts from the Russian textbooks show that these textbooks successfully meet the President's challenge.

The descriptions of battles are omitted by half of the surveyed Russian texts. However, the authors who have written about them acknowledge the Russian defeat in every one, and all authors state the total defeat of Russian troops in the war. Of all the textbooks, five of them provide some statistics on Russian and Japanese losses. Yet only Chubaryan provides the total Russian losses in the war:

"The Small Victories War" cost Russia about 400 000 lives (including the injured and prisoners of war). This war substantially reduced Russian influence in the Far East and in the world generally.⁵⁶

The Japanese losses are not accounted for. A few authors contrast Russian and Japanese losses as:

In August 1904 close to Liaoyang, the Japanese tried to surround and destroy the Russian army. The Russians showed incredible resilience and the Japanese lost 24 000 soldiers against only 15 000 Russian losses.⁵⁷

The above extracts do not encourage any empathy towards the deceased on either side. And this is one of the characteristics of Russian textbooks, the lack of empathy to the human subjects generally. The main characteristic of Russian textbooks is the emphasis on heroism which glorifies trauma and constructs the idea or myth that even if the tsarist regime was incompetent, the ordinary soldiers were heroes who we can be proud of.

Comparison between Japanese and Russian textbooks

⁵³ Boris, G. Yakemenko, *Istoriya otechestva, chast 1, 1800-1939, 11 klass [The History of the Motherland, part 1, 1800-1939, Year 11]* (Moscow: Center for Humanitarian Education, AO "Moscow Textbooks", 2003), 212.

⁵⁴ Chubaryan, *Istoriya Rossii*, 32

⁵⁵ Shatina, "Shkolnye uchebniki istorii", 4

⁵⁶ Chubaryan, *Istoriya Rossii*, 34.

⁵⁷ Levandovskii and Shetinov, *Rossiia v XX veka*. 24.

Descriptions of military conflicts or wars are instrumental in constructing groups and national identities as they evoke emotional feelings – a very important element of historical memory. Hence, a number of scholars have analysed how ‘chosen glories’ and ‘chosen traumas,’ that become heavily mythologised over time, influence groups or national identity and impact on international relations.⁵⁸ It is not difficult to agree that history education and textbooks contribute strongly to promoting patriotism. Narration of the Russo-Japanese war in Russian textbooks shifts the attention from the tragic cost on both sides to the heroism of Russian soldiers in spite of Russian losses. The ideology of patriotism found in Russian textbooks helps to develop ‘conscious citizens’ rather than ‘critically thinking individuals’ in spite of the earlier attempts of some educators and historians to emancipate history from ideology.⁵⁹ Such narrative indicates a lost opportunity for understanding how the tragedy of war equally disadvantages both nations. This can hardly help Russo-Japanese reconciliation.

In contrast with Russian textbooks, Japanese textbooks tend to mute the heroism of soldiers. The concealing of human brutality helps to protect the ‘faces’ of those responsible for those acts. However, face protecting ideology is only one part of the national narrative. Japanese textbooks tend to emphasise the hardship of Japanese population as a result of this war. The main didactic message is to promote pacifism and to show the brutality of the war while protecting the state.

Conditions for troops and the domestic population inside Japan

Unlike Russian textbooks, Japanese counterparts tell us how the war affected the conditions of the troops on battlefields and the living conditions of the Japanese people during the war. Two 1997 textbooks provide the most detailed accounts:

The strength of the troops and ammunition ran out while tax increases made the lives of the Japanese people difficult. Dissatisfaction amongst the Russian people increased during the war and with the news of their defeat. A revolutionary movement began to oppose the Tsarist regime, which made the war difficult to continue.⁶⁰

Continuing this theme, the Kyôiku Shuppan textbook says:

⁵⁸ Johan Galtung, for example, analyses how ‘chosen glories’ and ‘chosen traumas’ are involved in defining a group’s identity and how they can potentially influence group’s behaviour in conflict situations. Johan Galtung, “The Construction of National Identities for Cosmic Drama: Chosenness-Myth-Trauma (CMT) Syndromes and Cultural Pathologies” in *Handcuffed to History*, ed. P. Udayakumar (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2001), 61-81.

⁵⁹ Kaplan, “History Teaching in Post-Soviet Russia,” 248-250

⁶⁰ Ôhama Tetsuya and 16 others, *Chûgakusei no shakaika nihon no ayumi to sekai: Rekishi* [Social Studies for Middle-school Students Japan’s Footsteps and the World: History] (Osaka, Nihon bunkyô shuppan, 1997), 203-204.

In Japan the national finances became tighter; Troops and materials ran short while standards of living also suffered. Although the course of the battles was advantageous, Japan could no longer afford to continue fighting.⁶¹

These are but a few samples of constant messages in the Japanese textbooks surveyed. They emphasise the exacerbating domestic conditions. The texts do not identify the responsible individuals and organisations for these conditions. Rather, it is the people as a whole that suffered from these conditions as a result of demanding a war. While this interpretation can serve as a reminder for the Japanese people to honour pacifism, it also evades the question of who holds the ultimate responsibility. In the minds of many unsuspecting readers, the textbooks shift the responsibility to the state which remains beyond reproach as its mistakes lie beyond scrutiny.⁶²

The End of the War in Japanese textbooks: Popular reaction to the conclusion of the war

The textbooks surveyed mention two outcomes of the war – the domestic response and Japan's international standing. Tokyo Shoseki's 1997 edition exemplifies the narrative trend:

Despite the enormity of her sacrifices, Japan was unable to secure reparations and had to be content with gaining small territories and concessions. The people in Japan attacked the government fiercely and in Tokyo, a mass protest developed into rioting.⁶³

The excerpt indicates that substantial rewards were expected to compensate for all the suffering. But as it became clear that the gains were small, the public responded vociferously, even resorting to rioting. Likewise, the 1997 and 2002 editions by Kyôiku Shuppan also provide an example of the ideology of face protection:

However, strong dissatisfaction with [the government's failure in] securing reparations was expressed by the Japanese public, who had co-operated with the war effort and made large sacrifices. Many newspapers criticised the government and crowds shouting their opposition to the Peace Treaty attacked the residences of ministers, police stations, pro-government newspaper offices, and Christian churches.⁶⁴

⁶¹ The footnote gives: one million troops. Half of ¥1.7 billion was met by debt, bond and tax. Sasayama and others, *Rekishi* (1997 ed.), 208-209.

⁶² The shift of responsibility from the state to the populace is not confined to the Russo-Japanese War. John W. Dower has persuasively demonstrated that similar logic was used to explain responsibility for Japan's defeat in the Asia-Pacific war. John W. Dower, *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: Norton, 1999).

⁶³ Tanabe Hiroshi and 39 others, *Shimpen atrashii shakai: Rekishi* [Middle School Social Studies: History] (Tokyo: Tokyo shoseki, 1997), 219.

⁶⁴ Sasayama and others, *Rekishi* (1997 edition), 209 and Sasayama and others, *Rekishi* (2002 edition), 160.

The mention of rioting serves as the denouement to the Pyrrhic victory. The focus on the adverse results of the war seems to buttress what the historian James Joseph Orr finds about post-1960s Japanese education's aspiration to cultivate a peaceful-loving youth.⁶⁵ The motive had already strongly appeared in the description of the war course. Two texts, both from the 1997 round, give different motives to the popular sentiment:

Japan was unable to gain reparations so frustration amongst the Japanese people, who had produced many victims and who had been troubled by tax increase, rose. In Tokyo crowds ransacked and burnt down newspaper offices and police stations.⁶⁶

And,

Deaths and injuries had occurred to soldiers from towns and villages across the country. But many people were dissatisfied with a peace treaty that did not award reparations. In Tokyo, after a public meeting, attacked police stations, newspaper companies and Christian churches were attacked.⁶⁷

Kyōiku Shuppan's 2006 edition notes that only a part of the crowd attacked:

A national meeting opposing the treaty was held at Hibiya Park in Tokyo. Following the end, a part of the demonstrating crowd attacked government residences and police stations, and the newspapers that supported the treaty.⁶⁸

Fusōsha's textbooks seem to be more direct:

Japan was unable to gain reparations. But a group of people who did not know that the national capacity had reached its limit were dissatisfied and caused riots.⁶⁹

Contrary to this predominant trend of state-centric interpretation in textbooks Tokyo Shoseki's 2002 and 2006 editions add an extra sentence: "Furthermore, the enlargement of the military went ahead so the burden on the people did not become any lighter".⁷⁰ This phrase suggests the government channelled funds to the military, while ignoring social welfare programmes.

The End of the War in Russian textbooks:

The surveyed Russian textbooks present the end of the war in geopolitical contexts.

⁶⁵ James Joseph Orr, *The Victim as Hero: Ideologies of Peace and National Identity in Postwar Japan* (Honolulu, University of Hawai'i Press, 2001), Ch. 4.

⁶⁶ Teruya and eight others, *Shakaika chūgakisei no rekishi: Nihon no ayumi to sekai no ugoki* [Social Studies History for Middle School Students: Japan's Footsteps and the World's] (Tokyo: Teikoku shoin, 1997), 212-213.

⁶⁷ Ōhama and others, *Chūgakisei no shakaika* (1997 ed.), 204.

⁶⁸ Sasayama and others, *Rekishi* (2006 ed.), 131.

⁶⁹ Nishio and others, *Atarashii rekishi* (2002 ed.), 223; Fujioka and others, *Atarashii rekishi* (2006 ed.), 168.

⁷⁰ Tanabe and 37 others, *Atarashi Shakai Rekishi* (Tokyo: Tokyo shoseki, 2002), 143; Gomi Fumihiko and 47 others, *Shinpen atarashii shakai rekishi* [New Middle School Social Studies: History] (Tokyo: Tokyo shoseki, 2002), 159.

Levandovskii states:

The strengthening of Japan in the Far East was not a part of the plan of Japan's allies and particularly the USA. The American government took the role of the mediator in the peace negotiations in Portsmouth.⁷¹

The power of making political decision about ending the war was taken away not just from Russia but equally from Japan. Moreover, Levandovskii displays quite a patronising attitude towards Japan as it was not Japan but Japan's allies who made the important decision to end the war. Danilov narrates similarly:

The USA was afraid that if Russia had lost to Japan, Japan could strengthen its position in the region. So the USA acted as the mediator in peace negotiations. England and France wished to see a weakened Russia, but at the same time did not want the war to continue.⁷²

The narrative signals that the main players in the region were the USA, England and France, who were preoccupied with their own geopolitical interests. Zuev provides an exception by referring to the Japanese conditions at the end of the war:

In spite of the success in winning all the battles, Japan exhausted its material and human resources. This forced the Japanese government to seek peace with Russia. In May 1905 the USA, who was afraid that the rise of Japan in the Far East had the potential to undermine American interests in the region, initiated peace negotiations between Russia and Japan.⁷³

Zuev states that Japan was exhausted by war and recognises Japanese suffering, so the USA participation in the negotiation process is explained.

The majority of authors concentrate on Russia's 'small' victories. S. Y. Witte, who conducted negotiation for Russia, was able to gain reasonably good results in spite of the difficulties Russia had. Russia got off with minimal territorial losses – South Sakhalin and Port Arthur. However, S. Y. Witte managed to avoid paying reparations to Japan.⁷⁴

Chubaryan follows:

According to the Portsmouth Treaty, Russia not only accepted the Japanese possession of Korea, but also gave South Sakhalin to Japan. Russia also agreed to concede to Japan the rights over the Liaodong Peninsula including Port Arthur. Only the diplomatic skills of the leader of the Russian delegation kept Russian losses to a minimum.⁷⁵

⁷¹ Levandovskii and Shetinov, *Rossia v XX veke*, 24.

⁷² Danilov and Philippov, *Istoriya Rossi*, 25.

⁷³ Zuev, *Istoriya Rossii*, 477.

⁷⁴ Levandovskii and Shetinov, *Rossiya v XX veke*, 24-25.

⁷⁵ Chubaryan, *Istoriya Rossii*,³⁴.

The textbooks mitigate Russian losses with Witte's diplomacy and focuses on the positive outcome for Russia. Finally, Russian textbooks convey a didactic lesson from the war. In Danilov's words:

Russia was not prepared for the war ideologically. Kuropatkin wrote: "The Japanese army was very patriotic, it received the support of the whole nation, every person in the army knew the importance of this war". However, the Russian nation was not united in pursuit of victory [...]. The losses caused by poor leadership caused disappointment and regrets. Such sentiments became the catalyst for the revolution of 1905-1907.⁷⁶

Danilov praises the Japanese army for its patriotic sentiments and emphasises the importance of national support to achieve victory. In contrast, the inability of Russian nation to unite at the time of war resulted not only in total Russian defeat but also caused the First Russian Revolution which aimed to change the tsarist regime. Assessing the significance of defeat Yakemenko notes:

Despite some concessions gained by Russia during the negotiations [in Portsmouth] the war with Japan seriously damaged political stability in Russia. The defeat was perceived by the public as a national humiliation and resulted in the loss of confidence in government and monarchy.⁷⁷

Yakemenko links the war with the First Russian Revolution as the Russian defeat resulted in the loss of confidence in not only the Russian government, but also in the political system it represented. These concluding remarks reveal the need for a strong national leadership to win a war.

Sergei Burin's textbook further expands the didactic message by praising Japanese modernisation and at the same time warning about growing Japanese danger:

The victory in the Russo-Japanese war marked the important first step in making Japan one of the most important economic and military empires in the East [...]. The Japanese government skilfully modernised the nation and made the ascent to a new bourgeois society irreversible. While keeping much of its traditions Japan energetically copied Western innovations. At the same time, the militarisation of the Japanese economy created a potential for future Japanese aggression – which had already been experienced by its neighbours, China and Russia.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Danilov and Philippov, *Istoriya Rossi*, 26. Alexei N. Kuropatkin was Russian Imperial Minister of War at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War. He was often held responsible for many blunders.. After the conflict was over, he published a number of books in his defence.

⁷⁷ Yakemenko, *Istoriya otechestva*, 215.

⁷⁸ Sergei N. Burin, *Noveishaya istoriya, XX vek. 9 klass [Contemporary History of the 20th century. Year 9]* (Moscow: Drofa, 2000), 66.

By paying tribute to the Japanese state and the patriotism of Japanese nation the authors reinforce the central idea that a strong state can single-handedly guide the nation to victory. The main didactic message young Russian readers obtain from learning about the Russo-Japanese war is that they should always support the state. Michael Apple and Linda Christian-Smith in their study of history textbooks notice that textbooks are often used as “ideological tools to promote a certain belief system and legitimise an established political and social order”.⁷⁹ Russian textbooks promote a strong sense of patriotism based on the glorification of Russian losses in Russo-Japanese War.

Finally, the Russian loss of the South Sakhalin to Japan indicates that Japan creates a potential danger to Russia and that a future conflict between two countries is very real.

Conclusion

The analysis of the descriptions of the Russo-Japanese war from its outbreak to conclusion in 44 Russian and Japanese history textbooks reveals their factual accuracy. The Russian textbooks, in a similar vein to their Japanese counterparts, seem to ascribe the intensifying rivalry between Japan and Russia as rooted in their respective imperialistic desires to expand their territories. Further commonality is the introduction of geopolitics at the beginning of the war in both sets of textbooks. However, the difference lies that in Russian textbooks geopolitics rests on European diplomacy while in Japanese textbooks geopolitics is based on the regional diplomacy of the ‘Man-Kan’ exchange.

A further difference is that the Japanese state-centric interpretation rests on its aversion towards the populace. The textbooks attribute the beginning of the war to popular demand more than geopolitical considerations. Russian textbooks defend the Russian state by stressing Japanese belligerence in the emerging East Asian geopolitical arena. Russian textbooks also blame Japan for the “sudden attack” which reiterates the belief that this war should never have been won by Japan. Japanese textbooks do not say that the war happened suddenly but name the government’s response to public demands as the main cause. The common theme is that Japanese and Russian textbooks equally avert state responsibility for the war.

⁷⁹ Michael W. Apple and Linda K. Christian-Smith, *The Politics of the Textbook*. (New York: Routledge, 1991), 10.

In the descriptions of the course of the war both Japanese and Russian textbooks acknowledge the enormity of casualties in both countries. The main difference is that Japanese textbooks focus on the hardship of the domestic populace implying the people would not have suffered if they had not demanded the war. At the same time they convey a pacifist message. Russian textbooks admit to defeat, but mitigate the humiliation by resorting to the heroism of its soldiers. This suits the present political agenda in Russia which reflects Putin's perception that today's Russia is in need of patriotic youth. The Japanese textbooks do not celebrate its military victories even if Japan emerged victorious. The casualties were too high for Japan, the war brought economic hardship, and possibly, the textbook's authors are also trying to avoid any criticisms from the political left. However, the right-wing nationalists are not happy with the muted celebration either, which causes the motivation for Tsukurukai activities.

Japanese and Russian textbooks equally acknowledge both countries ended the war by negotiation initiated by the American government. The difference is that Japanese textbooks expose the futility of public reaction to the peace treaty. Russian textbooks try to salvage national pride accentuating that the loss was not as bad as it could have been. A number of Russian textbooks convey a didactic message that Japanese victory was a result of public/national support for the war. In contrast, the Russian nation was unable to unite (as they simply could not understand why Russians should fight in Manchuria) and lost. The didactic message in Russian textbooks is that the public has to be patriotic and support their state in order to win wars and avoid national humiliation. Japanese textbooks do not provide any explanation for Japanese victory or Russia's loss except in Tsukurukai textbook.

Russian and Japanese textbooks equally serve to strengthen the position of the state but use different narrative strategies to achieve this goal. By comparing Russian and Japanese textbooks it often appears that they tell the story as if they were describing two different wars with relatively few areas of convergence; leaving the impression of 'talking past each other'. Russian textbooks use the war to criticise the lack of domestic patriotism while Japanese textbooks blame the Japanese public for initiating the war. Russian textbooks promote the ideology of patriotism by constructing historical myth based on the bravery and heroism displayed by Russian soldiers and contrasting this with the incompetency of the Tsarist generals. Japanese textbooks accentuate pacifism and also diverge from the state responsibility for the war and especially casualties and the hardship the war brought to Japanese people. Nearly all Japanese textbooks, except the Tsukurukai textbook, forget to mention how this

conflict transformed Japan from an 'unknown' and 'unimportant' country, into a regional power.

The analysis of the textbook's ideologies in descriptions of the Russo-Japanese War reveals both countries equally have no empathy for each other. Textbooks do not contribute towards the development of transnational perspective or understanding that can assist with removing the suspicion between the two nations. The textbooks' authors, preoccupied with the task of constructing historical memory to strengthen the position of the state, often neglect the opportunity to encourage critical thinking that may result in some state criticism. In Japanese textbooks this message is less evident as the narrative is more 'neutral' and charged with less emotional vocabulary than Russian texts. Russian textbooks boldly focus on glorifying war trauma. Reading such historical narratives in both countries naturally reproduce ambivalence and even suspicion towards each other.

In Japan the Tsukurukai stands out from the rest converting a more patriotic and nationalistic message about the importance of the importance of the victory in this war for the future of Japan. In Russia Zuev's textbook conveys a more pacifist rather than just a patriotic message showing Russian and Japanese losses and sacrifices in the war. However, the rest of textbooks are quite homogenised in presenting the main ideologies.

Referring to the three types of textbook genre described by Klerides and discussed in our introduction, Russian and Japanese examples demonstrate the characteristics of the traditional textbook. The debate about history education in both countries indicates there is an awareness of the existence, or at least the possibility of existence, of the new history textbooks. However, our analysis reveals that textbook authors in both countries neglect the opportunities offered by these different and more critical approaches.

Despite of all the different challenges that Putin and Abe are currently facing, both of them try to restore national pride and rejuvenate the feeling of patriotism among their countrymen. This task is not much different from any other national leaders. Both of them refer to national history and history education with the hope to fulfil their ambitious plans. The comparative analyses of the one historic episode common for both countries, the Russo-Japanese war, reveals that the narrative presented in Russian textbooks, although with slight variations, do assist with promoting the ideology of patriotism and national pride. While Japanese textbooks focus on averting state responsibility for the war and blaming the Japanese public for it. The result of such textbooks is that both nations continue talking past each other.