

The Compilation Philosophy, Strategies, and Implications of Russia's Unified Junior High School History Textbooks from the Perspective of National Identity

Bangbiao Li^{1,*}, Junzhen Hu²

¹Chongqing Normal University, Chongqing 401331, China

²Wuxi County Wenfeng Junior High School, Kunshan 405804, China

*Corresponding email: 1028916756@qq.com

Abstract

History textbooks serve as carriers of national memory and play a vital role in uniting societal forces and fostering national identity. Given Russia's complex ethnic composition, its history curricula emphasize revitalizing shared historical memories and strengthening national identity. The Russian Junior High School History Textbook Publishing House has developed its editorial philosophy around achieving national harmony and stability, preserving cultural heritage, and cultivating students' historical literacy. Its approach employs a unified national historical framework to reinforce concepts of "continuity" and "sovereignty and territorial integrity"; highlights iconic "heroic figures" and "individuals" reflecting diverse ethnic development; integrates collective historical narratives to establish a "triple-identity" system; adopts a strategy that uses historical context as the central thread and interdisciplinary perspectives as supporting dimensions to solidify the national identity framework. These insights offer valuable references for developing junior high school history textbooks in China, enabling them to effectively contribute to building national identity.

Keywords

National identity, Russia, Unified junior high school history textbook, Triple identity

Introduction

National identity refers to the recognition by citizens within a nation of its cultural values, historical traditions, national sovereignty, political principles, and value orientations within specific historical contexts [1]. The constructivist theory of national identity posits that it is not an immutable entity but rather continuously reconstructed through social and historical evolution. Eisenstadt identifies media such as printed materials and standardized language as pivotal in modernization concepts, which transcend narrow regional identities and facilitate the shift from "nation" to "community" [2]. Textbooks serve not only as vital conduits for cultural transmission and development but also as key elements in maintaining national unity, fostering ethnic solidarity, and strengthening national identity [3]. Based on this, domestic scholars have conducted in-depth investigations into how national identity is manifested in educational materials. Some researchers compare the

components, construction methods, and content features across three editions of high school chemistry textbooks to help students grasp the significance of Chinese national identity [4]. Others explore innovative national identity education methods from four dimensions: setting national awareness teaching requirements, building discourse frameworks, designing learning goals, and adopting multimodal presentations in foreign language textbooks. Additionally, efforts to enhance students' national identity through textbook innovation and improved evaluation mechanisms have garnered significant scholarly attention [5,6].

In addition to the aforementioned disciplinary textbooks, history textbooks serve as a crucial medium for nurturing individuals and fostering talent in history education, bearing the important mission of "cultivating individuals with a strong sense of national identity" [7]. Some scholars have analyzed the content of the unified high

school history textbooks and highlighted the significant value of innovative teaching materials in enhancing national identity. Foreign studies also corroborate the vital role of history curricula and textbooks in strengthening national identity [8]. For instance, by comparing junior high school history textbooks from six countries-Ethiopia, South Africa, Rwanda, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States - some scholars found that objectively presenting shared historical narratives is an effective approach to reinforcing national identity consciousness [9,10]. In Russia, the education sector regards heroic narratives in history teaching as a key means of cultivating students' cultural national identity, value judgments, and national identity. However, research specifically focused on national identity in Russian history textbooks remains relatively scarce, with existing studies primarily concentrating on political identity and cultural dissemination. Some scholars have identified four major historical education strategies for fostering political identity in Russia, while others have examined the unique role of cultural narratives in history textbooks during the Russian imperial period in promoting national culture based on cultural dissemination theory. History courses and textbooks play a key role in forming Russian national identity. Related research on this topic still remains insufficient. Thus, it is necessary to study how Russia shapes and spreads its national identity via history textbooks. Russian citizens hold dual identities. They prioritize civic identity while retaining ethnic national awareness. This feature bears much resemblance to China's unified multi-ethnic national structure. Therefore, studying Russia's unified junior high school history textbooks provides valuable insights into leveraging China's history education materials in fostering national identity.

The editorial philosophy behind Russia's unified junior high school history textbook

As the world's largest country by area, Russia possesses a relatively complex ethnic structure shaped by factors such as population migration, cultural integration, wars, and policy decisions. Beyond its dominant Russian population, the nation comprises East Slavic peoples, Turkic-speaking groups, and nearly 200 officially

recognized ethnic minorities [11]. In addressing its multicultural reality, Russia consistently emphasizes "national identity as a vital bond for ethnic cohesion", highlighting the role of history education in promoting outstanding cultural heritage, strengthening ethnic unity, safeguarding national sovereignty and reinforcing national identity. Junior high school history education occurs during a critical phase when students develop their worldview, values, and life perspectives. By studying the histories of diverse regions, ethnic groups, and the nation as a whole, students gain deeper insights into the evolution of social history and its underlying roots, gradually understanding the cultural and value implications embedded within these historical processes - thereby enhancing their identification with national culture. Taking Moscow School No.57 as an example: This eleven-year institution prioritizes academic advancement while fostering students' scholarly competence and innovative capabilities. Its secondary education system consists of two phases - the first covering grades five-nine and the second grades ten-eleven - which shares fundamental similarities with China's educational structure, albeit with minor differences in admission criteria and stage divisions. To make it clear, the first stage of Moscow No.57 School corresponds to Russia's junior high school education. The research checked junior high history textbooks from three major Russian educational publishers. They are Education Press, Great Stork Publishing House and Russian Language Publishing House. Finally, this study chooses General History of the World: History of the Ancient World series. The textbooks are issued by Education Press and serve as the research object. In addition to the standard edition, this series incorporates region-specific content adaptations, resulting in regional variant editions. Based on Russia's official education policies and studies, the textbooks systematically incorporate national identity education. Their compilation focuses on harmony, stability, civic commitment and historical thinking cultivation.

Clarify fundamental values and pursue national harmony and stability

As a vital tool for fostering civic consciousness and maintaining social stability, Russia has prioritized the fundamental value of "shaping national identity" in its

junior high school history curriculum. The Soviet Union collapsed in the past. Russia was then affected by Western peaceful evolution tactics. It also faced worsening ethnic identity crises and an urgent demand for national unity. National and social harmony became a fundamental condition for Russia's development. Yet this development path was filled with difficulties [12]. In this context, safeguarding ethnic interests and promoting national stability emerged as central themes in post-Soviet Russian history education. The primary objectives extend beyond combating historical nihilism and bolstering national confidence. They also aim to guide students through historical reflection, enabling them to deeply understand the social roots, historical factors, value orientations, and internal driving forces behind the nation's institutions, thereby facilitating a more profound understanding of state-building [13].

As this philosophy evolved, Russian lawmakers enacted legislation such as the "Law on Eternal Commemoration of the Victory of the Soviet People in the Great Patriotic War (1941-1945)" and the "Act Against Nazism and Historical Nihilism", designed to encourage citizens to objectively assess World War II history, preserve national heroism, and integrate these principles into historical education [14]. Building on this foundation, Russian local authorities have also taken proactive measures: The Republic of Tatarstan established a dedicated "Historical Memory Protection Prosecutor" position to severely punish those who defame veteran soldiers. Moscow authorities require primary and secondary schools to hold two themed class meetings per semester on the "Truth of the Patriotic War" and organize student visits to veteran soldiers. The Krasnoyarsk Krai government invested 120 million rubles to install surveillance cameras and digital interpretation screens at war memorials in remote areas, while launching the "Veterans on Campus" program to help students understand history and foster patriotism. Consequently, Russian history education and textbook compilation adhere to fundamental human values such as "sovereignty and independence", "territorial integrity", "ethnic unity", and "national prosperity". These textbooks record major historical events like the Soviet Patriotic War, Stalingrad and Kursk battles, Peter the Great's reforms and Catherine II's territorial expansion, as well as Orthodox Christianity's cultural influence. They help students understand national origins and development, and build recognition of unity, law,

equality and sovereignty. This approach elevates the purpose of Russian history textbooks beyond merely correcting historical nihilism, instead embedding a profound commitment to harmony and national unity within collective narratives.

Abandoning the single ethnic benchmark and upholding the spirit of cultural dedication

From the East Slavic tribes to the ancient Russian ethnic groups and modern national communities, Russian society has undergone numerous population migrations, ethnic integrations, and external expansions. All ethnic groups have vigorously celebrated heroic sacrifices and established exemplary figures for their people. This emphasis on national role models poses challenges for historical education and narrative construction in Russia: As each ethnic group focuses on shaping its own heroes, it becomes difficult to objectively reflect Russia's historical and cultural realities, let alone meet the requirements of national history textbooks regarding the portrayal of dedication [15]. Scholar Petrov's research reveals that compared to other countries, Russians place greater importance on the contributions of national heroes [16]. Reviving forgotten heroes, highlighting their achievements, and reshaping public memory of these figures serve as crucial means of fostering national identity-reflecting Russia's unique approach to internalizing heroic values and civic devotion in textbook compilation. In 2013, Russia officially issued the "Historical and Cultural Standards", emphasizing that historical education should "respect factual history, combat distortions and vilification of heroes, and cultivate students' spirit of sacrifice and dedication for national development". Russian history textbooks focus on heroic tales to stress heroism and duty. Heroes are contrasted with traitors, judging historical figures diversely under the loyalty-based educational tenet. Moreover, textbook development transcended single-ethnic viewpoints and binary oppositions, abandoning simplistic distinctions between "Russian national heroes" and "foreign enemies", instead adopting a "symbiosis perspective" in assessing historical figures. On May 8th, 2024, Russia issued the "Document on Approving the National Policy Framework for Historical Education", emphasizing the commitment to building a civilizational state based on ethnic equality. The document highlights those Russian ethnic groups, together with numerous

other ethnic communities, form a unified historical and cultural entity, and underscores the importance of leveraging the exemplary role of shared national heroes. A collective memory grounded in ethnic equality helps prevent the homogenization and polarization of historical hero narratives, integrating minority groups and historical events into the nation's cultural identity. This approach mitigates ethnic discrimination, reduces ethnic conflicts, and fosters a "community of shared ethnic identity". Such a comprehensive historical hero narrative, encompassing diverse ethnicities, cultures, and regions, not only avoids the pitfalls of historical nihilism but also enhances students' understanding of national heroes by showcasing the collective contributions of various ethnic groups, thereby nurturing their core patriotic values.

Emphasizing dialectical thinking and cultivating students' historical competence

Historical competence refers to students' comprehensive ability to analyze and evaluate historical phenomena by applying professional knowledge, academic methods, and dialectical thinking during the process of acquiring historical knowledge [17]. In 2020, Alexander Chubarian linked this competency to the objectives of historical education. Under the initiative of an expert panel at the Institute of Historical Education of the Russian Academy of Educational Sciences, historical competence was incorporated into the fundamental framework of Russian historical pedagogy. Elena Klyuchevskaya described it as a holistic capability that integrates competencies and values through targeted educational activities within specific historical contexts, forming a closed-loop system of "values-competencies-action". This time bound repetition endows historical competence with an "experience-oriented" characteristic. Historical experiences rooted in responding to "threats" cannot serve as a scientific blueprint for future actions or plans. Only through dialectical reflection and historical analysis can individuals and groups gain a comprehensive understanding of themselves and others, awaken their subjective consciousness within evolving national identities, and thereby formulate more holistic future strategies. Consequently, Russian middle school history textbooks not only respect historical facts but also emphasize guiding students to conduct thorough and objective evaluations of historical figures. These textbooks do not shy away from historical complexities

and controversies but instead explore them through a "rational" perspective. For instance, regarding the controversial central figure of Stalin, early textbooks described his political purges conducted between 1936 and 1938 as "the most profound subject across all curricula" and a "movement of political persecution and oppression". These texts particularly criticized the "highly centralized power structure" as the root cause of the purges, claiming it "fostered Stalin's personality cult and suppressed local and individual initiative" - an oversimplified interpretation. The revised textbooks, however, guide students to evaluate Stalin objectively by considering the historical context, primary sources, and the era in which events unfolded. They emphasize not only recognizing the brutality of the purges but also understanding them as complex choices made under specific historical circumstances. This approach cultivates students' dialectical thinking grounded in historical evidence, inspires admiration for heroic dedication, and strengthens their national consciousness. Developing dialectical thinking enables students to transcend one-sided portrayals of historical heroes and delve into the social roots and historical contexts behind their actions. Through this process, students realize that national identity is not static but rather undergoes continuous construction, adjustment, and reshaping. Ultimately, they enhance their historical literacy, critically assess the merits and limitations of heroic figures within their cultural traditions, find balance through analytical thinking, and nurture a profound sense of national identity by comprehending the spirit of selfless devotion embodied by these great historical figures.

Compilation strategies for the unified Russian junior high school history textbook

To boost students' cultural engagement, the revised Russian history textbook adopts tailored compilation strategies. Centered on established editorial ideas, it shapes students' national identity via structure, logic, content and layout design.

Rooted in unified national history, it reinforces awareness of continuity, sovereignty and territorial integrity

National identity represents an individual's sense of belonging, loyalty, and recognition of a nation's values.

It closely links personal development with the nation's destiny, motivating individuals to proactively shoulder responsibilities in defending the homeland and building their communities. When individuals develop a strong sense of national identity, they gradually reflect on cultural backgrounds, political attitudes, historical identities, and ethnic cultures through heightened self-awareness, ultimately forming a distinctive national identity. Russian junior high school history education, grounded in national unity, places particular emphasis on cultivating students' awareness of "continuity" and "sovereignty and territorial integrity" [18]. For instance, Wang Yue analyzed key factors driving shifts in historical education between the Yeltsin and Putin eras, stressing the importance of understanding historical connections while respecting objective historical facts. Ma Deyong demonstrated from both macro and micro perspectives that sovereign independence is a crucial factor in national development. These approaches aim to guide students in understanding historical contexts, analyzing their societal impacts, and connecting them to contemporary realities, thereby fostering their awareness of "continuity" and "sovereignty and territorial integrity" throughout history. Specifically, Russian history textbooks prioritize national harmony and stability, constructing a "past-present-future" developmental framework. They cultivate students' analytical and interpretive skills around pivotal events, enabling them to accurately position their roles in national and social progress through dialectical thinking and critical awareness, thereby strengthening their loyalty and pride in their country.

The revised Russian middle school history textbook adopts a timeline as its central framework, constructing a comprehensive narrative spanning from Kievan Rus to modern Russia, thereby establishing a longitudinal historical continuum that holds significant practical value for fostering students' national identity. Taking the Tatarstan region as an example, its middle school history textbook adheres to these principles by developing a unified historical framework that encompasses national identity: (1) Time continuity: The narrative shifts focus from "our ancestors" to "unified Russia". In the seventh-grade section "The Formation of the Russian Centralized State", the textbook details the glorious history of the Volga Bulgaria and the Kazan Khanate, portraying them

as integral components rather than adversaries of Russian civilization. The eighth-grade section "Imperial Expansion and Reforms" emphasizes the joint contributions of Tatars and Russians to major historical processes such as the Great Patriotic War and industrial development, reinforcing the sense of shared identity that "we collectively shaped Russia". The ninth-grade section "The Soviet Union and Contemporary Russia" focuses on Tatarstan's development during the Soviet era and its autonomous status within the modern federal framework, strengthening awareness of sovereignty and territorial integrity. (2) Spatial integration: Territorial understanding evolves from "the Kazan Khanate" to "the indivisible Russian territory", forming a cohesive educational chain encompassing "territory-sovereignty-responsibility". First, the text provides a detailed account of border treaties such as the Treaty of Nerchinsk, extending to the 1994 Treaty on the Division of Russian and Tatar Powers, emphasizing the historical legitimacy of modern Russian borders; second, by recounting the stories of joint resistance against foreign invaders by Tatars and Russians during the Battle of Kazan and the Great Patriotic War, it fosters a sense of responsibility for "protecting our shared homeland"; finally, in light of contemporary geopolitical developments, it discusses issues concerning regions like Crimea, reinforcing the principle of "indivisible sovereignty". The textbook's compilation aims to construct a cohesive national identity, establish a comprehensive framework for emotional national identity, cultivate a dialectical awareness of national identity, ultimately define a developmental approach to national identity, and deepen public understanding of patriotic sentiments.

Grounded in the current reality of ethnic diversity, cultivate iconic "heroic groups" and "individuals"

The essential prerequisite for national identity lies in the equality of all ethnic groups, respect for developmental disparities among them, and promotion of their diverse development based on shared principles - a value orientation enshrined in the Russian Constitution and widely endorsed by citizens. Textbook content highlights positive historical narratives to construct a national heroography. Russian middle school history textbooks provide comprehensive accounts of the "Soviet peoples' collective resistance against fascism", highly

acknowledging the patriotic spirit demonstrated by ethnic minority heroes. They document the deeds of the “Digory people” in central Caucasus who resisted German troops and commend the Mil’ diz reconnaissance unit for securing troop evacuations.

Incorporating these heroic contributions into curricula not only strengthens students’ admiration for these figures but also, through cultural preservation mechanisms, underscores their sense of responsibility and dedication - helping students cultivate national consciousness while appreciating historical sacrifices. Conversely, Russian history textbooks employ multifaceted safeguards against defamation of heroes, establishing a robust protection system grounded in legal frameworks, textbook censorship protocols, and value-oriented guidance - all aimed at highlighting the enduring relevance of these heroic figures. Russian authorities have passed a series of laws one after another. They include the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation, the Law on Commemorating Patriotic Martyrs and related honor status laws. Insulting and slandering Soviet heroes will face punishments. Penalties cover compulsory labor as well as administrative and criminal sanctions. Such complete legal systems effectively protect the reputation of these heroes. Second, Russia implements a stringent review system for junior high school history textbooks, involving historians and education experts in multiple rounds of evaluations to rigorously scrutinize portrayals of heroes, ensuring they remain unfluted. For instance, textbooks from the 1990s removed overly negative depictions of historical figures like Stalin, replacing them with “dialectical assessments” that acknowledge both achievements and shortcomings. This textbook review mechanism serves as a quality control safeguard for hero portrayal. Finally, textbook compilation emphasizes positive value guidance for students, presenting heroes with multifaceted and authentic portrayals-including Lenin’s idealism alongside his pragmatic compromises, and Stalin’s accomplishments alongside his errors - helping students develop sound historical perspectives. Furthermore, “cultivating students’ ability to form accurate evaluations of heroes” serves as a crucial approach to shaping iconic heroic figures. To deepen students’ understanding of historical truths, Russian middle school history textbooks directly present original historical documents and analyze historical figures from

multiple perspectives. For instance, the textbook includes Zoya’s final letter to her mother: “My dear mother, I am fully prepared; I fear no death” allowing students to directly grasp the heroic spirit. When presenting the original text of Alexander II’s decree abolishing serfdom, the textbook also includes records showing peasants still required to pay substantial ransom for acquired land, enabling students to analyze the reforms’ incomplete nature. By incorporating primary sources and multidimensional historical analysis, these textbooks not only reconstruct historical truths and develop students’ dialectical thinking and analytical skills, but also elevate heroic figures into core elements of national identity, providing vital impetus for fostering a national identity imbued with the spirit of their era.

Integrating shared historical memories to establish a “triple identity” framework

History textbooks serve as vital carriers of national collective memory, with their content organization playing a crucial role in maintaining national stability [19]. Collective historical memory encompasses recognition of cultural symbols, historical traditions, values, and political systems, serving as a fundamental medium for shaping national identity. Russian middle school history textbooks generally adopt a dual-track structure of “time + main narrative”, presenting three dimensions - Russian national history, world history, and local history - in a horizontal framework. This approach thoroughly considers multi-layered identity relationships between individuals and the state, the state and local communities, ethnic groups, and local areas with the global context. Local histories often utilize pivotal historical milestones or significant events as common threads connecting regional, national, and global narratives, integrating content across dimensions to establish a progressive “triple identity” system. This approach not only helps students understand the historical and social roots of their ethnic development, formulate a coherent historical development framework, and strengthen their value identification with their nation, but also provides a global perspective for better comprehending historical connections and shared values between their country and the world.

According to modern nationalist state-building theory, the formation of national identity generally follows a progressive hierarchy from local to national and then to global levels. Russian middle school history textbooks adhere to this “from near to far” logic, positioning local

history as the starting point for national and world history. For instance, when covering “Heroes of the Great Patriotic War”, the textbook dedicates two sections to recounting the heroic deeds of underground workers and Petrograd defenders in the Moscow region, thereby bridging the generational gap between historical heroes and students from local ethnic minority communities. This concrete portrayal of heroes not only reinforces ethnic equality awareness but also promotes cultural inclusivity within the context of national survival. Notably, Russian middle school history instruction avoids hastily emphasizing the monumental contributions of Soviet heroes during the anti-fascist war. Instead, it begins with their life trajectories and social backgrounds, details their specific heroic actions, and ultimately contextualizes them within major global historical events. When discussing national heroine Zoya Kosmomyanskaya, the textbook first describes her upbringing in Tula Oblast and the local anti-German resistance movement, then elaborates on her heroic deeds, ultimately positioning her as a symbol of the global anti-fascist resistance. National identity does not directly stem from world-renowned heroes but may emerge from seemingly insignificant local figures. As a bridge connecting national and world history, local history reflects a microcosm of Russian society under multipolar dynamics and serves as a classic model for global-oriented educational practices. Russian middle school history textbooks incorporate extensive regional history content, covering not only “local historical sites and cultural relics” but also examining “how the regional geographical environment shaped history”. The Dnieper River serves as both the lifeline and dividing line of Eastern Slavic civilization and the “original cradle of the Russian state”. Known to the ancient Greeks as the “Bursitis River”, it became a crucial interface between Mediterranean civilization and the Slavic world, functioning as a trade route between Greek colonies and inland tribes since the 5th century BCE. This approach seamlessly integrates regional history into both Russian national history and world history, enabling students to understand the Dnieper’s historical significance through a dual perspective of “Russia - the World” and to construct a tripartite national identity framework

encompassing “region-Russia-world”. The three-tiered system established by these textbooks not only serves as a powerful tool for preserving global diversity but also preserves space for regional national identity development amid multi-ethnic realities. As these national identity elements evolve over time, they continuously demonstrate vitality, playing a vital role in strengthening the stability of the national identity system. ***Using history as the framework and multidisciplinary approaches as the dimensions to consolidate the national identity architecture***

National identity possesses inherent multidimensional integrative characteristics, which can be analyzed and evaluated from various dimensions such as politics, culture, ethnicity, historical trajectories, regional categories, and social development [20]. Therefore, strengthening the foundations of national identity often requires enhancing interdisciplinary connections while grasping the historical developmental context. Russian junior high school history textbooks employ a “chronological framework + thematic approach” to construct both vertical and horizontal thematic structures, serving as a crucial supplement to the traditional chronological sequencing method [21]. Through this integration, students rapidly establish a mental “historical coordinate system”, comprehend multidimensional relationships, and develop “multidimensional historical thinking”. On one hand, this approach establishes a historical thread spanning “past-present-future” to lay the groundwork for national identity. On the other hand, it guides students to connect national identity with political systems, economic structures, current social developments, and ideological frameworks through interdisciplinary perspectives, thereby constructing a stable, multi-dimensional national identity system.

Russian middle school history textbooks not only organize conventional units along a chronological timeline but also include at least one independent thematic module presented as a longitudinal chapter structure within each unit. Taking Unit 4 of Grade 9, “The Great Patriotic War (1941-1945)”, as an example, this module systematically examines the international context and domestic situation surrounding the Soviet Union’s participation in the Patriotic War, highlighting

the inevitability of its outbreak. It particularly emphasizes pivotal battles such as the Battle of Moscow, the Battle of Stalingrad, and the Battle of Kursk. These vertical thematic narratives go beyond mere factual listing; they elevate historical knowledge from an academic framework to a level of national consciousness. Their purpose is to cultivate a unified historical perspective and values among Russian students, strengthen national identity, and ensure that this historical memory provides enduring momentum for contemporary national unity and political stability. Secondly, the textbooks broaden the dimensions of national identity through interdisciplinary approaches. Using the same unit as an illustration, the Education Publishing Group developed integrated learning modules incorporating geography, literature, art, and mathematics in accordance with Russian curriculum standards, designing four instructional sessions centered around the theme of the Patriotic War see Table 1. The lesson on the strategic significance of the “war environment” fully utilizes geographical knowledge to analyze how “General Winter” became the Soviet Army’s “secret

weapon”, while meteorological data analysis examines its impact on German forces during the 1941-1942 winter. The multidimensional approach to war narrative employs diverse methods - including textual cross-referencing, poetry interpretation, and recitations - to demonstrate literature’s role in boosting morale.

The section on visual memory and national construction strengthens citizens’ wartime memories through artistic analysis, literary appreciation, and observation activities. Rational calculation in warfare is explored through military statistics, wartime production models, and cryptography, enabling students to mathematically understand the impact of historical conflicts. This “interdisciplinary integration” strategy in textbook development transcends the limitations of historical studies, allowing students to examine historical events from multiple perspectives, rationally analyze them to reconstruct Russia’s national identity framework, and connect history with contemporary national realities. By grasping historical narratives, students deepen their understanding of specific topics and develop a coherent perception of national identity through historical learning.

Table 1. Summary of multidisciplinary integrated teaching activities for the “Great Patriotic War” unit in Grade 9, Russia.

Type of disciplinary integration	Core teaching activities	Core integrated discipline	Core objective
History + Geography	1. Topographic analysis of Volgograd's “Urban Fortress”. 2. Climate impact study on “General Winter”. 3. GIS reconstruction of tank mobility during the battle of Kursk	History, geography, military Science	Understanding the strategic significance of the battlefield environment in warfare
History + Literature	1. Mutual verification between war literature and official war history texts. 2. Interpretation of war heroic epics. 3. Recitation of wartime poetry and emotional experience	History, literature, sociology	Experience the diversity of war narratives and construct national identity
History + Art	1. Visual symbol analysis of War-time propaganda posters. 2. Appreciation of War-themed oil paintings. 3. Comparative analysis of war documentaries across different historical periods	History, art, and film Studies	Understanding the role of visual art in constructing national memory
History + Mathematics / Technology	1. Comparative analysis of military forces and equipment data between the Soviet Union and Germany. 2. Construction of a War-Time production function model .3. Preliminary exploration of World War II cryptography	History, mathematics, economics, information technology	Understanding the impact of rational calculation and technology on warfare

Insights from the compilation of Russia's unified junior high school history textbooks

National identity refers to the profound recognition that members of society have toward their country and serves as a crucial prerequisite for strengthening social cohesion [22]. China is a multi-ethnic nation. When discussing ethnic-related content in the unified junior high school history textbooks, historical facts concerning ethnic unity, integration, and collective struggle should be emphasized as key references, while also highlighting the efforts made by all ethnic groups for national independence and liberation. This enables students from various ethnic regions to reinforce their sense of national identity by understanding the shared destinies and common interests of all ethnic groups. Additionally, China can draw the following insights from the compilation of the unified junior high school history textbooks in Russia.

Highlighting territorial sovereignty facts and clarifying national boundary cognition

Russian junior high school history textbooks, while adhering to the principles of historical curriculum standards, focus on historical events related to territorial and sovereign integrity to cultivate students' awareness of territorial boundaries. Chinese junior high school history textbooks can highlight relevant historical facts concerning territorial and sovereign integrity, helping students develop a clear understanding of borders and thereby deepening their recognition and conscious defense of territorial and national sovereignty. On one hand, territorial integrity is a prerequisite for a nation's development and a crucial element of national identity.

Textbooks should systematically and comprehensively present key events and institutions through which various dynasties consolidated their territories and resisted foreign invaders. For example, the Qin Dynasty's southern campaigns against the Baiyue and northern expeditions against the Xiongnu, along with the construction of the Great Wall. The Han Dynasty's establishment of the Protectorate Generalship in the Western Regions to formally administer the region. The Tang Dynasty's creation of the Anxi and Beiting Protectorates. The Yuan Dynasty's incorporation of Xizang and Taiwan under direct central jurisdiction; and the Qing Dynasty's signing of the Treaty of Nerchinsk to

demarcate the eastern border between China and Russia and its implementation of the "reform of native chieftainships" to strengthen southwestern governance. Through these historical facts, students should understand that the formation of China's territorial boundaries was the result of collective efforts by successive regimes and ethnic groups, endowing it with historical legitimacy and continuity. On the other hand, we should attach more importance to modern Chinese historical content. It focuses on fighting foreign aggression and safeguarding territorial integrity. Typical examples include the fight against land concessions and war reparations after the Opium War. They also cover Zuo Zongtang's reclaiming of Xinjiang. There was armed opposition to Taiwan's secession after the First Sino-Japanese War. Besides, the whole nation waged the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity. This underscores how, despite suffering invasions by foreign powers in modern times, the Chinese people never wavered in their determination to defend territorial sovereignty - a concentrated manifestation of national unity and a pivotal period in the formation of national identity. In addition, regarding sections that are subject to historical disputes, the textbooks should base their explanations on historical facts and international norms to elucidate the legitimate grounds attributable to China. For instance, historical evidence demonstrates that Taiwan has always been part of China's territory (such as Sun Quan of the Three Kingdoms sending Wei Wen to Yizhou, and the Yuan Dynasty establishing the Penghu Inspection Office to administer Penghu and Ryukyu); the historical context of Xizang being placed under the jurisdiction of the central government; the historical sovereignty over the islands in the South China Sea. This approach avoids ambiguous expressions and helps students develop a clear and accurate understanding of territorial sovereignty.

Expanding heroic heritage across all ethnic groups and diversifying fields to reflect ethnic diversity

Objective evaluation of heroes is the fundamental principle in historical study, requiring consideration of specific historical contexts to comprehensively analyze the actions of individual or collective heroes. Russian junior high school history textbooks utilize heroic figures

from diverse ethnic groups and historical periods as key vehicles for national identity: On one hand, they construct heroic genealogies through positive deeds of these figures; on the other hand, they employ legal frameworks, censorship mechanisms, and value-oriented guidance to uphold the national heroic lineage and strengthen patriotic consciousness. In light of this, Chinese junior high school history textbooks should transcend singular narratives centered on a single ethnic group or hero type,

instead establishing a comprehensive heroic genealogy that spans various ethnicities, domains, and eras while deeply aligned with the core values of “national unity and ethnic solidarity”. This approach enables students to perceive the historical trajectory of “the unity of diversity within the Chinese nation” through multifaceted heroic portrayals, thereby enhancing their sense of national identity and patriotism. Firstly, textbooks should not only tell stories about Han historical figures. They need to add heroic stories of ethnic minorities in a systematic way. These stories fully embody ethnic solidarity and national cohesion. Several typical examples can be cited. Songtsen Gampo advanced cultural integration between Tibetans and Han people. Woba Xi guided the Torgut tribe back to the motherland in the Qing Dynasty. Gada Meilin safeguarded the rights of Mongolian herdsmen in modern times. Ma Benzhai led Hui armed forces to defend the homeland in the War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression. Secondly, particular emphasis should be placed on showcasing heroic collectives where members of different ethnic groups fought side-by-side and collaborated in national development, reinforcing the concept of a “community with a shared future for the Chinese nation”. Examples include the Central Plains military-civilian forces during the Qin and Han dynasties working alongside Baiyue tribes in Lingnan, multi-ethnic collaborative groups governing border regions during the Yuan Dynasty, the multi-ethnic combat units of the Northeast Anti-Japanese United Army, and the diverse ethnic builders supporting China’s border regions in the new era. Finally, we need to break the stereotype of heroes only being political or military personnel. We should also acknowledge people who boost national development and unity. They make contributions in economy, culture, technology and other fields. Here are

relevant examples. Ancient merchant groups once operated in the Western Regions. Some scholars sorted out classic works of ethnic minorities. The Mongolian mathematician Ming An in the Qing Dynasty is one representative. Many teachers and doctors of all ethnic groups have taken root and served border areas in modern China.

Rooted in local history, consolidating rural national identity and fostering responsibility

Unlike the “theme + interdisciplinary” approach adopted in many countries, Russian middle school history textbooks follow a principle that integrates chronological progression with thematic focus, combining local history, Russian national history, and world history to present the nation’s past from recent to ancient times. This progressive narrative not only cultivates students’ comprehensive historical literacy but also helps them establish a three-tiered linear cognitive framework of “local-national-global” through understanding historical development trajectories. Most Chinese history textbooks adopt a separate treatment of domestic and foreign histories; therefore, properly managing the relationship between local and national history remains a critical issue for current middle school curricula. First, break away from the fragmented approach of separating national and local histories by integrating representative historical sites, figures, and developmental threads into the broader national narrative. For example, incorporating Jiangnan’s town economies into the Ming-Qing mercantile economy framework, linking southwestern tusi reforms with central government border consolidation policies, and connecting coastal port openings with modernization efforts. Second, establish a “Local History Practice” section tailored to junior high students’ cognitive patterns, guiding them to visit historical sites, consult county records, and interview eyewitnesses to explore connections between their hometowns and national history. Third, account for diverse regional historical memories by adding content on the Northwest Silk Road, northeastern frontier development, southwestern ethnic integration, and coastal maritime trade, ensuring all students can identify their local contexts within the textbook.

Adopting multidisciplinary perspectives to enrich national identity and showcase cultural confidence

Integrating multidisciplinary knowledge to strengthen

national identity is the enduring goal of Russian junior high school history textbooks. In addition to vertical thematic units, these textbooks feature independent thematic units that demonstrate “multidisciplinary integration”, such as “The Great Patriotic War (1941-1945)”. Although Chinese junior high school history textbooks incorporate multidisciplinary elements to some extent in their activity lessons, they remain primarily chronological in structure.

Integrating multidisciplinary knowledge is not only a key measure to reinforce national identity but also a vital step in enhancing cultural confidence. First, the textbooks emphasize the integration of territorial geography and human geography knowledge to help students establish connections between “historical territories and current territories”. For example, maps illustrating territorial changes throughout history are included, combined with geographical concepts such as topography and climate, to analyze the geographical links between central China and its frontiers - such as the geographical conditions of the Silk Road or the topographical impacts of the ancient Tea-Horse Road in southwestern China. Comparisons between historical frontier administrative regions and modern China’s provincial divisions enable students to intuitively grasp the continuity of territorial sovereignty. In the “Modern Imperialist Invasions of China” unit, geographical knowledge is used to analyze the strategic intentions behind imperial powers’ occupation of ports and delineation of spheres of influence, deepening students’ understanding of the importance of defending territorial integrity. Second, the textbooks incorporate historical documents, poetry, and artistic elements - including calligraphy, painting, and music - from the Chinese language curriculum, transforming national identity into tangible cultural symbols. For example, in the “Prosperous Tang Era” unit, border poetry by Du Fu and Wang Wei is included, complemented by the Tang Dynasty painting “The Spring Outing of Lady Guo” and the calligraphic work “The Stele of Yan Qinli”, showcasing the cultural prosperity and national confidence of the Tang Dynasty. In the “Anti-Japanese War” unit, the creative background of “The Yellow River Cantata” and letters from the war period are introduced, leveraging the power of literature and art to inspire students’ patriotic sentiments. In the “Ethnic Integration”

unit, epics of ethnic minorities - such as excerpts from the Tibetan epic “The Legend of King Gesar” - and song-and-dance performances are incorporated, illustrating the intermingling and coexistence of diverse ethnic cultures. Thirdly, the textbooks should integrate legal and political institutional knowledge to elucidate the legal and institutional foundations of national identity. For instance, in the “Ming and Qing Border Governance” unit, the concept of “national sovereignty” from legal studies is applied to analyze the significance of Qing Dynasty institutions like the “Reform of the Native Chieftain System” and the “Golden Urn Drawing” in maintaining national unity. In the “1911 Revolution” unit, modern legal principles such as “democratic republicanism” and “national sovereignty belonging to the people” are linked to trace the institutional transition from imperial to republican governance. In the “Establishment of New China” unit, constitutional content is used to explain the historical origins and contemporary relevance of the system of regional ethnic autonomy, helping students understand the historical inevitability of institutional identity. Fourthly, the textbooks should incorporate ancient scientific achievements and mathematical knowledge to highlight the contributions of Chinese civilization to the world. Here are specific examples. We can use math knowledge to explain algorithms in The Nine Chapters on Mathematical Art when learning the Han Dynasty. In the study of the Song and Yuan dynasties, mathematical theories help interpret Qin Jiushao’s algorithms and Guo Shoujing’s astronomical calculations. Physics knowledge can illustrate the working principles and marine uses of the compass. It can also connect the compass with maritime trade events of the Song and Yuan periods. We may compare the spread paths of China’s Four Great Inventions and their influence on global modernization. Students will thereby realize the worldwide value of Chinese civilization. Their national identity can also be enhanced from a technological angle. How to use scientific knowledge to explain the inventions and creations of different dynasties in textbooks? Can you give some more examples of using different knowledge to explain historical events and figures in textbooks? In addition to the above examples, are there any other ways to make textbooks more diverse and inclusive?

Conclusion

This study has examined the compilation philosophy, strategies, and implications of Russia's unified junior high school history textbooks through the lens of national identity. The analysis reveals that, in response to its multifaceted ethnic and cultural landscape, Russia has consciously designed its history textbooks as a strategic tool for fostering national cohesion. The editorial philosophy prioritizes national harmony, cultural preservation, and the cultivation of historical literacy, while compilation strategies are built around four interconnected pillars: (1) Reinforcing a unified national historical narrative that emphasizes continuity and territorial integrity. (2) Featuring iconic heroic figures that reflect diverse ethnic contributions. (3) Constructing a collective historical memory that supports a "triple-identity" system (encompassing ethnic, civic, and national identities). (4) Embedding historical context as the central thread with interdisciplinary perspectives as reinforcing dimensions.

These strategies illustrate how a state can deliberately shape historical consciousness to consolidate national identity from an early age. The Russian experience offers valuable insights for other multi-ethnic countries, including China, in developing their own junior high school history textbooks. Specifically, it suggests the importance of balancing a unified national framework with inclusive representations of ethnic diversity, using historical narratives to foster both belonging and civic responsibility. Ultimately, the Russian case demonstrates that history textbooks are not merely repositories of past events but active instruments in the ongoing construction of national identity.

Funding

This work was not supported by any fundings.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to show sincere thanks to those techniques who have contributed to this research.

Conflicts of Interests

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

References

[1] Ariely, G. (2020) Measuring dimensions of national
<https://www.wonford.com/>

identity across countries: theoretical and methodological reflections. *National Identities*, 22(3), 265-282.

- [2] Eisenstadt, S. N. (2020) The challenge of multiple modernities. *New Horizons in Sociological Theory and Research*, 99-126.
- [3] Zhang, J., Wu, Y. (2022) Theoretical exploration of Chinese anthropology and ethnology: the road to construct the Chinese school. *International Journal of Anthropology and Ethnology*, 6(1), 15.
- [4] Shu Xingtong, Gui Qian, Fan Min. (2024) A comparative study on the constituent elements and content construction of "national identity" in high school chemistry textbooks. *Chemistry Teaching*, 9-13.
- [5] Wang, R. (2022) A study on cultivating national consciousness in foreign language education. *Forest Chemicals Review*, 118-126.
- [6] Nurzhayeva, A. M., Aldabek, N. A., Nadirova, G. E., Saparbayeva, N. B., Svoikin, K. B. (2021) Impact of textbook reform on the formation of Chinese national identity. *Integration of Education*, 25(1), 102.
- [7] Yarlykova, M., Xunda, Y. (2021) History textbooks as social contract: educational reform, the unified history textbooks and patriotism in contemporary Russia. *Education and Society*, 39(2), 5-28.
- [8] Awgichew, S., Ademe, E. (2022) History education for nation-building in Ethiopia, Germany, Rwanda, South Africa, Switzerland, and USA: a comparative analysis. *Cogent Education*, 9(1), 2113210.
- [9] Zajda, J. (2022) Key historical narratives in school textbooks in the Russian federation: 1992-2013. *Discourses of Globalisation, and the Politics of History School Textbooks*, 47-66.
- [10] Köroglu, Z. Ç., Elban, M. (2020) National and global identity perspectives of textbooks: towards a sense of global identity. *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 11(5), 55-65.
- [11] Bessudnov, A., Shcherbak, A. (2020) Ethnic discrimination in multi-ethnic societies: evidence from Russia. *European Sociological Review*, 36(1), 104-120.
- [12] Petrenko, O. (2024) The formation of national and cultural identity in school history education: a

- multicultural approach. *Mountain School of Ukrainian Carpaty*, (31), 17-21.
- [13] Lisovskaya, E., Karpov, V. (2020) Russian education thirty years later: back to the USSR? *European Education*, 52(3), 283-296.
- [14] Kratochvíl, P., Shakhanova, G. (2021) The patriotic turn and re-building Russia's historical memory: resisting the West, leading the post-Soviet east? *Problems of Post-Communism*, 68(5), 442-456.
- [15] Radchenko, O. (2025) The Second World War in the new Russian textbooks for secondary school: old and new myths about heroes. *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*, 17(1), 117-140.
- [16] Petrov, J. (2024) The great Russian revolution, 1917-1922, and problems of historical memory. *The Russian Revolution of 1917-Memory and Legacy*, 12-16.
- [17] Huang, Y., Bai, Y., Zhu, Z., Zhang, J., Zhang, J., Su, T., He, J. (2023) C-eval: a multi-level multi-discipline Chinese evaluation suite for foundation models. *Advances in Neural Information Processing Systems*, 36, 62991-63010.
- [18] Vaara, E., Tienari, J., Koveshnikov, A. (2021) From cultural differences to identity politics: a critical discursive approach to national identity in multinational corporations. *Journal of Management Studies*, 58(8), 2052-2081.
- [19] Sakki, I. (2025) Collective memory and history textbooks. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 65, 102073.
- [20] Filsinger, M., Wamsler, S., Erhardt, J., Freitag, M. (2021) National identity and populism: the relationship between conceptions of nationhood and populist attitudes. *Nations and Nationalism*, 27(3), 656-672.
- [21] Fardi, K. (2022) The concept of historical time in early childhood education: theoretical, methodological approaches and practice. *History Education Research Journal*, 19(1), 1-11.
- [22] Byrd, D. P. (2023) Nationalism and national identity in North America. *Nationalities Papers*, 51(6), 1205-1214.