Europe as Argument, Value, and Promise?
Western European Perspectives on the History of Ukraine in History Curricula and Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

This article takes a comparative perspective on the question of how the history of Ukraine is represented in recent history textbooks of Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the UK in a categorical relation to Europe. It analyzes which themes, concepts, and narratives of European history are formative for the representations of Ukraine and how the representations have changed since the 1990s. The article asks to what extent Europe is articulated as a historical-political argument, which values characterized as European are invoked, and to what extent Europe has ultimately become a genuine promise for Ukraine. It focuses on the following questions: What significance is ascribed to Ukraine's European past? With what specific values is such a European past of Ukraine associated, and to what extent does the reference to Europe function as a discursive resource? Which topics are associated with which value attributions, and which epochs are focused on? Finally, which spatial patterns and temporal narratives are used overall for the "European-ness" of Ukraine?

KEYWORDS: Europe, Ukraine, textbooks

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"The history textbooks of Western Europe seem most of the time unconscious of most of the lands which we call 'Europe' today, and which we ought to include in the Europe of the Middle Ages, when Byzantium was more 'European' than Brandenburg or even Britain."[1]

1   Introduction

Is Ukraine part of a shared European history in the history teaching of Western European countries? A glance at current history textbooks shows that authors now include examples from Ukrainian history in their discussions of state formation in the early Middle Ages, religious diversity in the early modern period, resistance to fascist and communist dictatorships, and a social movement for European unification. Since the 1990s, textbook authors and editors from Germany, France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom (UK) have begun to respond to intensifying research into traces of European connections in Ukrainian history. Since the beginning of the Russian aggression against Ukraine in 2014 and the full-scale war of aggression, this research has become even more intensive. Yet, it has also revealed blind spots in Western European historiography and history teaching. Historians of East Central Europe have argued that a Western European perspective has long dominated the discourse and significantly neglected or even ignored Ukraine as an independent European nation-state. This critique has, in particular, also been confirmed by recent textbook research regarding (mis) representations and significant omissions of Ukrainian history from the history textbooks of Western European countries.[2]

In comparison to the history of Russia and the Soviet Union, Ukraine's history has received significantly less attention in the school textbooks of Western European countries. In the recent past, suggestions from Ukrainian colleagues have led Western European historians and schoolbook authors to take a more critical look at the presentation of Ukrainian history in their countries' textbooks. The intensive debates that have taken place in international organizations and networks, such as the Observatory on History Teaching in Europe and the European Network of Remembrance and Solidarity, have also contributed to this shift.[3] However, the absence of Ukrainian history from Western Europe's history education and disinterest in Ukrainian history also reveals a particular under-

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1   Edouard Bruley, Edward P. Dance: A History of Europe, Leiden 1960, p. 20.
2   Maria Kovalčuk, Yuri Šapoval: Die Geschichte der Ukraine in deutschen Schulbüchern, in: Geschichte in Wissenschaft und Unterricht 4 (2024), 3/4, pp. 180–188; Georgiy Kasianov, Yevhen Luniak: 20th-Century History of the Ukraine in French School Textbooks, Kyiv 2022; Georgiy Kasianov, Oleksandr Udod: 20th Century History of Ukraine in German School Textbooks, Kyiv 2022; Georgiy Kasianov, Iryna Kostiuk: 20th Century History of Ukraine in the Textbooks of UK, Kyiv 2022.
3   https://www.coe.int/en/web/observatory-history-teaching; https://enrs.eu/ (2025-11-21).

standing of Europe. German historian Falk Pingel makes clear that "Textbooks and curricula reflected an expanded model of Western Europe. Consequently, countries not considered eligible for membership in any foreseeable future—such as Belorussia, Moldova, and Ukraine—did not form part of this model and were sometimes referred to as a Russia-oriented periphery of Europe."[4]

This rejection of Ukraine's historical belonging to Europe is articulated using historical attributes that are, therefore, implicitly framed as defining Europe and its civilization. This dominant essentialist position was predominantly shaped by Western perspectives on Europe, which only tentatively, if at all, had begun to recognize Eastern Europe as historically and intrinsically part of ancient and modern Europe. However, the discourse regarding Ukraine's European-ness changed substantially after 2014. Against the background of pro-European movements and revolutions in Ukraine, and finally, after Russia's military aggressions, invasions, and war against Ukraine, which ramped up in 2014 and 2022, Western European historians and the public have taken a wider interest in Ukraine. This shift eventually affected school history textbooks and curricula in Western European countries.

This article investigates this change in the representation of Ukrainian history from a European perspective in French, German, Italian, Spanish, and British history textbooks. Textbooks have been characterized as a specific form of discourse and as a genre.[5] Setting aside micro-level differences between the textbooks of different nation-states, the political-epistemological status of school textbooks in general can be defined by different levels of discourse. They include political semantics, on the one hand, and representations of academic or scientific knowledge, which comprise descriptions from the "outside" as well as descriptions of significant "others" on the other hand.[6] History textbooks, in particular, can be

4　FALK PINGEL: Europe—A Concept in Its Own Right or an Intermediate State between National Traditions and Global Interrelatedness? Representations of Europe in Curricula, Textbooks and Surveys, in: STEFAN BERGER, CANER TEKIN (eds.): History and Belonging: Representations of the Past in Contemporary European Politics, New York—Oxford 2018, pp. 64–78, in particular p. 66.

5　Cf.: ELEFTHERIOS KLERIDES: Imagining the Textbook: Textbooks as Discourse and Genre, in: Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society 2 (2010), 1, pp. 31–54, doi.org/10.3167/jemms.2010.020103.

6　Cf.: RUDOLF STICHWEH: Selbstbeschreibung der Weltgesellschaft, in: JÖRG BABEROW-SKI, HARTMUT KAELBLE et al. (eds.): Selbstbilder und Fremdbilder: Repräsentation sozialer Ordnungen im Wandel, Frankfurt am Main 2008, pp. 21–52; MARCUS OTTO: Bildung als Institution und die Bildungsmedien der Gesellschaft oder: Versuch einer gesellschaftstheoretischen Verankerung des (Bildungs-)Mediums Schulbuch, in: Journal of Educational Media, Memory and Society 15 (2023), 2, pp. 71–94.

characterized both as media and objects of historical culture with their corresponding politics of memory.[7]

After an introduction into the European perspective of national history textbooks, this article examines how Ukrainian history is treated in the context of the founding histories of European states in the Middle Ages and whether these founding histories are perpetuated as founding myths of contemporary Ukraine or the Russian Federation. We look into the formation of modern nation-states in Europe and the depiction of experiences of violence and resistance in the twentieth century. Further, we ask whether and how Ukraine's role in a future Europe is presented in Western European textbooks. Finally, in contrast to previous studies that have examined the representation of Ukrainian history exclusively in textbooks produced for national education systems,[8] we explore the potential for the representation of Ukrainian history in bi- and multilateral European textbooks. We have chosen the German-Polish history textbook *Europa: Unsere Geschichte*,[9] the *Illustrated History of Europe*,[10] and the digital textbook *Shared Histories: For a Europe without Dividing Lines*,[11] published by the Council of Europe (CoE).

2   Europe in National and International Textbooks

Developing a European perspective in national textbooks has been discussed since the early days of European integration. To analyze Europe as an argument, set of values, and promise in the representation of Ukraine in Western European textbooks, it is important to take into account the guidelines on how to approach the concept of Europe in the field of teaching history that have been carried out

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7   Cf.: FELICITAS MACGILCHRIST, MARCUS OTTO: Schulbücher für den Geschichtsunterricht, Version 1.0, in: Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, 18.02.2014, https://dx.doi.org/10.14765/zzf. dok.2.574.v1.

8   Cf.: KOVALČUK/ŠAPOVAL; KASIANOV/LUNIAK.; KASIANOV/UDOD; KASIANOV/KOSTIUK.

9   Cf.: ASMUT BRÜCKMANN, EVA MARIA KABISCH et al.: Europa: Unsere Geschichte, vol. 1–4, Wiesbaden 2016–2020; Polish version: ASMUT BRÜCKMANN, EVA MARIA KABISCH et al.: Europa: Nasza historia, vol. 1–4, Warszawa 2016–2020.

10   Cf.: FRÉDÉRIC DELOUCHE (ed.): Illustrated History of Europe: A Unique Guide to Europe's Common Heritage, London 1993. Original quotes from the first and second edition of the *Histoire de l'Europe* are taken from the English version which has been published in 1993 under the title "Illustrated History of Europe." The German textbook publisher Klett decided to publish a revised German version of the *Histoire de l'Europe* again in 2011 under the title "Das Europäische Geschichtsbuch: Von den Anfängen bis ins 21. Jahrhundert." The original quotations from this latest edition are taken from this German edition.

11   Cf.: BRULEY/DANCE; DELOUCHE, Illustrated History; Shared Histories for a Europe without Dividing Lines (2010–2014), Strasbourg 2014, http://shared-histories.coe.int (2025-11-25).

since the 1950s within the framework of the CoE and the European Union.[12] Since the first series of CoE-organized textbook discussions in Europe between 1953 and 1958, history educators proposed that "history should be presented from the European point of view," and Europe should complement the history of European nation-states and national movements.[13] The textbook discussions also defined topics that are "common to European history, influencing part or all of Europe"[14] and that should identify elements of a shared history of Europe, such as "representative institution and legal principle," "the rise of modern states," or the competition between democracies and authoritarian societies ("Democracy, Communism and Fascism").[15]

After the fall of the Iron Curtain in the 1990s, these conversations on a common European history were extended to include Central and Eastern European experts. In this new context, these discussions linked the established topics of a shared European history more strongly to values ascribed to Europe.[16] In the first seminar after the fall of the Iron Curtain, "History teaching in the new Europe," the participants, many of them from Central and Eastern European countries, concluded:

> "Europe was generally recognized as an area and as an idea. On the latter point, the discussion proved particularly rewarding and, although different opinions were expressed, a number of values were identified as a basis for defining Europe in relation to the other continents, including, if such a list is justified: a developing civilisation; different cultures suggesting an image of multilingualism; the land of the partial achievement of human rights; [and] a civilisation capable of preserving and transmitting knowledge."[17]

The participants pledged to teach "Europe" as a "controversy over an idea," focusing on the dimension of Europe as an argument and underlining the painful dimensions of Europe's past, calling it "also the theatre of conflict and oppression" and "a civilisation which is expanding, to the detriment of others."[18]

Ukraine joined these debates right after 1991 but was by and large absent from this presentation of European history in textbooks. This fuelled a growing academic interest in the topic. An increasing literature has studied the representations of Ukraine in European history textbooks. For instance, Italian researchers have recently emphasized the deficits in the presentation of Ukrainian history in Italian textbooks in lower secondary education in a self-critical way and imple-

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12   Cf.: BRULEY/DANCE; DELOUCHE, Illustrated History; Shared Histories, 2014.
13   Council of Europe: Course on History Teaching in Secondary Education, Elsinore, 21st August – 1st September 1965. Final Report, Strasbourg 1966, p. 13.
14   Ibid.
15   Ibid., pp. 13–14.
16   Cf.: MICHEL CHARRIÈRE: Report of the Symposium on History Teaching in the New Europe, Brugge Belgium, 9–13 December 1991, Strasbourg 1993.
17   Ibid., p. 18.
18   Ibid., p. 20.

mented their findings in new history textbooks.[19] In particular, Ukrainian scholars have studied the representation of Ukraine in other Western European history textbooks. In a research project initiated by the Deutsch-Ukrainische Historische Kommission, Maria Kovalchuk and Yuri Šapoval studied how Ukrainian history is represented in recent German history textbooks.[20] Iryna Kostiuk and Yevhen Luniak studied representations of the twentieth-century history of Ukraine in British, French, and German textbooks in a project directed by Georgiy Kasianov.[21] Ukrainian researchers also evaluated the outcomes of recent European history textbooks and developed ideas to implement the results of their research successfully in their national curricula and textbooks. Kasianov and Udod have referred to the work of bilateral historical commissions, such as the bilateral Deutsch-Ukrainische Historische Kommission, and expressed the wish that these commissions include the study of textbooks in their studies.[22] Ukrainian historian Polina Verbytska actively participated in the evaluation process of *Shared Histories for a Europe without Dividing Lines*, a digital textbook published online by the history education department of the CoE in 2014. She suggested bringing examples from Ukrainian national revolutions into a shared European history curriculum as well as developing themes like "cultural heritage," "cities and villages in Europe," "civil movements and development of civic society," or the "development of intellectual ideas in Europe" from a Ukrainian perspective.[23]

Researchers from Ukraine, in their contributions to the CoE's history education projects, finally made creative suggestions to present Ukrainian history from a European perspective, entering Western European textbooks. Often-suggested examples include state-building of European importance in the Middle Ages, the search for freedom from serfdom, religious diversity, the experience of resistance against mass crimes and oppression in the twentieth century, or the right of resistance based on the experience of terror and mass atrocities. These suggestions have inspired the selection of topics addressed in this article.

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19   Cf.: Viola Giannoli: L'allarme degli ucraini: "Nei libri di scuola italiani c'è la storia secondo Putin," in: La Repubblica 24 (2024), p. 3. In their textbook *Tieni il tempo*, Giovanna d'Agostino and Luciano Cafora emphasize Ukraine's aspirations for independence from Russia and the resistance to the Russian annexation of Crimea. Giovanna d'Agostino, Luciano Canfora: Tieni il tempo. Vol. 3: Storia contemporanea, Bergamo 2019, p. 436.

20   Cf.: Kovalčuk/Šapoval.

21   Cf.: Kasianov/Luniak; Kasianov/Udod; Kasianov/Kostiuk.

22   Cf.: Kasianov/Udod, p. 22.

23   Polina Verbytska: Feedback Analysis, in: Shared Histories for a Europe without Dividing Lines: Evaluation. Report, Strasbourg 2015, pp. 32–33.

3　Topical Representations and Omissions of Ukrainian History in Western European History Textbooks

3.1　Foundational Narratives and National Myths

The foundational narratives of modern nation-states play a significant role in history textbooks. For our research question on the representation of Ukrainian history in Western European textbooks, it is revealing how respective foundational narratives are represented in those books and if the authors reflect on how the foundational narrative is related to narratives and myths of nation-building. Concerning the history of Ukraine, the foundation of the Principality of Kyiv is mentioned in the textbooks of all Western European countries analyzed here, and the principality is represented on the textbooks' historical maps. The textbooks present the foundation of the Principality of Kyiv in the context of the Viking trade and raids that led to the foundation of states across Europe in the Early and High Middle Ages. Italian and Spanish history textbooks since 2017 have chosen the Kyivan Rus as an example for an entangled history of different cultures in Europe by illustrating the commercial and migratory relations between different European regions, including identifying the Vikings as founders of the Kyivan Rus. The entangled history of state foundations by the Vikings in Europe is mostly illustrated and visualized using maps, including maps of migratory and commercial flows, which, in particular, refer to trade between European regions. Within this framework, the plurality and entanglement of European civilizations are signified and subsequently, to some extent, evaluated as a European value in textbooks from all Western European countries.

However, a closer look at the textbooks confirms that the Principality of Kyiv has predominantly been presented as the cradle of Russia. Ukrainian researchers have highlighted this Russo-centric narrative in several studies in which Kyiv is thus made a founding part of Russian history.[24] For instance, the authors of an Italian history and geography textbook from 2017 describe the founding of the Principality of Kyiv as follows: "In 987, after converting to Orthodox Christianity, the Varangians founded the Principality of Kyiv, which can be considered the first political and territorial nucleus of the future Russian Empire."[25]

A 2016 French history textbook offers a methodic comparison between the Carolingian and Byzantine Empires using selected examples and a thematic approach at the expense of a presentation of state-building in the Kyivan Rus. In the section on the legacy of the Byzantine Empire, French students learn that Ukraine is, among other countries, including Russia, Moldova, Belarus, Poland,

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24　Cf.: Kasianov/Luniak, p. 9.
25　Cf.: Giovanni Borgognone, Dino Carapanetto: L'idea della storia 1: Dal Mille alla metà del Seicento, Milano 2017, p. 139: "Nel 987, dopo esseri convertiti al cristianismo ortodosso i Varieghi fondarono il Principato di Kiev che può essere considerato il primo nucleo politico e territoriale del futuro Impero russo."

Bulgaria, and Greece, part of the states in Europe characterized by a strong presence of the Orthodox Church.[26]

3.2   Political Independence and Redrawn Borders in 1918 and 1991

In contrast to the history of nation-state formations in Poland, independent Ukrainian nation-building is rarely mentioned in the curricula and history textbooks of the Western European nation-states examined. This significant omission essentially corresponds to the general framing of Ukraine as an "incomplete" nation-state within the imperial Russian and later (post-)Soviet geopolitical sphere. The textbooks from (Western) Germany, France, England, Spain, and Italy since the 2010s deal with Ukraine's national aspirations for independence and the constitution of an independent state within the framework of the peace negotiations of 1918, which followed the end of the Russian Empire in 1917 and the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Both processes are presented primarily from the perspective of the Russian Empire and the Soviet Union. Regarding the 1918 Treaties of Brest-Litovsk, only the treaty signed in March 1918 is associated with the symbolic place of Brest-Litovsk. The textbooks analyzed here do not mention the so-called "Bread Peace Treaty," signed on 9 February 1918 between the Central Powers, comprised of the German Empire, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, and the Ottoman Empire, and the newly founded Ukrainian People's Republic.

Textbooks describe the Brest-Litovsk treaty's consequences exclusively from a Russian perspective and list the Russian Empire's losses. For example, a British history textbook from 2016 says:

> "Russia lost Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Bessarabia, Georgia, Belarus and Ukraine […] The losses amounted to a sixth of the population of the Russian Empire (62 million people) and 2 million square kilometers of its land, including the area that produced almost a third of Russia's agricultural produce. Also lost were 26 per cent of Russia's railway lines and 74 per cent of its iron ore and coal supplies, and Russia had to pay 3 billion roubles in war reparations to Germany."[27]

However, British textbooks make clear that the violent conflicts between 1917 and 1922 should not be interpreted solely as a war between "Reds" and "Whites." Instead, the conflicts should also be seen as a struggle of national independence movements in Ukraine and Georgia against the central power in Moscow. German textbooks since 2018 also show that if 1917 is not narrowed down to the revolutionary event but is portrayed comparatively as a process of crisis and upheaval in the multi-ethnic Russian Empire, the event offers space to por-

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26   Cf.: Anne-Marie Hazard-Tourillon, Sébastien Cote (eds.): Histoire, géographie, enseignement moral et civique 5e, Paris 2016, p. 25.

27   Chris Rowe, Sally Waller: Oxford AQA History: Revolution and Dictatorship. Russia 1917–1953, Oxford 2016, p. 41.

tray national independence movements after the 1917 October Revolution. In contrast, French textbooks, in their in-depth portrayal of violence in the years following the October Revolution of 1917, emphasize the pogroms committed by Ukrainian nationalists against the region's Jewish population.[28]

In contrast to the binational textbook *Europa: Unsere Geschichte*, the authors of the French, German, Italian, and Spanish textbooks examined here do not take up the Ukrainian movement for national independence from 1918 to 1922. They also omit such movements when presenting the history of World War II and the immediate post-war period.[29] In most Western European history textbooks, the foundation of these nation-states after the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk is represented and illustrated using maps. Many textbooks even explicitly portray the short-lived independence of Ukraine in the context of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as a Russian loss or deprivation. For example, an Italian history textbook from 2020 says:

> "On 3 March 1918, Russia signed an armistice with Germany at Brest-Litovsk, thus exiting World War I. The peace treaty stipulated harsh conditions for the country, which had to recognize the independence of Finland and Ukraine and cede Poland, Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania to the German state amid bitter internal controversy. Russia was thus deprived of a third of its population and about half of its factories."[30]

This narrative treats Europe like a theater, not one comprised of nation-states but rather of former or failing empires, which continue to claim territories of newly independent nation-states.

Consequently, the representation of Ukrainians' efforts to form a nation-state after World War I remains genuinely very ephemeral. This narrative further strengthens the overall impression that Ukraine is generally represented as a marginal and relatively unsuccessful case of state-building in European history. However, history textbooks after 2014 generally reflect Ukraine's newly gained post-Soviet independence. These more recent textbooks introduce Ukraine's movements for national independence in 1991 from the perspective of the collapse of the Soviet Union. The chapters and paragraphs that include the constitution of an independent Ukrainian state are framed and titled from a Soviet

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28 Cf.: Guillaume Le Quintrec (ed.): Histoire 1re: Nouveau programme, Paris 2019, p. 311.

29 Cf.: Kasianov/Luniak, p. 19.

30 Anna Tancredi, Roberta Chitarrini, Valeria Porta, S. Tresin: L'Aventura continua 3: Il Novecento, Turono 2020, p. 147: "Il 3 marzo 1918 la Russia firmò l'armistizio con la Germania a Brest-Litovsk., uscendo così dalla Prima Guerra Mondiale. La pace prevedere dure condizioni per il Paese, che dovette cedere allo Stato tedesco la Polonia, l'Estonia, la Lettonia e la Lituania e riconoscere l'indipendenza della Finlandia e dell'Ucraina., tra aspre polemiche interne: infatti la Russia si privava così di un terzo della popolazione e di circa metà delle fabbriche."

Union perspective as "breakdown" ("Zusammenbruch"),[31] "The disintegration of the USSR" ("La desintegración de la URSS"),[32] "collapse of the USSR" ("l'effondrement […] de l'URSS") or "implosion of the USSR" ("l'implosion de l'URSS").[33] At the same time, however, Italian textbooks also describe Ukraine's increased efforts to gain independence from the Russian Federation in its foreign policy after 1991.[34] Overall, the dominant pattern represents the history of Ukrainian nation-building as immediately dependent upon the disintegration of (former) empires.

3.3   Experiences of Mass Violence: The Paradigmatic Example of the Holodomor

In recent decades, the question of how mass violence and crimes against humanity are represented within contemporary memory cultures has become a highly debated and contested issue. For the history of Ukraine, these discussions revolve around histories of the Holocaust, the Holodomor, and the mass expulsions or forced migrations following World War II. These debates are generally also increasingly reflected in recent Western European history textbooks.[35] While in these publications, Ukraine-specific aspects of the Holocaust, such as Babyn Iar, are rarely elaborated and mostly subsumed within overall representations of the Holocaust, the Holodomor is predominantly contextualized. It is contextualized within the Stalinist repression in general and, especially in British history textbooks, within Stalinist economic policies and their corresponding forced agricultural collectivizations in particular.[36] These framings reflect only one interpretation, which runs counter to the national Ukrainian interpretation of the Holodomor as a purposeful crime against the Ukrainian nation. However, in more recent British textbooks, the latter interpretation and corresponding explicit use of the notion of the Holodomor have also been included.[37]

Kasianov and Luniak have demonstrated that current textbooks illustrate the immeasurable human suffering experienced by the Ukrainian population during the Holodomor using eyewitness accounts and photographic sources.[38] Regarding the controversial explanations of the Holodomor by academia, British school textbooks, in particular, offer controversial explanations of the Holodomor, simi-

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31   MARKUS BENTE, ROBIN GLIFFE et al.: Kursbuch Geschichte: Qualifikationsphase, Berlin 2017, p. 397.

32   VITTORIA CALVANI, ANDREA GIADRINA: Dentro la Storia 3, Milano 1997, pp. 266–267.

33   GUILLAUME LE QUINTREC: Histoire Terminale, Paris 2020, p. 226.

34   Cf.: CALVANI/GIADRINA.

35   Cf.: KOVALČUK/ŠAPOVAL, pp. 180–188.

36   Cf., e. g.: Modern World History, London 2009, p. 184.

37   Cf.: MARTYN WHITTOK: History: Russia and the Soviet Union 1917–1941, London 2016, pp. 116–117.

38   Cf.: KASIANOV/LUNIAK, pp. 16–18.

lar to those presented by academia. For example, one British textbook published in 2015 reads:

> "There is a question as to whether the famine was in some way allowed to occur, if not deliberately created. Robert Conquest suggests that collectivization was in part a war on remaining nationalist elements, particularly in Ukraine. While there may be insufficient evidence for such a claim, it is true that relief to famine-struck areas was limited; possibly simply in order to 'contain' the lack of food and prevent the spread of discontent, but more certainly to ensure a continued export of grain abroad."[39]

Textbook histories of the Holodomor and the Holocaust also offer context on Europe between two totalitarian systems, thus showing the dark sides of Europe despite its partial achievement of human rights. Within this context, the history of Ukraine, in particular, forms part of the history of mass violence in Eastern Europe as analyzed and elaborated by Timothy Snyder.[40] Yet, only very recently have Western history textbooks also addressed the genocidal dimension of the Holodomor.[41] In a German history textbook from 2018, for example, the description of the Holodomor is framed with the heading "Destruction through Hunger." However, the explicit notion of genocide with regard to the Holodomor is referred to as a controversial interpretation within historiographical debates and the framework of contemporary memory culture.[42] Generally, the Holodomor has recently been elaborated in greater detail in Western European history textbooks.[43]

3.4   European Integration and Ukraine's Prospects for EU Membership

After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and Ukraine's subsequent independence, as well as in its ongoing struggle and resistance against Russian imperialism, Ukraine's ambitions and prospects for EU membership have become crucial for its self-understanding as an independent European nation-state. In Western European history textbooks, Ukraine's EU prospects and ambitions are presented in the chapters on European integration. The European integration in general and the EU question in particular are presented within the historical

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39   ROBERT FRANCIS, HANNAH DALTON: Revolution and Dictatorship: Russia, 1917–1953. A/AS Level History for AQA Student Book, Cambridge 2015, p. 87.

40   Cf.: TIMOTHY SNYDER: Europe between Hitler and Stalin, London 2010; TIMOTHY SNYDER: The Reconstruction of Nations: Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569–1999, New Haven 2003.

41   Cf.: KOVALČUK/ŠAPOVAL, pp. 180–188.

42   Cf.: HANS EBELING, WOLFGANG BIRKENFELD (eds.): Die Reise in die Vergangenheit, vol. 9/10, Braunschweig 2018, pp. 250–251.

43   Currently coordinated by the Leibniz Institute for Educational Media (GEI) in Braunschweig. Ukrainian historians contribute to the framework of an ongoing collaboration to the corresponding chapter in an upcoming German history textbook by Klett publishing.

narrative of Europe as a "developing civilization," "multi-lingualism," and "the land of the partial achievement of human rights."[44]

However, it is precisely these characteristics that are not attributed to Ukraine.

The authors of a German textbook on politics and the economy ask students to assess "whether Ukraine's accession to the EU would be compatible with the EU's values and objectives" in a section titled "Controversially Discussed: Should Ukraine Be Admitted to the EU?" To answer this question, the authors provide sources that refer more to Ukraine's long membership in the Soviet Union and the associated need to catch up in areas including the rule of law than to Ukraine's successes in this area.[45]

The question of Ukraine's EU membership is primarily represented within the framework of the devolving geopolitical conflict between the EU on the one hand and Russia on the other hand. This paradigmatically resonates with the programmatic controversiality of Ukraine's EU membership bid, which, furthermore, corresponds to broader controversies about European institutions or of Europe as an idea.

Ukraine is represented as an object when it comes to the representation of Russia's aggression and its full-scale war against Ukraine, launched in 2022. The formula "Ukraine between Russia and the EU" serves in a German history textbook from 2022 as a dominant background for the Russian war against Ukraine.[46] Furthermore, German, Italian, and Spanish textbooks still use phrasing such as the "Crimea crisis," the "Ukraine crisis," and the "Ukraine conflict." In these phrases, imperial Russian narratives and self-conceptions of Europe within the discursive framework of the semantics of crisis somehow strangely converge and overlap.

In a pair of German history textbooks from 2022 and 2023, the headings "The Ukraine Crisis after 2014"[47] and the "Crimea Crisis"[48] serve to describe Russian aggressions and its invasion of Ukraine at least partly as a reaction to Ukraine's pro-Europe orientation. In a Spanish history textbook from 2022, Russia's annexation of Crimea in 2014 and its invasion of Ukraine in 2022 are described in a paragraph about tensions due to the process of the EU's expansion towards Eastern Europe.[49] In an Italian history textbook, Russia's annexation of Crimea is not only described as the "Crimea Crisis," but the textbook further-

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44   CHARRIÈRE, p. 14.

45   MAX BAUER, HELMUT BECKER et al.: Kompendium Politik: Politik und Wirtschaft für die Oberstufe, Bamberg 2016, pp. 381–382.

46   WERA BARTH, ELMAR GEUS, ULRIKE LOHSE: Die Reise in die Vergangenheit, vol. 9, Braunschweig 2022, p. 188.

47   ANDREAS ZODEL: Kursbuch Geschichte, Berlin 2023, p. 28.

48   BARTH/GEUS/LOHSE, Reise in die Vergangenheit, p. 189; WERA BARTH, ELMAR GEUS, ULRIKE LOHSE: Durchblick Geschichte 4, Braunschweig 2023, p. 123.

49   ROBERTO BLANCO ANDRÈS, MARIANO GONZÁLEZ CLAVERO: Historia del Mundo Contemporáneo, Madrid 2022, p. 76.

more claims that the majority of Crimea's population is of ethnic Russian origin.[50] Another German civics textbook uses a very telling heading: "The Ukraine Conflict: Danger for European Security?"[51] The European perspectives or even promise of Ukraine are thus very much framed and, at the same time, restricted by the narrative of Ukraine as a challenging object of crisis and conflict between Russia and the EU.

4   Opportunities for Bi- and Multilateral Textbook Projects to Represent Ukrainian History in a European Perspective

Binational and multinational textbook projects offer opportunities for a European perspective on Ukrainian history. To find these opportunities, we return to the first series of textbook revisions organized by the CoE in the 1950s and 1960s. Participants in these discussions emphasized the importance of the Byzantine Empire as a cornerstone of a common European history. At the same time, they drew a clear dividing line between Central European states and the states and communities of the Soviet Union, which they considered outside Europe.[52]

Since the 1980s, history textbooks funded by the European Commission and those developed in the framework of the CoE's history education programs have contributed to a new understanding of a shared history or histories of Europe. The European textbook projects proposed a thematic and problem-oriented framework for viewing a shared European history from a transnational perspective. The authors of the *Illustrated History of Europe* define Europe as a land of migration and highlight its linguistic diversity, consisting of 43 languages. The textbooks reflect the search for characteristics of a shared European history in headers, such as "A Frontier between Latin and Greek?" and "Nationalism versus Cosmopolitanisms beyond Methodological Nationalism." These themes are inclusive of Ukrainian history.[53]

The authors of the *Illustrated History of Europe* select two examples from the history of Ukraine to show the nation's contributions to a European sense of belonging. These examples are the recognition and equal status of the Ukrainian language within the concert of European languages and the European dynastic politics of Iaroslav the Wise, the ruler of the Kyivan Rus. The independence of Ukraine is clearly emphasized in the textbook's treatment of linguistic diversity. However, the description of the state's foundation and the portrayal of

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50   Antonio Desideri, Giovanni Codovini: Storia e storiografia: Per la scuola del terzio millenio, 3: Dalla Belle époque a oggi, Messina—Firenze 2019, p. 916.
51   Gunnar Meyer, Kersten Ringe, Peter Stolz, Jan Weber: Die Europäische Union: Errungenschaften und Herausforderungen. Unterrichtswerk für die Oberstufe, Bamberg 2016, p. 136.
52   Bruley/Dance; Marchant, pp. 45–46.
53   Delouche, Illustrated History, pp. 8–30.

Iaroslav the Wise stick, to a certain extent, to the traditional Russian imperial perspective.[54] While the *Illustrated History of Europe* only expanded its authors to include Polish and Czech scholars for the first time in its second edition, published in 2001, the CoE succeeded in inviting historians from Croatia, Georgia, Romania, Russia, Serbia, and Ukraine to participate in its first digital textbook, published in 2014.[55] The Ukrainian historians Mikhalo Kirsenko and Tatiana Stojan contributed chapters on "The Industrial Revolution: Basic Features in Space and Time Perspective" and the "History of Ukrainian Education and Pedagogy."[56] The history of Ukraine is represented in this textbook as part of a shared history of Europe's migration flux, exchange of educational knowledge, and industrial development.

The binational German-Polish history book *Europa: Unsere Geschichte / Europa: Nasza historia* offers the most fruitful example for representing Ukrainian history from a European perspective. The authors not only deal with topics of Ukrainian history from a long historical perspective but also address the themes of religious diversity, cooperation, and conflict between different ethnic and religious communities in one state. Likewise, they assign an equal place to the foundation of empires in the Slavic-populated territories in their presentation of the constitution of "political communities in the Middle Ages." The political and cultural significance of the Kyivan Empire, which moves from being depicted on the periphery in Western European textbooks to the center of medieval Europe, is made clear in text and maps. The textbook also describes the founding history of Kyivan Rus as being of equal importance with that of the Carolingian Empire.[57]

The authors take a comparative look at the political and legal organization of statehood in Western and Central Europe in the early modern period and also highlight the diversity of population groups and religious communities in the Kingdom of Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania from a comparative perspective. Using the example of the Chmielnicki Uprising, the authors also provide teachers and students with information about the Ukrainian Cossacks' self-governance and describe juridical and social inequalities and discrimination

54   Ibid., p. 27: "At the time of the Wikings, Norwegians invaded Scotland, and Ireland, the Swedes with more openings towards the east, crossed the Baltic and drove into western Russia." Ibid., p. 11: "Russia's first law giver […]."

55   Shared Histories, 2014.

56   Mikhalo Kirsenko: The Industrial Revolution: Basic Features in Space and Time Perspective, in: Shared Histories, 2015, pp. 196–199; Tatiana Stojan: History of Ukrainian Education and Pedagogy, ibid., pp. 398–405.

57   Cf.: Asmut Brückmann, Eva Maria Kabisch et al.: Europa: Unsere Geschichte. Vol. 1: Von der Ur- und Frühgeschichte bis zum Mittelalter, Wiesbaden 2016, p. 146.

against ethnic groups in the Kingdom of Poland-Lithuania, which led to social unrest.[58]

Regarding Ukraine's European affiliation, the analyzed bilateral and multilateral textbooks offer an inclusive view of the future of Europe and the European Union (EU)—one that includes Ukraine. The authors of the *Illustrated History of Europe* formulate the promise of Ukraine's belonging to Europe with a projected map pointing to the future entitled "The Past in the Present Day: The End of a Divided Europe?" In the 2011 German edition of the *Illustrated History of Europe*, the authors emphasize the openness for new states to join the EU by quoting Article 49 of the "Treaty on European Union." Its first sentence states, "Any European State which respects the values referred to in Article 2 and is committed to promoting them may apply for membership of the Union." The textbook continues, "Morocco's application for membership was rejected already in 1986 on the grounds that the country definitely did not be part of the European continent. But what about Turkey, Ukraine, Belarus, and Moldova? Do they belong to Europe, or should they merely be granted a 'privileged partnership'?"[59] At the end of their presentation, the authors of *Europa: Unsere Geschichte / Europa: Nasza historia* ask whether Europe is more than our history but also our future. They also link their question to a map that shows a European future that includes Ukraine.[60]

5   Conclusion

The findings of our analysis on how Ukrainian history is represented in the framework of European history in Western European history textbooks designed for national curricula can be summarized in three major and entangled arguments. First, Ukraine is foremost represented as an object rather than as a subject of history. Second, Ukrainian history is predominantly framed within Russian and (post-)Soviet histories, while its genuinely European dimension is only very recently and tentatively addressed. Third, Ukraine is most prominently presented as a victimized people in the context of experiences of mass violence.

Overall, Western European history textbooks only tentatively include and inscribe Ukrainian history in their narratives of European history. When they do so, Ukraine is most often presented in maps and statistics that provide a more detailed and colorful picture of Ukrainian history than the authors' texts. The history of post-1991 independent Ukraine, on the other hand, has received

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58 Cf.: Asmut Brückmann, Krzystof Gutowski et al.: Europa: Unsere Geschichte. Vol. 2: Neuzeit bis 1815, Wiesbaden 2017, pp. 94–95.

59 Frédéric Delouche: Das Europäische Geschichtsbuch: Von den Anfängen bis ins 21. Jahrhundert, Stuttgart 2011, p. 450.

60 Asmut Brückmann, Krzystof Gutowski et al.: Europa: Unsere Geschichte. Vol. 4: 20. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart, Stuttgart 2020, p. 241.

greater attention in history textbooks since the full-scale war of aggression of the Russian Federation, not least thanks to the closer links between history and civics education in Germany, France, and Spain. These findings confirm earlier findings from Kovalchuk's study of German textbooks and Kasianov and Kostiuk's study of British textbooks.

The findings apply equally to the textbooks of those countries that emphasize their own national histories in curricula and develop European or global perspectives from their own or in close relation to their national histories, such as France, Italy, and Spain. The findings also apply to those textbooks that look back at a longer tradition of problem-oriented and student-centered learning, such as those in Great Britain and Germany.

British textbooks foster multiperspectivity and critical thinking, but their comparative approaches to the teaching of sixteenth- to twentieth-century European and world history mainly focus on the history of the Great Powers, including Russia and the Soviet Union. The authors of this article agree with Ukrainian researchers that problem-centered world history approaches, in particular, should select their national examples more carefully to avoid exclusive essentialist attributions of, for example, aggression and experiences of violence.[61]

This is also true with regard to Ukraine's current wish for EU membership and in the context of its defense against the Russian Federation's full-scale war of aggression against Ukraine. If Europe becomes an argument regarding Ukraine and its history, it mainly refers to the inclusion of Ukraine into a predetermined and predominantly Western conceptual framework of Europe. In this sense, Europe also serves as a discursive resource, albeit in a self-referential way, by highlighting Western European solidarity and support for Ukraine in the name of European values.

The analyzed textbooks written exclusively for national curricula have quickly reflected the changing discursive landscape due to Russia's war against Ukraine and, since 2022, to Europe's commitment to and solidarity with Ukraine. However, these textbooks still do not present Ukrainians as an active part of the European movement. Conversely, in Western European history textbooks, the current state of Ukraine serves the purpose of European self-reassurance within topical self-descriptions of Europe in terms of definitions, values, narratives, and history, including diagnoses of crisis.

In contrast, the bilateral and multilateral textbooks examined in this article chose a European perspective that attributes to Ukrainians an active role in the shaping of European history. Unlike the presentations of Ukraine in national textbooks, the *Illustrated History of Europe* and *Europa: Unsere Geschichte / Europa: Nasza historia* end their narratives with an invitation to imagine an

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61 KASIANOV/LUNIAK, p. 25: "Ukraine is very often associated solely with tragic events well known in the West: Holodomor, Holocaust, Chornobyl, and lately the war in the Donbas."

inclusive perspective of Europe's future and the EU. These endings can be read as invitations to Ukrainians to join this future development. The advantage of the European projects is that they address themes of a shared European history from their early beginning in a transnational perspective, including Ukraine in a Europe of migration and cultural diversity.

Changes in how the history of Ukraine from a European perspective is presented in national Western European textbooks compared to the findings of previous studies result from a more intensive exchange between scholars from Western European countries and Ukrainian historians and history educators. These shifts illustrate the potential effects of institutionalized bilateral and international textbooks for dealing with the different sides of history on equal footing from a European perspective. These perspectives could provide inspiration for future changes in the presentation of Ukrainian history in national history textbooks in Western Europe.

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