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Byung-soo OH
Northeast Asian History Foundation

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Introduction

Since Xi Jinping came to power, the teaching of history in middle and high school in the People's Republic of China (PRC) has been undergoing major changes. While it took almost 15 years to reform the educational curriculum and to revise textbooks, the breadth of changes at the institutional level goes well beyond the norm. At the heart of the matter lies the fact that through "Curriculum Reform" the Chinese Party-State (黨國, hereafter Party-State) has widened its intervention in controlling the teaching of history in school. Introducing a state-authorized textbook system, the Party-State has enforced a single curriculum nationwide to prescribe the use of textbooks dictated by the Party-State and to enhance political and ideological education. At the very least, this is anathema to de-politicization, openness, and autonomy in public education.

The teaching of history in school has conventionally performed the function of political education by contributing to the formation of national identity and social integration in modern times.¹ With China being an ide-

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logical state, this tendency has become even more prominent.² In such a political culture, regimes have utilized history and history education as a tool for building the modern Chinese state, establishing its legitimacy, and mobilizing its citizens ideologically.³ Even in the Era of Reform and Opening-up, emerging as a result of criticism of the Cultural Revolution, the teaching of history in public school was always subservient to ideological education in terms of historical materialism and patriotism endorsed by the CCP.

Nevertheless, since the Era of Reform and Opening-up, there have been perceptible differences in the way history education has developed. What matters here is how to treat an autonomous path in history education despite the Party-State's slogans of 'seeking truth from the facts,' 'emancipating the mind,' and rejecting Soviet-style historical studies.⁴ A prime example is the transition to an American-style curriculum standards system in place of the old Soviet-style history education. Although operating with the sport of the Party-State that advocated the modernization of socialism, more fundamentally, this new project came in step with the reconstruction of a new national identity and ideology on the one hand and the changes in

¹ It is widely acknowledged that in modern China, school history education heightens nationalism through the spreading of historical knowledge and contributes to the formation of national identity and social integration. See Peter Zarrow, *Educating China: Knowledge, Society and Textbooks in a Modernizing World, 1902-1937* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Yu Weimin and Liu Chang, eds., *Wenhua he jiaoyu shiye zhong de guomin yishi* (Shanghai: Shanghai Cishu Chubanshe, 2012); Liu Chao, *Lishi shuxie yu rentong jiangou: qingmo minguo shiqi lishi jiaokeshu yanjiu* (Shehui kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2016).

² Because of this, Chinese scholars also see schools and history textbooks as an apparatus for the indoctrination of state ideology. Fang Chengzhi, *Jiannan de guizheng: Xin zhongguo shiqi nian (1949-1966) zhong xiaoxue jiaokeshu yanjiu* (Changsha: Hunan Normal University Press, 2013), 6-7.

³ Joseph Robert Culp, *Articulating Citizenship: Civic Education and Student Politics in Southeastern China, 1912-1940* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Asia Center, 2007); Timothy Cheek, *The Intellectual in Modern Chinese History* (Cambridge, Eng.: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁴ In particular, see Bu Ping, "Gaige kaifang yu zhongguo jindai shi yanjiu," *Jindaishi yanjiu* 5 (2009); and Jiang Yihua, "Cong geming dao ren de jiefang: Zhongguo shixue liushi nian," in *Xinshi liguo* (Shanghai: Renmin Chubanshe, 2012).

international relations such as the Cold War and the post Cold War geopolitics on the other hand. The development of history education in China has gone hand-in-hand with the ideological policy of the Party-State in response to fluctuations in global politics.

The recent change to the teaching of history in school can also be regarded as a way China (more specifically the CCP) reinterprets its relationship with the world in the G2 era and reformulates a new national identity necessary for national integration and ideological mobilization. Complicit in this process are factors such as internal feuds, arising from the advance of globalization and the intensification of the Reform and Opening-up, and fluctuations in the international relations, especially the relationship between China and the United States. In other words, just as history education in the Era of Reform and Opening-up changed along with the constructive establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the U.S. against Russia, so too have recent conflicts with the U.S. driven new changes in the teaching of history in Chinese schools.

Then, how does the Party-State read this situation, how does this interpretation make impacts on the teaching of history in public school, and how will the change be associated with the new national identity? To answer these questions, it is necessary to analyze *History: An Outline of Chinese and Foreign History* (歷史: 中外歷史綱要 hereafter *Outline*), the compulsory textbook for teaching history in senior secondary school (high school). The *Outline* is a new textbook introduced in accordance with the new curriculum and mirrors the intentions and the ideology of the Party-State in the sense of what the Party-State deems the essential content and themes of both national history and world history.

Since the Northeast Asia Project (2002-2007), academic analysis of Chinese history textbooks has tended to operate on the premise that the presentation of historical events should reflect the mainstream ideology of the Party-State.⁵ Moreover, textbook debates in academia have gone back

⁵ Oh Byeongsu, "Gungnae hakgye ui Jungguk yeoksa gyogwaseo yeongu gyeonghyang gwa gwaje," *DongbukA yeoksa nonchong* 53 (2016).

to the issue of ideological commitment to offer a cause for a state-authorized textbook system and reaffirm the goals of the new history textbook for the formation of ‘citizens with the core values of socialism,’ i.e. a strengthening of political education.⁶ Still, I contend, what should not go unnoticed is how to contextualize the over-politicization of history education under the Party-State on top of the aforementioned research on how history education was programed and taught for the (re-)formation of the identity of the PRC.

With these in mind, this article explores the background of the new curriculum reform and the policies on history education under the Xi Jinping regime. Discussing the importance of the prior curriculum reform in juxtaposition with an analysis of the background to and the ideology of the *Outline*, I will illustrate how the *Outline* presents a new direction of national historiography and a new vision for national identity under the Xi regime. This approach to a convergence of history, identity, and power enables us to rethink how writing and teaching history in East Asia will reflect international and regional power relations.

New Standard Curriculum and *History: An Outline of Chinese and Foreign History*

1. The Logic of New Curriculum Reform

The *Outline* is the prescribed text for the senior secondary (high school) history course created under the new public curriculum (*General Senior*

⁶ Kim Yuri, “Gukjeongje ro hoegwihan Jungguk ui junghakgyo yeoksa gyogwaseo bunseok,” *Yeoksa gyoyuk* 148 (2018); Kim Jihun, “Jungguk Shanghai yeoksa gyogwaseo nonjaeng gwa jisikin: Shanghai jiyek godeunghakgyo yeoksa gyogwaseo ui byeonhwa,” *Jungguk geunhyeondaesa yeongu* 81 (2019); Kim Jihun, “Gukga uiji wa yeoksa gyogwaseo ui jeongchi hwa: 2018 nyeon Jungguk junghakgyo yeoksa gyogwaseo ui hyeondaesa seosul,” *Yeoksa gyoyuk yeongu* 33 (2019); Yun Sebyeong, “Yeoksa gyogwaseo bipan eul dulleossan Jungguk sahoe ui galdeung: 2006 nyeon Bingjeom sageon eul jungsim euro,” *Jungguk geunhyeondaesa yeongu* 83 (2019); Yun Sebyeong, “Jungguk ui yeoksa gyogwaseo nonjaeng gwa gukjeonghwa,” *Yeoksa gyoyuk yeongu* 33 (2019).

Secondary History Curriculum Standards, 2017) from the Chinese Ministry of Education in January 2018. It consists of two volumes. The first volume on Chinese history was published in August 2019 and the second volume on foreign history came out in February 2020. The curriculum is organized around the 24 topics at the senior secondary level with a view to facilitating in-depth learning such as the comparison of major themes in Chinese and world history.⁷ Nonetheless, the political significance of the *Outline* is overstated by the editor-in-chief as below:

[I]t incorporates the will of the state and the core values of socialism, contains the five core qualities—historical materialism, the concept of time and space, historical source positivism, history interpretation, and affection for family and the state—, and reflects directly the historical ideology of Xi Jinping such as ‘the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation’ and ‘the realization of China Dream.’⁸

The new curriculum is divided into a compulsory subject (History: *An Outline of Chinese and Foreign History* / 4 hours); two selected compulsory subjects (State Institution & Social Governance, Economy & Social Life, or Cultural Exchange a& Transmission / each 2 hours), and elective subjects (for example, Introduction to Historical Studies or Historical Material Research). The goals of the compulsory subject are 1) to have ‘a comprehensive understanding of the content learnt in the junior secondary (middle school) curriculum, 2) to understand the major facts in the context of Chinese and world history as foundational knowledge in preparation for advanced learning at the next stage (selective compulsory subjects), and 3) to develop basic historical consciousness.’⁹

Meanwhile, in order to understand the background to the *Outline*, it

7 Ministry of Education of China, *Putong gaozhong lishi kecheng biao zhun*, 9, 12.

8 Zhang Haipeng, “Tong bian gaozhong lishi jiao ke shu de xueke tixi he xueshu tixi,” *Kecheng jiao cai jiao fa* 39, no. 9 (2019).

9 Ministry of Education of China, *Putong gaozhong lishi kecheng biao zhun* (2017 Nianban) (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 2018).

is necessary to look at the previous curriculum dating to 2003. The 2003 Curriculum was groundbreaking in the sense of integrating Chinese history with world history, pursuing a topic-oriented organization, and promoting research and learning on the student's initiative. Such changes aimed at the cultivation of global citizenship able to keep pace with the modernization of socialism and the global community. Accordingly, the curriculum emphasized the humanistic qualities of historical consciousness, historical way of thinking, and data-processing capabilities along with historical materialism.¹⁰

In this fashion, advocating both the acquisition of knowledge and its interpretation rather than pure knowledge-centered education, the 2003 Curriculum sought to secure the relative autonomy of history education.¹¹ Giving priority to the development of a student's ability to distinguish between historical fact and historical interpretation, the curriculum tried to emphasize critical thinking skills, including interpretation, analysis, evaluation, inference, explanation and comparison, for the betterment of generalization, selection, hypothesis, distinction and logic,¹² and to transform the format of history education from the existing knowledge-centered political education to a more humanistic civic education. The school education is meant to enable students to ask questions, to interpret reality, to understand the values inherent in human culture, and to engage themselves in meaningful social practices. Then, even teachers prepare themselves to be not only experts in teaching, learning and assessment, but also masterminds in planning all these educational activities.¹³

¹⁰ Ministry of Education of China, *Putong gaozhong lishi kecheng biao zhun* (Beijing: People's Education Press, 2003); Kim Yuri, "Yeoksa gyohak daegang eseo yeoksa gwajeong pyojun euro."

¹¹ These history curriculum standards gave the highest priority to autonomous learning and teaching activities. This was different from the "Teaching and Learning Outline." Ministry of Education of China, *Putong gaozhong lishi kecheng biao zhun*, 2; Kim Yuri, "Yeoksa gyohak daegang eseo."

¹² Zhao Yafu, "Pipan xing siwei jue ding lishi jiao xue de zhiliang," *Kecheng-jiao cai-jiao fa* 33, no. 2 (2013); Song Sangheon, "Yeoksa insik eseo mirae jeonmang ui yeoksa gyoyukjeok uimi," *Yeoksa gyoyuk* 115 (2010); Song Sangheon, "Yeoksahak gwa yeoksa gyoyuk ui geori," *Yeoksa gyoyuk* 138 (2016).

¹³ Zhao Yafu and Wang Jiping, "Meiguo lishi jiao xue de yan jiu shiye," *Lishi jiao xue wenti* 4

This orientation displayed a new attempt to redefine the significance of history education in China and to create a new identity by way of using Western educational theories rather than the traditional Soviet-style history education that had bearing on the development of history education of China.¹⁴ The core of Soviet-style history education, as is well known, was “communist education” and its goal was the mobilization of citizens, devoted to the construction of socialism, into ideological fighters. Its aim was the production of students dedicated to the communist revolution through learning the major events, phenomena, and traits of national history in the Marxist interpretative framework.¹⁵ This Soviet-style was nothing more than political and ideological education. The role of teachers was merely

 (2011); Xu Cicheng and Zhao Yafu, “Lishi jiao ke shu yu lishi guan jiaoyu: Yijin ershi nianlai lishi jiao ke shu gaige wei li,” *Neimenggu shifan daxue xuebao* 7 (2019).

¹⁴ From the 1990s, with the encouragement of the Party-State, interests in foreign history increased. Accordingly, Ye Xiaobing (葉小兵), Yu Weimin (余偉民), Zhao Yafu and others investigated overseas theories and used these to construct a theory of history education for China and took the lead in curriculum reform. In particular, Zhao Yafu tenaciously advocated the independence of history teaching from historical studies and expanded established views on teaching and learning. See, Yu Weimin, *Lishi jiaoyu zhanwang* (Shanghai: East China Normal University Press, 2002); Zhao Yafu, *Guo wai lishi jiaoyu toushi* (Beijing: Gaodeng Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2003); Nie Youli, *Lishi kecheng yu jiao xue lun* (Hangzhou: Zhejiang Jiaoyu Chubanshe, 2003).

¹⁵ Soviet-style history education began to influence China in the 1930s. In 1934, Stalin and Zhdanov emphasized the textbooks *History of the Soviet Union* and the *Modern History* should focus on the history of class struggle and party history. This then replaced Mikhail Pokrovsky’s (1868-1932) theory-oriented historical science. Stalin considered history textbooks to be key to the ideological struggle. Stress the use of such terms as “feudal despotism” and “capitalism and bourgeois democracy” instead of the “ancient regime” or “new regime,” the method of teaching and learning was to make students memorize major historical phenomena, figures, and dates, and then with the presentation of necessary historical materials, to enable them to analyze historical events from a Marxist perspective. After 1949, China actively adopted Soviet historical science and history education, including key concepts such as nation, class, the forms of society, periodization, productive forces, and relations of production, and even the school history curriculum, textbook writing, methods of teaching and learning, and the school operation methods. As a result of this influence, textbooks focused on the history of class struggle and the history of the masses. See Wang Duoquan, “Shi dalin yu zhongguo lishi jiao xue,” *Shanghai shifan daxue xuebao* 1 (1980); and Feng Yiyi, “Jieji douzheng shi fanshi.” In addition, for the Marxist type of human beings that was imported from the Soviet Union, see Cheng Yinghong, *Creating the “New Man”: From Enlightenment Ideals to Socialist Realities* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2008).

faithfully to propagate and indoctrinate in students the state ideology set by the Party-State. The 2003 Curriculum was the vigorous endeavor to break from this over-politicization of history education.

The curriculum gave rise to considerable controversy. Most of all, the overemphasis on topic learning met with criticism that it might impinge on the proper function of history education, that is, the formation of historical consciousness integral to the background of socialist history education. The reason is that the topic-centered curriculum could challenge and fragment ‘the systematic character of historical knowledge’ without a deep sense of edifying patriotism. Concerns over the student-centered style of teaching and learning widened the controversy even further.¹⁶ The indiscriminate integration of Chinese history with world history was also ascribed to an immature failure in curriculum development and design.¹⁷ In short, the opponents maintained that the 2003 Curriculum diverged so markedly from the educational reality of China.

This controversy fundamentally involved the issue of what the objectives of history education on top of how perspectives and interpretations can be useful in history class. Critics argued that by constructing the history textbook based not on historical materialism but on the historical perspectives of civilization and modernization, the revolution as the source of the legitimacy and identity of socialist China was marginalized or minimized.¹⁸ Accordingly, they claimed that developing alternative curricula

¹⁶ Wang Hongzhi, “Zhongshi lishi ke kai hao lishi ke,” *Lishi jiao xue* 470, no. 1 (2003). Wang Hongzhi (王宏志, 1937-), who was a senior researcher involved in textbook writing in the People’s Education Press for many years, argued that history education was a “vehicle for the heightening of the qualities of the nation,” not for individual development. He insisted that while the role of teachers was essential to achieve this, the student-initiated learning intended by the curriculum standards was likely not only to neglect historical knowledge but also to atrophy the teacher’s initiative.

¹⁷ Zhao Yafu, “Gaozhong lishi kecheng sheji you dui gaijin,” *Lishi jiao xue* 5 (2006).

¹⁸ This alluded to the fact that the Junior Secondary Curriculum (2001) was organized with a focus on the birth, formation, and development of Chinese civilization, while the Senior Secondary Curriculum (2003), organized political, material, and spiritual civilization as 1, 2, 3 respectively. This organization was predicated on breaking away from Soviet-style history education. Its focus was on enabling students to understand Chinese history from a world historical perspective, while

and new textbooks should benefit the lift of ideological integrity and humanistic nature, strengthen historical materialism, inseparable from the cause of socialist education, and reaffirm the importance of political education geared towards the glorious history of Chinese revolution under the CCP.¹⁹ The Party-State actively launched the Marxism Project (馬工程, Marxism Theory Research and Construction Project) as an alternative to the liberal 2003 Curriculum and later designated Zhang Haipeng (張海鵬), who was in charge of teaching material for modern Chinese history in the Marxism Project, as the editor-in-chief of the *Outline* under the Xi's regime²⁰ It is thus necessary to explore the new ideological perspective of history education that went in concert with Xi Jinping's vision for new national identity of China in the 21st century.

2. History Policy in the Xi Jinping Era and the Development of the *Outline*

Since his early days in power, Xi Jinping has dealt with history policy as an ideological problem. He has adopted the slogans of "Road to the Rejuvenation of the Chinese Nation", "Realization of China Dream," and cultural confidence while making a revision of how historical events are perceived. In January 2013, he announced that "the two thirty years cannot

also taking into account the universality of modern society as well as local historical traditions. The rationale for this was that students could only be expected to make contributions to the solution of global problems in the future if they understood China's national history as part of the history of human civilization. The core of the controversy was the philosophical difference over whether history education should prioritize the development of individuals or the identity of the nation and the state. For a detailed discussion, see Yu Weimin, "Lishi guannian yu gongmin jiao yu: 2007 Nyeonpan Shanghai shi gaozhong lishi jiao ke shu de shijie lishi guan," in *Wenhua he jiaoyu shiye*, eds. Yu Weimin and Liu Chang; Kim Jihun, "Jungguk Sanghai yeoksa gyogwaseo."

¹⁹ Zhao Yafu, "Jin shi nianlai zhongguo dalu lishi kecheng gaige" (paper presented at the Han-Jung yeoksa gyoyuk jeonmunga semina, October 2015).

²⁰ Zhang Haipeng, "*Zhongguo jindai shi jiao cai* ("Ma gongcheng" xilie) bianzhu de youguan wenti yu sikao," *Shixue yuekan* 6 (2014). Succeeding Fan Wenlan 范文瀾, Hu Sheng 胡繩, and Liu Danian 劉大年, Zhang took it upon himself to be the spokesperson of the mainstream ideology and spearheaded the publication of the *Zhongguo jin xiandai shi gangyao* [*Outline of modern Chinese history*].

deny each other.” This meant that “the two historical periods before and after the Reform and Opening-up should not be taken as oppositional, nor should the history of the previous period be denied.”²¹ In effect, the aim was to revise or discard the Deng Xiaoping’s discourse on the two stages of socialism²² that claims a new stage of Chinese socialism with the advent of the Reform and Opening-up.

Xi’s second important action was the issuance of ‘Notice on the Ideological Sphere’ whose main focus was on “the Ban on the Discussion of Seven Matters” (七不講) or seven anti-establishment ideologies including historical nihilism. The Notice claimed that the problem with history education stemmed from Western-oriented anti-establishment ideologies such as Western constitutional democracy, human rights, civil society, neo-liberalism (economic freedom), and press freedom, all of which were related to historical nihilism.

The goal of historical nihilism in the guise of ‘reassessing history’ is to distort the CCP history and the history of New China.... Rejecting the revolution, claiming that the revolution led by the Chinese Communist Party results only in denying the historical inevitability in China’s vision for a socialist road.... Some people try to cleave apart the period that preceded the Reform and Opening-up from the period that followed, or even to set these two periods in opposition to one another. By rejecting the CCP history and the history of New China, historical nihilism seeks to fundamentally undermine the CCP’s historical purpose, which is tantamount to denying the legitimacy of the CCP’s long-term political dominance.

The term ‘historical nihilism,’ coined after the Tiananmen Incident in 1989, signifies the liberal trend of the intellectual community that denied Mao Zedong, the CCP history, and the state. It was also used to denote an

²¹ “Guanyu dangqian yishi xingtai lingyu qingkuang de tongbao” [Communiqué on the Current State of the Ideological Sphere], *Zhong ban fa* 9 hao (2013).

²² Hu Jintao, “Zai jinian dang de shiyi jie san hong quanhui zhaokai 30 zhounian dahui shang jianghua,” *Renmin ribao*, December 9, 2008.

anti-establishment ideology that sought to turn China into a capitalist state. The intent of historical nihilism, made official in the Notice, is to further ‘historical consciousness disavowing the legitimacy of the CCP regime and denying the history of the CCP and New China.’

This terminology appeared frequently in the debate on the 2003 Curriculum. At the academic conference, co-hosted by the Ministry of Education (Research Center for the Social Science Development of Higher Education) and the Association of Chinese Historians, in March 2005 on the topic of Modern Chinese History Research and the Trend of Historical Nihilism.²³ Approximately 30 researchers from major universities in the metropolitan area, including Peking University, Renmin University and Beijing Normal University, from the Academy of Social Sciences, and from the Party Literature Research Center attended the conference. Some key members of the Association of Chinese Historians such as Sha Jiansun from Peking University, Li Wenhai from Renmin University, Gong Shudou from Beijing Normal University, Liang Zhu from Peking University, and Zhang Haipeng from Academy of Social Sciences also participated in the conference. These scholars were all considered the representatives of the conservative position since the Tiananmen Square Demonstration.²⁴ Without simply handling the issue of historical nihilism, the conference also expanded the battle front into an ideological issue.²⁵ For example, the attend-

²³ The Research Center for the Social Science Development of Higher Education is in charge of ideological education in universities, while the Association of Chinese Historians, an organization affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, represents the academic views of the Party-State. I Academy of Social Sciences and the Party Literature Research Center are closely related with the ideological policy of the Party-State. Li Zhen, “‘Zhongguo jin xiandai lishi yan jiu yu lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao’ xueshu yan tao hui zhaokai,” *Gaoxiao lilun zhanxia* 4 (2005).

²⁴ Wei Zhaogai, “Jingti lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao,” *Guangming Daily*, March 15, 2005. For example, they did not shy away from making conservative remarks on the *Towards the Republic* (走向共和), a historical drama broadcast by CCTV from April, 2003. See among others, Gong Shudou, “Zouxiang gonghe yanzhong waiqu lishi,” *Wenyi lilun yu piping* 4 (2003); Zhang Haipeng, “Lishi dianshiju Zouxiang gonghe xuanyang shenmo lishi guan,” *Makesi zhuyi yan jiu* 5 (2003); Li Wenhai, “Zouxiang gonghe ji renmen tígongle shenme yang de ‘xin de lishi guandian,’” *Gaoxiao lilun zhanxian* 6 (2003).

²⁵ The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, ed., *Lishi xuwu zhuyi pipan wenxuan* (Beijing: China Social Sciences Press, 2015).

ees took an active part in the above mentioned “Marxism Project,”²⁶ and in April 2005 they held an academic conference against a right-wing history textbook produced in Japan. By so doing, they played a crucial role in shifting the history textbook problem to the matter of state ideology and policy-making.

The conservative academics saw historical nihilism as having emerged under the influence of Western trends during the Reform and Opening-up era, denying the historical experience of modern China, and delegitimizing the formation of socialist China. The historical revisionists, according to the conservative camp, also offer a critical perspective on the CCP history and the socialist government.²⁷ The following passages present the official view of the Party-State on historical nihilism.

While annihilating the people’s revolutionary movement in China, the leadership of the CCP, the guidance of Marxism, the socialist institutions and the proletariat dictatorship, they eulogize rebels, collaborators, and reactionary rulers. They do not interpret and explain history starting from the real situation of historical development, but through the misinterpretation, falsification, distortion and denial of history; they seek another historical discipline and a direction of development alike without any historical grounds.

In order to deny the revolution, [they] claim that reformism was the only exit for modern China.... Opposing revolution with modernization, they say that the historical perspective of revolution should be replaced with that of modernization.

Historical nihilism goes in concert with the strategy of hostile forces, in other words, the soft strategy of the enemies that aim at the Westernization or division of China.²⁸

²⁶ Zhang Haipeng, “*Zhongguo jindai shi jiao caiji*.”

²⁷ Wei Zhaogai, “*Jingti lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao*.”

²⁸ Xia Chuntao, “*Lishi xuwu zhuyi jiexi*,” *Shixue lilun yan jiu* 3 (2019).

Likewise, the conservative academics looked at historical nihilism as an intrusion of Western ideology whose purpose was to dismantle the mainstream historical consciousness of socialist China, more specifically a strategic product of the United States for the dissolution of China.²⁹ It was the soft imperialism that enabled the liberal camp to reinterpret modern Chinese history on the basis of the theory of modernization, and to overthrow socialist China under capitalism. And, as the Western ideological offensive involved students and school, history education became an object of defense.³⁰ History curriculum reform and the revision of textbooks were poised to be followed. The objective was the creation of a historical consciousness commensurate with the ‘China Dream’ and ‘National Rejuvenation,’ both of which were set for the preservation of state ideology under the CCP and the reformulation of collective identity. For the Party-State, the 2008 Global Economic Crisis and the growing ethnic conflicts in Tibet and Xinjiang after 2008 became a critical turning point that revalidated the necessity of creating a new identity through an adjustment of the dominant ideology and eradicating historical nihilism.

Another factor that deserves attention is how Russia has overhauled state ideology through an intensification of history education since Putin assumed power. Russia has on many occasions served as an example for China in large part because of the similarity of the situations both countries had faced during the Cold War and beyond. The shock felt by Chinese society at the disintegration of the Soviet Union is clearly illustrated by Chinese analyses of its causes,³¹ one of which was the effect on ideology of

²⁹ Gong Yun, “Zhongguo jin xiandai shi yanjiu lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao chansheng de renshi genyuan,” in *Jingtū lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao*, eds. Liang Zhu and Gong Shudou (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 2006). As its theoretical background, apart from Western historical relativism and modernization theory, reference was made to the trend of post-modernism, the discourse on the end of history, and deconstruction theory. Yu Pei, “Hou xiandai zhuyi lishi guan he lishi xuwu zhuyi,” *Lishi yanjiu* 3 (2015).

³⁰ Zhang Haipeng and Zhao Qingyun, “Lishi xuwu zhuyi de ruogan biaoxiang ji qi shizhi,” *Shijie shehui zhuyi yanjiu* 9 (2018).

³¹ See Central Party School of the Communist Party of China, *Su gong de shibai ji jiaoxun* (Beijing: Zhonggong Zhongyang Dangxiao Chubanshe, 1994); Xu Xin, *Chaoji daguo de bengkuai: Sulian jieti yuanyin tanxi* (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2001).

such schools of thought as historical nihilism.³² From this point of view, the criticism and denial of the socialist policy and institutions of the Stalin era were directly responsible for the fall of the Soviet state ideology.

After Putin attained power, the conservative scholars surmise, the movement to re-evaluate the Stalin era gained ground.³³ Academics in China viewed this conversion as a revival of a ‘social aspiration for the order and stability under Stalin against the entire confusion of Russia in the post-Soviet period.’³⁴ Along with the turmoil of history textbooks led by Putin in 2003 and 2007, the whole process from the discussion on the state-approved textbook system in 2013 to the publication of the new textbook in 2016 turned out to be the great object of scrutiny. What attracted the Chinese conservatives in particular was Putin’s resistance to the West with the motto of ‘reappearance of the great Soviet Union. While advocating Russian style market economy and democracy, they believed, Putin distanced himself from global imperialism such as the United States and sought, as Stalin did, Russia’s own development strategy. Reacting strongly to Western criticism of the foreign policy and the historical issues of the old Soviet era, Putin also made a clear ideological stance against the West.³⁵ He mobilized Slavism and Marxist historical science to invigorate nationalist historical science in opposition to global imperialism and neo-colonialism.³⁶

³² Chen Zhihua, “Sulian jieli qianxi de lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao ji qi tedian,” in *Jingti lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao*, eds. Liang Zhu and Gong Shudou; Zhong Zheming, “Lishi de diandao yu sulian de dianfu,” in *Jingti lishi xuwu zhuyi sichao*, eds. Liang Zhu and Gong Shudou. Naturally, the then Chinese official media criticized the abolition of the one-party system and the introduction of the multi-party system by Gorbachev, and exerted themselves to block the repercussions on China. They took the critique on historical nihilism as a means for ideological response. Richard Baum, *Burying Mao: Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 313-314.

³³ Wu Enyuan, “Eluosi chongxin pingjia Sidalin,” *Lishi yanjiu* 5 (2003); Wu Enyuan, “Eluosi fansi sulian lishi yu zhong ping Sidalin sixiang fenxi,” *Makesi yanjiu* 1 (2006).

³⁴ Wu Enyuan, “Eluosi chongxin pingjia Sidalin.”

³⁵ In 2009, the European Parliament in its resolution on “European Conscience and Totalitarianism” highlighted both the Nazis and Stalin. Putin responded, “I cannot accept that other people imagine themselves while compelling us to have guilty feeling.” Zhang Shengfa, “Eluosi lishi jiao ke shu wenti de yuanqi yu fazhan: 2003 nian zhijin,” *Eluosi xue kan* 3 (2012).

³⁶ Choe Deokgyu, “Global history ui suyong gwa byeon yong: Jungguk, Russia, Hanguk sarye e

This anti-Western position of Russia, leaning back on the universality of traditional Marxist historical science and rekindling the value of nationalism, has its parallels in China under Xi Jinping.³⁷

The Party-State applied the Russian example to the development of the *Outline of Chinese and Foreign History*.³⁸ First of all, it set the State Teaching Materials Commission in 2012 and revised the textbook publication system, thereby establishing the principle of direct government production, inspection, distribution, and management of textbooks. In addition, with Zhang Haipeng from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in charge, the Party-State mobilized high profile textbook writers such as Liu Guo-Xin from Institute of Contemporary China Studies, Zheng Qian from Party History Research Center of the CPC Central Committee, and other researchers belonging to the Party Documents Research Office. The project also included prominent scholars such as Bu Xianqun from Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Zhang Fan from Peking University, Li Fan from Beijing Normal University, and Zhang Qing from Fudan University. They argued for a revision of Chinese history through the Discipline Evaluation Group of the Academic Degrees Committee of the State Council and the Planning Review Committee of the National Social Science Fund of China.³⁹

daehan bigyo yeongu,” *Seoyangsa ron* 40 (2016).

³⁷ The relationship between China and Russia deepened through co-hosting the World War II Victory in Europe 70th Anniversary Ceremony in 2015 and lively exchanges between Chinese and Russian historians. This was in contrast to heightening tensions between China and the US. This rapprochement culminated in an academic conference held in Moscow in 2015 co-hosted by the two countries. This rebuked what were seen as historical distortions by the West and emphasized the role of both countries during the Second World War. It could be called a declaration of anti-Western solidarity by two of the world's great powers. Chen Kaike, “Zhongguo shi xuehui daibiao tuan fu c canjia jinian fan faxisi zhanzheng shengli 70 zhounian xueshu huodong,” <https://kknews.cc/military/x5pjjor.html>.

³⁸ Zhang Haipeng, “Tong bian gaozhong lishi jiao ke shu.”

³⁹ Bu Xianqun took the lead in criticizing historical nihilism and claimed openly that the current mission of Chinese historical science was to hold fast to a line of research in the service of both socialism with Chinese characteristics in the new Xi Jinping era (習近平新時期中國特色社會主義) and the Chinese people, and to construct a system of historical science with Chinese characteristics by combining academic research and the will of the state. Bu Xianqun, “Xin

The next issue to be addressed was the ideological weight of the textbook. Zhang Haipeng stressed that in editing the content of the *Outline*, they excluded individual perspectives, incorporated state-authorized reading materials and academic writings such as Maoism and Deng Xiaoping Theory, and choose content that would lift national pride in students.⁴⁰ The textbook was thus regarded as the medium for propagating the official ideology of the Party-State. In this way, the establishment of a textbook control system on the Party-State's initiative was the official and organized outcome against the U.S.-led global capitalism and its ideological encroachment.⁴¹ Yet the production of the *Outline* goes beyond the level of textbook management to the extent of political indoctrination. The term 'Chinese and foreign history' is itself a significant retreat from world history. Similarly, the term '*Outline*', as widely used for the translation of political textbooks in Russia during the Stalin era, implies that the new history textbook is planned as a foremost material for political education.⁴²

zhongguo qishi nian shixue fazhan daolu," *Zhongguo shi yan jiu* 3 (2019).

⁴⁰ According to Zhang Haipeng, after the completion of the draft, they trialed the new materials in the secondary schools of 11 provinces and cities, and made alterations and modifications based on feedback from domestic university professors and experts. They then submitted the materials to the History Professional Expert Committee in National Teaching Materials Committee for evaluation. After a final consultation with teachers from 140 secondary schools, they submitted the final evaluation copy (color book) to the State Teaching Materials Commission. This can be considered as the establishment of a textbook control system by the state. Zhang Haipeng, "Tong bian gaozhong lishi jiao ke shu."

⁴¹ It can be ascertained in the textbook writing as discussed below. See, note 139.

⁴² At the outset, the title of the subject was the "*Outline* of Chinese and foreign history," but conscious of potential criticism that this was a retreat from world history education, the editors put the word "history" before the title at the final stage. While, of course, focusing on national history, the *Outline* retained a comparison of Chinese and foreign history. However, this was subservient to strengthening China-centered historical consciousness based on the Chinese "academic discipline system," "subject knowledge," and "academic discourse." Yang Biao (杨彪, professor at East China Normal University), interviewed by the author, September 22, 2019; Zhang Haipeng, "Tuijin woguo shixue huayu tixi jianshe," *Renmin ribao*, July 25, 2016. The word "outline" was used in a variety of book titles ranging from *Zhongguo lishi gangyao* [Outline of Chinese history], *Zhongguo shi gangya* [An Outline of Chinese history], and *Zhongguo tongshi gangyao* [Outline of the general history of China] in the Cold War period, to *Zhongguo jin xiandai shi gangyao* [Outline of Chinese modern and contemporary history], meant as teaching material embodying the ideology of the Party-State, particularly the politics of ideas.

As Xi Jinping came to power, the CCP began to implement the new curriculum project and completed this process in 2017. There were two stages in this process: first, the writing of the draft by the Chinese Ministry of Education (2013-16),⁴³ and second, the modification of the draft and the writing of the final text by the Party Publicity Committee (2016-17). A comparison of the final text with the initial draft shows that the Committee considerably strengthened its political character. For example, the draft pursued diverse historical interpretations, based on the perspective of historical materialism, with the curricular objective of ‘the formation of the historical knowledge and identity of which the modern citizen should be in possession.’ The final text, however, avows the curricular objective of fostering ‘builders and successors of socialism’ and underscores the formation of ‘ideology-sharing citizens’ on the basis of the materialistic conception of history.⁴⁴ The final text did interweave Marxism, Maoism, and Deng Xiaoping’s Theory altogether in accordance with the CCP line, and re-strengthen ideological integrity, scientificity, and political education through the succession of traditional and revolutionary culture and the development of an advanced socialist culture. The new curriculum, different from the previous curriculum whose description of the content tended to be underplayed in favor of the autonomy of teaching and learning, not only stresses historical materialism as the principle of teaching and learning, but also actively redefines the whole spectrum of the curriculum both in content and method. Then, teaching and learning history has been retaking the place of indoctrination less than education.

⁴³ Jiaoyu bu jichu jiaoyu kecheng jiao cai zhuanjia gongzuo weiyuanhui: putong gaozhong kecheng biaoazhun xiuding zu, *Putong gaozhong lishi kecheng biaoazhun* (zhicqu yijian gao) (2016).

⁴⁴ In the final text, considerable modifications were made to the content of the curriculum. For instance, the part on early Chinese civilization (Unit 1, section 1) stating that “by understanding the representative Stone Age cultural relics within the boundaries of China, the plural characteristics of the origins of Chinese civilization can be perceived ...”(the initial draft), was changed to “by understanding the representative Stone Age cultural relics within the boundaries of China, the origins of Chinese civilization, the institution of private property, and the relationship between class and the creation of the state can be perceived. Through oracle bone inscriptions, bronze inscriptions, and documentary records, the institution of private property and the characteristics of early states are to be understood.”

3. The Presentation of Chinese National History: Between Empire and Great Power

The primary objective of the new history textbook was the formation of national identity and social integration. To perform such an objective, the textbook employed a number of strategies in terms of content and method. The *Outline* followed a definite plan as regards how it was constructed and how its content was presented.⁴⁵

First, it contains the dual principles of heightening students' ideological character, scientific nature and the character as a nation on the one hand and deepening the education of patriotism, collectivism and socialism for socialist China under the CCP on the other. It is historical materialism that was placed even before the formation of students' ideological identity. Second, it turns back to the various cultural traditions of the Chinese nation and carves out the cultural identity of socialist China through a collective memory from time immemorial. Third, patriotic education empowered the new curriculum to teach state sovereignty, territory, and the relationships among ethnic peoples to the point of stating that Xinjiang, Tibet, Taiwan, Diaoyu Dao, and South China Sea Islands are historically the Chinese territories. The aim here was to restore the perception that from ancient times China had been a "unified multi-ethnic state" and thereby legitimize the ethnic policy of the Party-State. National identity as a "unified multi-ethnic state" was taken as seriously as territorial sovereignty.

The content of the *Outline* embodies is divided into three parts: ancient Chinese history, modern Chinese history, and world history. The first volume on national history consists of 30 units in total, 4 units with 15 sections given to Chinese ancient history, 4 units with 10 sections to Chinese modern history, and 2 units with 4 sections to contemporary history.⁴⁶ To enumerate unit names only is the following:

⁴⁵ Zhang Haipeng, "Tong bian gaozhong lishi jiao ke shu."

⁴⁶ The second volume of the *Outline* consists of 3 units with 7 sections on ancient world history and 6 units, 16 sections on modern world history.

1. From the Origins of Chinese Civilization to Qin and Han: the Foundation and Consolidation of the Unified Multi-ethnic Feudal State
2. Cross-National Interactions in the Three Kingdoms, the Two Jins, the Southern and Northern Dynasties: the Development of the Unified Multi-ethnic Feudal State
3. Liao, Song, Xia, Jin, the Coexistence of Multi-ethnic Regimes and the Unification by Yuan Dynasty
4. Ming and Qing: the Establishment of China's Domain and Responses to Challenges
5. The Late Qing Period: Internal and External Troubles and Saving the Nation and Striving for Survival
6. Xinhai Revolution and the Establishment of the Republic of China
7. The Founding of the Chinese Community Party and the Rise of the New Democratic Revolution
8. War of Resistance Against Japan of the Chinese Nation and National Liberation War
9. The Founding of the People's Republic of China and the Socialist Revolution and Construction
10. The Reform and Opening-up and the New Era of the Construction of Socialist Modernization

Volume 1 of the *Outline* is organized chronologically from the origins of Chinese civilization to the People's Republic of China, taking the late Qing as the dividing line between ancient and modern history. The ancient history section describes the process of the formation of China from the beginning of Chinese civilization through the coexistence of multi-ethnic regimes to the unification of these domains. The formation of the Chinese realm, entwining with territorial domain, historical China and the Chinese character, is presented as the goal of historical development. The modern history section describes the process of overcoming the threats to the Chinese realm, establishing the People's Republic of China, and constructing socialist modernization. Along this line, the modern section focuses on the transition from the Republic of China to the People's Republic

of China through an anti-colonial and anti-feudal revolution against Western imperialism and the emergence of the Chinese Communist Party in conjunction with Chinese nation.

1) The Tradition of Cultural Empire and “Historical China”

In the section on ancient history, the concept of social formations in accordance with historical materialism is less apparent, if relatively, while the use of term ‘feudal state’ in addition to ‘multi-ethnic’ as a qualifier is prominent. The textbook, still, accepts historical stages of development by holding fast to primitive community-slavery society, the feudal state, semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, and finally the socialist transformation. The Neolithic Age represents the primitive community stage; the Xia, Shang, and Zhou dynasties are the slavery society, and the Qin and Han empires are unified multi-ethnic feudal states. The Western Zhou period, in particular, is presented as a slavery society where state ownership of land and slave trading were rampant, with social changes in the Warring States period the result of the appearance of an emerging class of landowners. On the other hand, the long period from the Qin to the Opium War is presented as the establishment and development of a feudal state in a process of division and unification.⁴⁷ The notable feature here is that the state is not the exploiter of the people but rather an empire which creates traditional China by facilitating communication, exchange, and interactions among people and by unifying diverse ethnic groups. Without simply employing the language of class struggle, this section narrates the history of an empire embracing diverse ethnicities and classes. One example can be charted in the following passage on the Qin.

The formation of a unified and centralized state is a historical neces-

⁴⁷ In particular, Unit 4 of the textbook states that “in the period of the two dynasties of Ming and Qing, the despotism had never been stronger and the unified multi-ethnic feudal state was more stabilized, and the territory of modern China was set.” In fact, it could be called the completion of the unified multi-ethnic feudal state. *Lishi: Zhongwai lishi gangyao*, vol. 1 (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 2019), 71.

sity as well as an objective demand. The feudal state, representing the first unified state, facilitated communication, exchange, and interactions among the various ethnic groups and drove the political, economic, and social development of a unified multi-ethnic state.

The *Outline* has a particular focus on imperial institutions, culture, and thought. The state management system of each dynasty, such as the costume regulations of the Shang or the enfeoffment system and the patriarchal system of the Zhou, receives special attention, for example. There is also a detailed section on the more advanced administratorship of the Qin central officialdom.⁴⁸ The *Outline* states that these systems of imperial governance developed in the Qin and Han dynasties and culminated in the more sophisticated central government system in the Tang and Song dynasties.⁴⁹ Further modifications, such as the posthouse system and the province system in the Yuan dynasty, the grand secretariat system under the Ming dynasty, and the system of the folding memorials to the emperor and the grand council in the Qing dynasty eventually completed an absolute monarchy.⁵⁰

The *Outline* also deals with the nation as an important theme.⁵¹ The whole process of ancient history is to demonstrate the ongoing course of a multi-ethnic unified feudal state absorbing the ethnic minorities into imperial China since the Spring and Autumn Period. The *Outline* erases not only the idea of class relations but also ideas such as the liberation of backward ethnic groups by more advanced ethnic groups. Instead, it overrepresents the institutional integration of the diverse ethnic groups in the narrative of im-

⁴⁸ *Lishi: Zhongwai lishi gangyao*, vol. 1, 15.

⁴⁹ *Lishi: Zhongwai lishi gangyao*, vol. 1, 38-9, 49-50.

⁵⁰ *Lishi: Zhongwai lishi gangyao*, vol. 1, 80. In the teaching material of the selective compulsory subject, Unit 1, entitled “The formation and development of the ancient Chinese political system,” explained this by dividing the period into the prior Qin, Qin and post-Qin (from Han to Ming and Qing). This amounts to considering the institutions of the Qin as the precursor of a centralized absolute monarchy, which was the characteristic of the Chinese feudal state. *Lishi 1: Guojia zhidu yu shehui zhili* (Beijing: People’s Education Press, 2020), 2-6.

⁵¹ *2017 Curriculum Standards*, 7.

perial China equivalent to One China. Accordingly, the *Outline* claims, this imperial expansion was completed by the restoration of Taiwan, the incorporation of Fujian Province, the Dzungar conquest, the domination over Xinjiang, Mongolia and Tibet in early Qing. The following passages exemplify the narrative of historical integration under the umbrella of imperial China.⁵²

- ① In the Spring and Autumn Period, significant changes arose in relations between ethnic gros. In this period, the states of the Central Plains Region, referred to themselves as Huaxia (華夏), were more advanced compared to the Yi, Man, Rong, and Di (夷蠻戎狄) tribes in social development. The process of the formation of Huaxia identity was a product of frequent contact and exchange. During the Warring States period, other ethnic gros were gradually assimilated into the Huaxia Tribe.
- ② After the Eastern Han dynasty, several ethnic gros in the western and northern border areas continued to migrate into the central area. Among the ethnic minorities, migrating until the time of the Western Jin dynasty, were the Xiongnu, Jie, Di, Qiang, and Xianbei, all of whom were active around the Great Wall.
- ③ [In the Eastern Jin period] in the north, separatist regimes continued to emerge ... most of them consisted of migrant ethnic minorities. All of them adopted the state title and the era name of the states in the Central Plains Region and learnt the laws and institutions of the Han people in that area.
- ④ During the Yuan dynasty, many Mongolians moved to the Central Plains Region, living and mingling with the Han people. Persians and Arabs from central and west Asia also migrated to China and mixed with the Han, Mongolian, and Uygur peoples. These peoples intermarried with the Han people, gradually assimilated into the Han culture, had formed the Huihui, or the ancestors of the Hui people.

⁵² *Outline*, vol. 1, 27, 29, 30, 54, 56, 69.

At an unprecedented level, the *Outline* explains in detail the interconnection between the territorial domains and the institutional and cultural Sinicization of numerous ethnicities. It includes maps and tables such as a map showing the distribution of migrant ethnic minorities; a topographic map of the Eastern Jin dynasty and the Sixteen Kingdoms; a table showing the ethnicity of the rulers of the Sixteen Kingdoms; and a map specifying confrontations between the Northern Qi, the Northern Zhou, and the Jin. The focus again is on the way that the non-Han peoples were assimilated into the imperial culture of the Tang or the Song and integrated into the great Chinese tradition under imperial China. The *Outline* portrays China as both an ancient empire of multiple ethnicities and a political community equipped with universal laws, institutions, and culture.⁵³ Although the degree of integration varied throughout the period, the realm of China eventually developed into a highly integrated empire through the unified empires of the Yuan, the Ming, and the Qing.

The *Outline* also clarifies a connection between the security of border areas and the relationships with neighboring states as a major concern of the historical empire. Examples include the military campaigns against ethnic groups in the north west under Emperor Wu of the Han, and the establishment of military governmental institutions such as the protectorates to pacify the western regions, the west, and the Beiting.⁵⁴ Relationships with the periphery are also a key feature of imperial order.⁵⁵ Examples are the nomination of Emperor Taizung as “Tian Khan” by the northern ethnic groups, the Tang-Tubo Alliance, the hierarchical relationship between the Yuan and the Four Khanates, and the hierarchical relationship between the Qing and Joseon·Taiwan·Vietnam·Laos. The acceptance of Chinese statutes, ordi-

⁵³ In dealing with relationships between ethnic groups, the teaching material for advanced learning describes the organizations in charge of the internal and external affairs of ethnic groups since the Qin Dynasty. The *dianke* (典客, director of guests) in the Qin dynasty and the “minister herald” (大鸿臚) of the Han are cases in point. The core of integration of ethnic groups is allegedly the imperial institution. *Lishi 1: Guojia zhidu yu shehui zhili*, 52-57.

⁵⁴ *Outline*, vol. 1, 21, 27, 33, 52, 54. Included here are the Four Commanderies of the Han, the local political powers (Bohai, for example), Jimizhou (羁靡州), and area commands (都督府).

⁵⁵ *Outline*, vol. 1, 33, 34, 57, 98.

nances, and culture by these neighboring states indicates the hegemony of the imperial China in the region of East Asia. Even, this hierarchical relationship was important to the extent that a crisis of the empires was simultaneously a crisis of the neighboring state as in the case of Taiwan and Korea through the Sino-Japanese War and Vietnam through the Sino-French War.⁵⁶ Therefore, the *Outline* regards the Chinese nation as the historical product, inseparable from a long-term nation-building process, and presents the pre-modern history of China as the history of empire under which class and ethnic relations are subsumed.

At this juncture, Ge Zhaoguang's discussion on history of empire is relevant in understanding an academic inspiration and atmosphere of the conservative historians for the reconstruction of a new Chinese history in the Age of Globalization.⁵⁷ Instead of setting the largest territorial domain of the Qing as the fixed historical territory of China and presenting Chinese national history as a process of one integrative development, Ge proposed the history of empire by concentrating the scope of Chinese history on political governance, institutional implementation, and cultural identity. His main theme is to restore historical China with special focus on 'China cre-

⁵⁶ *Outline*, vol. 1, 93, 98, 105.

⁵⁷ In an extension of his work on the history of thought, Ge Zhaoguang conducted a project called "China as seen from the periphery" (2006-). Its core was to reconstruct national history and historical identity with the rise of China. At the same time, by examining various discourses since *Zhai zi Zhongguo* (宅兹中國, Reside in this China) relating to the construction of Chinese history, it exerted considerable influence both inside and outside of China. As he was not writing with the history textbook issue in mind, it is somewhat hasty to link his ideas directly to the textbook narration. However, he sought the construction of a Chinese history that considered its relationships with its neighboring countries, and as the chief of the Junior Secondary School Textbook Examination and Approval Committee, he exerted considerable influence on the new curriculum. Although the *Outline* takes patriotic education as its basis, it is also linked to Ge's idea of "imperial" history. In addition, his concept of cultural empire provides an alternative to Western theories of the modern state, and is highlighted as an apparatus for the integration of various ethnic peoples as well as the birth of the modern state. Indeed, his intention is to overcome historical consciousness to reflect real politics. In the same context, he criticizes the ideology inherent in such discourses and concepts as Tianxia (天下, All-under-heaven) and the theory of civilized states. Ge Zhaoguang, *He wei Zhongguo: Jiang yu, min zu, wen hua yu lishi* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press, 2014); Ge Zhaoguang, "Dui 'tianxia' de xiangxiang: Yige wutuobang xiangxiang beihou de zhengzhi, sixiang yu xueshu," *Sixiang* 29 (2015).

ated by the empires of the Qin and Han in all its political, institutional, and cultural aspects,' and its relationship with the periphery.⁵⁸ He conceptualized China as a cultural empire encompassing institutions, civilization (prefectures & counties, letters, currency, administration, law, weights & measures, and traffic system), and culture (traditional knowledge, thought, religious life, national rites, historiography, statutes & ordinances, documented administration). This Chinese identity, predicated on boundary consciousness and diplomatic protocols, also structurally involves a hierarchical relationship with the periphery in terms of regional order. The inseparable linkage between Chinese national history and Chinese identity, both of which are put together in the historical development of imperial China, enables Ge and other conservative historians to counter globalization, capitalism, nationalism and the modern state, and to recall the great politico-cultural tradition of imperial China as the great regional power before the advent of the Western powers, including the U.S., in East Asia.⁵⁹

Ge's new perspective on Chinese history had a number of realistic objectives. The first was to avoid historical conflict with neighboring states in the vision of a new regional order after the remarkable rise of China in the 21st century. In fact, China has long experienced serious historical conflicts with its neighbors including Korea, Vietnam, Thailand, Mongolia and Turkey. Ge's reevaluation of Chinese history may also be related to the American school of New Qing History. In reasoning that there had been a transformation from "Little China" to "Greater China" at the end of the

⁵⁸ Ge Zhaoguang, *Lishi zhongguo de nei yu wai*, 5.

⁵⁹ Lin Chun, *China and Global Capitalism: Reflections on Marxism, History, and Contemporary Politics* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013). Diverse attempts were made to construct Chinese national history as a history of empire encompassing the nomadic world, the agricultural world, and the maritime world. Such attempts viewed the history of empire as pivotal for civilization as well as a framework encompassing numerous pluralistic systems in East Asia. See, for example, Shi Zhan, *Zhou chou: 3000 nian de Zhongguo* (Guilin: Guangxi Normal University Press, 2018), who narrated chronological dynasties as the intersection of universal and specific empires, and in the ensuing controversy ("Chong shu zhongguo: Cong guoqu kanjian xianzai," *Tansuo yu zhengming* 344 (2018)). In a conference in which Yao Dali participated, the mainstream argument was that traditional China should be presented as the history of empire embracing diverse foreign ethnic peoples.

Yuan dynasty, and that the Yuan imperial governance further developed throughout the Ming and the Qing, Ge was able to avoid the Manchurian origin and identity of the Qing.⁶⁰ Recognizing Central Asian regions such as Xinjiang in the context of regional, not ethnic, history and reframing the history of peripheral territories not as ‘unity in diversity’ (多元一體) but as ‘pluralistic unity’ (多元一統), may also be a response to the New Qing History.⁶¹

The theory of empire dates to the dissolution of the Soviet Union. After the disintegration of the Soviet Union, the independence of Ukraine and other nations revealed that nationalism is not simply a product of modernity but is deeply rooted in the cultural heritage of traditional empire. Ge Zhaoguang stands against Western theories of the nation-state and argues that traditional China ended with the Qing empire and its transformation into a territorial state came in response to threats from the West and Japan around the time of the May Fourth Movement.⁶² The *Outline* also portrays the “realm of China” as the precursor to modern China.

A more fundamental problem caused by the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the national question of China. Socialist China transformed the grounds for its legitimacy from the class state to the nation-state and dealt with the national question in reference to Stalin’s theory of nations and nationality policy.⁶³ The introduction of policies such as the identification of nationalities, autonomous regions, and preference towards ethnic minorities was meant to consolidate Chinese identity as a unified multi-ethnic state. However, the disintegration of the Soviet Union endangered the ideology of socialist China as a ‘unified multi-ethnic state.’ And, the

⁶⁰ Ge Zhaoguang, “Zhangfan tan yuanchao dui zhongguo lishi de yingxiang,” in *Shu fang wei yuan: Gudai zhongguo de jiangyu, minzu yu renting*, eds. Ge Zhaoguang et al. (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2016).

⁶¹ Wang Wenguang, “‘Da yitong’ Zhongguo fazhan shi yu zhongguo bianjiang minzu fazhan de ‘duoyuan yitong,’” *Bianjiang shi di yanjiu* 25, no. 4 (2015).

⁶² Ge Zhaoguang, “Cong ‘diguojiangyu’ dao ‘guo jia lingtu’: ‘Wuss’ zhiqian youguan ‘zhuquan’ wenti de riben ciji yu zhongguo fanying,” *Wenshizhe* 3 (2019).

⁶³ Liu Xiaoyuan, “Zhongguo gongchandang guojia jiangyu guan de yuanyuan yu fazhan (2012-49),” *Ershiyi shiji* 160 (April 2017).

gap between the rich and the poor after the Reform and Opening-up and the crisis of social identity exacerbated the situation. As a result, in reexamining national policy and large-scale development projects in ethnic minority regions, the Party-State came to think about categorizing ethnic minorities not as ‘nations’ but as ‘citizens of empire’⁶⁴ based on law, culture, and the tradition of the universal empire.⁶⁵

Such an attitude to national integration also has relevance to Taiwan. Since democratization in 1990s, Taiwan has pursued a policy of de-Sinicization and the reconstruction of Taiwanese identity without perceiving historical China as its own history. For the Chinese Party-State, which regards Taiwan as part of the territory of the PRC, to put forward the universal institutions and culture of the Chinese empire and its modern version of ‘One Country, Two Systems’ is a potentially more palatable means of claiming its sovereignty over Taiwan. The *Outline* repeats this official position and we can witness the use of Ge Zhaoguang’s ideas for a new vision of Chinese history and identity.

Moreover, tailoring premodern China to the PRC historiography in an overly retrospective manner can pose new challenges to the neighboring countries. The reason is that perceiving the relationship between China and other states in a center-periphery hierarchy is questionable. Even if some key elements of imperial integration, such as Confucianism, statutes & ordinances and institutions, exerted influence on the state formation of ancient East Asia, still, interpreting the relationships between Chinese states and neighboring states merely as hierarchically given needs more careful reconsideration. This interpretation might aggravate the process of Sinicization. Then, a newer version of discourse on suzerainty can emerge and undermine the inherent characteristics of the history and identity of the neighboring states against Sinicization.

⁶⁴ Ma Rong, “Zhongguo minzu wenti de lishi yu xianzhuang,” *Yunnan minzu daxue xuebao* 28, no. 5 (2011); Ma Rong, “Dui dangdai minzu zhengce de fansi,” *Qinghai minzu yan jiu* 24, no. 4 (2013).

⁶⁵ Zhang Hanlin and Xiong Qiaoyi, “Lishi kecheng biao zhun yu guojia rentong de jiangou,” *Lishi jiaoxue* 2 (2019).

2) The Creation of a Non-Western Great Power in Modern Times

Since his ascendance, Xi Jinping has underscored the need for a cultural identity fit for the new era, in other words, a cultural confidence of social China in the 21st century, to demand an intensification of research and education on the history of the Republic of China, the war against Japan, and the revolutions. In so doing, he intends to reinforce the legitimacy of the CCP and socialist China. One of the key issues is the way the relationship between the modern global world and China is reinterpreted for a new national identity of social China in the Age of the US-China G2.

The *Outline* organizes modern history into 6 units, namely 1) late Qing, 2) the Xinhai Revolution & the Republic of China, 3) the CCP & new democracy, 4) the Anti-Japanese War & the People's Liberation War, 5) the establishment of the People's Republic of China & the socialist construction, and 6) the Reform and Opening-up. This organization is clearly based on official historical consciousness professed by the CCP in the sense of focusing on how the CCP spearheaded the National Revolution, achieved victory in the War of Resistance, won the civil war, and finally built socialist China. Under these circumstances, the *Outline* underscores a process of forced incorporation into the modern world from late Ming Dynasty,⁶⁶ less than following the typical narrative of internal development, from the perspective of global history.

- ① With the pioneering development of the new navigation route, new agricultural products were introduced in late Ming; diverse businesses flourished in the Jiangnan area; and crop cultivation increased along with the handcraft industry. From the middle Ming period, the commodity economy entered a new prosperous stage and the massive flow of silver into China from America facilitated a long-distance and large-scale trade to drive the accumulation of commercial capital... Viewed as a whole, however, the traditional self-sufficient economy of small-scale farms held a predominant position and strong despo-

⁶⁶ *Outline*, vol. 2, 39-43.

tism blocked social progress and transformation.⁶⁷

- ② The competition and scramble for colonial acquisitions (after the Industrial Revolution in Europe) became harsher among the (western) powers.... Great Britain seized colonies in America and Africa and targeted Asia. France began military operations in Asia (especially) in Vietnam. In the 1840s, Russian forces invaded eastern China and Xinjiang while the U.S. also invading the country.... The Qing government did not understand the change in the world situation. China was still a feudal society and the absolute monarchy remained obstinate.⁶⁸

Although acknowledging that capitalism had formed the groundwork of modern world, the textbook presents this transformation/transition as a typical system of class exploitation in tandem with an ongoing process of colonialization of the non-Western world.⁶⁹ The textbook pays great attention to how the colonial system of world capitalism, subduing imperial China, emerged in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.⁷⁰

Nonetheless, the global system also structurally contained the critical momentum in which the feudal economy of these colonies stopped and national/local capitalism & nationalist movements arose. One of the prime examples was the Xinhai Revolution in China, the national liberation movement in India, and the Iranian constitutional revolution.⁷¹ Subsequently, the *Outline* emphasizes the Xinhai Revolution as a bourgeois democratic revolution and devotes two whole chapters to the revolution. It provides a detailed explanation regarding a series of historical events from Sun Yat-sen (1866-1925) & the Chinese Alliance (同盟會) to the Second

⁶⁷ *Outline*, vol. 1, 83-84.

⁶⁸ *Outline*, vol. 1, 90-91.

⁶⁹ *Outline*, vol. 2, 51, 52, 55.

⁷⁰ *Outline*, vol. 2, 73.

⁷¹ The *Outline* (vol. 2) makes detailed reference to the process through which Western empires made colonies or semi-colonies out of a number of nations in Asia, including the colonization of Joseon by Japan (*Outline*, vol. 2, 70-71). However, as examples of anti-colonial national movements, it deals with only India, Iran, and Indonesia. *Outline*, vol. 2, 78, 95-96.

Revolution to the formation of the *Beiyang* warlord regime to the growth of national capital & social changes.⁷² It evaluates the Xinhai Revolution as the ‘beginning of the anti-imperialist and anti-feudal national democratic revolution’ that ended the absolute monarchy and ‘created favorable conditions for the development of national capitalism by driving the ideology of democratic republic.’⁷³ The dark side of the revolution was an absence of active leadership, equipped with a scientific program of revolution, and grand strategy for mass mobilization.⁷⁴

The *Outline* identifies these limitations in all the reform movements of the late Qing period including Taiping Rebellion, Boxer Rebellion, Yangwu, Bianfa, and Xinzeng all failed without social foundation, scientific thought, and concrete leadership.⁷⁵ The logic behind this description is that it was solely the CCP that could overcome colonialism and feudalism. The textbook also defines the May Fourth Movement as a patriotic student movement, distinct from the New Culture Movement, which exploded into a nationwide movement of citizens, paved the way for the founding of the CCP, transformed the old democratic movement into a new democratic revolution. Importantly, the *Outline* employs here a much more dogmatic interpretation of facts as well as a speech by Xi Jinping in order to glorify the victorious march of the CCP. That is to say, presenting the history of modern China, the *Outline* focuses on the Chinese Communist Party to such an extent that it could be called the Party History (党史).

At the same time, the textbook highlights the struggle of the CCP for socialist China in a global context on the ground that the CCP stood in with the Bolshevik Revolution, ‘boosted the world national movement in an epoch-making manner,’ and provided a springboard to ‘the reorganization of the world system.’⁷⁶

⁷² *Outline*, vol. 1, 108-118.

⁷³ *Outline*, vol. 1, 111.

⁷⁴ *Outline*, vol. 1, 112.

⁷⁵ *Outline*, vol. 1, 96-108.

⁷⁶ The curriculum standards set an independent unit (“The Two World Wars, the October Revolution and the Change in the International Order”) and a chapter (“The Victory of the

The October Revolution (of Russia) created for the first time in history a state where the proletariat took leadership and destroyed a world structure under capitalism. It was a great leap that brought the socialist ideal into reality and inaugurated a new epoch exploring the direction of socialism. The October Revolution, striking a huge blow against the world governance of imperialism, greatly encouraged the anti-colonial liberation struggles of the peoples in colonies. From this time forward, the significant content of world history became (a set of) coexistence and competition between capitalism and socialism, the two kinds of social system.⁷⁷

Presuming the Soviet Modernization to be an alternative to the established capitalist system,⁷⁸ the *Outline* edifies the Chinese socialism under the CCP as opposed to the capitalist world system. As a result, the CCP history, entwined with modern Chinese history, embarked on a new history in place of the old history fettered by the oppressive capitalism. It is at this juncture that modern China entered into a new chapter of world history.

We can capture this convergence of the CCP history and modern Chinese history in the passages regarding the War of Resistance, the Cold War and post-Cold War periods. In the unit entitled “The Anti-Japanese War of the Entire Nation,” the *Outline* substantially reinforces the importance of the War of Resistance in that modern China and the CCP achieved national restoration through the Resistance War to rehabilitate its status as a great power in the international anti-fascist war.⁷⁹ Alongside this, the *Outline* ex-

October Revolution and the Soviet Union’s Practice of Socialism”) to make clear the meaning of the Russian Revolution in relation to the change in the international order as well as national movements in non-Western regions.

⁷⁷ *Outline*, vol. 2, 90-91.

⁷⁸ The negative side effects of Soviet-style socialism are mentioned only briefly. *Outline*, vol. 2, 93, 103.

⁷⁹ The objective was that “by understanding the War of Resistance on the battlefields home and abroad, students will understand that the Chinese Communist Party is the pillar of the national resistance war. They must understand that the Chinese theater of war was an eastern battlefield of the world’s anti-fascist war and the historical meaning that the victory in the 14-year War of

tends the War of Resistance to 14 years, the first seven years from Mukden Incident in 1931 to the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese War in 1937 and the second seven years from 1937 to the outbreak of the Pacific War between 1941 and 1945. Again, the textbook repeatedly foregrounds the active and decisive role of the CCP in the War of Resistance and the Pacific War in contrast to the anti-communist Nationalist Party (Kuomintang, KMT), pursuing a policy of internal pacification and staying away from a direct military confrontation with the Japanese invaders. The *Outline* ‘otherizes’ the KMT whose significance in the making of modern China was downplayed or erased.⁸⁰ In a similar vein, the *Outline* does not forget the Japanese aggression by enumerating economic exploitation and war crimes including the Nanking Massacre, comfort women, and biological warfare.⁸¹

The textbook accentuates the China’s victory against the Japanese invasions as a turning point for restoring its status as a great world power⁸² and for creating the opportunity for the ‘rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.’

Resistance had for the great restoration of the Chinese nation. *2017 Curriculum Standards*, 14. This is also the recent official position of scholars in government circles. See, for example, Zhang Haipeng, *Zhongguo kangzhan yu shijie fan faxisi zhanzheng* (Beijing: Shehui Kexue Wenxian Chubanshe, 2008).

⁸⁰ Examples are the places where by expressing the subject of the total War of Resistance as ‘China’, the merits and demerits of the Nationalist government were not acknowledged. Such were the case as in the total War of Resistance including the movement of the capital city to southwest China led by the Nationalist government and the construction of the rear area ruled by it (大后方). What may be called diplomatic war as in the Washington Conference (1942), the Cairo Declaration (1943) and the Yalta Conference, not to mention the acceptance of the Japanese surrender at the end of the war. Such a narration is distanced from the position of the academic circle that has positively evaluated the diplomacy of the Nationalist government in the context of China’s national and great power diplomacy. *Outline*, vol. 1, 140; Oh Byeongsu, “Hangjeon sigi Jungguk ui ‘Jungguk geundae sa’ seosul gwa Dong-Asia insik ui byeonyong mit yusan,” *Seogang immun nonchong* 50 (2017): 280-283.

⁸¹ *Outline*, vol. 1, 136-7.

⁸² The textbook emphasizes that China contributed to the Allied powers not only by declaring war on the Axis powers and recovering the concessions of Tianjin and Hankou, but also by sending over 100,000 Chinese workers to the European theater. *Outline*, vol. 1, 115; Xu Guoqi, *Asia and the Great War: A Shared History* (Oxford, Eng.: Oxford University Press, 2017).

The victory in the Anti-Japanese War was the first complete victory by China against foreign aggression in modern times. The victory had a great influence on world peace sufficient to establish China's status as a great world power and allow the Chinese people to receive the respect of the peace-loving peoples of the world. This victory opened the door to a bright future and a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and the old China to move on to a new stage (of modern history).⁸³

This victory “combines the universal principles of Marxism, the concrete practice of the Chinese Revolution, and the victory of Maoism, changing fundamentally the direction of the development of Chinese society.”⁸⁴ With this official victory narrative, the *Outline* eventually equates the history of the CCP and modern Chinese history in the new vision for world history vis-à-vis the old version from the west.

Another important change is the portrayal of the Cold War. The *Outline* legitimizes the socialist transformation of China in relation to changes in the international order such as the Cold War and Détente and the post-Cold War world. The textbook locates the Cold War ‘a long-term state of confrontation and competition, of neither war nor peace, between the two camps headed by the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. from the 1940s to the late 1980s and early 1990s.’ It deals with how the political, military, and ideological competition between the U.S. and the U.S.S.R. intensified, beginning with the formation of the Eastern Bloc and the Berlin crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the emerging threat of nuclear war. The textbook portrays the confrontation between them as asymmetrical, with the U.S. as the first super power in the postwar world attempting to expand American social institutions on the basis of its overwhelming military superiority and with the Soviet Union seeking to hold it in check. However, the textbook is also critical of the Soviet Union. It criticizes the setting of communist parties and information bureaus in East European countries and the export of a

⁸³ *Outline*, vol. 1, 145.

⁸⁴ *Outline*, vol. 1, 152.

Soviet-style planned economy, which finally led these states to revolt against the Soviet Union and brought about the collapse of the socialist camp.⁸⁵ It also accounts for how the arms race went between the two camps due to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 and the way the subsequent American Strategic Defense Initiative threatened world peace.

In dealing with the Cold War policy of China, the textbook emphasizes its peace diplomacy. According to the textbook, China “abolished the privileges of the imperialist states in China” and adhered to peace diplomacy not only with the states in the socialist camp such as the Soviet Union, Bulgaria, North Korea and Vietnam, but also with Third World countries including India, Indonesia, Myanmar, Pakistan, Sweden, Switzerland, Norway and Egypt.⁸⁶ In addition, by taking a leading role at the Geneva Conference (April 1954), the Sino-India Negotiations (December 1953), and the Bandung Conference (April 1955), it portrayed itself as both a champion of the Third World and a great power contributing to world peace. As China became one of the top 5 world powers, in part due to its development of nuclear technology, and it secured the status of a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, it took the lead in representing Third World.⁸⁷

The presentation of the post-Cold War in the *Outline* evinces the positioning of the Party-State even more directly. The textbook describes the revisionist spirit in the Soviet Union after the death of Stalin and the policies of *perestroika* & *glasnost* as the causes of 1) ideological confusion, 2) ethnic separatism, and 3) the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the Eastern European bloc.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ *Outline*, vol. 2, 111-2.

⁸⁶ *Outline*, vol. 1, 158, 160.

⁸⁷ *Outline*, vol. 2, 112. Although this may reflect the perception of reality of the current Chinese Party-State, it is rather different from the fact that China played the role of a regional empire acting as a proxy of the Soviet Union and had exported revolution in the name of internationalism since the Sino-Soviet conflict. Oh Byeongsu, “Hangjeon sigi Jungguk ui ‘Jungguk geundae sa’ seosul..”

⁸⁸ *Outline*, vol. 2, 121-123.

Yugoslavia undertook reform early ... establishing autonomous socialist institutions and facilitating economic development by mobilizing localities, enterprises, and the general populace. However, with the rise of localism caused by this reform and the intensification of the national question, the seeds of the break of the state were sown.... Reform in the other Eastern European states (Poland, Hungary, East Germany) was also successful. However, these reforms could not escape the Soviet Union model and from the 1980s the economies of some of these states collapsed, resulting in political turmoil. The communist parties in Eastern Europe under the auspices of the Soviet Union and the influence of the Western 'Peaceful Evolution' strategy, lost the direction of socialism, negated the leadership of Marxism and socialist institutions, denied the leading status of the communist party, and exercised political pluralism. From 1989 to 1992, the social and political system of the socialist Eastern Europe changed rapidly.

The textbook makes it clear that despite a lessening of tensions between the U.S. and the Soviet Union after 1985 the Soviet failure to confront Western soft strategies—Peaceful Evolution— against Eastern Europe was ultimately responsible for the disintegration of the Soviet bloc.⁸⁹ The Soviet case after the Cold War mirrors the task of socialist China, especially how to champion national liberation and socialist revolution in counter to the capitalist world system and how to maintain a great power as the main representative of Third World void of any hegemonic intervention of the U.S. and the Soviet Union. Through the concept of socialism embedded in Chinese characteristics, the Party-State also brought forth a great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and paved the way for the development principle of human society and the reconstruction of world socialism.⁹⁰

The *Outline* delineates the present world as the disintegration of the Cold War in the multipolar era and exemplifies the weakening of the U.S.,

⁸⁹ *Outline*, vol. 2, 113.

⁹⁰ *Outline*, vol. 2, 124-25.

the advent of the European Union, and the rise of Russia & Japan. What characterizes China of today is its contribution to the peace and prosperity of the world through multilateral diplomacy and new forms of international relations.⁹¹ Ideologically, however, the *Outline* directly opposes global capitalism by pinpointing the Financial Crisis of 2007-2008 as an evidence that capitalism has not been resolved its basic contradiction that the most of the profits went to the developed countries of the west. It thus recommends that every country should protect its own economic safety and make good use of the opportunities provided by the global economy.⁹² It goes on to suggest that China, acting as the third great power, should carry on its own development and keep a distance from global capitalism. Indeed, this has also been the basic line of the Chinese Communist Party since Mao Zedong.

Conclusion

Since the beginning of the PRC in 1949, the teaching of history in China has changed in accord with the ideological policy of the Party-State and the dynamics of international relations. The official education curriculum during the Reform and Opening-up period abandoned the Soviet model and followed instead the style of history education in Europe and the U.S.. Against the background of the post-Cold War world, public education, in line with the state policy of modernization, aimed at preparing students for a future global information society. Since the Xi Jinping era, however, public history education has undergone a dramatic change. In reinterpreting its relationship with the world, China reconstructs a new state identity for national integration and ideological mobilization. This new identity is crucial given that the Party-State attempts to deal with global capitalism led by the U.S., the crisis of national identity during the Reform and Opening-up period, and the question of ethnicities & nations. As such, China is once

⁹¹ *Outline*, vol. 2, 133-5.

⁹² *Outline*, vol. 2, 135.

again resorting to the centripetal force of collective identity through knowledge-focused political education and state-led ideological education. In particular, keeping pace with Putin's Russia, the PRC strives for a non-Western hegemony in which to blend Marxism and nationalistic historical science and standardizes the form and content of history education in public school.

History: An Outline of Chinese and Foreign History embodies this new national identity able to glorify China's national history as an imperial history, based on the theory of cultural empire, in premodern times and the history of a non-Western great power in modern times. The imperial history emphasizes the ongoing process of unification, less than class struggle or conflict, where diverse ethnicities and classes through universal laws and the institutions of empire, thereby propagating the idea that China had long been a multi-ethnic regional empire since ancient times. The non-Western great power underlines the ongoing process of revolution in such a way that the CCP has marshalled the success of its anti-feudal, anti-colonial, and anti-imperial movements in the first half of the 20th century into an international solidarity to champion the interests of the Third World during the Cold War and in the post-Cold War era. It further envisions socialist China to take an alternative path to development against U.S.-led global capitalism in the 21st century and to contend for their regional power in Northeast Asian and East Asia. Then, the reevaluation of Chinese history as an imperial history and a great power can grant a kind of diachronic legitimacy to the PRC for its leading role in the region. But, the new national identity of the PRC seems to be closely tied to re-Sinicization whose center-periphery framework might pronounce hegemonic involvement of the PRC in neighboring states and give rise to regional instability in East Asia. Then, the leadership of the PRC could dismantle the national identities and cultural tradition of the neighboring states by justifying a hierarchical top-down relationship, whether unwittingly or otherwise, in the region.

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