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Diversification of The "Late Soviet": Attitudes to Mikhail Gorbachev in The Mirrors of History Textbooks

Abstract. *The article deals with representations of Mikhail Gorbachev, last leader of the USSR, in textbooks on the history of three Post-Soviet countries: Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. The personality of Gorbachev is seen in the wider framework of attitudes to the "late Soviet" and its embedding in three histories based on the official discourses. The results of historical textbook analysis show the ambiguity and diversification of these attitudes reflected in three "faces" of Gorbachev changing with the pace of perestroika. It is seen that negative attitudes to the personality of Gorbachev are connected to his representations within the framework of Machiavelist elite theories and general fight for power, with certain manifest or latent nostalgia for the Soviet past. The case of Ukraine is the most in contrast with a positive evaluation of Gorbachev's personality and activities in comparison to Russia and Belarus.*

Key words: historical textbook analysis, "late Soviet" period, Post-Soviet representation, attitudes to Mikhail Gorbachev, comparative research.

Introduction.

Reflections upon the possibilities of creating and reframing the geopolitical configurations in the contemporary world always shed light on previous country unions and associations. A characteristic feature of the Post-Soviet past is a constant search for new political equilibriums which take into account both the closeness of non-Soviet neighbors and relationships with Russia as a main successor of the USSR (especially important for Ukraine and Belarus as two "younger sisters" of neighboring Russia). Current President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko flirted with the European Union and fell out with Vladimir Putin before the presidential elections in Belarus in 2010. 2013 has become a new benchmark for

Ukraine in a rather similar scenario triggered by the upcoming possibility of the Ukraine's Association with the European Union. In such tricky situations, references to the recent past seem to be inevitably relevant. This article is intended to unveil the specificity of image construction of the last Soviet leader, Mikhail Gorbachev, in Post-Soviet textbooks mirroring the official attitudes towards history of three countries - Ukraine, Russia and Belarus. In order to realize this intention, we will focus on the following questions: How does Gorbachev's textbook image represent the attitude to the "late Soviet" and the USSR collapse as a whole? Which meanings of the "late Soviet" period, also called perestroika, are connected to such translations in three countries nowadays? How are these meanings diversified both in space and time? In order to answer these questions, we refer to the classical Machiavelist and evaluative elite theories (Femia, 2004; Ortega-y-Gasset, 1930) and the results of the research conducted in the frame of the project of Centre for Russian and Eurasian Studies (Uppsala University, Sweden): "Internationalization and Implementation of Western Educational Standards in the Post-Soviet States: From Building a Network Towards Joint Research" (2011-2013)¹.

For our research of the indicated period, we have chosen school and university textbooks on the history of three countries with close historical ties and similar cultures - Belarus, Russia and Ukraine - as the main source of information, as they afford a possibility to reflect on the nuances of interpretations of this personality in the frame of official attitudes to the Soviet and its turn into the Post-Soviet; at the same time, textbooks as historical objects usually contain information with reference to later events (Danto, 2007), which means constant revision of the past based on the present facts, along with discussion or disproof of the latter. In such a way, textbook analysis sheds light on the constructed positioning of any historical matter. This is especially evident in case of Gorbachev embedded into perestroika and kept in the stories of the Post-Soviet nation-building in different societies. Thus, we will logically consider the possibility of speaking about Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian models of Mikhail Gorbachev's image transmission through the educational institutions of these countries. In our reasoning, we will correlate these images with the historical development of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine during the last twenty years and follow the relations between the

¹ Research teams were responsible for separate countries, so that the research was conducted by a team from Belarus (Marharyta Fabrykant, Andrei Dudchik), a team from Russia (Nataliya Tregubova, Aleksandr Gorylev, Aleksey Rusakov, Liliya Erushkina) and a team from Ukraine (Andriy Kashyn, Alla Marchenko, Yuliya Yurchuk). Academic Director of the Project – Prof. Li Bennich-Bjorkman, coordinator – Sergiy Kurbatov. The project received funding from Swedish Institute through the Visby Program.

collapse of the Soviet Union, the origin of new states and the role of Gorbachev in these complicated processes.

The period of perestroika (1985-1990) was the end of the Soviet Union, one of two superpowers, which maintained the reality of a bi-polar world during the second part of 20th century. This period is reflected in recent literature and labeled in different ways: “conservative revolution” (Magun, 2010), “approval of inactivity” (Prozorov, 2012), etc. Fukuyama stressed that with the end of Soviet Union we were witnessing not just the end of the Cold War, but “the end of history as such” (1992, pp. 25, 28). The disintegration of the Soviet bloc led not only to new geopolitical configurations and the origin of fifteen new states instead of the USSR entity, which were hardly imagined before, but also to new instances of violence which were scarcely possible without the fall of the Communist system, such as Karabakh, Pridnestrov’e, and Sumgait. Although Lyotard long ago put stress on scepticism towards big narratives of history as an indicator of postmodernism (1979), history in the textbooks of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine continues to be translated and retranslated in a positivistic manner: the sequence of events is connected with political leaders, at the same time neglecting everyday life and the role of “small people.” In such a way, all changes of perestroika and consequent collapse of the USSR have been more or less associated with Mikhail Gorbachev, the first and the last President of the USSR, the last General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, and the unpredictable Soviet leader who became a Nobel Prize winner. The controversial personality and activities of Mikhail Gorbachev have been examined mostly by political scientists and historians from the perspectives of evaluations of the period accomplishments (White, 1990; Sogrin, 2001; Breslauer, 2003); there are some sociological reflections as well (Butenko, 1992; Levada, 2005). In this context, the personality of Gorbachev and description of his activities through the lenses of textbook research seems to us an interesting attempt to analyze how the perception of the last Soviet leader is consciously constructed in minds of future generations.

Methodology.

Countries in the scope of our analysis have been selected as comparative cases that have, to some extent, similar Pre-Soviet² and rather different³ Post-Soviet backgrounds. Belarus,

² The majority of contemporary Belarus and Ukraine was part of Russian Empire before 1917.

³ In comparison with authoritarian Belarus and semi-authoritarian Russia, Ukraine has a more or less liberal type of state (Davisha & Parrott 1997).

Russia and Ukraine inherited a lot of features from the Soviet period, which is most evident in their political systems, rooted in the perestroika period or even before. Communist nomenclature has successfully turned into Post-Soviet political leaders (Pylypenko, 2008: 37). At the same time, the period of perestroika (especially during its early stage) became the arena for new leaders, mainly public intellectuals and national-oriented actors (e.g. Andrey Sakharov, Viacheslav Chornovil, Egor Gaydar) who declared themselves to be at the forefront of changes while reflecting expectations of the vast part of the society. Such political arrangements led to the cause-and-effect relationship between the negative part of the Post-Soviet transformations in each country and perestroika itself (*sui generis*, a display of causal attribution fundamental error). Here we refer to the data showing rather similar attitudes toward the personality of Gorbachev in Russia, Belarus and Ukraine: one of Levada Center polls in Russia conducted in April 2013 showed that the majority of people in Russia remarked upon the bad influence of perestroika on the future; they also showed a tendency to evaluate Gorbachev neutrally or negatively⁴; only one fifth of Ukraine's population viewed Gorbachev's reforms positively, according to Kyiv International Institute of Sociology data in 2011.⁵ Comparative research conducted by a Eurasian monitor in 2009 also showed negative average attitudes only towards two Soviet leaders: Stalin and Gorbachev. At the same time, in Ukraine and Belarus attitudes to Stalin are more negative than to Gorbachev, while in Russia the situation is quite the opposite (!).⁶ The attitude to perestroika as a whole has not undergone significant changes during the Post-Soviet time. Surely, such tendencies are reproduced in the collective memory of each society and may as well be generated by educational materials on perestroika intended for those who perceive perestroika and its leader as a literary concept, without having any personal experience of living during the period. In this vein, instead of three cases, we could see, rather, a unified and negative picture of perestroika and its leading actor.

The selection of university and school textbooks on the history of Belarus, Ukraine and Russia was determined by several factors: 1) approval by the relevant official bodies for use at the educational establishments (e.g. in Ukraine we dealt with the textbooks approved by the Ministry of Science and Education of Ukraine); 2) current use due to their existence in public libraries; 3) coverage of the period of perestroika in their texts.⁷ The sample of Russian

⁴ See: [<http://www.levada.ru/08-05-2013/otnoshenie-k-lideram-proshlogo-gorbachev-eltsin-verkhovnyi-sovet>]

⁵ See: [http://gazeta.zn.ua/SOCIETY/perestroyka_ili_zarya_postkommunizma.html]

⁶ See: [<http://www.eurasiamonitor.org/rus/research/event-162.html>]

⁷ The books with several editions were taken into account only if there was difference of material about Perestroika period, otherwise we took the latest edition.

textbooks, though, is comparably more qualitative and consists of textbooks related to various regions of Russian Federation. There is an overall tendency to put facts rather than evaluations into school textbooks (and the personality of Gorbachev is not an exception), while university textbooks are expectedly more evaluative. In order to describe country tendencies, we have taken into account and mediated both variants.

Quantitative and qualitative approaches have been combined in the textbook analysis as rather compatible at the core, allowing us to simultaneously explore both explicit and implicit meanings of Gorbachev's positioning during perestroika, grounded in each country's specificity. Content analysis is used as a quantitative substantiation of the research implemented through measurement of the volume of perestroika materials as the whole and its areas covered in the textbooks, references to key events, actors and entities and their proportions in each case. Qualitative substantiation is based on different versions of discourse analysis selected as the most appropriate for each country, but comparable due to their common aim: critical research of ideology and authority incorporated into the texts about perestroika. In the Belarusian case, qualitative approach has been realized by means of critical discourse analysis, which unveils hidden relations of power embedded in texts (Fairclough, 2003) and psychological discourse analysis helping diagnose implicit guidelines provided in textbooks in order to select a distinctive position of perestroika in the textbooks (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002), while in the Russian case, critical discourse analysis reconstructs the inner logic of historical narration and distinguishes between the struggle of abstract discourses and motives of particular authors (Jørgensen & Phillips, 2002). The Ukrainian case has been grounded on historical discourse analysis that pays special attention to historical context, explaining certain representations of the past that tend to be fixed as commonly accepted knowledge (Wodak, 2009).

General picture and quantitative measures.

Each country's research groups have revealed the existence of dominant discourses: in Belarus there is a manifest "discourse of transition" in the perestroika historical narrative; in Russia's textbooks, a discourse of the "domino principle"; Ukraine's historical narrative is predominantly in line with the discourse of "nationalization." A detailed picture of each discourse's peculiarities goes beyond the scope of this article, though we should emphasize that the "discourse of transition" places perestroika on a field of unstructured interactions

where directions and the initial premises remain unclear, whereas the “domino principle” implies that the explicit primary steps of perestroika led to unexpected consequences that resulted in the loss of control and the collapse of the Soviet Union. In contrast, the “nationalization” discourse places perestroika in a narration aimed to justify the appearance of independent Ukraine as the culmination of the period. The personality of Mikhail Gorbachev is embedded into each case’s narrative, though the latter can be characterized as internally depersonalized. It means that the majority of events and processes were not attributed to any person; moreover, the regarding of persons sometimes seems too formal and schematic, as in long lists as tributes to the honor of so-called national-oriented. In this case, Gorbachev plays the role of a symbolic coverage of these processes. Anyway, in this trend the personality of Mikhail Gorbachev is exploited most often in all the countries: on average, Gorbachev is mentioned 8 times per book in Ukraine and Belarus, and 18 times per book in Russia. In these countries, all other politicians are paid considerably less attention. The second figure of this period in Belarus, Boris Yeltsin, is mentioned 3 times per book, and the same quantitative measure can be applied to Leonid Kravchuk⁸ in Ukraine. The second figure in Russia’s texts on perestroika, B. Yeltsyn, is mentioned 7 times per book. The third person of perestroika narration is Stanislav Shushkevich⁹ in Belarus and Yuriy Andropov¹⁰ in Russia. They appear in the majority of consequent textbooks 1-2 times per period. In Ukraine, the third most-mentioned person is Volodymyr Shcherbitskiy.¹¹ Even such a simple overview shows that the narration of perestroika defines some of the same actors in three countries, though there are differences regarding quantitative measures and national specific actors (e.g. Ukraine’s narrative is oriented towards national actors, while Belarus’s main actors are both national and soviet). There is also a visible tendency to promote “national heroes” (Kravchuk and Shcherbitskiy) in the Ukrainian case without rejection of the “quantitative superiority” of Mikhail Gorbachev. Is the quantity of Gorbachev’s mentions in the textbooks on history in three Post-Soviet countries really evidence of his being the main actor of perestroika, and how homogenous is his image during perestroika period? We will proceed further to show which actions and qualities are constructed to frame Gorbachev in each case.

⁸ The Head of the Supreme Council of Ukraine in 1990-1991, President of Ukraine in 1991-1994.

⁹ The Deputy of the Supreme Council of Belarus: Deputy Head in 1990-1991, Head in 1991-1994.

¹⁰ Former Soviet leader who changed Brezhnev on the position of the First Secretary of the Central Committee of Communist Party of the USSR, died in 1984.

¹¹ The First Secretary of the Central Committee of Communist Party of Ukraine (May 1972 - September 1989).

Three “faces” of Gorbachev.

Textbook narration, as we found, usually deals with similar periodization of perestroika: its cautious beginning, intensive deployment and rapid ending. All these periods correlate with Gorbachev's mentions. The first facet is connected with the simultaneous emergence of the term “perestroika” and Gorbachev as a player on a political arena. The second one appears episodically within the realization of perestroika and unveils the rules of the game, while the third is comprised of meanings that saturate perestroika results and, thus, shape the finalized image of Gorbachev in each case. We dare to assign three “faces” of Gorbachev to each mentioned facet of perestroika: “face of a reformer” at the beginning, “face of a confused dummy” in the middle and “face of a democrat” in the end to check their suitability for Belarus, Ukraine and Russia’s historical narratives. In such assignments, we will examine the most vivid messages connected with the personality of Gorbachev translated by each “face” of Gorbachev’s presentation. We have to mention the two most evident dichotomies that shape perceptions of the last USSR leader – “powerful-weak” and “dependent-independent,” both of which create the contours of all three faces.

As we emphasized, the first “face” of Gorbachev is connected with the beginning of perestroika. The common feature of all the analyzed textbooks is that he is differentiated from the previous rulers both in age and mind (the latter is emphasized in the textbooks of Russia and Ukraine). Such differentiation, as we will see, is a convenient tool for creating and recreating the ground for some conspiracy around Gorbachev and his role in history. The textbook narrative imposes the emergence of Mikhail Gorbachev “from nowhere” - there is no short biography or explicit references to former activities. He appeared in the textbooks’ narratives as a kind of *new protagonist of the new period* of Soviet history. Though Gorbachev led an echelon of so called “instant career” political leaders (Pylypenko, 2008: 32) instead of climbing the classical career ladder of a typical party functionary, this fact is usually underestimated in the textbooks of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine. Meanwhile, the textbook version of perestroika starts in Belarus with his elections, in Ukraine with his speech, or in Russian with his ascertaining of becoming a new leader of the USSR. Such an abrupt history gives ground for considering him a symbol of renovation with emphasis on his age: typical adjectives in the textbooks of three countries are “energetic,” “active,” and “popular.” In this meaning, Gorbachev is contrasted with the establishment of the previous period characterized as gerontocratic – even going so far as to be called an “oligarchy of “Kremlin elders” (Kulchytskyi & Lebedieva, 2011: 213) – and passive – “Gorbachev had an

unusual, for the Soviet leaders, style of behavior” (Valliulin, 2002). Such an appeal to age surely seems too weak for a political leader compared to experience and personal qualities connected with politics (to rephrase: where is charisma?), but at the same time, the appeal is powerful enough to justify further failures of perestroika. Such a positioning of Gorbachev fits the “best possible variant” evaluative theory of Ortega-y-Gasset, in which Gorbachev is positioned as a number of good intentions in the background of stagnation. We admit the rather descriptive nature of such differentiation, which is in line with different versions of Gorbachev’s interpretations. A unified picture of Gorbachev in all three countries changes rather quickly with the pace of perestroika. To sum up, the first “face” of Gorbachev as a reformer seems rather artificial and symbolic; this is rather a “mask” of a somewhat anonymous and young reformer than a face. This mask provokes bright expectations for the future, at the same time playing a role of promising introduction to further development of events and processes. But what does his “face” look like? Let’s proceed to it with the deployment of perestroika.

The perestroika processes in 1986-1990 were ambiguous in their nature, implementation and consequences. Such ambivalence of planned and realized reforms is described through the lens of necessity to keep the Soviet system, as well as to bring modifications to its most destructive parts. The most typical concept regarding Gorbachev here is his anonymous team, “architects of perestroika,” a stumbling block or a place of “hideaway” while speaking about his activities. In Ukraine’s textbooks there is an evident tendency to explain mistakes of perestroika politics by the restrictions created and maintained by Gorbachev’s team within the popular discursive strategy of shifting blame and responsibility. Belarusian textbooks are not so straightforward while emphasizing the dubious goals of Gorbachev and his team, thus exploiting the mere concept of “team” to make an inseparable linkage between the personality and a system. Analysis of this perestroika facet in Russia’s textbooks shows the abundance of metonymies where “Gorbachev” is synonymous with “the Soviet Union,” while at the same time personifying inconsistency of any reform. The Russian case is demonstrative for its absence of evaluative connotations in such a way that a reader of the textbook could construct a vision of Gorbachev in accordance with the existing attitude to the Soviet Union in its agony.

Here we remark on the setoff of Mikhail Gorbachev to an old system (typical for Ukraine’s narrative), democratic forces embodied by Boris Yeltsin (typical for Belarus and Russia’s narratives) or random comparisons symbolizing nothing but incoherence. Existence

of the rather free manner of Gorbachev's interpretations and comparisons in Belarus' textbooks distinguishes their narration as most critical, e.g. "Mikhail Gorbachev is very similar to the weak-willed chatterbox of period of collapse of the Russian Empire, Alexander Kerensky, but without his education and gloss of an advocate... Publicity became the only achievement of Gorbachev" (Treshchenok, 2005: 283).

In Ukraine's textbooks, it is typical to emphasize the positive victimhood of Gorbachev as a person who came before his time: "He was distinguished from the other party leaders by emphasized democracy, energy, desire and readiness for radical changes in society" (Husiev & Kazmyrchuk, 2008: 398). Moreover, in the Ukrainian case, it is common to find such phrases as "perestroika architect" or "Gorbachev's perestroika;" some of the titles of paragraphs/subparagraphs borrow their name from Gorbachev's work "*New thinking*." The abovementioned idealization mixed with signs of collective sympathy for Gorbachev might lead to naming his second "face" that of a "confused hero", not a "dummy". Negative aspects of Gorbachev's personality are related to his attempts to rescue the Soviet Union and its power; "Gorbachev was inconsistent in reforms implementation and fighting with conservatism" (Bilotserkivskyyi, 2007: 477). Hence, the second "face" of Gorbachev is the most positive in Ukraine's textbooks on history (in comparison to Belarus and Russia's) due to some extent to sacralization ("he really wanted to change something") and justification on the background of an "obsolete team." The positive aspects of Gorbachev's representation in Ukraine are enforced by the statements about his braveness to recognize deep crisis in the country.

The Chernobyl tragedy of 1986, with its consequent catastrophic meanings in the textbooks of all three countries, thereby, is used as a marker to show the upcoming collapse of the system and Gorbachev's dependency and inability to act. Additional meanings are conveyed in Ukraine's textbooks: the colonial status of the state within the USSR increased dependency on the central will embodied, and thus indirectly empowered, by Gorbachev.

In the majority of Ukraine's textbooks, the personality of Gorbachev is described as active, making key decisions and taking responsibility for all the changes during the perestroika period. Only some books give explicit information about the other forces standing behind Gorbachev's figure: other leaders of Communist parties or external influences, hinting at the hidden agenda, or even conspiracy theories, cherished by Western countries in the dissolution of USSR. On the contrary, formal treatment of Gorbachev as a synonym of "the USSR" or "the USSR government" in the majority of Russia's textbooks does not leave

ground for confusion or activeness, but rather for disability - “disabled dummy”. His description is supplemented by the renewal of de-Stalinization and support of freedom of speech (through glasnost in the USSR). In this meaning, the positioning of Gorbachev's personality is rather close to his positioning in the "domino principle" discourse that is widespread in Russian history textbooks.

Generally, we assume that the second “face” of Gorbachev is reconstructed according to each state’s interpretation of the perestroika process (as the “invention of transition” from one to another obscurity in Belarus, a ladder to independence in Ukraine, and a definite process with unexpected and differently interpreted consequences in Russia’s textbooks). In this vein, the “face of a confused dummy” suits the Belarusian case as that having most tragicomic connotations. In contrast to what was found in the reconstruction of the beginning of perestroika, the second “face” of Gorbachev appears to be explained by the political Machiavellist theory of elites as a contradiction and determined by an internal, though silent, fight for power.

The third “face” of Gorbachev is manifested during the final stage of perestroika. We expected that textbooks would contain material on the general role of Gorbachev and reflect his third hypostasis as a “Communist democrat” due to the cumulative impact of “glasnost” politics and de-Stalinization in all three countries, politics of disarmament resonant outside the USSR, etc. History textbooks demonstrate exclusive and sometimes unexpected interpretations. Gorbachev’s last play before his removal from power with the USSR collapse (the collapse is shown as a main event of this stage) was about loss of control over the state and complete subordination to circumstances in all the countries.

Outcomes of perestroika described in the textbooks of all three countries can be judged by their internal scale. Russia seems to be the most cited country (in both meanings of Russia as a state and Russia as a symbol of the Soviet empire) and a ground for comparison in Belarus and Ukraine. For instance, Ukraine’s status as a “sanctuary of stagnation” is completely positioned in line with the progressive politics of Gorbachev in Russia and regressive politics of its Ukraine’s ally Volodymyr Shcherbitskiy. External outcomes of perestroika (e.g. building a new image of the USSR in the world, disarmament) seem rare in the textbooks and are overshadowed by internal processes and consequences. In our opinion, this avoidance is an instrument for focusing readers' attention on either the USSR’s collapse (Russia, Belarus) or independence as the key outcome (Ukraine) rather than evaluating the impact of perestroika and role of Gorbachev in the wider context. The end of the Cold War is

considered in some books, but that seems atypical. The Nobel Peace Prize awarded to Gorbachev for his input in contemporary world history is completely avoided. Therefore, we state that mainly the existence of a conformed Post-Soviet historical position put Gorbachev inside of the USSR circle. In contrast, additional stress is put on the external role of Gorbachev in the meaning of uncovering the white spots of history and “glasnost,” which adds to the symbolic image of Gorbachev on the international arena.

It is worth admitting that in Ukraine’s textbooks, unlike in Belarus and Russia, special emphasis is placed on the coup d’état¹² of August 1991, which is used as a symbol of Gorbachev’s victimization. The GKChP is typically characterized as a negative phenomenon that hastened the end of perestroika, and the USSR’s total downfall aimed to return the USSR to its “before-perestroika” variant, which is also a fact influencing the negative perception of the “big external system” in the Ukrainian textbooks within the discursive strategy of justification of its de-montage. We consider such attention to the GKChP in Ukraine as an additional tool of shifting the responsibility for the negative outcomes of perestroika from Gorbachev to “collective Others.” Levada pointed in his article that the failure of the GKChP is the main success of perestroika (2005), but the textbook material, as we see, generates other meanings. A positive outcome of perestroika in Ukraine’s textbooks is not referenced explicitly, but as the whole period is constructed as a path to a state independence, such independence seems to be the main achievement of perestroika. The decline of the USSR is meant to be a natural stage on a way to this achievement. The Ukrainian case shows that the third “face” of Gorbachev is characterized as a “tragic democrat” (even more tragic than before) who lost control but understood when to resign in order to free space for this achievement. In contrast, in the historical narration of Belarus, the third “face” of Gorbachev remains tragicomic; the USSR’s collapse is presented as not only the final phase of the perestroika period, but also as a bifurcation point of the Soviet history as such. Similar connotations are present in the majority of Russian textbooks. Russia’s textbooks either associate Gorbachev’s resignation with the final decline of the USSR, or pay little attention to his role in the final stage of perestroika; in both cases, the personality of Gorbachev is downplayed in its de-sacralized weakness.

The resignation of Gorbachev in Belarus and Russia is connected with the USSR’s collapse and the end of perestroika, which seems rather explained in accordance with his ambivalent previous activities. So to say, the third “face” of Gorbachev in both countries may

¹² In established Russian abbreviation transliterated as GKChP

be formally called the “USSR finalizer”, evoking a question which remains without explicit answers in the textbooks: did Gorbachev destroy an evil system or a powerful country? In contrast, connotations of perestroika finalization in Ukraine are definitely positive due to its main achievement: Ukraine’s independence. This can be used as an explanation of the most positive general vision of Gorbachev in Ukraine as compared to Russia and Belarus, as well as of the most tragic elements of Gorbachev’s fate (victimization sub-discourse) during perestroika reforms, provoking sorrow for the “perestroika architect.” It is worth admitting that the Post-Soviet image of the late Soviet epoch on the whole is the most negative in Ukraine’s history textbooks, which gives ground for reasoning about linkages of Gorbachev’s positive vision with its role in the USSR’s disappearance (though not voiced).

The “face of the USSR finalizer” in accordance with Machiavellist theory of elite rotation, though, leaves a lot of room for speculation. On the one hand, it doesn’t give a ready-made decision on who Gorbachev was or who Gorbachev is; on the other hand, it pushes the textbook reader to determine his attitude towards the decline of the Soviet Union. In the results of cross-national polls conducted in Ukraine, Russia and Belarus over the last 13 years (Dmytruk, 2013), there is a slow tendency to reevaluate the disintegration of the USSR in Russia and Ukraine towards feeling less nostalgia. 41% of Ukraine’s population is sorry for the USSR, according to a Rating poll in 2013; the same emotions characterize 56% of the Russian population, according to VCIOM in 2012 (Dmytruk, 2013). On this basis, we assume that the expression of the third “face” of Gorbachev can be read ambivalently; the only exception is Ukraine’s historical narrative where the tragedy of Gorbachev seems extremely favorable for the nation. Nevertheless, we state the overall existence of concept of a “serious case”, or “Ernstfall” in original (Schmitt, 1996), concerning the Soviet Union’s collapse, described as a political decision in an extraordinary situation that could not be regulated by usual legal rules without alternatives.

Gorbachev’s personality is not in the focus of the historians. There is no information about his family life or wife (a topic which became rather resonant in public Post-Soviet discourse with the label of “first public lady in the USSR”). Also, details of his future career after December 25, 1991 are absent (although he remained public figure at least in the frame of the “Gorbachev-fund” established in 1992). On the one hand, this transmits the symbolic loading on Gorbachev as a collective name which can be interpreted in the frame of the “enemy-friend” dichotomy due to its emergence in the arena (positioned as the “Other”), transitive role and lack of described personal qualities (Schmitt, 1996). Such interpretation is

enforced by general discourses of perestroika in the textbooks, so that positioned freedom from any overly-emotional representations of Gorbachev's personality seems just a façade. At the same time, Gorbachev is shown as the main protagonist of perestroika, an inevitable period of USSR history - the one who, along with this dramatic period, disappeared from all the textbooks! But what are the outcomes of this adoption of a somewhat fragmentary and formal vision of Gorbachev's deeds in history? The feedback of the target audience of the Post-Soviet textbooks, as we already know, was rather negative in all three countries in 2009, which may be interpreted now as an indicator of perceiving Gorbachev through the lens of a Machiavelistic fight for power and neglecting his first, "evaluative" face. Surely, reconstruction of the textbook image of the previous Soviet periods and comparison of Gorbachev's positioning within textbooks of three Post-Soviet countries with other Soviet leaders of different periods (Leonid Brezhnev, Nikita Khrushchev, etc.) could be substantial issues for development of this research in understanding the roles of different Soviet leaders in official mind-mapping by history.

Conclusions

To sum up, we have distinguished what unites and differentiates Gorbachev's reconstruction in historical narratives of three Post-Soviet countries. Thus, three "faces" of Gorbachev, along with the intertwining of explanation by Machiavellist and evaluative theories, look like the Buddhist "past," "present" and "future," where time has changed its flow. The Machiavellist vision of Gorbachev is vividly exhibited by the concept of fighting for power (especially within Gorbachev's team) during the second stage of perestroika, while the evaluative dimension is recognized in the first "face" of Gorbachev at the beginning of perestroika (and seems most notable in Ukraine's textbook descriptions regarding perestroika's deployment). Future intentions are, at first glance, substituted by "past-in-the-present" perestroika reforms still mirrored in Post-Soviet politics, culture and economy, and finally turn into the definite "past of the USSR" with different connotations. Moreover, time category may be a marker of perestroika placement in three histories; while in the Belarusian and Russian cases this place refers mainly to the past (by contrasting Gorbachev to democratic forces embodied by Yeltsin and emphasizing the USSR's collapse as the main event connected with the period), the Ukrainian case shows that perestroika narration is intended to justify the "future" (by contrasting Gorbachev to conservative Communists and pointing out Ukraine's independence as the key event impossible without perestroika).

Although Gorbachev's professional deeds are widely interpreted on a bipolar scale from "homo novus" to "homo soveticus" in the history textbooks of Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, he remains an important actor of the Soviet epoch in line with the official schemes of history. This importance, though, is used as an instrument for each case of narration and discourse reconstruction. In the textbooks of Russia and Belarus, the authority of Gorbachev is described as legal-rational, with its further weakness and loss. He is a kind of protagonist, one recruited by the system, but also one who did not satisfy its demands and was rejected along with it. In the Ukrainian historical narrative, there's an attempt to translate the image of Gorbachev as a charismatic leader, though in his tragic modality (anticipator of the future). He is a kind of hero, who, as a part of the system, tries to improve it in radical way. The balance between acceptance and rejection of Gorbachev by the system construct the dramatic, even tragic dimensions of his image. All these kinds of authority are also connected to the country meanings of perestroika: a ladder to independence in Ukraine, unclear transition in Belarus and the loss of the USSR in Russia.

Gorbachev's textbook image represents the ambiguous attitude to the Soviet political regime. This attitude is the most frequently expressed as obsolete in Ukraine, but in Russia and Belarus authors tend not to demonstrate the specificity of Gorbachev, showing him as one more representative of political elites – a representative who, due to circumstances, became the last one. At the beginning of perestroika, he is described as a person wearing the mask of a reformer, which can be an attribute of a chess king in a chess game of perestroika, analogies provoked by famous Zbigniew Brzezinski's metaphor of the "grand chessboard" (1998). Analysis of his further actions described in the textbooks showed that many of his intentions were prohibited or facilitated by his team, which finally led him to inability and changed his status to a chess pawn. Such a shift, anyway, does not allow for consideration of Gorbachev either as a real chess player or as a chess king in the historical narratives, although it leaves space both for rethinking his role in the finalization of the USSR and re-conceptualizing the driving forces of perestroika.

Ukraine's historical narrative seems to be the most positive among the narratives of these three countries in the scope of the analysis, though it also shows the ambivalent character of interpretations of Gorbachev. Such constructions are important in conveying meanings of Gorbachev as a symbol of change rather than a person. They undoubtedly influence the role of other figures of perestroika in the three histories and transfer major meanings of perestroika, as well as the role of Soviet in the Post-Soviet space, in the three

countries. In Belarus, the discourse of transition resonates with the tragicomic and confused “dummy face;” in Russia, the “domino principle” discourse shows the duality of possible superpower and disability in the metaphorical equal sign between Gorbachev and the Soviet Union; in Ukraine, the “nationalization” discourse helps grasp the positioned victimhood and sacrifice of Gorbachev.

In such a way, textbook narration demonstrates official attitudes to the Soviet legacy and ideological interpretations of the last Soviet period, called perestroika. Seemingly unified attitudes to Gorbachev reflected in various contemporary surveys hide different meanings and connotations - from disappointment in his leadership (Russia, Belarus) to general victimhood (Ukraine). In this trio of countries, Ukraine seems the most vivid outlier, eager to distance itself from the Soviet past. Our research showed that such meanings have been constantly conveyed during the Post-Soviet period in official history and, thus, may be implicitly embedded in the arguments on any forthcoming geopolitical configurations involving Ukraine, Belarus and Russia.

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20. Schmitt, C. (1996). *The concept of the political* / University of Chicago Press edition. - 105 p.
21. Sogrin, V. (2001). *Political history of contemporary Russia. 1985-2001: from Gorbachev to Putin* / In Russian: *Politicheskaya istoriya sovremennoy Rossii. 1985-2001: ot Gorbacheva do Putina*. - M.: Ves' mir. - 272 p.
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23. Wodak, R. et al. (2009). *The Discursive Construction of National Identity*, Edinburgh University Press; 2nd Revised edition edition. - 288 p.

Appendixes

APPENDIX 1. BELARUS' SAMPLE OF TEXTBOOKS ON HISTORY

Secondary School Textbooks

1. Istorija Belarusi XIX-nachalo XXI v. (History of Belarus, XIX-beg. of XXI cent., in Russian): textbook for 11th grade. Ed. by E.K. Novik. Minsk: BSU, 2009.
2. Istorija Belarusi 1945-2005 (History of Belarus 1945-2005, in Russian): textbook for 10 grade. Ed. by V.M. Fomin. Minsk: BSU, 2006.
3. Vsemirnaya istoriya, XIX – nachalo XXI v. (World History, XIX-beg. of XXI cent., in Russian): textbook for 11th grade. Ed. by V.S. Koshelev. Minsk: BSU, 2009.
4. Vsemirnaya istoriya Noveishego vremeni 1945-2005 (World History of Modernity 1945-2005, in Russian): textbook for 11th grade. Ed. by G.A. Kosmach et al. Minsk: BSU, 2006.
5. Kovkel, I.I., Yarmusik, E.S. Istorija Belarusi s drevneishih vremen do nashego vremeni (History of Belarus since ancient times till our times, in Russian). – Minsk: Aversev, 2010.
6. Sharova, N.S. Istorija Belarusi. Opornyje konspekty dlya podgotovki k centralizovannomu testirovaniyu (History of Belarus: Synopsis for Preparation for Testing, in Russian). Minsk: Aversev, 2010.

University Textbooks

1. Narysy historyi Bielarusi (Essays on the History of Belarus, in Belarusian). 2 vol. Vol. 2. Ed. by M.P.Kastsjuk, I.M.Ihnatsienka, U.I.Vyshynski et al. Minsk, Bielarus, 1995.
2. Historyya Bielarusi (History of Belarus, in Belarusian). In 2 vol. Vol. 2. February 1917 – 1997. / Ed. by Y.K.Novik, H.S.Martsul. Minsk, Universitetskaye, 1998.
3. Chigrinov, P.G. Istorija Bielarusi (History of Belarus, in Russian). Minsk: Polymia, 2001.

4. Historyya Bielarusi (History of Belarus, in Belarusian). In 2 vol. Vol. 2. 19th-20th centuries / P.I.Bryhadzin, U.F.Ladysieu, P.I.Zialinski et al. Minsk: Belarusian State University, 2002.
5. Istoriya Bielarusi (History of Belarus, in Russian). In 2 vol. Vol. 2. Ed. by Y.I.Treshchenok. Mogiliov, Mogiliov State University, 2005.
6. Chigrinov, P.G. Ocherki istorii Bielarusi (Essays on the History of Belarus, in Russian). Minsk, Vysheyshaya shkola, 2007.
7. Historyya Bielarusi. Ad starazhytnyh chasou – pa 2008 g. (History of Belarus. From ancient times to 2008, in Belarusian). / Y.K.Novik, I.L.Kachalau, N.Y.Novik; ed. by Y.K.Novik. Minsk: Vysheyshaya shkola, 2009.
8. Historyya Bielarusi (History of Belarus, in Belarusian). In 6 vol. Vol. 6. Belarus in 1996 – 2009. Ed. by M.Kastsiuk. Minsk: Sovriemiennaya shkola, Ekopierspektiva, 2011.

APPENDIX 2. RUSSIA'S SAMPLE OF TEXTBOOKS ON HISTORY

Secondary School Textbooks

1. Zagladin (2007) 9th grade History of Russia. XX century
2. Zagladin (2007) 11th grade History of Russia. XX – beginning of XXI century
3. Danilov (2012) History of Russia. XX – beginning of XXI century
4. Aleksashkina (2010) Russia and World in XX – beginning of XXI century
5. Levandovskiy (2011) History of Russia. XX – beginning of XXI century
6. Danilov (1995) History of Russia. XX century
7. Danilov (2003) History of Russia. XX – beginning of XXI century
8. Levandovskiy (1997) Russia in XX century

University Textbooks

1. Barsenkov (2010) History of Russia. 1917-2009
2. Dmitrienko (1998) History of Russia. XX century
3. Orlov (1997) History of Russia
4. Kirillov (2011) History of Russia
5. Lapteva (2009) History of Russia
6. Semin (2008) History of Fatherland
7. Kislitsin (1997) History of Russia in questions and answers
8. Valiullin (2002) History of Russia. XX century
9. Konukov (1995) History of Fatherland. Part II (mid of XIX – end of XX century)
10. Bobyleva (2010) History of Fatherland
11. Yanguzin (1997) History of Bashkortostan (1917-1990s)
12. Sabirova (2009) History of Tatarstan from ancient times till our days

13. Sultanbekov (2001) History of Tatarstan
14. Ahmatov (2005) History of Chechnya in XIX-XX centuries

APPENDIX 3. UKRAINE'S SAMPLE OF TEXTBOOKS ON HISTORY**List of university textbooks on History of Ukraine****(recommended by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine)**

1. Bazhan, O. & Bilousko, O. & Vlasov, V. & Mytsyk, Y. (2006). *Istoriia Ukrainy: Navchalnyi posibnyk*. Kyiv: «Delta».
2. Bilotserkivskiy, V. (2007). *Istoriia Ukrainy. Navchalnyi posibnyk*. Kyiv: Tsentr uchbovoi literatury.
3. Boiko, O. (1999). *Istoriia Ukrainy: posibnyk dlia studentiv vyshchych navchalnykh zakladiv*. - Kyiv: VTs «Akademiia».
4. Boiko, O. (2004). *Istoriia Ukrainy: posibnyk*. — 2-he vyd., dop. – Kyiv: Akademvydav.
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6. Hrechenko, V. (2009). *Istoriia Ukrainy. Modulnyi kurs [Tekst] : navch. posibnyk*. Kharkiv: Torsinh plus.
7. Hudz, V. (2008). *Istoriia Ukrainy. Pidruchnyk*. Vydannia druhe, dopovnene i pereroblene. Kyiv: Vydavnychi dim «Slovo».
8. Deshchynskiy, L. & Havryliv, I. & Zinkevych, R. & Denisov, Y. & Taraban, V. & Shelomentsev, S. (2005). *Istoriia Ukrainy ta yii derzhavnosti: navch. Posibnyk*. Vyd. 3-ye, pereroblene i dopovnene. Lviv: Beskyd Bih.
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10. *Istoriia Ukrainy / Za red. Y.Zaitseva*. (1998) Lviv: Svit.
11. Verstiuk, V. & Garan, O. & Hurzhii, O. ta in. / Pid red. V.Smoliia (1997). *Istoriia Ukrainy*. Kyiv: Vydavnychi dim «Alternatyvy».
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13. Lytvyn, V. & Sliusarenko, A. & Kolesnyk, V. & Hladkykh, M. & Husiev, V.; Za red. V.Lytvyna (2006). Istoriiia Ukrainy: Navchalno-metodychnyi posibnyk dlia seminarshkykh zaniat. Kyiv: Znannia-Pres.
14. Kazmyrchuk, H. & Kotsur, A. & Verbovyi, O. ta in.; za red. H.Kazmyrchuka (2009).Istoriiia Ukrainy: pidruchnyk. Kyiv: VPTs "Kyivskyyi universytet".
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List of school textbooks on History of Ukraine

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