

Original Research Article

A Study on the Causes of the Disintegration of the Soviet Union in Chinese High School History Textbooks

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Abstract: The disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 is one of the most important research topics in the history circles at home and abroad, and also an important knowledge point in the world history part of history teaching in middle schools in China. This paper selects the representative history textbooks of high school in China as the research object, summarizes the contents of the selected textbooks about the disintegration of the Soviet Union, focuses on the description of the causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the history textbooks, summarizes and analyzes the contents, so as to let the Russian people understand the Russian concept of history in China's high school education, and promote the cultural exchanges between China and Russia.

Keywords: Disintegration of the Soviet Union; History Textbooks; Cause

1. Introduction

Textbook is a kind of teaching book compiled according to a certain curriculum standard. It is the core teaching material. It is a comprehensive summary and systematic discussion on the existing knowledge and achievements of a certain discipline, which is related to the implementation of teaching activities and the improvement of teaching quality^[1]. Middle school history textbooks are an important part of middle school textbooks, which are usually compiled according to the syllabus or curriculum standards issued by the state education administrative department. It systematically and concretely presents the basic content of history discipline, and reflects the basic requirements of "curriculum standard" that students must master the most basic historical knowledge, the ability training of history discipline and the basic requirements of emotional attitude and values education^[2-3]. It is not only the "learning base" for students to learn history course, but also the main basis for teachers to organize history teaching activities. As an important carrier of cultural heritage and continuation, it is related to the formation of the values and world outlook of the training object. This paper selects the representative Chinese high school history textbooks as the research object, summarizes the contents of the selected textbooks about the disintegration of the Soviet Union and analyzes the reasons. The purpose is to let friendly neighboring Russia understand the image of Russia reflected in China's current mainstream world outlook, promote cultural exchanges between China and Russia, and understand the Russian history in China's high school education on the basis of relevant research Historical view.

2. A summary of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in Chinese high school history textbooks

The disintegration of the Soviet Union is a necessary point in the history textbooks of Chinese senior high schools, as well as the examination points of college entrance examination^[4]. Chinese high school history textbooks have studied this topic in a wide range. This study collected five sets of Chinese high school history textbooks, a total of 12 volumes, respectively: "history compulsory 1", "history compulsory 2", "history elective 3-20th century war and peace" (2007), compiled by the People's Education Press Curriculum Textbook Research Institute and History Curriculum Textbook Research and Development Center, and published by the People's Education Press; "history compulsory Volume 1" and "history compulsory Volume 2" (2009), edited by Zhu Hanguo and Ma Shili, and published by People's Publishing House; "history compulsory 1", "history compulsory 2", "history elective 3-20th century war and peace" (2010), jointly compiled by senior high school history textbook compilation group and DC Canada International Exchange Center, senior high school curriculum standard experimental textbook published by Beijing Normal University Publishing House; "history compulsory Volume 1", "history elective 3-20th century war and peace"

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(2009), edited by senior high school history textbook compiling group, elephant publishing house and DC Canada International Exchange Center, and published by Elephant Press; "history compulsory 1-the course of political civilization", "history compulsory 2-the course of economic growth" (2004), published by Yuelu Press.

These 12 history textbooks are applied to senior high school history education in different regions of China. Although there are differences in arrangement, they are mainly in the form of chronicles. The chapters and titles of the contents about the disintegration of the Soviet Union in the five sets of textbooks are shown in **Table 1**.

Table 1 A list of chapters on the disintegration of the Soviet Union in five sets of textbooks

Serial number	Textbook name	Publishing House	Chapter title	Title	Page number
1	history compulsory 1	People's Education Press	Unit 8 lesson 27	The world pattern at the turn of the century	one
2	history compulsory 2		Unit 7 lesson 21	Economic reform of the Soviet Union after World War II	two
3	history elective 3-20th century war and peace		Unit 4 lesson 4	The end of the two-tier structure	four
4	history compulsory Volume 1	People's Publishing House	Topic 9 Section 3	The strengthening of multipolarization trend	one
5	history compulsory Volume 2		Topic 7 Section 3	The Soviet Union's socialist reform and setbacks	five
6	history compulsory 1	Beijing Normal University Publishing House	Unit 8 lesson 25	The current world political pattern	two
7	history compulsory 2		Unit 7 lesson 21	Economic reform and setback after the war	one
8	history elective 3-20th century war and peace		Chapter 4 section 3	Confrontation and relaxation in the struggle for hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union	one
9	history compulsory Volume 1	Elephant Press	Unit 8 lesson 25	The current world political pattern	two
10	history elective 3-20th century war and peace		Chapter 3 section 3	Confrontation and relaxation in the struggle for hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union	one
11	history compulsory 1-the course of political civilization	Yuelu Press	Unit 7 lesson 27	The world pattern across the century	one
12	history compulsory 2-the course of economic growth		Lesson 17	Economic reform of the Soviet Union	three

In the five sets of textbooks, compulsory textbooks on the disintegration of the Soviet Union are not introduced as a special section or topic content, but are discussed in the change of the world system. The main structure is as follows: the world pattern → the great changes in Eastern Europe and the disintegration of the Soviet Union. In addition to the required textbooks, there are also elective textbooks in this paper. The elective course of history in senior high school is a learning content for students to choose. It aims to further stimulate students' interest in learning, expand their historical vision and promote their personalized development. In the process of compiling and teaching history elective course, relevant learning contents can be added according to the actual situation. The content of the disintegration of the Soviet Union was arranged in history elective 3-20th century war and peace. All textbooks take the disintegration of the Soviet Union as the dividing line, representing the end of the cold war and the beginning of global multipolarization.

3. The causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in Chinese high school history textbooks

In 1999, 2000 and 2001, the Comprehensive Social Research Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences conducted several surveys, accounting for 66.5%, 63.2% and 57.6% of the respondents believed that the disintegration of the Soviet Union could be avoided, while only 20.3%, 25.4 and 30.0% of the respondents agreed that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was inevitable.

The explanation of the causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in Chinese textbooks is basically the same with little difference. The main point of view is that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gave up the position of the ruling party and Gorbachev's wrong reform. However, the descriptions in various textbooks are also different. See **table 2** for details.

Table 2 Summary of the causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union in five sets of textbooks

Serial number	Textbook name	Title	Publishing House	The causes of the disintegration of the Soviet Union
1	history compulsory 1	The world pattern at the turn of the century	People's Education Press	(1) The Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party gave up the leading position of the Communist Party in the country, which led to the serious weakening of power and the outbreak of crisis. (2) "8·19" incident. (3) Gorbachev's political reform led to the chaos of the situation. In August 1991, the Treaty of the union of Soviet sovereign republics was signed, which changed the state system of the Soviet Union from a unified union of Soviet Socialist Republics to a loose federation.
2	history compulsory 2	Economic reform of the Soviet Union after World War II		(1) Economic reform measures lack of macro decision-making and corresponding supporting measures. (2) Gorbachev did not give up the traditional practice of the Soviet Union, but focused on the development of industry. The economy has been declining and people's living standards have continued to decline. (3) Gorbachev turned economic reform into political reform, which eventually led to the domestic situation out of control and the disintegration of the Soviet Union.
3	history elective 3-20th century war and peace	The end of the two-tier structure		(1) The United States exerted pressure on the Soviet Union through economic aid, and it interfered with the reform process of the Soviet Union. (2) Gorbachev's economic reform did not reverse the economic downturn, the people's level was low, political "pluralism" and multi-party system weakened and gave up the leadership of the Soviet Communist Party. (3) The Soviet Union relaxed its control over Eastern Europe. (4) The "peaceful evolution" strategy of western countries. (5) The influence of "Revolutions of 1989". (6) The signing of the agreement on the establishment of the Commonwealth of Independent States.
4	history compulsory Volume 1	The strengthening of multipolarization trend	People's Publishing House	(1) The domestic political system of the Soviet Union was rigid, the vitality of the economic mechanism declined, the speed of economic development declined, and social contradictions were numerous. (2) Under the influence of Gorbachev's policy, Eastern European countries changed dramatically, the new regime moved closer to the west, and the Warsaw Pact was dissolved. (3) The political, economic and military systems of the Soviet Union in Europe collapsed. (4) The Soviet Union announced the Treaty of the union of Soviet sovereign republics, which changed the name of the union of Soviet sovereign republics to the union of Soviet sovereign republics and turned it into a loose confederacy. (5) "8·19" incident. (6) Because of the "8·19" incident, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was excluded from the political power. (7) Yeltsin and his supporters grasped the power of the state, and the nature of the state power changed fundamentally, signing the Almaty declaration.
5	history compulsory Volume 2	The Soviet Union's socialist reform and setbacks		After Stalin's death, the Soviet Union carried out economic reforms several times. However, due to the accumulation of difficulties, the reform steps were difficult and the effect was not great.

6	history compulsory 1	The current world political pattern	Beijing Normal University Publishing House	(1) Highly centralized planned economic system in the Soviet Union. (2) After the failure of Gorbachev's economic reform, he turned to political reform, replaced Marxism with "humane democratic socialism", and put forward "democratization" and "openness", which led to the reform falling into a wrong way. (3) Revolutions of 1989. (4) The Soviet Union amended the constitution, abolished the legal leadership of the Soviet Union Communist Party, and decided to implement multi-party system and presidential system.
7	history compulsory 2	Economic reform and setback after the war		Khrushchev's economic reform failed, Brezhnev's failed economic reform, and Gorbachev's economic reform failed to achieve good results. The focus of the reform was shifted to the political field, which eventually led to the situation out of control. In 1991, the "8.19" incident broke out and the Soviet Union disintegrated rapidly.
8	history elective 3-20th century war and peace	Confrontation and relaxation in the struggle for hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union		Gorbachev published "reform and new thinking" in October 1987 and "socialist thought and revolution" in 1989, which put forward and expounded his so-called "new thinking". This new thinking deviated from the direction of socialism in many major principles, which led to the gradual evolution of Soviet Union society and the disintegration.
9	history compulsory Volume 1	The current world political pattern	Elephant Press	(1) The failure of the Soviet Union's economic reform. (2) After Gorbachev took office, the economic reform failed and turned to political reform, which led to failure. (3) Revolutions of 1989. (4) In 1990, the Soviet Union amended the constitution, abolished the legal leadership of the Soviet Communist Party, and decided to implement a multi-party system and a presidential system.
10	history elective 3-20th century war and peace	Confrontation and relaxation in the struggle for hegemony between the United States and the Soviet Union		The United States and Western countries took advantage of the conditions provided by the relaxation of the situation to strengthen the offensive of "peaceful evolution", which affected the policies, thoughts and culture of the Soviet Union and other socialist countries.
11	history compulsory 1-the course of political civilization	The world pattern across the century	Yuelu Press	(1) Gorbachev's economic reform failed. He went to political reform and put forward the line of "humane and democratic socialism". The guiding ideology of the reform changed fundamentally. (2) The Soviet Union abolished the leadership of the Soviet Union Communist Party, implemented the multi-party system, civil unrest, ethnic disputes and fierce struggle among various faction. (3) Revolutions of 1989. (4) In 1991, with the dissolution of the mutual society and the Warsaw Pact, the political, economic and military systems built by the Soviet Union in Europe collapsed. (5) The "8·19" incident broke out and the Soviet Union disintegrated.
12	history compulsory 2-the course of economic growth	Economic reform of the Soviet Union		After Stalin's death, the Soviet Union carried out economic reforms several times in Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev. However, due to the accumulation of difficulties, the reform steps were difficult and the effect was not great. The economic reform was in a dilemma, and the economy continued to decline. Therefore, Gorbachev shifted the focus of reform to the political system reform. The domestic situation gradually lost control and led to the disintegration.

Chinese academic circles have conducted in-depth studies on the disintegration of the Soviet Union from the aspects of politics, history, culture, military affairs and economy. Returning to the textbook level, the authors or institutions of Chinese high school history textbooks have objectively studied and evaluated the issue from the political and economic aspects. The main reasons include that the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gave up its leading position in the country, which led to the serious weakening of power and the outbreak of crisis^[5,6]; the three generations of leaders of the Soviet Union, Khrushchev, Brezhnev and Gorbachev, basically failed in their economic reform, finally, Gorbachev's economic reform turned to political reform, resulting in chaos and deviation from Marxism^[7,8] The external reason was mainly the peaceful evolution strategy of western countries^[9]. The key event of the disintegration of the Soviet Union was the "8·19" incident, and the fuse was the signing of the Treaty of Soviet sovereignty and the union of republics in August 1991^[10]. From the point of view of the focus and content of the analysis, the Chinese history textbook elaborated the event of the disintegration of the Soviet Union from an objective point of view, without giving evaluation and judgment, so that contemporary Chinese high school students can understand the disintegration of the Soviet Union and the history of the Soviet Union from a more rational perspective.

This study holds that the disintegration of the Soviet Union was caused by the accumulation of historical and social problems left over by the Soviet Union for a long time. The main reasons are as follows: firstly, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union gave up the leadership position of the ruling party; secondly, the economic root, failed to solve the economic problems from the national conditions of the Soviet Union, did not deal with the economic crisis in time, the domestic development was unbalanced, and the understanding of the basic domestic contradictions was improper, which led to the emergence of the economic crisis; thirdly, it did not deal with the economic crisis in time, did not correctly judge the national conditions of the Soviet Union and went to the wrong political reform. The disintegration of the Soviet Union is a tragedy. Its disintegration raises many sharp questions to Marxism Leninists all over the world. It is the bounden duty of every theorist given by history.

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