

# Education Under Threat?

## Navigating the Intersection of Informational Autocracy and Indoctrination in Russian Education

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While all efforts have been made to ensure the accuracy of this thesis, any mistakes remain my own.

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# Abstract

How do informational autocrats, who seek information control, govern education, which is a large information channel? In this thesis, I develop the concept of centralized curriculum control (“CCC”), as a survival strategy employed by informational autocrats. In the study, I explore the case of Russian education under President Vladimir Putin’s leadership. I employ original data from the Putin regime’s list of school textbooks between 2006 and 2020. The findings indicate a less diverse composition of textbook publishing houses, particularly in the fundamentals of life safety (“FLS”) subject following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, in comparison to non-societal disciplines. The history and social studies subjects experienced less increase than anticipated following the annexation, but market concentration was nevertheless higher for these subjects than for natural sciences. Further, efforts to instill regime friendly values in societal disciplines substantiate that centralization and educational content is used by the Putin regime to counter regime threats. I conclude that the Putin regime utilizes CCC, through various tools, to control educational content, which further enables it to infuse regime-friendly values in education. I also suggest that it is plausible that CCC is used by the regime to counter regime threats.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Access to the codebook, data set, and R script is provided by emailing [johannehake@gmail.com](mailto:johannehake@gmail.com) or through this link: <https://github.com/johannehake/FL>

# Abbreviations

CCC	Centralized Curriculum Control
FLS	Fundamentals of life safety
EDU	Publishing house “Education” (Просвещение)
BUS	Publishing house “Bustard” (Дрофа)
RUS	Publishing house “Russian word” (Русское слово)
V-Indoc	Varieties of Indoctrination
VPN	Virtual Private Networks
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
FL	Federal List
HHI	The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index
OCR	Optical Character Recognition

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# Chapter 1 | Introduction

The seminal works of Guriev and Treisman (2015, 2018, 2019, 2020) describe informational autocrats as autocrats who use information control to convince the public they are competent leaders (2019, p. 101). They govern using more sophisticated methods than traditional dictators (2019, p. 103).<sup>2</sup> Unlike traditional dictators, who promote ideologies like communism and fascism, informational autocrats utilize populist and patriotic rhetoric while they try to come across as democratic leaders (2019, p. 102). Furthermore, they hide behind democratic institutions and resort to co-optation instead of brutal and violent repression (2019, p. 122). The tailored suits worn by informational autocrats symbolize their subtlety, starkly contrasting the military uniforms used by their traditional predecessors. Core to the strategy of informational autocrats is their ability to obtain control of information channels and exercise influence discreetly (2019, p. 103).

Education is a comprehensive information channel, and therefore, in this thesis, I explore how informational autocrats use education to counter regime threats and control society's information flow. Autocrats have long understood the importance of education in influencing public opinion, often using it to their advantage, as it can be a powerful tool in shaping our perceptions and understanding of society and play a critical role in autocratic survival. At its core, education promotes critical thinking, reflection, and discussion. These qualities pose a threat to an informational autocrat, who strives to attain information control. As such, education governance can turn out to be a crucial battleground in the struggle for autocratic survival and an important tool for informational autocrats to secure their survival. To maintain control and limit the potential threats posed by an educated, and thereby critical, populace, autocrats might strategically manipulate education. This then leads to an assessment of *indoctrination*.

This thesis adopts a definition of indoctrination that sees it as *systematic attempts to create certain beliefs in people whilst suppressing discussion, critical-mindedness, and openness*.

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<sup>2</sup> The terms "traditional dictator/autocrat" and "overt dictator/autocrat", used interchangeably in this thesis, refer to autocratic leaders who utilize brutal methods, such as violent repression. Examples include Joseph Stalin, Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, and Mao Zedong.

Utilizing the proposed definition of indoctrination, I put forward a new concept of *informational autocratic indoctrination*. The argument for doing so is that the methods the autocrat uses to indoctrinate should be examined in the context of informational autocracies specifically. This is in line with informational autocracy theory, which examines informational autocracy through the methods applied by autocrats (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 102). Additionally, it is suggested that one should assess the opportunity presented for informational autocrats to exert influence over the educational sphere following regime threats.<sup>3</sup> Under the conditions of regime threats, the autocrat's reputation and credibility might be at stake, which might drive him to intensify his information control efforts.

The first hypothesis proposed is that, given informational autocracy, *the autocrat centralizes the curriculum creation process following a moment of pressure*. Moments of pressure expose the autocrat's vulnerability, prompting him to enhance information control in education in order to consolidate power and maintain regime stability. The second hypothesis is that *the autocrat is more inclined to centralize the curriculum creation process following a moment of pressure in subjects addressing societal issues than in subjects which do not address societal issues*. This is because societal disciplines have the potential to foster critical thinking, which could result in dissent, and widespread dissent constitutes a threat to the autocrat. By controlling the narratives through influencing such subjects, the autocrat can curb alternative and dissenting viewpoints, thereby countering regime threats, and creating a favorable environment for his rule.

Specifically, in this thesis, I suggest that autocrats can consolidate content creation in education to obtain information control. This is a viable strategy because it can provide the autocrat with information control in education at its source, and he can avoid having to resort to brutal measures that might alert his critics. It is favorable for informational autocrats to obtain information control without using brutal measures, as overt repression is no property of a democratic and competent leader, which informational autocrats seek to come across as. These assumptions lead me to develop a concept of *centralized curriculum control* ("CCC"). It is suggested that by obtaining CCC in education, the autocrat can control information and covertly impose regime-friendly values on his citizens without alerting his critics and the public.

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<sup>3</sup> I use "threats", "moments of pressure", and "pressure" interchangeably in this thesis to describe any situation that potentially discredits the autocrat.

Then, I explore the case of Russian education governance under the leadership of President Vladimir Putin<sup>4</sup> to examine how he wields his power as an informational autocrat. The Putin regime has used a number of informational autocratic strategies, such as buying media outlets, disinformation campaigns, and resorting to co-optation (Treisman, 2018; Guriev & Treisman, 2019). Due to the 2022 invasion of Ukraine and the threat the regime poses to the international community, more knowledge about how the Putin regime operates is needed.

To test the presence of CCC in Russian education under President Putin's leadership, I use an original data set covering Russian government documents. Specifically, the data set contains over 18,000 textbooks the Putin regime listed for use in primary and secondary schools from 2006 to 2020. By using this granular data, insights about Russian curriculum development are provided. Furthermore, analyzing government textbook lists by the Putin regime can be useful in understanding what subjects are important to the regime. In turn, such knowledge might enable us to further identify the autocrat's strategies.

Among the findings from my study is that the Putin regime, especially following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, consolidated the market for publishing of textbooks using federal lists. Furthermore, the market for publishing houses who publish textbooks in societal disciplines, such as history, social studies, and fundamentals of life safety ("FLS"), experienced higher concentrations than those within non-societal disciplines, which are subjects in natural sciences. Over time, the Putin regime has recommended a less diverse composition of publishers of school textbooks in fundamentals of life safety ("FLS"), social studies, and history. The relative increase in market concentration is most prominent in FLS following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, but market concentration is overall higher in the societal subjects than natural sciences.

Regime friendly and military-patriotic<sup>5</sup> values have also been infused into the content of the societal subjects. It is suggested that the annexation may have driven the Putin regime to increasingly seek CCC, inculcate regime friendly values, and that the regime could do so more easily due to CCC in societal subjects. It is concluded that centralization of curriculum development is one of several tools in the Putin regime's toolkit. Legislative measures to

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<sup>4</sup> I use "Putin" and the "Putin regime" interchangeably in this thesis.

<sup>5</sup> The general term "regime-friendly values" encompasses "military patriotism" and refers to state-sponsored values meant to instill Russian national pride and the willingness to fight for Russia (Mitikka & Zavadskaya, 2021).

centralize curriculum making, influence educational content, stifle dissent, and counter regime threats, are thus prominent features of President Putin's educational governance as an informational autocrat.

The findings in this thesis might have widespread application, as they are applicable to education systems in autocracies and informational autocracies and can inform activists in Russia and the Russian diaspora about the trends in the education system. In redefining indoctrination, this thesis might address the conceptual vagueness in the literature on indoctrination. Furthermore, addressing conceptual vagueness can inform future research on education governance in autocratic regimes, particularly since this thesis carries a focus and an aim of employing innovative methods to collect and analyze data.

Nelson Mandela famously said, "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world" (1990). Arguably, education can be a double-edged sword for informational autocrats, as critical thinking, reflection, and discussion are qualities of education that pose a threat to them. However, education can also be vital for autocrats to achieve and maintain the society they desire, which forces them to pursue education to a certain level. Given the importance of information control for informational autocrats and their survival, we should examine how such autocrats govern their education systems. The question asked in this thesis is thus: "How does the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, carry out education governance as an informational autocrat, and to what extent is increased centralization of curriculum control relevant in explaining it?"

## **1.1. Justification of Case and Thesis**

The Russian regime is distinctive; it differs from other regimes in several relevant regards. It has, for long, been a super-power in global politics, and recent events, such as the Russo-Ukrainian War, highlight the importance of understanding the political dynamics and motivations within the regime.

For informational autocracy in particular, Russia is a valuable case study for a number of reasons. First, the regime under Putin's leadership has shifted away from overt, violent, and oppressive methods of governance. The regime has become less overt in its public displays of

repression (Treisman, 2018, pp. 1-28). These trends can indicate the presence of informational autocratic governance in Russia, as prescribed by Guriev and Treisman's theory (2019). Second, the regime has taken significant steps to control information channels. For instance, the Putin regime has acquired or regained state ownership of crucial media outlets and used surrogates and economic pressure to influence editors and journalists (Gehlback, 2010, p. 78, as cited in Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 118). These trends indicate that information control is a priority of the Putin regime.

Third, there has been a sharp rise in tertiary education in Russia, in which gross enrollment rates in higher education have increased from 52 percent in 1999 to 76 percent in 2011 (World Bank, 2022a). The country has also experienced substantial economic development, as prescribed by Guriev and Treisman (2019), to qualify as an informational autocracy (p. 102). Last, the Russian regime has a history of overt dictatorship<sup>6</sup>. The transition from overt dictatorship in the Soviet era to informational autocracy in contemporary Russia provides an opportunity to examine the changes in governance methods and strategies for information control.

## **Relevant Trends in Russian Education**

The recent and ongoing Russo-Ukrainian War also highlights the relevance, urgency, and importance of the Russian case and this thesis. The invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces on February 24, 2022, came with a number of challenges for the Russian regime regarding the information flow in society, including within the educational sphere. In the early stages of the War, Russian regional education departments ordered schools to teach pupils that the "special military operation" was necessary to "rescue" civilians from a "Nazi regime" (Esveld, 2022; Troianovski, 2022), and documents distributed show efforts to justify the Putin regime's actions (Appendix 1).

From September 2022, the school weeks in Russia began with raising the Russian flag and singing the Russian national anthem in mandatory flag ceremonies (Martynova, 2022). Almost a year after the invasion of Ukraine, the Russian education minister, Sergei Kravtsov,

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<sup>6</sup> There is disagreement regarding precisely what regime type we might categorize different periods of post-Soviet Russia as, but it is widely agreed upon that Russia has undergone a regime transition since the Soviet era.

informed about the new textbooks in the history subject for secondary students. These textbooks will include details about the goals and objectives of what the regime named a “special military operation” for the attack on Ukraine. These textbooks will also “present the heroic deeds of our ancestors, from ancient Russia to the special military operation” (Sibreal, 2023).

Since September 2022, Russian schools have begun conducting classes called “Important Conversations”, where topics related to patriotism and Ukraine<sup>7</sup> are discussed (Dettmer, 2022; Novaya Gazeta, 2022). These classes present narratives that align with the regime’s perspectives and goals. According to the head of the Russian President’s Department for Public Projects, Sergei Novikov, the subject covers 34 topics in which “we can talk with children about our values” (Novikov, 2022). This subject is part of another trend in the fostering of Russian military patriotism in the education system. For instance, in this subject, teachers must discuss the “special military operation” in Ukraine. While the subject is said to be voluntary, school administrations across Russia emphasize that it is mandatory (Konstantinova, 2022). The trends in the subject indicate that increased military patriotism in Russian education is promoted through a top-down process.<sup>8</sup>

Sergei Novikov elaborated further on the topic of patriotism at the “Class Marathon” on the “Russian Society Knowledge” site, further substantiating the notion of increasing trends of patriotism and militarization in Russian education:

This project is very important, because you, teachers, class teachers, play a huge role in the formation and development of a young person. [...] You are helping him form the foundation on which he will build his future and the future of our country. It is very important to lay key values in this foundation, including love for the motherland, pride in one’s country, and patriotism. It is especially important to talk about this right

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<sup>7</sup> A transcript from a recording reveals that a teacher said the following in an “Important Conversations” class in Moscow on September 1, 2022: “[...] in order to protect these Russians, at the request of the representatives of those territories, V.V. Putin gave the order to start military operations in order to protect people. For eight years, Ukraine has been trying to force these people to speak Ukrainian, to forget everything Russian, by shelling them. Our president, I think, made the right decision.” (Meduza, 2022b). Additionally, students in all grades in basic general education can access an “interactive map” of the Crimean Peninsula. For 5-11 graders, one of the videos depicts violent clashes in Ukraine in 2014 (Appendix 2).

<sup>8</sup> Another example of militarization in this subject was the movie “Officers” shown on February 27, 2023, for first to second graders, in which the infamous quote “There is such a profession - defend the homeland” was to be discussed (Appendix 3).

now, when an information war is launched against Russia and attempts are being made to rewrite the history and culture of our country.

(Novikov, 2022)

The increased focus on ideological education and patriotism in Russian schools has elicited various reactions and experiences from teachers, parents, and students (Vazhnyye Istorii/Important Stories, 2022a). For instance, individual accounts indicate the complex and diverse reactions to the growing mobilization of patriotism in Russian schools. While some students are receptive to or supportive of these initiatives, others express resistance, skepticism, and concern (Vazhnyye Istorii/Important Stories, 2022a).

In January 2023, new amendments were made to the 2012 law “On Education”, which will come into effect on September 1, 2023. These amendments establish a mandatory federal curriculum for disciplines which address societal issues, which are literature, history, social studies, and fundamentals of life safety (“FLS”), and the curriculum was prepared in November 2022 (Vorobiova, 2023). The unified history curriculum will include references and justifications of the 2022 invasion of Ukraine by Russian forces (Awasthi, 2023). This law does not apply to non-societal subjects, which indicates that the Putin regime focuses more on controlling subjects on societal issues. It is therefore interesting to explore the relationship between non-societal and societal subjects in education before the 2023 law.

Putin had already hinted at his emphasis on societal subjects almost a year into the Russo-Ukrainian War when he addressed the Federal Assembly with the following words:

We must work together with our teachers, academics and professionals to seriously improve the quality of school and university textbooks, first of all in the humanities – History, Social Science, Literature and Geography – so that our young people learn as much as possible about Russia, its great past, its culture and traditions.

(Putin, 2023)

Moreover, a 2022 Russian history textbook justified and praised the annexation of Crimea and Putin’s leadership numerous times (Balakhonova, 2022). Studies also show that history textbooks in the Russian education system were used to instill regime-friendly and anti-

Ukrainian values in students before the 2022 War (Korostelina, 2010). Furthermore, qualitative accounts reveal that Russia's school curriculum under Putin has become highly militarized and increasingly patriotic (Lanza, 2022). These trends are some of several examples of meddling in Russian education by the Putin regime. Additional trends and important information regarding recent developments collected for this thesis are also accounted for in Chapters 6 and 7.

All in all, the trends in the Russian educational sphere under Putin's leadership are worthy of our attention. In this thesis, several instances of systematic meddling in the Russian education system are revealed. This meddling can affect over 17.3 million primary and secondary pupils in Russia. Among these students are future voters, dissidents, activists, politicians, and leaders. The Putin regime faces perhaps its most grave crisis with its 2022 invasion of Ukraine. How the regime governs the education system following such events can hold great importance for Russian society and its future.

### **The Evolving Concept of Indoctrination: A New Direction for Research?**

In recent years, autocracies have evolved in their approach to governance, moving away from overt brutality to more covert methods to achieve information control (Guriev and Treisman, 2019). One dimension which can explain the development from traditional dictatorships is the increased citizen access to information and a higher quality and level education (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 123). As a result, autocrats cannot solely rely on overt brutality, as citizens are better equipped to reveal such efforts. Citizens might reveal their autocrat's brutality due to their information availability from attaining higher education, digitalization, and more. In turn, this can result in indoctrination becoming even more crucial for autocrats in shaping public opinion, promoting regime narratives, and ensuring their survival. It is therefore important to study how informational autocrats govern education and control the flow of information to understand their unique strategies for retaining power compared to their traditional predecessors.

Arguably, the development of modern autocrats' methods necessitates an examination of how such autocrats conduct indoctrination. The traditional understanding of indoctrination often involves autocrats who overtly promote ideologies like communism or fascism. However,



this definition does not necessarily reflect the strategies of contemporary autocrats who rather resort to covert methods. We should therefore reassess the definitions of indoctrination and attempt to encompass the developed methods used by modern autocrats. A new definition of indoctrination, focusing on methods and actors of indoctrination rather than its psychological outcome, is therefore put forward to examine how modern autocrats maintain their power.

Further, in this thesis, indoctrination is examined through collecting and analyzing data on textbooks in a single case study. This has the potential to enable us to better grasp the nuances and mechanics of modern autocratic governance. The methods of data collection presented in this thesis might inform future research on conducting research on indoctrination in closed regimes such as informational autocracies.

## **1.2. Thesis Roadmap**

I explore the following research question in this thesis: “How does the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, carry out education governance as an informational autocrat, and to what extent is increased centralization of curriculum control relevant in explaining it?”. These sub-questions are proposed to answer this question:

- Q1** How can we observe informational autocracy in the educational sphere?
- Q2** What characterizes the market for textbook publishing in Russia?
- Q3** What is the relationship between textbook publishing houses across subject areas in respect of centralization?
- Q4** What dynamics are at play in curriculum development in Russia?
- Q5** Has the content of education changed following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and if so, how?

In Chapter 2, I review the literature on informational autocracies, autocratic politics, autocratic education, and indoctrination. The findings from the literature review are that we should develop an indoctrination concept that fits for studying informational autocracies and that we should redefine indoctrination due to methodological challenges. Additionally, a proposed definition of indoctrination is also put forward.

The third chapter sets out the theoretical framework based on the revised definition of indoctrination, informational autocracy theory, and Machiavellian theory. It includes the concept of informational autocratic indoctrination and formulates a set of hypotheses. In the next chapter, the Russian education system and its evolution since the Soviet era is set out. Moreover, education legislation and publishing houses in Russia are also accounted for.

In Chapters 5 and 6, I investigate the presence of CCC in Russian education. The fifth chapter provides an account of the data, the data collection process, and the research design of the thesis. In particular, the methodology of the thesis, which adopts a quasi-experimental analytical approach, is accounted for. Chapter 6 includes a presentation and an analysis of the findings of the study. Here, I also supply the quantitative evidence with a qualitative account.

In Chapter 7, the findings are discussed and examined in the light of the theoretical argument. Here, I also present important information on recent trends in Russian education collected during the research for this thesis. The findings' implications and the study's limitations are also discussed. I conclude that the Russian education system has become more centralized over time. I suggest that this may have enabled the regime to increasingly exert control over the production of information in Russian education.

# Chapter 2 | Previous Literature

In this chapter, I review literature about autocratic politics, education in autocratic regimes, indoctrination, and informational autocracy. The aim is to position this study within the literature and identify with what this thesis can contribute. I begin by introducing the theoretical foundation of this thesis, which is informational autocracy (Guriev & Treisman, 2015; 2018, 2019, 2020) combined with a Machiavellian (2014/1532) understanding of such leaders. I then briefly examine the literature on the nature of autocratic politics (Svolik, 2012) and regime typologies (Geddes et al., 1999). I move to assess research on education in autocratic regimes. The conclusion here is that we should resort to middle-range theories, as coined by Merton (1968/1949), on education in autocracies, because it might lead us to more granular data. In turn, granular data might inform us more about the mechanics of autocratic governance.

After examining autocratic politics, I present various definitions regarding indoctrination, and I address conceptual vagueness in the literature. This vagueness, it is argued, derives from perceiving indoctrination as an outcome instead of focusing on the input aspects of it. By focusing on the outcome of indoctrination, I argue that we face some methodological problems. For instance, we risk losing sight of who and what drives the indoctrination, i.e., the actor and the systematic nature of it. In addition, while emphasizing the outcome of indoctrination can be useful to understand human psychology in the context of autocratic regimes, examining how indoctrination is used to serve autocratic ends can be valuable. By the end of this chapter, I propose a revised definition of indoctrination, which is that indoctrination is *systematic attempts to create certain beliefs in people whilst suppressing discussion, critical-mindedness, and openness*.

## 2.1. Informational Autocracy

This section presents the theory of informational autocracy as developed by Guriev and Treisman (2015, 2018, 2019, 2020). The theory encompasses the development of the governance methods used by modern autocrats, such as Russia's Vladimir Putin, Venezuela's

Hugo Chávez, and Hungary's Viktor Orbán (Treisman & Guriev, 2019, p. 102). Guriev and Treisman's theory describes the rise of the informational autocrat, who uses sophisticated methods to control information flow in society. They argue that informational autocrats ensure their survival by deluding their citizens into thinking their autocrat is competent and cares about them (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 101).

Traditional dictators will often resort to brutal repression to control information and rely on violence, heavy censorship, and indoctrination (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 107). However, informational autocrats use more covert methods to maintain power (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 108). Such methods might include co-optation, buying media institutions, or finding cunning ways to explain the imprisonment of disobedient citizens. According to Guriev and Treisman (2019), violent repression can be counterproductive for autocrats, as it undercuts the image of the able, competent, and popular leader (p. 101).

Although the transition from a traditional dictatorship to an informational autocracy is subtle and difficult to pinpoint, Guriev and Treisman point out some signs of this process. These signs include declining state violence, efforts to conceal state repression, and perception gaps between the elite and the masses (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 123).<sup>9</sup> Moreover, there has been a sharp decrease in state political killings within autocracies since the 1980s, demonstrating the change in governance methods in several autocracies (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 104). These shifts have occurred because informational autocrats must conceal their incompetence (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 117).

Informational autocrats conceal their incompetence by obtaining information control, and they seek information control partly due to economic prosperity and increased access to and participation in higher education (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 102). In turn, these trends have led to a more educated and informed elite, rendering autocrats more vulnerable to the spread of dissent. Additionally, the public infer about their leaders based on what signals they receive and their standard of living (Guriev & Treisman, 2020, p. 2). Their standard of living is affected by their access to education, as education can promote social mobility and economic stability (Haveman & Smeeding, 2006; Milburn, 2012). Thus, providing a certain

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<sup>9</sup> Perception gaps between the elite and the masses also further substantiate the presence and role of an informed elite according to informational autocratic theory (Guriev & Treisman, 2019).

level and kind of education is critical for the informational autocrat, as he does not want the public to revolt due to low living standards.

The informed elite<sup>10</sup> is more capable of assessing the autocrat's incompetence than the public, partly due to their higher education. Members of the informed elite also tend to favor independent or foreign media outlets, which the autocrat does not necessarily control, and this threatens the informational autocrat (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 121). The informed elite can signal to and influence the public by spreading messages through independent media (Guriev & Treisman, 2020, p. 2). Such signals can discredit the autocrat, and if this signaling successfully reaches the public, it poses a threat to autocratic survival. Because the informed elite tends to read independent media (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 101), they are also less vulnerable to regime attempts at manipulation and indoctrination.

Given these circumstances, why will the informational autocrat not resort to violence to repress and deter his citizens and his critics? People that live in brutal dictatorships, in which overt violence often occurs, can dislike their leaders but are often too afraid to rebel. Due to the risk of being brutally punished for disobedience, people living in brutal dictatorships who wish to rebel must rally enough people to achieve a successful revolt without being caught. However, people living in informational autocracies may not even know that they have every reason to dislike their leader since the autocrat works hard to remain credible and competent in the eyes of the public. Due to the relatively high education levels among the public in informational autocracies, citizens are, on the other hand, better equipped to expose their leaders. The informational autocrat thus avoids overt, brutal repression because he does not want to give his citizens a reason to revolt against him.

Following Treisman and Guriev's theory, the overt dictator resorts to the brutal repression of his dissidents, which signals to the public that they must not resist or disobey the dictator. However, while brutal repression may work in the short term for the overt dictator, it might make the public resentful of him. The following section builds further on this idea by offering a Machiavellian interpretation of the informational autocratic theory, which may supplement our understanding of such autocrats' motives and possible strategies.

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<sup>10</sup> An informed elite is an intellectual elite (Guriev & Treisman, 2018, p. 2)

## **A Machiavellian Approach to Informational Autocracy**

Machiavellian theory can help us understand why informational autocrats employ the methods they do. Niccolò Machiavelli's political theory, as put forward in *The Prince* (2014/1532), emphasizes the importance of cost-efficiency and practicality for rulers. Machiavelli encouraged rulers to be pragmatic and resourceful in decision-making, opting for minimal cost and risk strategies. By examining the balance between fear and love, one might better understand why informational autocrats avoid overt brutality and instead use covert measures to retain control.

Machiavelli questions whether it is better to be loved than feared (Machiavelli, 2014, xvii). As noted, overt dictators rely on citizens' fear to secure autocratic survival, often by putting brutal reprisals on display to the public. By doing so, they set an example for what is unacceptable behavior and can thereby prevent future instances of such behavior. However, rather than utilizing pure brutality, Machiavelli proposes that a ruler proceeds "in a temperate manner with prudence and humanity, so that too much confidence may not make him incautious and too much distrust render him intolerable" (Machiavelli, 2014, xvii).

The traditional dictator risks becoming intolerable to his citizens by being overtly violent, brutal, and repressive. Being too overt about his brutal measures or resorting to them too often might drive more citizens to infer that their leader is incompetent. The potential consequence can be a revolt, in which the worst-case scenario for the autocrat is his demise. Informational autocrats, however, are illustrative of the Machiavellian point that relying too much on the power of fear can have adverse effects.

For informational autocrats, brutal measures are the last resort, and they instead opt for information control. They thereby avoid having to overtly repress their citizens. However, as informational autocracy theory provides, factors such as the rise of higher education enable a larger proportion of the public to reveal and see through such efforts. Thus, informational autocrats must strike a balance between providing education and not so much that the population can identify the indoctrination they are subjected to. Overt indoctrination and propaganda can also expose the autocrat's incompetence, as one would assume that "truly" credible leaders do not have to resort to such measures in the first place. As such, when meddling with education, informational autocrats must proceed covertly to not be exposed.

## **Informational Autocracies and Autocratic Survival**

In this thesis, education is tied to autocratic survival using the theory of informational autocracy. There are studies that build on informational autocratic theory (Chulkov, 2021; Sirotkina, 2022; Sokolova, 2020), but they do not necessarily tie it to autocratic survival. Other studies build on informational autocracy and tie these to crises (Lin et al., 2022) but focus on media governance rather than education governance. For instance, Lin et al. (2022) link government-sponsored disinformation campaigns to informational autocracy and crises. According to Lin (2022), government-sponsored disinformation campaigns increased during the global Covid-19 pandemic. The increase in government-sponsored disinformation campaigns suggests that crises can trigger informational autocrats to pursue specific informational strategies to secure autocratic survival.

Under the conditions of crises, informational autocratic strategies may become more prominent, because more is at stake for the autocrat. Enikolopov et al. (2022) also connect media governance to threats in the context of informational autocracies. They find that informational autocrats tolerate “some limited form of domestic, independent media” so long as the independent media’s readership is limited and access to such news is not too risky, for instance, in the off chance of war (Enikolopov et al., 2022, p. 32). The findings that informational autocrats counter crises through information channels further substantiate why we should examine education as an information channel.

## **2.2. The Characteristics of Autocratic Politics**

Examining informational autocratic education governance warrants a discussion of the literature on autocratic politics. The argument presented in this section is that we should construct and develop theories that focus on the methods of autocrats as opposed to their characteristics. But what characterizes autocratic politics?

In *The Politics of Authoritarian Rule* (2012), Svoboda characterizes autocracies as regimes in which no independent authority may enforce agreements among key actors, with violence being ever-present (p. 14). Additionally, the problems of authoritarian control and power-sharing shape autocratic politics (Svoboda, 2012, p. 2). The first problem relates to the

autocrat's power over his subjects, and the second refers to the conflicts between the autocrat and those with whom he shares his power.

As prescribed by informational autocratic theory, there have been changes and developments in the methods of autocratic governance. Informational autocrats resort to brutal measures to a lesser extent, and they exhibit democratic characteristics by employing democratic institutions. Arguably, informational autocratic characteristics might warrant more nuances to contemporary descriptions of autocracies. Given that violence is a last resort for informational autocrats, and they to a greater extent exhibit democratic characteristics by employing independent institutions, it is not clear whether Svoboda's description of autocratic politics remains suitable for explaining informational autocratic governance.

There are several other ways of characterizing autocratic regimes (Huntington, 1968; Gandhi, 2008; Levitsky & Way, 2010; Svoboda, 2012; Geddes et al., 2014; Wright, 2021). Geddes et al. (1999), for instance, distinguish between autocratic regimes that are military, one-party, and personalist (pp. 121-123). While the academic field of autocratic politics adopts various regime typologies, these might prove more relevant for scholars who wish to compare cases across regimes. That is because regime typologies help establish a systematic categorization of autocratic regimes based on their key features and attributes, enabling researchers to make cross-country comparisons and identify patterns across different types of regimes. By using regime typologies, scholars can better understand the commonalities and differences between various autocratic regimes, which can, in turn, facilitate the development of theories and explanations.

However, in the context of this thesis, the focus is on understanding the specific governance methods within a particular type of autocracy rather than drawing comparisons with other countries or types of autocratic regimes. While categorizations or typologies are useful for understanding autocratic regimes, connecting a regime type to governance and autocratic survival is challenging. Regime typologies can help us understand the characteristics which make some dictators more vulnerable to regime transitions than other autocrats. However, typologies do not necessarily inform us about what triggers regime transition, change, or governance methods (Wright, 2021). Informational autocracy, however, cuts across traditional regime typologies because it emphasizes the methods used instead of more "static" characteristics.



While Geddes et al. (1999) highlight important aspects of autocratic governance and survival, the specific factors within a regime's characteristics that trigger certain governance styles remain unclear. Focusing on autocratic methods rather than regime characteristics can help reveal certain regimes' actual practices. This approach would go beyond static categorizations, which can enable researchers to study the dynamic nature of power consolidation, repression, and political maneuvering that typologies do not necessarily adequately capture.

In addition, regime typologies often fail to sufficiently capture the nuances of autocratic regimes and can tend to overlook regimes that exhibit characteristics of both democracy and autocracy (Wright, 2021). Some add a hybrid category to their typologies, but this category risks turning into a "default" category and not being nuanced enough (Wright, 2021). In this thesis, however, my aim is to address this problem by focusing on the specific methods of a hybrid regime type, informational autocracy, in an attempt to gather nuances derived from applying a multi-faceted approach in focusing on a single case study.

### **2.3. Education in Autocratic Regimes**

This section examines the literature concerning education in autocratic regimes. Much of the literature points to how education creates or affects attitudes, living standards, and other aspects. While these insights provide valuable context, it is asserted in this thesis that education also is a critical tool for autocratic survival in its own right. To further explore this relationship, the importance of fine-grained data and the development of specific theories to develop more nuanced understandings of autocratic regimes is highlighted as an important aspect.

The aspect of education as a tool is examined by Chang and Wu (2022), who look at the relationship between government spending on education and the likelihood of regime breakdown. They argue that autocracies with higher spending on education are less likely to suffer from regime breakdown, because when citizens are given social mobility, they are less likely to demand political freedom (Chang & Wu, 2022, p. 2). Thus, by making their citizens believe that they have high social mobility through providing education, autocrats can effectively mitigate threats of revolt.

Paglayan (2021) also points out that education can constitute a tool for autocrats. She raises questions about the relationship between democratization and the expansion of primary schooling, highlighting how autocratic governments have expanded primary schooling for various reasons, such as promoting loyalty and domestic order or strengthening military power. Education can also be crucial for autocratic regimes in maintaining social stability and political control (Paglayan, 2022). Moving forward, we should also examine how autocrats strike a balance between offering a level and a kind of education that promotes social mobility without fostering democratic values.

Several studies are valuable for highlighting regimes and their education systems. Dahlum and Knutsen (2017) and Diwan and Vartanova (2020) examine whether education systems will be impacted by the country's type of regime and vice versa. While there is no clear evidence that democracies provide a higher quality of education than autocracies, studies have shown that education is more widespread in democracies (Dahlum & Knutsen, 2017). Furthermore, it has been argued that people who are educated in autocracies typically hold more conservative values than those educated in democracies and that education has a significant impact on political values across regime types (Diwan & Vartanova, 2020).

Other studies focus on the effect that education might have on people's values. Carnevale et al. (2020) argue that "post-secondary education tends to expose people to secular values and cultures, leading them to be less inclined to express authoritarian preferences and attitudes" (p. 3). Several decades before this, Almond and Verba addressed the relationship between education and politics in *The Civic Culture: Political Attitudes and Democracy in Five Nations* (1989/1963). Here, they explored the impact of education on political participation and placed it within the context of political regimes. Furthermore, they argued that educated people are more likely to possess democratic values (1989, p. 315, as cited in Campbell, 2006, p. 26), which is interesting for this thesis as informational autocrats must provide widespread and certain kinds of education for their citizens to maintain an effective society. But how do they strike a balance between doing so and countering the threat of widespread, democratic values?

This also begs the question of what it is about education that "creates" certain values, such as democratic ones. The connection between education and political participation has been criticized as a "black box" problem (Elster, 2015). Black box problems are those questions in

which the mechanism creating the outcome is unclear, and so it is difficult to ascertain how education triggers political participation (Campbell, 2006, p. 26). It has therefore been argued that we should focus on collecting and analyzing more fine-grained data (Campbell, 2006, p. 107). Fine-grained data refers to detailed and context-specific data which can shed light on the complex relationships and interactions between various factors. In the case of education, fine-grained data might include information about the curriculum, textbooks, teaching methods, classroom dynamics, and students' experiences in a specific educational system.

Yet, to collect such data, there might be need for a theory which corresponds to it. Middle-range theories, as coined by Merton (1968/1949), are theories that are close enough to observed data so that one is, to a greater extent, allowed to perform empirical tests (Merton, 1968, p. 39). Such theories are, as a result, more specific, which can be beneficial for a more targeted and in-depth exploration of the dynamics and processes at play within the particular regime type. In this thesis, my aim is to develop a specific theory on indoctrination in informational autocracies, which will enable me to collect fine-grained data about the mechanics of autocratic governance.

In summary, the literature regarding autocracies and education examines the “outputs” of education and argues that education contributes to the development of certain values in people, while encouraging political participation. This might provide my study with valuable, contextual insight, but it does not suffice when seeking to explain how education can be a tool in and of itself. While Paglayan (2021, 2022) and Chang and Wu (2022) are among those who point out the tool that education can be for autocrats, more knowledge is needed also in this regard. To gather such knowledge, we should aim to develop specific theories (Merton, 1968/1949) about education to collect data that corresponds to the theory, as also pointed out by Campbell (2006). In this thesis, the aim is to address this concern by specifying the theory of informational autocracy and providing a concept of indoctrination.

## 2.4. Indoctrination

As the concept of informational autocratic indoctrination is introduced in this thesis, it is necessary to consider the concept of indoctrination.<sup>11</sup> This section reviews the literature on indoctrination through three lenses: Indoctrination as an outcome, as a process, and as a tool and strategy for autocratic regimes. I point to some of the methodological challenges involved in pinpointing indoctrination and argue that we should view indoctrination as *systematic attempts to create certain beliefs in people whilst suppressing discussion, critical-mindedness, and openness*. The suppressive nature of indoctrination, it is argued, makes it incompatible with democracy, which is a relevant point to discuss since informational autocrats might exhibit democratic characteristics.

### Indoctrination as an Outcome

John and Evelyn Dewey defined indoctrination as “the individual impact of the inducement of a set of beliefs” (1915, in Raywid, 1980, p. 3), while Hand argued that indoctrination is when an individual accepts a belief non-rationally<sup>12</sup> (2018, p. 6). These definitions focus on indoctrination as a psychological outcome, which is methodologically problematic because it is hard to demonstrate and prove the effect of indoctrination on individuals. This is partly due to the phenomenon known as “preference falsification” (Kuran, 1991).

Kuran (1991) put forward the concept of preference falsification to describe a phenomenon that occurs when private and public preferences differ in authoritarian regimes (p. 17). Those experiencing preference falsification risk suffering from cognitive dissonance,<sup>13</sup> in which the individuals must lie about their true opinions or beliefs or act contrary to their own moral convictions and beliefs or else risk repercussions. According to some findings in the indoctrination literature, it appears likely that indoctrination can in fact lead to enhancing individuals’ capacity to convincingly and strategically pretend that they adhere to the

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<sup>11</sup> Indoctrination can manifest itself in various non-political contexts. Instances of indoctrination may include religious education, military training, or even imparting moral values and societal norms to children. In this thesis, however, the focus is on political indoctrination. We expect such indoctrination to be a top-down process where regimes impose views on their citizens that fit the aims of the regime.

<sup>12</sup> Hand (2018) also includes the act of indoctrination in his proposed definition - “to indoctrinate someone is to impart beliefs to her in such a way that she comes to hold them non-rationally” (Hand, 2018, p. 6).

<sup>13</sup> The scholar Denis Grekov, who was publicly denounced in Russia for making anti-war statements on the Russo-Ukrainian War, framed “cognitive dissonance” among Russian students like this: “Russian students end up as either traumatized or cynical [with today’s situation in education]. Either they are not ready to defend their values, they might not even have them, or they are broken” (Grekov, 2022).

regime's declared objectives (De Juan et al., 2021). Furthermore, it has been argued that due to issues like preference falsification, statements made by those living in autocratic regimes cannot be relied upon (Tannenber, 2022). As such, preference falsification and strategic statements make it difficult to measure indoctrination in individuals, as we cannot trust the responses from the interviewed or surveyed individuals.

It is also difficult, if not impossible, to draw up independent criteria to determine whether an individual has been indoctrinated, as these would be vulnerable to the question of prevailing morals and values. If it is impossible to objectively identify indoctrination in individuals, then how can we be certain that we do not label something as indoctrination because we disagree with the beliefs promoted or the values or ideas being imposed conflict with our own (Egan, 2008, p. 15)?

### **Indoctrination as a Process and a Strategy**

Some understandings of indoctrination see it as a process rather than purely an outcome (White, 1970; Copp, 2016; Chazan, 2022). For some, "intention" is both a necessary and a sufficient prerequisite for an act to constitute "indoctrination" (White, 1970). Copp, on the other hand, argues that indoctrination is the inducement of a person or group to accept a set of beliefs uncritically (2016, p. 152). This definition focuses on the process, although with an outcome-focus as well. Further, it should be noted that accepting a belief uncritically or non-rationally refers to accepting a belief that is not based on argument or evidence (Copp, 2016; Armstrong, 2022). Under this definition of indoctrination, indoctrination has the characteristic of constituting conscious attempts to undermine individuals' ability to assess the imposed beliefs critically, and the indoctrination is therefore morally problematic (Callan & Arena, 2009; Taylor, 2017).

Another understanding of indoctrination that emphasizes the morally problematic aspects of indoctrination was put forward by Lifton (1961). For Lifton, who studied instances of indoctrination in Maoist China, indoctrination is a systematic phenomenon directed at changing values and beliefs held by humans (Lifton, 1961, p. 4). Lifton argued that indoctrination assumes a conscious actor who applies his methods deliberately to shape human minds. This view of indoctrination stresses aspects such as the actor behind it, the

intentions of the actor, and the systematic nature of indoctrination, as opposed to the psychological state of being indoctrinated.

## **Indoctrination as a Tool**

Indoctrination is not necessarily only used to impose values and beliefs on individuals. Some see indoctrination as a political tool to showcase a regime's ability to maintain social control. One might ask, "why do some dictators pursue indoctrination when the population can expose their attempts?". It has been argued that propaganda does not necessarily aim to achieve the outcome of indoctrination (Huang, 2015). Rather, propaganda and overt indoctrination signal to the public that the regime maintains social control (Huang, 2015, p. 420). An autocratic regime demonstrates its capability to maintain social control by conveying a consistent message through indoctrination. In line with this, indoctrination could have the effect of dissuading the public from revolting against the regime.

Indoctrination can therefore be viewed as an outcome, a process, a strategy, or a political tool. In this review, I argue that outcome-focused definitions of indoctrination do not recognize indoctrination's value as an important political tool. Further, by focusing on the psychological outcome of indoctrination, we risk losing sight of the actor and the systematic nature of it. These aspects can prove important, as indoctrination, by its nature, requires a conscious and deliberate actor, and a certain political environment, to be considered "indoctrination".

## **Indoctrination's Suppressive Nature**

The suppressive nature of indoctrination sets it apart from other forms of persuasion or influence in democratic regimes. Indoctrination's suppressive nature refers to how indoctrination limits critical thinking, dissenting opinions, and exposure to diverse perspectives, in line with the notions made by Callan and Arena (2009) and Taylor (2017). Indoctrination typically involves promoting a particular set of beliefs, values, and ideas while actively discouraging the questioning or challenging of those beliefs. This can take the form of presenting a specific narrative while downplaying or omitting alternative viewpoints or interpretations.

Arguably, the suppressive nature of indoctrination makes it incompatible with true democracies. In true democracies, individuals can criticize and discuss their views, creating an environment resistant to indoctrination. Indoctrination, conversely, aims to limit individuals' critical thinking by imposing beliefs on them. While systematic efforts to shape values and beliefs may exist in democratic societies, they cannot be classified as indoctrination, as democratic societies allow for alternative views. In a democratic regime, where citizens are presented with diverse perspectives, the imposition of beliefs, such as a political campaign, does not qualify as indoctrination, as indoctrination requires the stifling of competing ideas. This suppressive nature sets indoctrination apart from other forms of persuasion or influence in democratic regimes.

We should examine whether indoctrination, if it is suppressive by nature, can occur in regimes that are not pure autocracies. If indoctrination is not defined primarily by these requirements, then it would seem that indoctrination can occur in various political contexts, even democratic ones. Whether indoctrination can occur in all types of regimes will be discussed in the following section.

### **Indoctrination Across Regimes?**

The concept of indoctrination, it has been argued, is typically associated with traditional dictatorships (Raywid, 1980, p. 3) as opposed to democratic regimes. That is because democratic regimes, at least to an extent, allow citizens to exchange and discuss their views and beliefs. Indoctrination is therefore less effective in democratic societies. Autocracies, however, are often hybrid regimes that have characteristics of both autocracy and democracy. For instance, they may be “competitive” or “electoral” autocracies, which incorporate elements of democracy, such as multi-party systems, but still maintain a significant level of autocratic control (Levitsky & Way, 2002). By various definitions of indoctrination, those that do not stress the suppressive nature of it, the phenomenon can theoretically occur in democracies. This is also an important implication for the case of education, where indoctrination is likely to occur, as education is a “political endeavor” (McDermott, 2004, p. 103).

Can we call a regime a democracy if it seeks to undermine people's thoughts and behavior? Furthermore, what separates teaching six-year-olds democratic values in a systematic manner from indoctrination? One might argue that teaching democratic values to school children constitutes indoctrination, as it involves a systematic effort to shape people's beliefs. However, it does not constitute indoctrination by the proposed definition for two reasons. First, because such activities occur in democracies, where individuals are presented with alternative views, the suppression of alternative views that indoctrination requires is absent. Second, because democratic values promote free speech, alternative views, or critical thinking, imposing such values cannot constitute indoctrination. This is because indoctrination, by its nature, aims to suppress such qualities.

The consequence of this line of reasoning is that indoctrination, by the definition proposed here, cannot take place in true democracies. However, any understanding of indoctrination should recognize the potential of indoctrination to manifest itself in various political contexts. This is because it is worthwhile to investigate indoctrination in non-traditional autocratic, hybrid regimes, such as informational autocracies, or even in regimes which appear to be democratic at first glance.

This issue is explored in the 2023 ongoing research project Varieties of Indoctrination ("V-Indoc"). V-Indoc proposes that indoctrination is not limited to autocracies and can occur in democracies (Neundorf et al., 2023, p. 2). The V-Indoc project presents indoctrination as the "deliberate regime-led process of socializing 'ideal type' citizens who support the values, principles, and norms of a given regime – whether democratic or autocratic – and who thus voluntarily comply with regime demands and remain loyal in times of crisis" (Neundorf et al., 2023, p. 6). This definition is useful as it recognizes that (i) indoctrination can take place across regimes, (ii) indoctrination is deliberate, and (iii) it is relevant for regimes in times of crisis, which is a focus point of the study conducted in this thesis. The definition would also encompass autocracies that exhibit democratic characteristics, such as informational autocracies.

However, some key features of indoctrination are not captured by V-Indoc's definition. For instance, V-Indoc's definition of indoctrination does not emphasize the autocratic and suppressive nature of indoctrination. While V-Indoc's definition is broad enough to encompass various regimes, it understates the deliberate efforts of regimes to change the



views of their subjects. Any definition of indoctrination should also recognize that indoctrination is incompatible with certain democratic qualities, such as free speech.

This debate begs the question of what instances of political education qualify as indoctrination. Democratic values are arguably less morally problematic than fascist ones, and it has already been argued that democratic values are incompatible with indoctrination. But what should our approach be when we must consider values, such as patriotism, which are, at face value, not that problematic? We should avoid labeling political education or otherwise as indoctrination based on its substantive content, as that would make the concept vulnerable to prevailing morals and beliefs, potentially riddling the concept with bias.

### **Defining Indoctrination**

If we want to adopt an understanding of indoctrination that can take place in all regimes, we must either (i) find a way to categorize the content we consider indoctrination without our categorizations becoming biased or (ii) focus purely on the methods applied in education. The first option is less attractive than the second due to the potential for bias. By examining purely the methods that are applied to instill values, we can avoid questioning what content, values, or beliefs qualify as indoctrination if they are instilled in individuals in an uncritical manner. Thus, a compromise is available if we adopt an understanding of indoctrination as systematic efforts to shape individuals' beliefs and suppress critical thinking.

Further, the implication of recognizing that indoctrination is suppressive in its nature is that such indoctrination cannot occur in a "true" democracy. This assumption rests on the premise that critical thinking and free speech are values that follow from teaching democratic values systematically and that democracies do not suppress differing views or criticism.

Consequently, by this understanding, should one come to the conclusion that indoctrination has occurred in a democratic society, we must re-examine whether we can call it "indoctrination" or whether we are speaking of a true democracy.

Because indoctrination, by its nature, suppresses differing views, we can establish that indoctrination is an undemocratic phenomenon. However, it can occur in hybrid regimes, like informational autocracies, as these are no "true" democracies. Furthermore, indoctrination

involves systematic attempts to create certain beliefs in people. We expect it to occur in areas normally involving critical thinking, such as when learning about society in school or reading the newspaper about politics. Such areas usually consist of differing perspectives, which makes indoctrination necessary in the first place. We therefore see indoctrination as *systematic attempts to create certain beliefs in people whilst suppressing discussion, critical-mindedness, and openness*. Further, by seeing indoctrination as a tool and focusing on its methods, we can examine indoctrination in all non-democratic regimes without considering the specific contents of indoctrination.

## **Why Indoctrination Research Matters**

Despite the challenges in defining and conceptualizing indoctrination, the study of indoctrination is important. In Lifton's (1961) words, to overlook indoctrination would be to overlook "one of the major problems of our era - that of the psychology and the ethics of directed attempts at changing human beings" (p. 4). Furthermore, raising questions about indoctrination helps us understand how individuals form beliefs and why individuals behave in certain ways. It can also help us grasp how education and media shape beliefs and how they can promote positive messages, discussion and openness, and other democratic values. The study of indoctrination is important, and the aim of solving conceptual vagueness in indoctrination literature is therefore justifiable and called for.

## **2.5. Summary**

In this chapter, I examined the literature on autocratic politics, education, indoctrination, and informational autocracy. I suggested that a renewed investigation into the concept of indoctrination, and the role of autocratic education governance in autocratic survival, is necessary. I put forward two arguments. First, we should examine regimes by their methods instead of depending on clear-cut regime typologies when investigating informational autocracies. Second, we should address the conceptual vagueness in the indoctrination literature by focusing on the actors and methods of indoctrination. In this way, we can also examine regimes that exhibit democratic and autocratic characteristics.

# Chapter 3 | Theoretical Framework

While recognizing that autocratic regimes have evolved and transformed, the aim of this chapter is to develop a framework sensitive to the changes of autocratic governance methods. Two primary theoretical arguments are presented: The Autocratic Survival Argument ( $A_1$ ) and The Threat Argument ( $A_2$ ). Together, these constitute the theoretical framework, which serves as the foundation for the hypotheses presented and applied in the ensuing chapters. Through this theoretical framework, the aim is to address the gaps in the literature review, particularly indoctrination's role in informational autocracies. Combining the insights from studies of autocratic politics, indoctrination, and informational autocracy, I propose an approach to understanding how and why informational autocrats use indoctrination through education to maintain power. The primary argument presented here is that indoctrination is an essential tool for informational autocrats to obtain information control and thereby survive.

## 3.1. Informational Autocratic Indoctrination

Guriev and Treisman refer to indoctrination when discussing traditional, overt, or brutal dictators (2019, pp. 100-101; p. 123), and, arguably, their theory does not focus on the role that indoctrination potentially plays in informational autocracies. I therefore proposed a revised definition of indoctrination, as systematic efforts to impose certain views while suppressing other views, to underpin the concept of informational autocratic indoctrination. Indoctrination, as will be argued, is crucial for informational autocrats since the strategy of overt and brutal violence is not available to them.

An informational autocrat is faced with a dilemma. He desires prosperity and a highly functioning society, which requires the provision of education to the population. He must do so because citizens infer not only from the information from the informed elite but also from their living standards (Guriev & Treisman, 2015, p. 4). If the individuals or society lacks education, this can lead to a degradation of their living standards. Education is therefore important. Thus, the informational autocrat needs to provide his population with a sufficient level and a kind of education to achieve this. However, there are risks associated with

providing too much education or certain kinds of it. Providing information and education can enable the informed elite to grow to a size that can overthrow the autocrat. Alternatively, information and some kinds of education can better enable the public to reveal the autocrat's flaws, which also constitute a threat to him. One way for the informational autocrat to mitigate this risk is to exercise control over the educational content by pursuing indoctrination.

The informational autocrat cannot be too overt in his indoctrination, as this would alert the informed elite. Unlike the traditional dictator, the informational autocrat cannot, at least overtly, brutally repress his dissidents, and it is therefore difficult for the autocrat to silence and sanction the informed elite when they advocate and lobby against him. The informational autocrat, therefore, does not want to anger the informed elite. However, he must also prevent the informed elite from growing. Hence, the informational autocrat must stifle and prevent critical views against him through indoctrination. Therefore, effective educational governance is an important tool for informational autocrats in particular.

Effective education governance is particularly important for informational autocrats because they do not have the same tools as traditional dictators since they seek to embody democratic leaders. For instance, informational autocrats do not necessarily have the luxury of using armed forces to silence dissidents. Consequently, citizens are not sufficiently deterred by the autocrat since he avoids brutal measures and those living in informational autocracies will react to brutal measures put on display. Therefore, for the informational autocrat, using brutal measures is costly and carries significant risk. Furthermore, the public is more likely to overthrow the autocrat if they are provided with negative information about him, which puts him in an unfavorable light.

Guriev and Treisman argue that if an autocrat is deemed incompetent by the public, he will be overthrown (Guriev & Treisman, 2019, p. 117). It is conceivable, however, that the public would recognize the autocrat's incompetence yet not grab the opportunity to effectively rebel. There are a number of historical examples where populations privately disagreed with their respective regimes for long periods of time but did not rebel. Some examples include the citizens living in the Apartheid regime in South Africa from 1948 to 1994 (Sparks, 1991), Burma during the military rule from 1962 to 2011 (Fink, 2009), and North Korea during the Kim dynasty from 1948 to this day (Demick, 2009; Cha, 2013). These cases can show that

there are several social, political, and cultural factors which can suppress a rebellion. Guriev and Treisman's assumption should therefore be revised to reflect that while an autocrat's survival is threatened if the public is provided with certain information about him, it is not certain that the public will overthrow him, however, it could be a contributing factor to his potential demise.

## **Information Control and Indoctrination**

For informational autocrats, information control and indoctrination are inherently linked. The success of informational autocrats in maintaining power depends on their ability to manipulate information and shape public opinion. As a result, indoctrination becomes an essential tool for these autocrats to achieve their desired level of information control. Without indoctrination, informational autocrats would struggle to maintain the illusion of competence, which is crucial for autocratic survival.

Conversely, information control is also necessary for effective indoctrination. Effective indoctrination depends on control over the information flow in society, as the narrative put forward by the regime has to be dominant, otherwise, alternative narratives could undermine indoctrination efforts. Therefore, information control and indoctrination are interdependent and mutually reinforcing for informational autocrats. Achieving one is necessary for the success of the other since they cannot resort to brutal reprisals to strike down on dissent.

## **Informational Autocratic Indoctrination**

As brutal measures are the last resort, combined with the interconnected nature of information control and indoctrination in informational autocracies, there is a need for a distinct concept that captures the unique characteristics of indoctrination in informational autocracies. *Informational autocratic indoctrination* thus refers to how informational autocrats obtain information control through the use of *systematic attempts to create certain beliefs in people whilst suppressing discussion, critical-mindedness, and openness*. The concept is important for highlighting the importance of covert and strategic ways to which informational autocrats manipulate information to maintain power and control over their citizens, thereby avoiding violence and securing autocratic survival.

## 3.2. Theoretical Argument

Having established that there is a strong theoretical link between autocratic survival and the autocrat's control over information flows, especially in the light of the autocrat not using brutal measures, information control is closely tied to indoctrination. The concept of *informational autocratic indoctrination* was put forward. I will now move on to formulating the theoretical argument which underpin the hypotheses in this thesis. The argument presented is divided into The Autocratic Survival Argument (A<sub>1</sub>) and The Threat Argument (A<sub>2</sub>). A<sub>1</sub> posits that informational autocrats use informational autocratic indoctrination to secure autocratic survival, while A<sub>2</sub> suggests the conditions under which autocrats are most likely to adopt indoctrination measures.

### The Autocratic Survival Argument (A<sub>1</sub>)

The first part of the theoretical argument, A<sub>1</sub>, provides that the informational autocrat pursues indoctrination measures instead of brutal repression. This is because if the autocrat pursues brutal and forceful measures, such as those used by traditional dictators, he risks repercussions from its citizens. The worst-case scenario is that they revolt against him, which may lead to his demise. The information which discredits the autocrat could threaten his survival if it is provided to the public (P<sub>1</sub>). Overt measures must be avoided, as they can be easily exposed, and the autocrat would risk repercussions from its citizens. The autocrat, therefore, cannot resort to brutal measures overtly (P<sub>2</sub>). Thus, the informational autocrat must resort to methods that are covert, and preferably not brutal, to mitigate the threat of elite signaling (P<sub>3</sub>). Accordingly, indoctrination is a viable strategy to secure autocratic survival (A<sub>1</sub>).

**P<sub>1</sub>** The autocrat's survival is threatened when the public receives information that discredits the autocrat.<sup>14</sup>

**P<sub>2</sub>** The autocrat cannot resort to brutal measures overtly to suppress this information.

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<sup>14</sup> This premise aligns with assumptions made by Guriev and Treisman (2019): "If the public concludes that the ruler is incompetent, it overthrows the leader in a revolt" (p. 117). I revised this premise having discussed why it can be unrealistic for informational autocracies.

- P<sub>3</sub>** To counter the threat of public distrust, the autocrat must take measures to control information flow and influence public opinion.
- A<sub>1</sub>** One way for the autocrat to ensure his survival is through indoctrination.

### **The Threat Argument (A<sub>2</sub>)**

I now move to examine situations where informational autocrats adopt the suggested measures. In the following section, I present the second part of the theoretical argument, A<sub>2</sub>, which focuses on the potential threats to the informational autocrat and how he responds to them. In this thesis, “moments of pressure” or “threats” are defined as any situation or event that puts the perception of the autocrat at risk among the public. Examples of situations that could constitute “threats” or “pressure” are when the autocrat is revealed for his, for instance, corruption, election fraud, war crimes, or is being internationally sanctioned. These situations may trigger the informed elite to signal to the public about the autocrat’s incompetence.

Moments of pressure create an opportunity for elite signaling that can discredit the autocrat. The worst-case scenario for the autocrat is if a significant proportion of the public views him as incompetent, the likelihood of revolt increases, leading to his demise. If the public perceives the autocrat as incompetent or intolerable, then autocratic survival is jeopardized (P<sub>4</sub>). To prevent signals from reaching the public during pressure, the autocrat must resort to indoctrination to mitigate damage (P<sub>5</sub>). But in what areas can we expect to find indoctrination?

For three reasons, one can expect more informational autocratic indoctrination in areas where criticism is likely to occur. First, it is sensible for the autocrat to inculcate certain regime-friendly values in content which we will normally expect to find the expression of values. Such areas are usually those that stimulate critical thinking or relate to society. Because informational autocratic indoctrination is presumably covert, one can expect the autocrat to infuse values where such values easily blend in with the rest of the content. Second, signals that can effectively damage the autocrat’s reputation will most likely pertain to topics where critical thinking is stimulated or in areas which relate to society. If more and more become critical of the autocrat, his autocratic survival is threatened. Thus, to mitigate this risk, he

pursues more information control in areas important to him and his information control, i.e., those that relate to society and can potentially stimulate critical thinking.

Last, areas which have the potential to stimulate critical thinking, and relate to society, can also be used to promote narratives that diverge from the autocrat's intended narrative. After all, such areas might have disputable content in a different sense than "factual" subjects, such as natural sciences. This issue is especially prominent when the autocrat must counter moments of pressure to secure autocratic survival. If he seeks to justify his actions to counter elite signals, he needs a channel of information that allows him to do so without being disturbed by different messages. Different narratives hinder information control, making countering regime threats less effective. To ensure that his narrative remains dominant, the informational autocrat thus pursues information control more in areas that stimulate critical thinking. For these reasons, one might expect indoctrination efforts in areas which deal with society, in one way or another, and it is here which criticism is likely to occur (P<sub>6</sub>).

One example would be if an autocrat is exposed for his election fraud, and the elite signals it to the public. However, the autocrat can mitigate this by seeking to indoctrinate pupils in a social studies course to counter this threat. Thus, the autocrat resorts to indoctrination measures to a greater extent here to counter the potential risk of exposure (A<sub>2</sub>).

- P<sub>4</sub>** Moments of pressure create an opportunity for the elite to signal to the public information that discredits the autocrat.
- P<sub>5</sub>** Under moments of pressure, the autocrat must increase informational autocratic indoctrination to prevent signals from the informed elite from effectively reaching the public.
- P<sub>6</sub>** Signals that discredit the autocrat can be most effectively countered in areas that stimulate critical thinking.
- A<sub>2</sub>** Under moments of pressure, the autocrat resorts to indoctrination measures in societal areas to a greater extent than when not pressured.



The theoretical arguments can thus be summarized and look like this:

- A<sub>1</sub> One way for the autocrat to ensure his survival is through indoctrination.
- A<sub>2</sub> Under moments of pressure, the autocrat resorts to indoctrination measures to a greater extent than when not pressured.

## **Alternative Theoretical Explanations**

Having presented the theoretical argument to explain informational autocrats' motivations and strategies, I now move on to briefly propose some alternative theoretical explanations to the framework offered. First, autocrats do not always act rationally or strategically. However, the theory presented in this paper does not claim that all autocrats will engage in cost-efficient and covert strategies for controlling information. The theory instead focuses on informational autocrats' tendencies and potential motivations, and it is acknowledged that there may be deviations from the proposed pattern.

Another alternative explanation is that autocrats act out of a genuine belief in the superiority of their political or ideological system. However, this does not necessarily contradict the proposed argument. Autocrats can be motivated by their desire to maintain power precisely because of their belief in the superiority of their system. Put differently, the argument presented in this chapter accounts for the motivation to control information, which can coexist with an autocrat's genuine belief in his system's superiority.

While the proposed argument emphasizes the strategic decisions of informational autocrats in managing information flows, it is also essential to acknowledge internal factors' potential role in shaping these strategies. Other internal factors, besides possible revolts, such as the historical context or the nature of the regime's power base, might influence the degree to which an autocrat feels threatened and the specific strategies they adopt. These factors could reinforce or undermine the autocrat's choice to pursue indoctrination measures. Recognizing the potential influence of these internal factors does not necessarily negate the validity of the theoretical argument presented. Instead, it might highlight the complex interplay of various factors in shaping autocratic survival strategies and warrant more in-depth explorations of autocratic regimes.

Additionally, the theoretical argument assumes a cohesive, informed elite that potentially poses a threat to the autocrat. However, internal fragmentation among elites may reduce the overall effectiveness of elite signaling. The informed elite may have differing interests and may not always act cohesively in challenging the autocrat, thereby reducing the risk posed by elite signaling.

To summarize, there are other ways to explain the motivations of informational autocrats to pursue indoctrination. The theoretical argument of this thesis, however, aims to supply informational autocratic theory with one suggestion regarding why such autocrats pursue indoctrination. As information control and indoctrination are intertwined concepts, one can expect there to be efforts at indoctrination in informational autocracies. However, such indoctrination might look different than in traditional dictatorships. How can we indicate indoctrination in informational autocracies?

### **3.3. Centralized Curriculum Control**

As shown in the previous chapter, studies on informational autocracy closely examine how, for instance, some informational autocrats consolidate information control by buying and co-opting media outlets. Another possible strategy for consolidating information control is in the education system. This can be done by employing the strategy of centralized curriculum control (“CCC”). In this section, I account for the concept of CCC and argue that it can be applied to cases of informational autocracies to explore how information autocrats pursue indoctrination covertly.

Guriev and Treisman (2019) suggest that the autocrat will retain control of the source of information by buying media houses or co-opting them (p. 117). Presumably, this strategy can prove useful in an educational context as well. By controlling the educational content creation process through centralization, the autocrat can strengthen his control over the content without managing it directly. Additionally, he does not need to resort to brutal punishment for disobedience, as he already controls the process at its source.

It is therefore suggested that CCC is a possible strategy for informational autocrats to achieve information control. Arguably, it is more costly and burdensome for the autocrat to manage

the content of the curriculum directly than to ensure that the entire process of creating, publishing, and distributing the content aligns with regime views and values through exercising control over the process. Additionally, fewer actors in textbook publishing might reduce the risk of differing narratives in textbooks.

Furthermore, it is important to note that CCC is distinct from the uniform and centralized curriculum processes in, for instance, democracies. This is because CCC serves the autocratic end of obtaining information control, suppressing alternative views, and countering moments of pressure to secure survival. This starkly contrasts democratic settings, where CCC may be implemented for reasons related to standardization or quality control rather than as a means to stifle criticism or manage the narrative.

## **Textbook Production**

One way to indicate CCC is to look to curriculum producers. Curriculum producers create and publish content to be taught in schools. One comprehensive example of curriculum production is textbook production. The presence of CCC entails that the autocrat possesses some degree of control over the production of textbooks. But how can we measure control over the production of textbooks? Several actors can be involved in the production of textbooks. The government is important to mention, as governments can influence textbook production through funding and passing laws that promote or limit certain textbooks. Another prominent actor to mention is publishing houses. Their content is often intended as a principal source of educational material (Larson et al., 2010). Thus, these actors significantly influence the making of educational material in schools.

Publishing houses are central to creating, editing, and distributing educational materials (Larson et al., 2010). By controlling publishing houses, the autocrat can influence multiple aspects of the curriculum development process more effectively than targeting individual authors, teachers, or schools. Furthermore, controlling publishing houses allows the autocrat to leverage the market. By having control over a large portion of the market of publishing houses, the autocrat can ensure the propagation of regime values across a wide range of educational materials with minimal additional cost or effort. Additionally, by controlling the publishing houses, the autocrat can create a barrier to entry for potential competitors or

dissenting voices. Controlling the publishing house market makes it more challenging for alternative narratives to gain traction and threaten the autocrat's information control. Thus, in this thesis, the proposed way of indicating CCC is by focusing on how much control the autocrat has over the publishing house market for textbooks in education.

By the theoretical framework, I proposed to look to areas which can stimulate critical thinking and thus are important to informational autocrats. One can, for instance, look at subjects dealing with societal matters. The inculcation of values in, for instance, mathematics,<sup>15</sup> seems more overt than in subjects which discuss society, such as social studies. As previously argued, it makes sense for the autocrat to inculcate certain regime-friendly values where one could normally expect to find the expression of values. Because informational autocratic indoctrination is presumably covert, one can expect the autocrat to infuse values where such values easily blend in with the rest of the content.

It is important to recognize that CCC can be indicated in other ways. For instance, the autocrat might pursue legislative measures to ensure a uniform curriculum, or the state might buy publishing houses, or co-opt them. Furthermore, one might assume that CCC can manifest itself as meddling with teacher training courses or teacher qualification's schemes. It might also involve enrolling school principals in mandatory courses, or actively provoke mergers between publishing houses. These measures also align with CCC, with the point being that CCC implies a process in which the autocrat pursues more control over the content in education to obtain information control. For this thesis, however, control over publishing houses was most viable to investigate as there was data available for doing so. However, in this thesis, a qualitative account of other trends which might indicate CCC is also provided.

### **3.4. From Theory to Hypotheses**

To summarize, the autocrat aims to obtain control over information channels such as education, but at the same time, not risk being exposed for doing so. One might therefore

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<sup>15</sup> Some nuances are needed here: Overt dictators have induced political values in subjects like Mathematics in the past. In Saddam Hussein's Iraq, for instance, the regime swapped out "X" and "Y" in Mathematics textbooks for "S" and "H" instead (Goering, 2003). Some incidents indicate that Mathematics is also subjected to patriotic inculcation in Russia. For instance, in 2014, a Mathematics textbook written by Lyudmila Peterson was removed from the federal list because it did not "contribute to the formation of patriotism" (Konyukhova, 2014). We are, however, inclined to believe that textbooks in non-societal subjects are relatively *less* used to instill values than subjects which address societal matters.

expect the autocrat to pursue the inculcation of regime-friendly values covertly, and one way to do so is through CCC. To indicate CCC, one can investigate how the autocrat controls the publishing houses, as these are the principal sources of educational materials. This section formulates two hypotheses derived from what has been established until now.

The first argument,  $A_1$ , pertained to the informational autocrat pursuing informational autocratic indoctrination to secure autocratic survival. The presence of CCC can indicate the presence of informational autocratic indoctrination. The second argument,  $A_2$ , suggested that moments of pressure can warrant intensified indoctrination efforts, or an intensified effort to obtain CCC, as a response to secure autocratic survival. It was also established that one could expect more indoctrination in societal disciplines, which stimulate critical thinking, following pressure moments. Based on this insight,  $A_1$  and  $A_2$  were presented.

Moving forward, the first hypothesis,  $H_1$ , posits the autocrat pursues CCC in the wake of a moment of pressure. The second hypothesis,  $H_2$ , formulates the expectation that the autocrat centralizes curriculum production relatively more in societal disciplines than non-societal disciplines in the wake of a moment of pressure. The hypotheses read as follows and are rejected by  $H_0$ :

- $H_1$**  The autocrat centralizes the curriculum creation process following a moment of pressure.
- $H_2$**  The autocrat is more inclined to centralize the curriculum creation process following a moment of pressure in subjects addressing societal issues than in subjects which do not address societal issues.

The following section provides an account of the Russian education system, which was proposed as a case for exploring informational autocratic education and CCC.

# Chapter 4 | Russian Education

How do the proposed hypotheses manifest themselves within Russian education? This chapter provides an account of the Russian education system, including education under the Soviet regime. In addition, some key characteristics of interest for this thesis are suggested in light of the case of Russian education. For instance, it is argued that the 2014 annexation of Crimea is an example of a “moment of pressure” which triggered CCC, and that by examining Russian publishing houses we can identify CCC. Furthermore, subjects of societal kind in Russian education can be history, social studies, and fundamentals of life safety (“FLS”), and we can investigate textbooks in these subjects by “federal lists”.

## 4.1. Soviet Education

Soviet education has been discussed by a large number of scholars (Peters, 1956; Ross, 1960; Moe, 1975; Brandenberger, 2012; Zajda, 2014) who identified that the Soviet education system had distinct characteristics. First, it should be noted that education was used to achieve state goals (Ross, 1960, p. 540). Second, the state provided a streamlined curriculum which schools had to adhere to, and students were not allowed to choose which subjects to study (Ross, 1960, p. 541). Soviet education consisted of overt indoctrination efforts, and it has been argued that indoctrination was an “integral part of the general education of every Soviet student” (Ross, 1960, p. 543). Primary and secondary pupils were taught subjects such as the “Constitution of the USSR” (Counts, 1957, p. 77, as cited in Ross, 1960, p. 542) and from 1930 to the 1950s, the subjects were under total party-state control. Marxist-Leninist theory was taught in schools during this period, and the ideological approach to History continued until the 1980s (Almaev et al., 2020).

Additionally, it is said that the main objective of the textbook authors was to instill the Communist ideology in students (Almaev et al., 2020). Furthermore, textbooks would advocate the “prowess of particular Russian leaders, or the role of the Soviet Union in history, or the successes of the Communist party on the world scene” (Ross, 1960, p. 543). The overt attempts at indoctrination in the USSR makes it interesting to examine what form

indoctrination takes in modern day Russia, following the dissolution of the USSR and the emergence of informational autocracy.<sup>16</sup>

## **4.2. Russian Education Post-Soviet Era**

There are some characteristics of the Russian education system which originate from the Soviet education model. For instance, as of 2012, compulsory education covers the first grade through to the eleventh (World Bank, 2022b). This consists of basic general education and upper secondary education. Basic general education encompasses primary and lower secondary education, while upper secondary education is a two-year program (Nikolaev & Chugunov, 2012, p. 1).

The basis for education laws in Russia's post-Soviet era can be found in the Constitution of 1993. The Constitution's Article 43 grants every Russian citizen the right to free education and imposes compulsory education on all citizens. Article 114 imposes a duty on the Russian government to ensure that the education policy is uniform (Russian Federation, 1993). Until 2012, the Russian education system was guided by the Federal Law on Education of 1992 (IBE-UNESCO, 2007). It has been argued that the system has gradually evolved into a Soviet-style administrative-command system of state control, which refers to a centralized management style. This system has been re-established within the educational sphere, with the implication that regional authorities have less influence over school curriculum (Lisovskaya & Karpov, 2020, p. 290).

Curricular pluralism, which involves textbook diversity, has been drastically reduced in Russia and is by now almost entirely gone (Lisovskaya & Karpov, 2020, p. 290). In 2007, amendments were made to the Federal Law on education No. 3266-1, which abolished regional and local control over the secondary curriculum. Instead, schools were required to adhere to a federal, state-wide set of uniform, mandatory standards of education (Lisovskaya & Karpov, 2020, p. 290). These developments culminated in the adoption of a new federal education law in 2012, Federal Law No. 273 of December 29, 2012, "On Education".

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<sup>16</sup> Russia's regime transition is, of course, more complex and nuanced than this. Several contributions to the literature point to a variety of regime types, and more, which can be applicable to the historical case of Russia (Fish, 1994; Schröder, 2008; Clark, 2010; Krastev, 2011; Cassani & Tomini, 2019).

## **Federal Lists of Textbooks**

According to the Russian Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ “On Education”, Article 18, it is mandatory for educational institutions to use textbooks and teaching aids included in the federal list for implementing state-accredited educational programs of primary general, basic general, and secondary general education. The federal list consists of approved textbooks that meet the requirements set forth by the federal executive body responsible for the development and implementation of state policy and legal regulation in the field of general education (Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ).

For this study, the most relevant section of the 2012 “On Education” law is Article 28, sections (3) and (9), which provide that:

[...] (3) The competence of an educational organization in terms of the established sphere of activity shall include: (9) determination of the list of textbooks in accordance with the approved federal list of textbooks permitted for educational organizations to be used when delivering state-accredited educational programs of primary general, basic general, secondary general education as well as of manuals approved for use when implementing these educational programs;  
(Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ)

In the same law, Article 18 outlines the regulations for printed and electronic educational and information resources, including textbooks and teaching aids. The law mandates that these materials be included in the federal list of textbooks approved for use in state-accredited educational programs of primary general, basic general, and secondary general education, based on the results of an examination carried out by the federal executive body responsible for general education (Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ). The law also addresses the procedure for the formation of the federal list, the organization of work on the preparation, examination, and publication of textbooks, and financial support for the costs associated with these processes (Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ).



## Criteria for Textbooks

Moreover, according to Article 18, textbooks and teaching aids must meet specific requirements to be included in the federal list. These requirements include (i) compliance with federal state educational standards and federal basic general education programs, (ii) ensuring regional and ethnocultural characteristics of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation are taken into account, and (iii) implementation of the rights of citizens to receive education in their native language and literature from among the languages of the peoples of the Russian Federation.

Additionally, the law outlines the procedure for the formation of the federal list, including the examination of textbooks and teaching aids, the criteria for assessment, requirements for “experts” and “expert organizations”, and the procedure and grounds for excluding textbooks and teaching aids from the federal list (Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ). The Ministry of Education and Science issues a federal list of textbooks annually, which prescribes certain textbooks to be used in Russian schools. The government funds schools who choose books from the federal list. There have also been some regulations to the process which limit what books can be on the list. Law No. 309 of 2007, which was in force until November 12, 2013, provided that textbooks were to be approved by reference to federal educational standards for general basic education, which were:

6. [...] the working curricula of study courses, subjects, disciplines (modules) and other materials that ensure spiritual and moral development, upbringing and the quality of training of students.

(Federal Law of December 1, 2007, No. 309-FZ)

With the enactment of “On Education” in 2012, a more centralized standard was applied to forming the federal lists. Further, there were other laws introduced around the same time which impacted on the Russian education system. The most important one for this thesis is the order of the Ministry of Education of September 5, 2013, which mandated that textbooks should contribute to the formation of patriotism (Ministry of September 5, 2013, No. 1047). Furthermore, the law in 2012 also set out that textbooks are to be digitized (Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ), an effort which has also been intensified by the publishing houses since 2015.

It is worth noting that getting a book on the federal list of textbooks in Russia is a competitive process, and not all books submitted for review are included. To get a book on the federal list of textbooks in Russia, the publisher or author of the book must first submit a request to the Ministry. Once that request is received, the Ministry reviews the book to determine if it meets the standards and criteria for inclusion on the federal list of textbooks (Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ). This review process includes evaluations by experts in the field and feedback from teachers and other educational professionals. If the book is deemed suitable, the Ministry will include it in the next version of the list. The process of getting a book on the federal list of textbooks is depicted in Figure 4.1.

### Process of Federal Lists in Russia

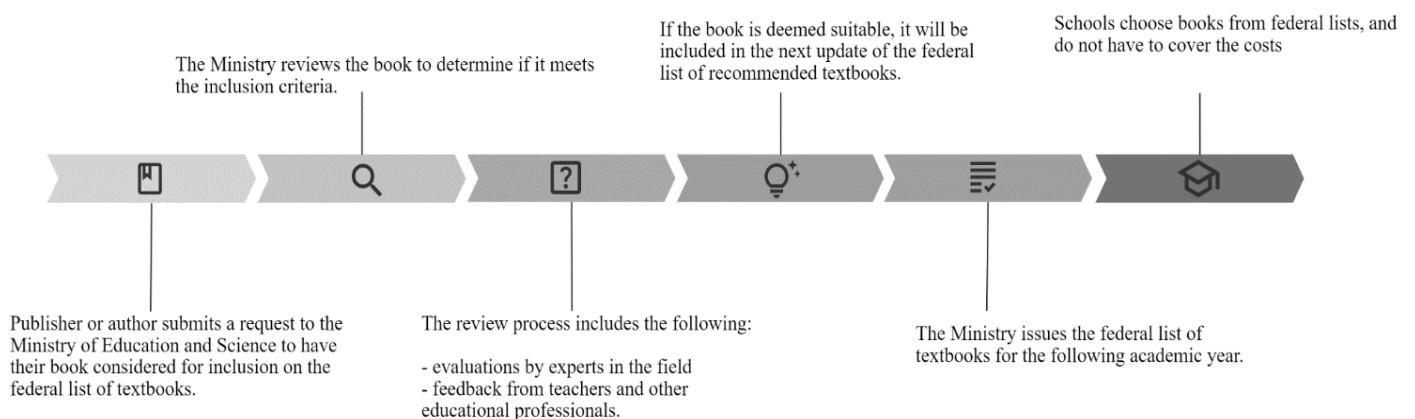


Figure 4.1. The process of a book being included in federal lists in Russia.

## Societal Subjects in Russian Education

The theoretical framework suggested that societal subjects are more prone to CCC measures because these might stimulate critical thinking. But what subjects can be considered “societal” in Russian education? In this thesis, I focus on three subjects: “History”, “social studies”, and “fundamentals of life safety” (“FLS”). It is argued that history, social studies, and FLS are subjects which can be crucial in developing pupils’ understanding of society.

A country’s history is a core part of its identity, as it creates the backdrop for modern day society. History prescribes a country’s victories, wrongdoings, and struggles, and it positions

the country within the context of its neighbors. How history is framed can therefore have significant implications for how a country sees itself. Just as a country's history is fundamental to its identity, social studies and FLS can play pivotal roles in shaping societal perspectives. Social studies offer an understanding of how societies function. It can cover a range of topics, such as politics, economics, and culture, making it an area for developing societal values and perceptions. The framing of social studies can shape citizens' understanding of their roles within society, their relationships with each other, and their interactions with the state. Therefore, control over how social studies is taught might allow an autocrat to subtly shape students' perceptions and maintain the narrative favorable to him.

Similarly, FLS is integral to the way a society perceives safety, health, and crisis management. This subject not only provides practical knowledge on survival skills and health, but it also touches upon more sensitive topics such as military history, international law, and civil defense structures (Stepura, 2018). Over time, the subject has also emphasized military knowledge, skills, and patriotism (Teslova, 2022). Therefore, how FLS is framed can influence citizens' attitudes toward these societal aspects. By controlling the narrative on topics in social studies, history, and FLS, an autocrat is in possession of the powerful tool of (i) inducing favorable attitudes and (ii) countering politically sensitive topics and discussion which might threaten him.

### **4.3. The 2014 Annexation of Crimea**

It was established that “moments of pressure” or “regime threats” are situations or events that put the perception of the autocrat among the public at risk. In this section, it is suggested that Russia's 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea can serve as an example of a moment of pressure. The annexation of Crimea has been covered extensively in the literature (Burke-White, 2014; Biersack & O'Lear, 2014; Treisman, 2016; Greene & Robertson, 2020; Strycharz, 2020). On March 18, 2014, Russia annexed the peninsula of Crimea, previously under Ukrainian administration, following a controversial referendum. The international community, including the United States and the European Union, condemned the annexation and imposed economic sanctions on Russia. The event garnered significant international attention and media coverage, leading to increased scrutiny of the Putin regime's actions (Biersack & O'Lear, 2014).

The controversial nature of the annexation, including the disputed legitimacy of the referendum, placed Putin's reputation at risk domestically and internationally. It could be argued that the international community's negative response to the annexation cast doubts on Putin's competence in handling foreign affairs. The Putin regime's illegal annexation of Crimea provided an opportunity for the informed elite to signal the autocrat's incompetence and disregard for international norms to the public, which could lead them to question the autocrat's abilities and intentions.<sup>17</sup>

The annexation of Crimea had the potential of fueling internal discontent within Russia, particularly among those who may have opposed the move or feared the repercussions of the international community's response. This internal discontent could make the public's perception of the autocrat's competence more vulnerable to elite signaling. This could put Putin's position at risk, and there was potential for political unrest. It is therefore argued that Russia's 2014 annexation of Crimea can be considered a "moment of pressure" within the context of the theoretical definition provided in Chapter 3. The event put the autocrat's reputation, competence, and public perception at risk, creating opportunities for elite signaling and increasing the likelihood of revolt or political unrest.

#### **4.4. Publishing Houses in Russian Education**

When considering educational content within Russia, one should assess the development of the role of textbook publishing houses. Publishing houses in Russia play an important role in the Russian education system, as they are responsible for producing materials that align with the government's educational standards and objectives. The publishing industry in Russia has a long and complex history, influenced by the Russian political, social, and cultural landscape. This section provides an overview of the development of publishing houses in Russia, focusing on their evolution, their role in shaping the educational system, and the impact political developments have had on them.

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<sup>17</sup> Whether the annexation of Crimea led to such attitudes or not is not relevant to this thesis. The reactions following the annexation constituted a threat, and this is sufficient. However, it is worth noting that international pressure does not always lead to democratization (Escribà-Folch & Wright, 2010).

## **Publishing Houses from the Soviet Era to Today**

During the Soviet era, the publishing industry underwent significant changes. The state assumed control over all publishing activities, leading to the centralization of the industry. Publishing houses were instrumental in disseminating propaganda and promoting Communist ideology (Shelton, 2010, pp. 65-66). Furthermore, a few publishing houses, such as “Prosvechenie” (“EDU”), played a crucial role in producing educational and pedagogical materials (Shelton, 2010, p. 75).

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 led to a transformation in the Russian publishing industry. The state monopoly on the production of textbooks ended, and private publishing houses emerged (Shelton, 2010, p. 75). The privatization led to a competitive publishing house market, and teachers had the opportunity to freely choose which textbooks to use, with parents being responsible for purchasing them. The role of the government was to maintain a list of recommended textbooks, also known as the federal lists, from which the teachers and schools choose textbooks from.

The Russian regime has recently regained its influence in the textbook publishing industry. As has been set out, the law “On Education” from 2012 mandated the provision of textbooks at the government’s expense, and the Ministry of Education made changes to how they approve textbooks, which has led to a consolidation of the industry, with large state-owned publishing houses such as EDU, dominating the market.

The two main organizations in the Russian publishing industry are Eksmo Publishing LLC and LLC AST Publishing House, which have several contracts with the Russian government (Soer, 2022). In 2021, Eksmo had contracts with the Russian government amounting to 652 million rubles, and AST had contracts valued at about 435 million rubles in total (Soer, 2022). These companies own parts of publishing houses’ portfolio, who publish everything from fiction to school textbooks.

## **4.5. Summary**

This chapter provided a brief account of the Russian primary and secondary education system. The brief account of Soviet education highlighted that political indoctrination was used in educational content. As for contemporary education in Russia, it has been demonstrated that the focus of the Russian education system has shifted to promoting Russian civic identity and patriotism. Furthermore, the publishing industry in Russia has gone through significant changes, with the Russian regime regaining its influence in recent years, leading to consolidation within the educational content, which has become more vulnerable to political influence. Additionally, laws were accounted for, and in the context of the study in this thesis, it was the 2012 “On Education” law which was most relevant. This law prescribed the process of issuing federal lists. The subjects of history, social studies, and fundamentals of life safety (“FLS”) were considered as belonging to the group “societal disciplines”, as these subjects touch upon topics related to society. In the following section, I elaborate on the research design and methodology regarding the study, with the characteristics of Russian education in mind.

# Chapter 5 | Methodology

Does the Russian education system conform to the characteristics of informational autocracy, and to what extent is centralized curriculum control (“CCC”) relevant in explaining Putin’s education governance? In Chapter 3, I proposed two hypotheses derived from the theoretical argument. These were as follows:

- H<sub>1</sub>** The autocrat centralizes the curriculum creation process following a moment of pressure.
- H<sub>2</sub>** The autocrat is more inclined to centralize the curriculum creation process following a moment of pressure in subjects addressing societal issues than in subjects which do not address societal issues

In Chapter 4, I proposed examining the Russian textbook publishing houses to assess the hypotheses. Furthermore, that the social studies, history, and FLS subjects as taught in Russian education should be examined, as these subjects address societal matters which might be of importance to an autocrat. Additionally, in the previous chapter, I argued that “moments of pressure” can be exemplified by the 2014 annexation of Crimea. In this chapter, I apply these characteristics, and put forth a research design for conducting a study of the publishing house market to examine whether the Putin regime has resorted to CCC following moments of pressure.

## 5.1. Research Design

A strong case study says something meaningful about the case in question, while providing insight into a more general and broader academic debate (Halperin & Heath, 2012, p. 205). For the study of this thesis, I will investigate the single case of Russian education under President Putin, with an overarching aim of providing detailed insights into his education governance. The choice of case stemmed from the justification of Putin as an informational autocratic leader, which is important since one of the aims of this thesis is to provide insights into informational autocratic theory. Moreover, the single case study might provide important

nuances, which was highlighted as important when attempting to understand the “finer” mechanics of autocratic governance.

## **Quasi-Experimental Approach**

The research design of the study is twofold using quantitative methods and supplying this with contextualizing, qualitative accounts. I will analyze figures through a quasi-experimental, comparative method, which resembles difference-in-differences. I will not, however, establish causal relationships due to the lack of data. By analyzing through a quasi-experimental approach, on the other hand, one might compare patterns between two comparable groups to isolate other possible explanations and estimate the relative change over time between the groups.

Difference-in-differences assumes “parallel paths” when comparing pre-and post-intervention change. The parallel path assumption in this study is that any average change in the market concentration for publishing houses who publish textbooks in non-societal subjects represents the counterfactual change in the market concentration for publishing houses who publish textbooks in societal subjects. This assumption is based on the premise that societal textbooks are more vulnerable to the inculcation of regime values than books in non-societal subjects, as societal textbooks might carry more importance to the autocrat.

Experimental methods can prove useful for researchers who seek to develop and test their theoretical models in a direct and empirically grounded way (McDermott, 2002, p. 326). In this study, one can justify a difference-in-differences analytical approach by the presence of alternative explanations for trends in market concentration levels. Other relevant factors which might influence textbook markets include inflation and digitalization. Inflation can make it more difficult for smaller publishing houses to compete in the market, as the cost of production and distribution increases. Digitalization can favor larger organizations, as they have more capital and are therefore in a better position to digitize their books.

However, one may expect the subject areas to be equally vulnerable to such trends, and it is not obvious why publishing houses in societal subjects would be more prone to inflation or digitalization than publishers of textbooks within non-societal subjects. Therefore,



differences between the market concentration levels across subject areas might indicate that something else, such as political influence, is at play. It is thus the presumed ideological importance that societal disciplines would hold for an autocrat, compared to non-societal disciplines, which constitutes the “treatment” effect in this study.

## 5.2. Operationalizations

This study’s operationalizations of key variables provide a foundation for assessing the relationship between international sanctions and CCC in the Russian education system. The general variables are the *number of international sanctions* and the *presence of CCC*. The research design assumed that international sanctions are independent of domestic regime influence and can be treated as an appropriate, exogenous variable to proxy regime threats. The units of observation are the *publishing houses* in Russia.

The unit of analysis is the *level of market concentration*, with the applied effect being *subjects on societal issues*. The dependent variables include the *concentration of the textbook publishing market*, while the independent variables comprise the 2014 annexation of Crimea, which *international sanctions against Russia* might capture. *Market concentration* in the textbook publishing market can be used to operationalize CCC. The Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (“HHI”) was used to calculate the concentration of publishing houses,<sup>18</sup> and I assumed the textbook market to consist of *n* publishing houses. HHI measures the market share a company possesses and can be a valuable tool for measuring market concentration.

The following equation measures HHI:

$$HHI = \text{sum}(\text{share of textbooks}^2)$$

The market share of a publishing house was calculated as the number of books published by a publisher in a year divided by the total number of books published in the same year by all publishers. The HHI ranges from 0 to 1, with values closer to 1 indicating higher market

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<sup>18</sup> There are several ways to measure market power. As the books per publisher on the federal lists constitutes the data for this study, the choice fell on HHI. Future research should consider using the Lerner Index, developed by Russian-born Abba Lerner, to explore market power in an economic context too.

concentration or monopolistic conditions. HHI can include whole numbers, but the HHI used in this thesis was computed to run from 0 to 1 for more intuitive results. The value of 0 indicates perfect competition with infinite publishing houses and textbooks spread uniformly across the publishing houses. Values closer to 0 suggest a competitive market with equal textbook distribution across publishing houses. An increase in the HHI value indicates that CCC is unfolding through a less competitive market in which certain actors have become more powerful than others.

The operationalizations chosen in this study aim to provide an adequate framework for exploring the relationship between international sanctions and CCC in the Russian education system. Using HHI as a measure of market concentration, combined with comparing treatment and comparison groups, might enable one to estimate the relative change over time between the groups, and identify potential patterns. Further research may expand upon these operationalizations and refine the measurements and explore additional aspects of the education system to deepen our understanding of the complex interplay between moments of pressure and educational centralization.

### **5.3. Data**

The data used in this thesis to test the hypotheses are federal lists of textbooks released between 2006 and 2020 by the Putin regime. Analyzing this data is essential to identify the types of textbooks that the regime favors. These lists can be accessed using online sources, such as [garant.ru](http://garant.ru), [273-фз.pdf](#), and the webpage of the Russian Ministry of Education and Science. I also used primary sources, such as the legislation prescribing the procedure for selecting the textbooks for federal lists, and secondary sources such as Russian education research. Most of the primary sources are scanned and not readable in PDF. Table 5.1 is an example of what a federal list may look like, which is an excerpt from the 2020 list.

Порядковый номер учебника (Textbook number)	Наименование учебника (Name of textbook)	Автор (Author)	Класс (Grade)	издателя (Publisher)	Приказ (Order)
1.1.2.8.1.1.2	Физическая культура (Physical Culture)	Лях В.И. (Lyakh V.I.)	8-9	Акционерное общество "Издательство "Просвещение"  (Joint stock company Society "Publishing House Education")	От 20 мая 2020 года No. 254  (From May 20, 2020, No. 254)
1.1.3.1.1.1.2	Русский язык (Russian language)	Воителева Т.М (Voiteleva, T.M.)	11	Общество с ограниченной ответственностью "Образовательной издательский центр "Академия"  (Limited Liability Company "Educational Publishing Center "Academy")	От 20 мая 2020 года No. 254 (From May 20, 2020, No. 254)

Table 5.1. Two books as they were listed in the 2020 federal list of textbooks (May 2020, No. 254).

## Data Collection

Before coding the data, I developed a codebook based on the information found in the federal lists. The data I used is self-coded, "FL 2006-2020", where "FL" stands for Federal Lists. The data set consists of 18,156 Russian textbooks from 2006 to 2020, coded in Microsoft Excel. The information in the dataset is based on the federal lists issued between 2006 and 2020. Each federal list consists of several books which the schools can choose from. A federal list also contains the following information: (i) the year of the federal list, (ii) the academic year that the list applies for, (iii) the Russian title of the book, (iv) the grade it is intended for, (v) the Russian name of the publishing house. This information is included in the data set. In the data set, the following is also coded: (vi) the English translations of the title and publishing house, (vii) the code for the publishing house of the book, (viii) the name of the specific subject, and (ix) the code of the subject category that the subject falls under, derived from the codebook. In addition, if it was announced in a federal list that a book was removed or added later, then this information was included in the data set.

Due to recent events in Russia, notably the invasion of Ukraine, numerous websites were inaccessible. Additionally, virtual private networks (“VPN”) from Russia, Ukraine, Belarus, and other countries were blocked, and several independent sources and media outlets have been shut down. Fortunately, by using a Saudi-Arabian VPN, which was not blocked, I could access the materials I needed for this thesis. The internet archiving service “Wayback Machine” was also of great use when accessing defunct webpages.

The retrieval of Russian government documents, specifically federal lists, was paramount to the transparency and replicability of this study. Since earlier legislation is referred to in the federal lists, I identified the most recent federal list (2020) and could trace the legislation from there, as each federal list replaces a previous federal list. This approach enabled me to track federal lists back to 2006, with the aim of capturing all lists that have been published since they were introduced. However, I could not locate federal lists for 2013, 2016, 2018, and 2019. This might be due to two reasons; either because such lists do not exist, indicating that no changes occurred in these years, or they exist but could not be located. The data collection process was further challenged by not finding a central repository for federal lists. For coding, tools such as Tabula, OCR text recognition by Adobe, and automatic translation functions in Google Sheets proved valuable as they enabled me to extract the information from federal lists to the Excel sheets more efficiently.

### **The Data Set “FL 2006-2020.”**

This data set is based on accessible, online legislation, making it transparent and replicable. Another strength of this data set is its large size and its complexity; since it includes comprehensive information on each textbook, it enables the researcher to capture variations across years and textbooks. The data set is accessible and manageable for English speakers. Each row is a textbook in FL 2006-2020. Table 5.2 is an excerpt of the data set.

academic_year	fl_added	fl_revised	fl_year	title_ru	grade	publisher_ru	title_en	publisher_en	publisher_code	subject_ru	subject_code
2021/2022			2020	Лях В.И. Физическая культура	8	Просвещение	Lyakh V.I. Physical Culture	Education	EDU	Physical culture	10
2021/2022			2020	Лях В.И. Физическая культура	9	Просвещение	Lyakh V.I. Physical Culture	Education	EDU	Physical culture	10
2021/2022			2020	Воителева Т.М. Русский язык	11	Академия	Voiteleva T.M. Russian language	Academy	ACD	Russian language	9

Table 5.2. An excerpt of the same books as shown in Table 5.1 but coded to the FL 2006-2020 data set.

One should note that there are challenges associated with using materials that can be found through open sources when assessing autocratic regimes. Open-source materials might not provide the full picture or cover all aspects of a regime, as certain information may be hidden or inaccessible due to government censorship or lack of public disclosure. The quality and credibility can vary significantly, and one should devote considerable time and effort in verifying and assessing the reliability of the sources. In an attempt to address this issue, I provided a qualitative and contextualizing account to the findings of my study.

While there are challenges in using open-source materials when studying autocratic regimes, it is important to acknowledge the advantages that these sources can provide. Open-source materials grant researchers access to information that might otherwise be difficult to obtain, drawing from a diverse array of sources that can be cross-referenced and corroborated. This variety can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the matter at hand. Additionally, open-source materials can facilitate transparent and replicable research, as other researchers can access and verify the same sources, resulting in a more robust body of knowledge.

## **The Data Set “GSDB.”**

The study used the Global Sanctions Database (“GSDB”), developed by Felbermayr et al. (2020), as one way of identifying moments of pressure for the Russian regime. GSDB contains data on economic sanctions covering bilateral, multilateral, and plurilateral sanctions from 1950 to 2020 (Felbermayr et al., 2020). The GSDB data covers (i) the type of sanction, (ii) the policy objectives behind the sanction, and (iii) the degree of success (Felbermayr et al., 2020). The goal is to explore and visualize how the publishing market changes in response to perceived regime threats, such as the imposition of international sanctions.

## **Analytical Tools and Lack of Regression**

To examine the development in the market concentration over time, I used RStudio. The textbooks were grouped by year, and publishing codes derived from the codebook. I then grouped the data by subjects, resulting in two main groups. The first group was the treatment group, capturing societal subjects, which were history, social studies, and FLS; the second, capturing non-societal subjects, was natural sciences. The natural sciences group comprised the mathematics, chemistry, biology, and physics subjects.

The treatment group of societal subjects was assumed to be subject to regime values inculcation. The comparison group, on the other hand, was assumed to be subject to a different level of political influence. By comparing these two groups, the study could analyze the relative increases in market concentrations while taking various factors into account. The table in Appendix 4 displays one code used frequently for converting the data to HHI levels per year in RStudio, in which the steps are explained along the way.

By the end of the data cleaning process in RStudio, I had a data set of market concentration values covering the two groups in the years 2006 to 2020, but with the lack of data points in some years, the result was 11 observations. Regression analysis was therefore not carried out due to the limited data available and the small number of observation units in years, which was an insufficient sample size to perform regression analysis effectively, as the limited sample size would reduce the statistical power of the regression analysis. Instead, I relied on

interpreting graphs through a quasi-experimental approach, and supplying this with contextualizing accounts.

## **Qualitative Contextualization**

The study conducted in this thesis is primarily quantitative. However, this approach alone does not provide an extensive account of curriculum measures in Russian education, and due to the lack of regression, a contextualization was deemed necessary. Centralization measures of the Russian curriculum can occur through, for instance, other legislative efforts, which the FL 2006-2020 data set does not capture. Furthermore, another aim of this study is to secure a holistic approach. Therefore, I employed a research design with a multifaceted approach to supply the quantitative findings with a qualitative account. The approach included collecting and analyzing Russian government documents, such as federal laws and decrees, and some content analysis of Russian textbooks. The textbooks were selected by their accessibility online, their presence on federal lists, and whether they were within the societal subject group.

Additionally, I analyzed educational materials, such as textbooks and curriculum plans, to identify the imposition of regime-friendly values in Russian educational content. These documents and curriculum plans were compiled when searching for federal lists. Furthermore, I had background meetings to obtain more insight, but this was only supplementary. The information obtained from these meetings was cross-checked and verified as thoroughly as possible before it was included in this thesis. I was also conscious about using primarily Russian secondary literature concerning educational research, to supplement the document analysis and the information obtained from the background meetings.

While the qualitative accounts served to complement and enhance the quantitative findings, it is important to acknowledge that a more in-depth qualitative analysis would be ideal to ensure full method triangulation. However, due to the scope and focus of this thesis, conducting a comprehensive qualitative investigation was not possible. Thus, the qualitative aspects presented should be seen as only supplementary to the quantitative analysis.

## 5.4. Summary

The study combined quantitative methods with background research and document analysis, with the aim of answering the research question comprehensively and holistically.

Government documents were used to connect market concentration to CCC in the Russian education system, and the data included a sample size of 18,156 Russian textbooks published between 2006 to 2020. To retrieve the federal lists, I used online open sources, as transparent data collection was one of the aims of the study.

I used techniques such as “Tabula”, OCR, and automatic translation functions in “Google Sheets” to speed up the data collection process, and thereby ensure that I could cover as many books as possible. However, no regression analysis was conducted due to the low number of observational units after conversion to market concentration levels in RStudio. The market concentration was suggested to be identified through examining government documents, such as federal lists, which would reflect government policies. The following chapter presents and discusses the analysis of the study for this thesis based on the methodological accounts presented.



# Chapter 6 | Analysis

I have so far in this thesis proposed that the international sanctions following the 2014 annexation of Crimea constituted a “moment of pressure” for the Russian regime, and that the subjects of social studies, history, and FLS are subjects which are vulnerable to regime inculcation. In order to identify whether the Putin regime carried out informational autocratic indoctrination, in this section, I analyze changes in market concentration levels in the Russian publishing market for textbooks in the aftermath of the 2014 annexation of Crimea. This is to see whether centralized curriculum control (“CCC”) is present in Russian school curriculum policy, and whether it was pursued following moments of pressure.

I then present the findings of this thesis, which have been produced using a comprehensive and original data set covering over 18,000 Russian textbooks from federal lists published between 2006 and 2020, as well as online data sets capturing economic sanctions imposed on Russia from 2006 to 2020 to identify the connection between curriculum centralization measures and the Crimea annexation. This was proposed as a method for measuring CCC, as it is favorable for the Putin regime to consolidate curriculum creation by reducing diversity in the federal lists for the textbook publishing houses which publish textbooks. Some of the reasons for this is that fewer actors within the textbook publishing market might reduce the risk of differing narratives in textbooks, and more actors is more burdensome for the autocrat to manage.

One can identify market concentration by measuring the market share of each publishing house. As recalled, this can be done through the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (“HHI”). The following sections set out the HHI levels that can be perceived from analyzing federal lists from 2006 to 2020 while comparing the trends with international sanctions imposed on Russia during the same period. After presenting and interpreting the figures, I turn to a qualitative account which might serve to contextualize the findings.

## 6.1. Hypothesis 1

H<sub>1</sub> provided that the textbook publishing market had become increasingly concentrated in Russia following the 2014 annexation of Crimea. This was interesting to investigate to see whether CCC is at play in the general textbook publishing in Russia.

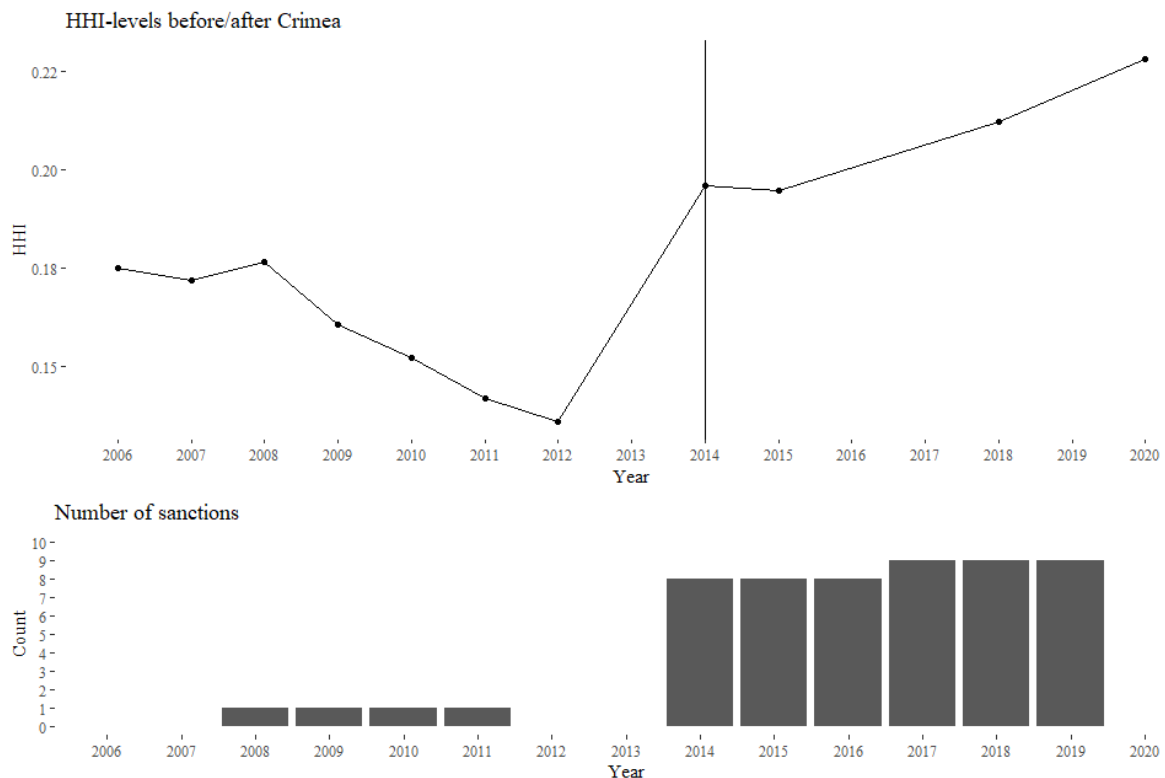


Figure 6.1. The general market concentration for Russian publishing houses and the number of sanctions imposed on Russia.

Figure 6.1 shows two different trends which it is argued in this thesis are interconnected. First, the figure in the lower half illustrates the number of international sanctions imposed on Russia. The chart in the upper half figure depicts HHI levels from 2006 to 2020. It can be seen from the chart that from 2006 to 2012, the federal lists posited a more diverse composition of textbook publishers, and there was a gradual decline in the HHI level from

2008 to 2012. In 2012, however, there was a sharp increase, followed by a brief decrease in 2014, and another increase from 2015 to 2018.

The implication of an increase is that the government posited a less diverse or less equal composition of actors in publishing textbooks for primary and secondary education in Russia. The development from 2012 was likely spurred by the enactment of the 2012 law, “On Education”, which put forth new guidelines for approving textbooks to appear on federal lists. It might be that the education reform in 2012 led to the increase in HHI value, as the reform prescribed the process for approving textbooks to federal lists. If so, then this should be seen as one of the methods used by the Russian regime to secure curriculum control. Still, it is not clear which moment of pressure would enable this development.<sup>19</sup>

The figure might lead us to acknowledge that high market concentration levels can be affected by crises differently. For instance, Russia was suffering severely from the 2007-2008 financial crisis (Guriev & Tsyvinsky, 2010, p. 9), and Figure 6.1 shows that market concentration went down following this. It is possible that the financial crisis disincentivized state efforts at centralizing the textbook publishing market. This is because the regime might have been more focused on addressing the economic turmoil and maintaining social stability rather than centralizing the curriculum creation process.

The chart in the lower half of the figure shows that Russia was faced with sanctions by the international community following its 2014 annexation of Crimea. In 2015, the HHI level was lower than it had been in 2014. However, since 2015, the HHI level has steadily increased, showing that the government’s federal lists have posited less diverse compositions of actors in the Russian general education textbook market following the annexation of Crimea. This indicates that the increases in 2012 and 2015 were not connected.

The findings corroborate H<sub>1</sub>, as they show that the textbook publishing market experienced increased centralization following a moment of pressure, this being the 2014 annexation of Crimea. The increase in market concentration would have given the autocrat greater control over the curriculum creation process, as it is easier for him to manage fewer publishing

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<sup>19</sup> It is likely that the law was drafted before the 2011-2013 mass demonstrations in Russia. However, it is possible that amendments or other changes occurred in this law due to moments of pressure, but this would require a more in-depth inquiry on events in this period.

houses involved in producing educational content. However, there is a concern which presents itself, and makes the confirmation of  $H_1$  a less straightforward process. That is, it is not clear whether the trend of curriculum consolidation began in 2012 or 2015. We cannot be certain that the Crimea annexation triggered the increase in HHI due to the lack of key data points (2013, 2016, 2017, 2019). It is also important to note that Figure 6.1 only displays the HHI levels of the federal lists in their entirety. The HHI levels arising from the textbook market in specific subjects will be accounted for when analyzing  $H_2$ .

## **6.2. Hypothesis 2**

$H_2$  posited that the increase in market concentration in the textbook publishing market following the 2014 annexation of Crimea has been more prominent for textbooks on societal issues. It has been established that societal disciplines within the Russian educational system include the history, social studies, and FLS subjects. Non-societal disciplines, such as subjects within natural sciences, include subjects such as physics, mathematics, biology, and chemistry.

Moreover, it has been proposed that societal and non-societal subjects are affected differently by moments of pressure, due to their relative importance for the regime ideology. To test whether the subjects are more or less important to the regime in respect of pursuing less diverse or unequal compositions in federal lists, one should seek to rule out trends such as economic growth and recovery after the financial crisis. This is because one would expect such trends to affect both disciplines similarly. Thus, this part of the analysis employs a difference-in-differences approach. The differences between the subjects are investigated by using natural sciences as a control group for examining differences between the groups following a moment of pressure.

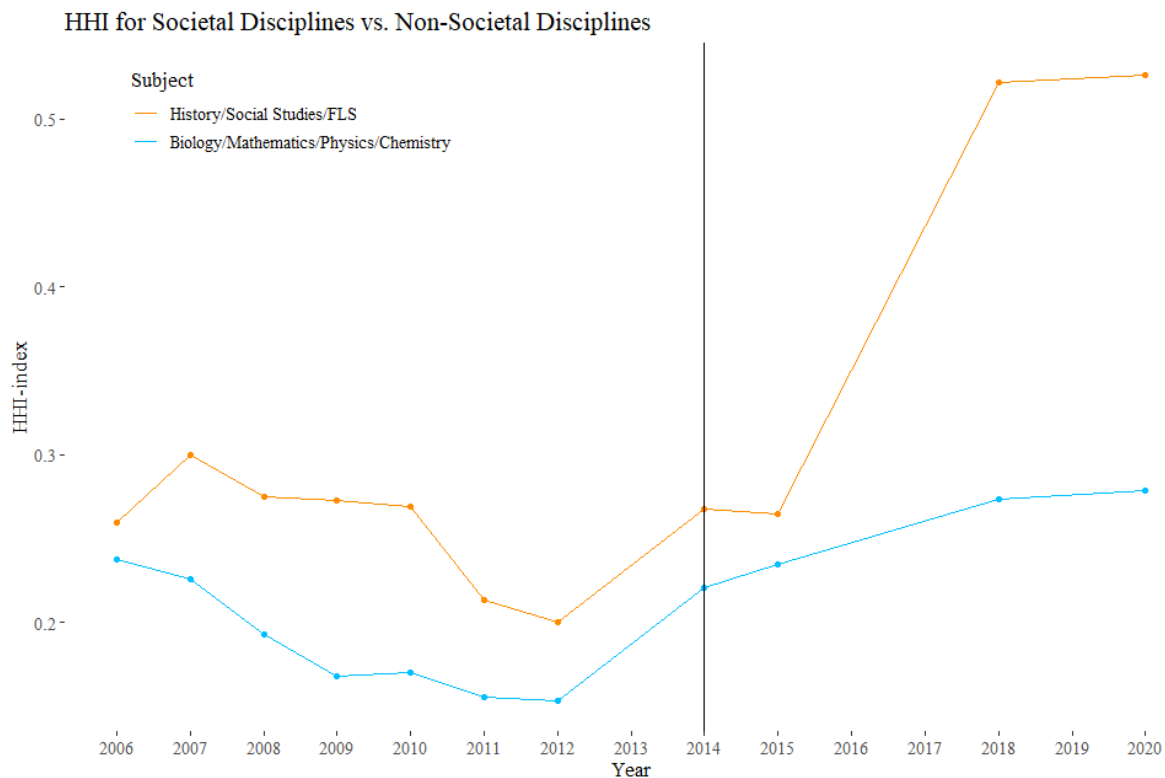


Figure 6.2 The market concentration for Russian publishing houses in societal versus non-societal disciplines.

Figure 6.2 depicts the HHI-values of the societal treatment group, consisting of history, social studies, and FLS versus the non-societal control group of natural sciences, consisting of the biology, physics, mathematics, and chemistry subjects. It can be observed that since 2006, the market has consistently been more concentrated in the societal disciplines than the non-societal disciplines. In 2012, both disciplines experienced an increase, however the increase was more prominent for non-societal subjects. In 2015, however, the societal subjects experienced a notable increase when compared to natural sciences.

From 2007 to 2012, both disciplines experienced a decline in their HHI-levels, but this decrease is less prominent for societal subjects. One would assume that the financial crisis, for instance, would have had a similar effect on the HHI level for publishers of textbooks on societal subjects as well as textbooks on non-societal subjects, but Figure 6.2 contradicts this. Figure 6.2 thus indicates that the government posited less diversity among publishing houses of societal textbooks as opposed to non-societal textbooks in this period, which suggests political influence is still at play following the financial crisis.

Furthermore, the sharp increase in the level of HHI in 2012, which one might attribute to the enactment of the 2012 “On Education” law, was sharper in the non-societal disciplines than the societal disciplines. This might suggest that the restrictions made on federal lists by the “On Education” law had a bigger effect on non-societal subjects than societal subjects. The following increase since 2014 was remarkably sharper in the societal disciplines than the non-societal disciplines. This is consistent with the second hypothesis and suggests that the government prioritized increasing their control over the educational content in societal disciplines. However, the trend of market concentration in societal subjects should be investigated further. Figure 6.3 depicts market concentration levels from 2006 to 2020. Natural sciences remain as the comparison group, but the sole subject of history is now the treatment group.

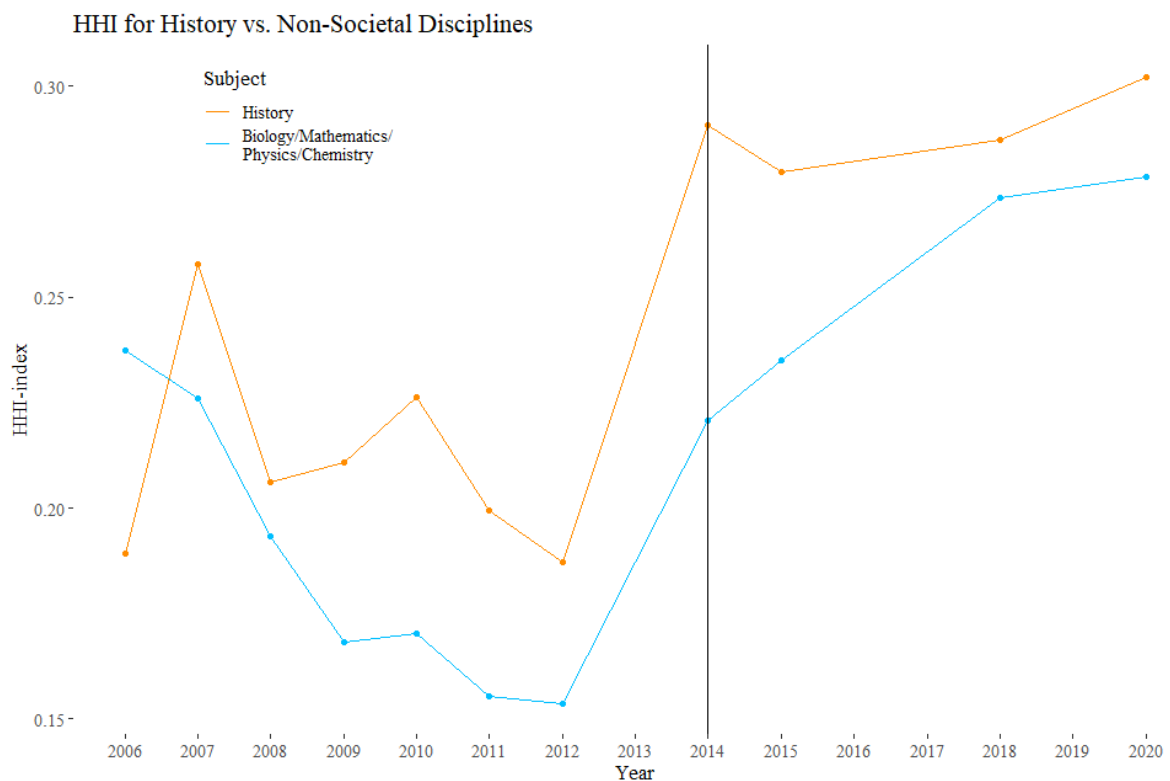


Figure 6.3. The market concentration for publishing actors in History versus non-societal disciplines.

In 2006, the federal lists contained a less diverse textbook publisher composition for mathematics than for history, however this trend reversed in 2007. The two groups follow a relatively similar pattern following 2014. The HHI level for history decreased more than it did for non-societal subjects following 2014. It is not possible to unequivocally confirm that H<sub>2</sub> also applies for history, so it is necessary to consider the other societal disciplines.



Figure 6.4. The market concentration for publishing houses in Social Studies versus non-societal disciplines

Figure 6.4 compares natural sciences and social studies. In 2006, the non-societal disciplines experienced higher HHI levels than social studies. However, from 2007, this trend reversed as it did for history. In the following years, until 2010, both disciplines experienced a decrease in their HHI levels. From 2012, however, both disciplines' HHI levels experienced a sharp increase, which we might attribute to the 2012 "On Education" law, but social studies' increase was a bit sharper than natural sciences. The HHI level for social studies increased following 2014, although the increase was not as steep as before, and natural sciences' increase was sharper. While this does not lend support to H<sub>2</sub>, the figure might still indicate that social studies is more important to the regime, given its higher concentration levels.

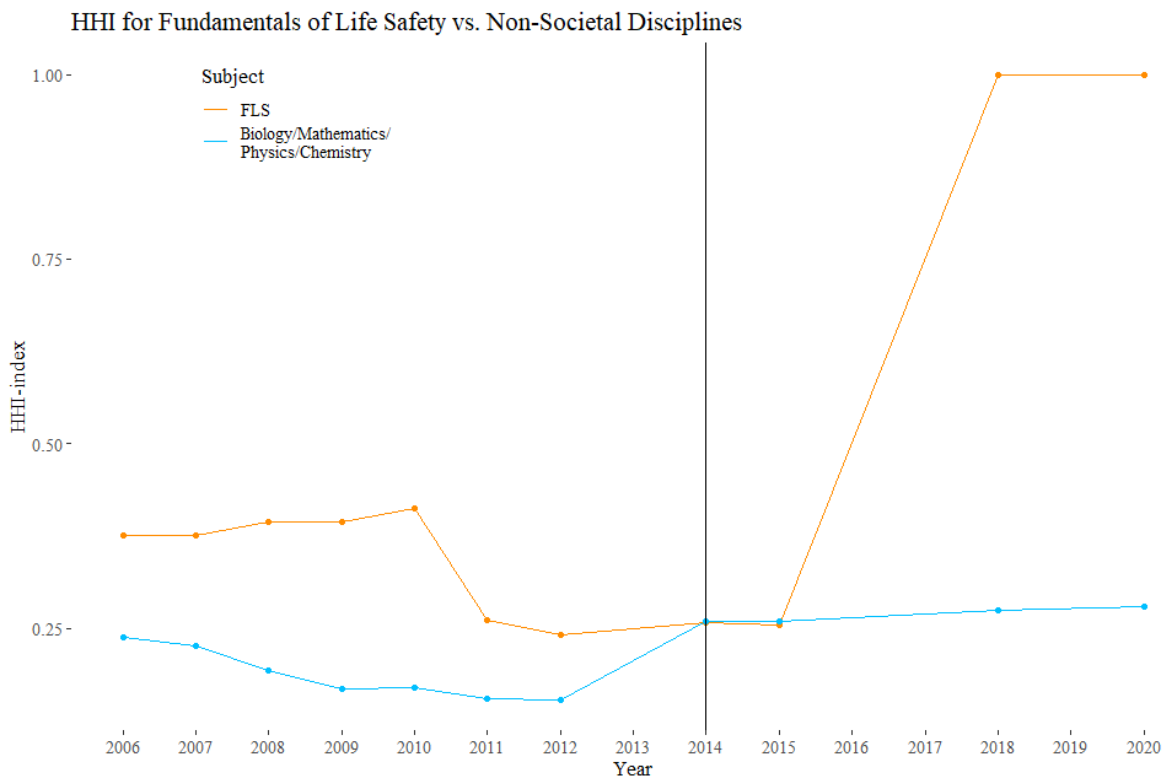


Figure 6.5. The market concentration for publishing houses who publish textbooks for fundamentals of life safety (“FLS”) versus non-societal disciplines.

Figure 6.5 compares FLS with non-societal subjects. The previous Figure 6.2 depicted a sharp increase in HHI levels for societal subjects in 2015, but it seems that this is due to the sharp increase in the HHI level of FLS that year. It also seems that a number of textbooks in the FLS subject were removed from the federal lists in 2018. By that year, the publishing house Ventana Graf had a monopoly over publishing FLS textbooks (HHI = 1,0). It seems that the HHI level of FLS was unaffected by the 2012 “On Education” law, according to Figure 6.5.

It is clear that the Putin regime has, by the federal lists, reduced equality of distribution of textbooks across publishing houses and increased market concentration in the textbook publishing market. This trend has been occurring since 2015 in the FLS subject, but the trend is less prominent in history and social studies. There are also other questions which arise from the findings. First, how might legislative measures have affected these numbers? Second, can we see evidence of regime-friendly values being instilled in textbooks which discuss societal matters?



### **6.3. Contextualizing the Findings**

What would one observe qualitatively if the theory on CCC and regime influence is correct? The aim of the following section is to provide the quantitative study with qualitative context. If indoctrination is indeed taking place, and CCC is a strategy used by the Putin regime to achieve this, it begs the question of what values are instilled, what the publishing houses' roles are in this, and whether other measures are taken to obtain CCC.

#### **Regime Values in Russian Education**

What values are instilled in students in the Russian education system? Several studies indicate the increased emphasis on military patriotism in Russian schools (Rapoport, 2009; Sanina, 2017; Alava, 2021). Nationalism has also consistently been a tool utilized by the Kremlin. While “[n]ational identity has undoubtedly become more russkii-centered, [...] the Kremlin keeps the definition of ‘Russianness’ intentionally vague, blurring the boundaries between ‘nation’ and ‘civilization’” (Blakkisrud, 2023, p. 64).

What is it about military patriotism that makes it effective for countering regime threats like one arising following the 2014 Annexation of Crimea, as assumed by the theoretical argument? Military patriotism, it could be argued, contributes to national pride and unity. The annexation of Crimea in 2014 was framed as a triumphant event, highlighting Russia’s strength and historical ties to the region. This narrative fosters national pride and unity, which can help counter anti-regime sentiments by portraying President Putin as a strong defender of Russian interests and identity.<sup>20</sup>

Furthermore, by spreading military patriotism in Russian education, the regime can silence dissent among the youth. Military patriotism makes it difficult to criticize the regime without appearing unpatriotic and anti-Russian. This can in turn limit public criticism and opposition to the regime. Additionally, military patriotism contributes to identifying “the other”. History is a way for a society to understand itself (Zajda & Zajda, 2003). It also informs a country’s

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<sup>20</sup> Putin is no stranger to portraying himself as a strong defender of Russia; at the 2018 Valdai Conference, he stated that he is Russia’s “most genuine and most effective nationalist” (Putin, 2018, as cited in Blakkisrud, 2020). Russian patriotism is part of Putin’s ideological foundation.

sentiments about its neighbors. As such, the history subject can be used to vilify other countries, creating a powerful “us versus them”-narrative. Such narratives can be important drivers in military patriotism, which aims to instill a “willingness to fight for your country”-attitude.

### **Legislative Efforts in Russian Education**

The analysis demonstrated one way to pinpoint the presence of centralization efforts to obtain curriculum control. However, it did not capture other efforts to obtain curriculum control besides through federal lists. However, several instances of legislative efforts in Russian education indicate that CCC is at play. From 2001 to 2015, three state programs of patriotic education were implemented in Russian education (Russian Federation, December 30, 2015, No. 1493). On December 30, 2015, the government decreed resolution No. 1493, “On the state program, “Patriotic education of the citizens of the Russian Federation for 2016-2020”. Part of the program’s goals was “increasing the interest of citizens in the military history of the Fatherland and memorable dates”, and “improving the quality of the work of educational organizations on the patriotic education of students and increasing their motivation to serve the Fatherland”. Additionally, one of the goals was stated to be “ensuring the formation of moral, psychological and physical readiness among young people to defend the Fatherland, loyalty to constitutional and military duty in conditions of peacetime and wartime” (Russian Federation, December 30, 2015, No. 1493).

The order of the Ministry Education of September 5, 2013, No. 1047 includes a clause that provides that approved textbooks should “[contribute] to the formation of patriotism, love and respect for the family, the Fatherland, one's people, the region, tolerant attitude towards representatives of various religious, ethnic and cultural groups, [teach] interethnic and interfaith dialogue” (Ministry of Education, September 5, 2013, No. 1047). Furthermore, in 2021, more amendments to instill patriotic values in pupils came into force in Russian education legislation. These amendments establish that education should involve students getting a sense of patriotism, and respect for the memory of the defenders of the Fatherland, for the law, the older generations, traditions, and the environment (Sokolov, 2022).

It is therefore clear that the Russian regime has attempted to impose patriotism values on students through the content contained in primary and secondary school textbooks. It seems

plausible that the reason the Putin regime has pursued centralization through excluding publishing houses' textbooks, is because the textbooks that were removed from the federal lists were not considered sufficiently patriotic.

### **Regime Friendly Values in History and Social Studies**

In November 2014, around eight months following the annexation of Crimea, Putin met with young scientists and history teachers at the Museum of Modern History in Moscow.

According to Putin, they were “[...] moving in the direction of giving greater importance to historical knowledge in general, teaching history in schools and universities” (Putin, 2014).

In addition to setting out the reforms to the history subject, Putin highlighted his attitude to education: “I consider it extremely important, simply necessary; without it, it is impossible to build a country.” (Putin, 2014).

The orders of the Ministry of Education on patriotism in education were released in 2012, and on May 17, 2012, the standards for the tenth and eleventh grades in Russian education were approved. One of the requirements for mastering the general education program involved the following:

7. Personal results of mastering the main educational program should reflect:

1) Russian civic identity, patriotism, respect for one's people, a sense of responsibility to the Motherland, pride in one's land, one's Motherland, the past and present of the multinational people of Russia, respect for state symbols (coat of arms, flag, anthem) (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of May 17, 2012, No. 413).

Furthermore, in February 2013, President Putin reportedly requested a new plan for the History curriculum (Kovalyova, 2013). The historical and cultural standard was developed in accordance with the instructions of President Putin on May 21, 2012, No.1334, and the 2014-2015 History reform was finalized on June 8, 2015, by law No. 576. The law amends the federal list, which was published on March 31, 2014, ten days after the completion of the annexation of Crimea. The reform led to the exclusion of several books on the federal list and the introduction of thirteen new history books on the list. All of the new thirteen books were to be published by the top three largest publishing houses in Russia; Дрофа

(“Bustard”/”BUS”), Просвещение (“Education”/”EDU”), and Русское слово (“Russian Word”/”RUS”). These books were to follow requirements such as “transitioning to a linear system of teaching history from grades 5 to 10”, “changing the periodization of history”, and, most relevant to this thesis: “Strengthening the patriotic orientation, which, in particular, is manifested in increased attention to the study of the history of the Great Patriotic War.” (Olifirova, 2017). The standard includes a list of topics, concepts and terms, events, and historical figures which are mandatory to study, as well as a “list of difficult questions of history that caused heated discussions in society” (Prosvechenie, n.d.). The reform is one of some examples of legislative efforts by the Putin regime to acquire control over the content of education in societal disciplines.

The books were also to include references made to the annexation of Crimea in 2014 (Ria Novosti, 2014). In one of the newly added history books published by BUS, the following question was to be discussed by students; “why did the inclusion of Crimea and Sevastopol in Russia get mass support from the population of Russia and contribute to a sharp increase in the rating of President V. V. Putin?” (Volobuev et al., 2016, p. 327). Another book added by the 2015 History Reform presented the following view of the Crimea annexation in 2014:

In 2014, after the adoption by the State Duma and the Council Federation of Legislative Changes, the President of Russia, Vladimir Putin, signed the law on the adoption of the Crimea and Sevastopol into the Russian Federation. The events in Ukraine, the reunification of Crimea with Russia, caused a sharp reaction from the United States and the European Union, who imposed sanctions on Russia. However, these measures did not lead to sovereign change. (Gorinov et al., 2015, p. 105)

The excerpt above is not necessarily problematic by itself. However, the statement below is from the next page in the same book:

More than 96 percent were in favor of [Crimea’s] reunification with Russia. The figures are extremely convincing. To understand why such a choice was made, it is enough to know the history of the Crimea, to know what Russia means for Crimea and Crimea for Russia. Literally everything in Crimea is permeated with our common history and pride. [...] Crimea is Sevastopol, a city of legend, a city of great fate, fortress city and homeland of the Russian Black Sea military fleet. Crimea is

Balaklava and Kerch, Malakhov Kurgan and Sapun Mountain. Each of these places is sacred to us, these are symbols of Russian military glory and unprecedented valor. (Gorinov et al., 2015, p. 106)

Students reading this section of the book were also asked to discuss “why did Russian citizens unanimously support the reunification of Crimea and Sevastopol with Russia?” (Gorinov et al., 2016, p. 106) and “why did the majority of the voters in the 2012 presidential election vote for V.V. Putin?” (Gorinov et al., 2016, p. 105). As these excerpts and questions can demonstrate, the 2015 History reform involved efforts at inculcating certain values in the Russian education system.

Within social studies educational material from 2013, there is evidence of regime friendly values such as patriotism being imposed. However, these instances are of a more general sense. For instance, one of the learning outcomes proposed in a 2013 Social Studies textbook published by EDU is that the subject should create “[...] value orientations based on the ideas of patriotism, love and respect for the Fatherland” (Ponomareva et al., 2013, p. 4).

An anonymous source told Mediazona in 2022 that, “You understand, history and social studies textbooks are the most opportunistic from the point of view of censorship, once the pendulum has swung, and the textbook is immediately edited” (Mediazona, 2022a). Further, a former publishing house employee stated that, “Following the annexation of Crimea, passages about Crimea were inserted everywhere” and that, “There are simply no independent publishers who have the opportunity to make textbooks on the market now” (Mediazona, 2022a). This indicates that censorship and political influence in the publishing market are important measures used in Russian education. However, one should furthermore acknowledge that the toolkit of Russian curriculum control and indoctrination involves more than simply centralizing the textbook publishing market.

The trend of patriotic values and other regime friendly statements being included in textbooks is not a new trend. In a 2013 Social Studies textbook, the following excerpt was found:

February 8, 2008, President V.V. Putin at a meeting of the State Council noted that ‘Russia has returned to the world stage as a strong state - a state that is reckoned with and that can stand up for myself’. The statement ‘Russia is a strong state’ is by no

means an exaggeration, but a statement of the serious changes that have taken place in the country since the beginning of the 21st century.

(Ponomareva et al., 2013, p. 93)

Additionally, before the annexation in 2014, the 2012 learning outcomes for Russian general secondary education established three requirements for developing educational programs, of which the one was to lead to the formation of “Russian civic identity, patriotism, respect for people, feelings of responsibility towards the homeland, pride in the land, the homeland, past and present of the multinational people of Russia, respect for state symbols (coat of arms, flag, anthem)” (Federal Law of December 29, 2012, No. 273-FZ). It is clear that this piece of legislation had an impact on the content of the textbooks in social studies and other subjects, prior to the annexation of Crimea.

This thesis has assumed that the textbooks within history, social studies, and FLS are more prone to the inculcation of regime-friendly values like military patriotism after pressure moments. However, it should be noted that patriotic and military-patriotic values were calculated in textbooks prior to the 2014 Crimea annexation. However, in the aftermath of the annexation, the imposition of such values was carried out partly to justify the annexation and so it served a specific purpose.

### **Regime Friendly Values in FLS**

While some scholars find that we may see no rise in military moods among the Russian public following the Crimean annexation (Mitikka & Zavadskaya, 2021, p. 164), developments within FLS indicate increased efforts at instilling military-patriotic values in education. Over time, the subject has evolved from a course emphasizing survival skills to a subject that is infused with patriotic values with an overarching focus on military knowledge and skills. One may find the following statement in an FLS book from 2014:

The patriot consciously loves his fatherland, is ready to stand on his shield, ready for any victims and exploits in the name of the Motherland. [...] The military history of the Fatherland includes many examples of the heroic behavior of Russian soldiers and officers.

(Smirnov & Khrennikov, 2014, p. 244)

Furthermore, a book from 2019 expressed the following:

Russian soldiers have always been distinguished by their indomitable will to win, steadfastness on the defensive, firm determination on the offensive. Living conditions, weapons and military equipment changed, but patriotism, fidelity to duty, service to the Fatherland remained an unshakable tradition and spiritual strength of our army. (Kim et al., 2019, p. 106)

Moreover, the following is stated in the same book:

Patriotism is the most important spiritual value of the Russian soldier, his moral core and psychological support for conscientious performance of military duty in everyday service and in battle. Patriotism is the love for one's Motherland, people, its history, language, national culture. Patriotism is at the same time a value, a feeling, and a tradition, which find their expression in a sense of duty to the Motherland. In whatever form patriotism appears, it is always associated with public interests, with moral values and actions. This high feeling helps each of us to resist temptations, to refuse a wrong step, to keep clear conscience and personal dignity. Patriotism manifests itself not in words, but in deeds, in fidelity to one's military and civic duty. (Kim et al., 2019, p. 121)

Additionally, the book instructs students to "find out what military-patriotic associations exist in your village or city" (Kim et al., 2019, p. 116). It should be noted that, as was demonstrated by Figure 6.4, the HHI level of FLS was ultimately 1 as there was only one book on the subject on the federal lists.

As for military-patriotic associations, these have become more prominent over the last few years. The establishment of the All-Russia "Young Army" National Military Patriotic Social Movement Association ("Yunarmiya")<sup>21</sup> in October 2015 reflects a trend towards increased patriotic education and military training in Russia. Yunarmiya, which the Ministry of Defense

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<sup>21</sup> The research project Contested Ukraine Project at the Norwegian Defence University College investigates Yunarmiya and other military-patriotic clubs in Russian-occupied areas of Ukraine (Forsvaret, 2022).

funds, Yunarmiya's stated goal is to train future personnel for the uniformed services and instill values of patriotism, national service, remembrance of past military operations, and fallen armed forces.

The increasing prominence of Yunarmiya and focus on military and patriotic education signals a trend toward the centralization and militarization of the Russian education system, particularly following the 2014 annexation of Crimea. One can also trace military patriotism to the law of May 17, 2012, which provides that military patriotic associations count as extracurricular activities (Order of the Ministry of Education and Science of the Russian Federation of May 17, 2012, No. 413). Additionally, in the FLS textbook from 2019, students are taught about automatic weapons such as the Kalashnikov.

Kalashnikov assault rifle (AK) - one of the types of automatic small arms. AK has several modifications and options, depending on the combat missions to be solved. [...] The modernized Kalashnikov assault rifle is an individual weapon and is designed to destroy enemy manpower. In hand-to-hand combat, a bayonet-knife is attached to the machine gun. For shooting from the machine, cartridges of the 1943 model are used with ordinary, tracer and armor-piercing incendiary bullets, both automatic and single fire (shooting with single shots) can be fired from the machine gun. (Kim et al., 2019, p. 363)

Other trends are also notable in the FLS subject. For instance, the front cover of a 2021 FLS textbook depicts two younger persons in military suits standing before a waving Russian flag (Appendix 4). The FLS subject has evolved to include a stronger emphasis on military knowledge and skills, and a more explicit patriotic rhetoric. Recently enacted policies in Russia have made military training mandatory for high school students, which include handling firearms and personal protective equipment (Kapnik, 2023). These developments should be understood within the broader context of military patriotism in Russian education politics, which are further accounted for in the Discussion chapter.

### **Publishing Houses and the Power Dynamics at Play**

Having assessed the evidence of regime influence in Russian educational material, the textbook publishing houses themselves should be more closely investigated. The involvement



of politically connected figures in the ownership and management of major publishing houses has raised concerns about the potential for political influence and censorship in producing educational materials. There have been several instances of content revision initiatives, for instance, it was demanded of textbook publishers to reduce references to Ukraine and Kyiv. The content revision initiatives highlight the impact of politics on the Russian publishing industry (Nesterova, 2022).

There are several power dynamics at play in Russian publishing politics, which are exemplified by the case of EDU. The publisher was privatized in 2011 in which the key investor was oligarch Arkady Rotenberg. Rotenberg is an old acquaintance of President Putin<sup>22</sup> and chairman of EDU (Nesterova, 2022). Accounts reveal that several of the competitors of EDU did not pass the new evaluation criteria from 2013. Consequently, EDU was given 70 to 80 percent of the contracts for new Russian textbooks in 2014 (Myers & Becker, 2014).

In the years to follow, EDU bought a number of its competitors. As of 2019, EDU received almost 80 percent of the state funding to purchase textbooks (Nesterova, 2022). Moreover, after 2014, EDU controlled over 85 % of the textbook market in Russian education. However, it is not certain that the annexation of Crimea led the Putin regime to increase EDU's market share, as EDU was powerful and favored by the regime prior to 2014. It is clear, however, that government-connected executives in the publishing houses can be valuable to the Putin regime in its efforts to influence the content of educational materials.

Other accounts reveal the presence of Russian oligarchs in the publishing market. As of November 2022, oligarch Oleg Novikov owns the publishers EKSMO-AST, Mann, Ivanov and Ferber, Azbooka-Atticus, and others (Kharitonov, 2022), and he also heads the Russian Textbook Corporation. In 2014, Novikov purchased the publishing house BUS (Gerden, 2014). In 2015, the publishing house Ventana Graf was acquired by EKSMO-AST, which is owned by Novikov (RuBooks, 2015). To my knowledge, there is no clear evidence of a friendship between Novikov and President Putin, but it is known that President Putin has had ties with oligarchs in Russia (Goldman, 2004; Markus, 2017).

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<sup>22</sup> Rotenberg in fact co-wrote a book with President Putin about judo, the Japanese martial art. The book was then distributed to about 7 million children from first to fourth grade in Russian schools in 2016 (Luhn, 2016).

## **Summarizing the Contextualization**

In conclusion, the educational materials in the history subject demonstrated the regime's efforts to instill certain values in students. The 2014-2015 History reform, which resulted in the publication of new textbooks, as well as changes in the content, has introduced a more regime friendly narrative of events such as the annexation of Crimea, which emphasizes national pride and patriotism. History and FLS textbooks emphasize military patriotism, while instances of overt imposition of regime friendly values were less common in social studies. This might explain why the HHI levels were higher in FLS than in history, as the history subject has to a greater extent been influenced through legislative measures, such as the 2014-2015 History reform. The HHI level for FLS increased drastically in 2014, and the textbooks themselves have more emphasis on military training. It is possible that CCC is pursued more in FLS due to the lack of legislative or policy measures applied. Either way, it is clear that the Putin regime resorts to a number of strategies to instill its values in students.

## **6.4. Alternative Explanations than Political Influence**

To better understand the implications of these findings, it is essential to explore the other factors that may have contributed to the consolidation of the textbook publishing house market. Mergers and acquisitions within the industry publishing houses, economic conditions, and the challenges faced by smaller publishers following the digitization efforts could have led to the increased concentration. It is possible that economic conditions such as inflation affected HHI levels, as an increase in production and distribution costs may have driven smaller publishers out of business. The digitalization reform in Russia, which intensified its efforts to digitize books in 2015, may also have led to increased market concentration. Smaller publishers may have struggled to keep up with the larger publishing houses, resulting in further consolidation. However, it is important to note that these factors might not have affected all publishing houses across subjects equally.

While it is possible that factors such as inflation and digitalization may have affected the market concentration, the fact that the HHI values for history, social studies, and FLS were higher than for natural sciences and that some of them increased more than natural sciences following 2014, suggests that there is political influence at play. To summarize, the analysis

provided in this chapter provided qualitative evidence supporting the hypothesis that the textbook publishing market became more centralized in Russia following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, particularly for history, FLS, and social studies.

CCC has occurred gradually through legislative measures and federal lists. Moreover, the qualitative account substantiates that the Putin regime uses to impose regime-friendly values on students and justify events such as the 2014 Crimea annexation. The qualitative account has demonstrated that CCC is obtainable through other measures apart from market centralization, such as through legislation or policy initiatives. To conclude, the findings suggest that the Russian regime utilizes a number of different methods to obtain control over the educational content in Russian schools.

## **6.5. Key Findings**

The federal lists of textbooks issued in Russia from 2006 to 2020 have been analyzed using the Herfindahl-Hirschman Index (HHI) to determine market concentration. The results show that over time the number of publishing houses in these lists has decreased. The trend shows a relatively larger difference between FLS than in natural sciences. The increase was less prominent than anticipated in social studies and history, but concentration is higher in all subjects when compared with natural sciences. In light of the quantitative and qualitative findings, it is argued that the hypotheses can be confirmed.

It seems that the Putin regime applies other strategies beyond market centralization in the textbook market. While the trend of reducing the number of publishing houses on the federal lists indicates a deliberate effort to limit the range of perspectives and ideas presented in these subjects, the contextual account substantiates the idea that other methods, such as legislative efforts, are being pursued for the regime to obtain CCC.

Legislative efforts led to significant revisions being made to the publishing of textbooks, both in 2012 and 2015. The latter reform related to the history subject and removed a number of the textbooks off the federal list. New textbooks were added to the lists which presented a more regime-friendly favorable narrative of historic events, and which emphasized national pride and patriotism. The new books were mostly published by the three largest publishing

houses in Russia. Furthermore, regime-friendly values have been inculcated in history, social studies, and FLS textbooks, and there are political connections between the Putin regime and the executives of the top publishing houses in Russia.

The Putin regime, especially following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, consolidated the publishing of textbooks through the use of federal lists. Furthermore, the market for publishing houses who publish textbooks in societal disciplines, such as history, social studies, and fundamentals of life safety (“FLS”), experienced higher concentrations than those within non-societal disciplines, which are subjects in natural sciences. Regime friendly values, such as military-patriotic values, have also been infused into the content of societal subjects. The annexation may have driven the Putin regime to impose regime friendly views, and that it could do so more easily due to its centralization of the curriculum process in societal subjects. The Putin regime therefore utilizes various tools, such as CCC through federal lists and legislative measures, to influence educational content, to stifle dissent and justify regime actions. This aligned with the theoretical framework presented in Chapter 3, which suggested that the informational autocrat must indoctrinate to secure autocratic survival (A<sub>1</sub>) and counter criticism when pressured (A<sub>2</sub>).

# Chapter 7 | Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter, I synthesize the study's implications, limitations, findings, and its theoretical framework. In addition to presenting the conclusions of this thesis, this chapter points to the limitations of the study that can be considered for future research. By focusing on the strategies and priorities of informational autocrats like President Putin in education governance, the chapter might provide insights that are of relevance for policymakers, civil society, Russian diaspora, educators, and which are valuable for future research.

## 7.1. Synthesis

In the context of President Putin's Russia, the theory of informational autocracy offers valuable insights into how the regime attempts to maintain power by controlling the information flow in the educational sphere. This type of influence is significant given the role education plays in shaping citizens' beliefs and values, with the potential of influencing people's perceptions of the autocrat's competence and legitimacy. Education, it has been argued, is a crucial battleground for informational autocrats in securing their survival. In the introductory part of this thesis, I reviewed the relevant literature and formulated the research question and analytical framework for my study. I sought to answer how President Putin carries out education governance as an informational autocrat, and to what extent centralized curriculum control can explain this. I put forth the following sub-questions:

- Q<sub>1</sub>** How can we observe informational autocracy in the educational sphere?
- Q<sub>2</sub>** What characterizes the market for textbook publishing in Russia?
- Q<sub>3</sub>** What is the relationship between textbook publishing houses across subject areas in respect of centralization?
- Q<sub>4</sub>** What dynamics are at play in curriculum development in Russia?
- Q<sub>5</sub>** Has the content of education changed following the 2014 annexation of Crimea, and if so, how?

For Q<sub>1</sub>, it was found that informational autocracy can be observed through centralization of textbook publishing, the federal lists and legislative effort and policy initiatives, and the infusion of regime friendly values and narratives in school textbooks. As for Q<sub>2</sub>, it was established that the market for textbooks in Russia from 2006 to 2020 has become increasingly centralized, particularly following the 2014 annexation of Crimea. The observed market concentration, and the imposition of regime friendly values, was more prominent in the societal group of subjects, e.g., history, social studies, and FLS, when compared to non-societal subjects such as those within natural sciences. The reason for this, it has been argued, is that societal subjects are of greater importance to an autocrat, as they can stimulate critical thinking and touch upon areas of political sensitivity.

For Q<sub>3</sub>, it was found that the Russian regime exerts greater control over the social studies, FLS, and history subjects when compared to the natural sciences subjects. For Q<sub>4</sub>, it has been argued that the Putin regime employs a range of tools to promote its values and narratives. This includes enacting legislation and passing decrees which prescribes the content to be taught in school and issuing the federal lists which limit the textbooks that schools can choose from. The rationale for doing so is that this way the regime can maintain control over the information flow in society, thereby mitigating the risk of dissent, without resorting to brutal measures.

Finally, for Q<sub>5</sub>, it has been argued that the textbook market in Russia experienced increased centralization following the 2014 annexation of Crimea. Further, regime friendly values and narratives have been heavily promoted through school textbooks following the annexation, particularly in the FLS and history subjects, which demonstrates the strategies used by informational autocrats to maintain control over the information flows in society.

## **Indoctrination and Informational Autocracy**

In this thesis, I proposed a revised definition of indoctrination, which was that indoctrination is systematic attempts to create certain beliefs in people whilst suppressing discussion, critical-mindedness, and openness. The increased concentration of the textbook publishing market, education legislation on patriotism, and the content of textbooks in societal

disciplines, suggest that the Putin regime has made systematic efforts to impose regime friendly values on students in primary and secondary school in Russia.

The key findings presented earlier align with the concept of informational autocratic indoctrination, a concept which was developed on the basis of Guriev and Treisman's informational autocratic theory (2015, 2018, 2019, 2020). The key takeaway from the theory presented in this thesis was that informational autocrats utilize more covert strategies to obtain information control, as brutal and overt measures are a last resort. It was therefore suggested that centralized curriculum control is a strategy for informational autocrats to obtain information control in education, as education is a comprehensive information channel.

The increasing concentration of the textbook publishing market, with the infusion of regime friendly values in societal subjects, in addition to significant legislative efforts to promote patriotic education, are all elements which suggest that President Putin's education governance aligns with informational autocracy and informational autocratic indoctrination. By pursuing these efforts, the Putin regime could, to a greater extent, control and manipulate information covertly in the education sphere.

## **7.2. Limitations**

This study has its limitations, and the following section will provide a detailed overview of the limitations of the study in respect of scope, generalizability, data collection, and methodology. In doing so, I aim to assist future research in addressing these limitations and ultimately expanding our understanding of education governance in informational autocracies, particularly in the context of Russia. Despite the limitations, I argue that the findings of this study provide valuable insights into education governance in Russia and contribute to the broader literature on autocratic politics.

### **Limitations in Scope, Generalizability, and Causality**

One limitation of this study is the focus on CCC as the sole indicator of information control in Russian education. While CCC is a useful concept, it does not capture all the strategies

used by informational autocrats to control the dissemination of information. For instance, teachers might be deterred from teaching students anything other than the government prescribed content due to the threat of punishment. Future research should therefore consider adopting a more holistic approach in order to examine the Russian education system, perhaps through combining content analysis of Russian school textbooks with an analysis of classroom practices, to gain a more nuanced understanding of education governance methods in informational autocracies.

It should also be recognized that there are other threats a regime might face beyond international sanctions. International sanctions are just one aspect of external pressures a regime may face. Such threats may include military conflict, diplomatic tensions, or shifts in global power dynamics. Consequently, this thesis does not capture the full range of factors that could trigger a regime to resort to CCC. The impact of international sanctions may also vary depending on their scope, severity, and duration. Some sanctions directly target specific industries, sectors, or persons, while others are more comprehensive and encompass broader economic restrictions. Moreover, the resilience and adaptability of a regime in facing sanctions varies. Some governments might have the resources to minimize the impact of sanctions, while others might be more vulnerable to their effects. Thus, the effect of sanctions on an autocratic regime will vary significantly depending on the type of sanction and the type of regime affected.

Furthermore, it is crucial to acknowledge the potential influence of domestic factors on education governance within an autocracy. Political developments, economic trends, and shifts in public opinion could all affect the regime's approach to education governance and therefore the control the regime exerts over the publishing industry. By focusing only on international relations, one might overlook the complex interplay between domestic and international factors that influence the strategies employed by an informational autocrat to counter regime threats. Future research should therefore seek to incorporate a more holistic and comprehensive understanding of indirect regime threats when exploring the relationship between regime threats and governance.

Another limitation of employing a single case study is the potential for low generalizability to other regimes. While insights into the Russian education system are insightful and valuable given the recent invasion of Ukraine, and the Putin regime's informational autocratic



characteristics, it is unclear whether the findings can be generalized to other informational autocratic regimes. By adopting a comparative perspective, future research can better identify the broader patterns of education governance in informational autocratic regimes and the role of CCC in these systems.

The theoretical framework proposed in this thesis warranted an attempt to establish causal relations between moments of pressure and market concentration levels. However, the consequence of converting the data to proportional values was that the complete number of units became 11, which does not suffice for a regression-based approach. It is therefore recommended to aim for a regression-based approach with a difference-in-differences design on textbook market concentration levels, using societal matters as a treatment group, in future research.

### **Limitations in Data Collection and Methodology**

This study is also limited by its data collection and methodology. First, the lack of federal lists from certain years might negate the reliability of the findings. Further, while using the federal lists from 2006 to 2020 provided a comprehensive data set for analyzing market concentration in the Russian textbook market, it only captures some aspects of education governance in Russia. Future research should therefore consider expanding its data collection to include a broader range of sources, such as records of teachers being dismissed, the content of lesson plans, number of governmental education decrees, and more.

Moreover, the quantitative methodology of this study, including the use of difference-in-differences reasoning, may not capture the complexities of education governance in Russia. As a result, alternative factors potentially influencing market concentration and information control ought to be more adequately considered. Future research should therefore explore alternative methodological approaches and consider employing mixed methods designs to better understand education governance in informational autocracies. One suggestion includes looking at market concentration and control on textbooks for different age groups, which the data set presented in this thesis could be used for.

## **Limitations in Addressing Resistance, Agency, and Effect**

Another limitation of this study is its focus on the top-down approaches to education governance and the role of the Putin regime in controlling information dissemination. This approach does not acknowledge the potential for resistance and agency among teachers, students, parents, and other actors within the education system. Future research should therefore explore whether and how these actors resist autocratic control over education and explore the implications of such resistance for the survival of informational autocracies.

Further, while my analysis of market concentration and CCC provides insight into the strategies of information control, it does not shed light on the effectiveness of these strategies in shaping different groups of citizens' beliefs and actions. Hence, future research should consider examining the relationship between different aspects of education governance and the development of political attitudes and values in different parts of societies in order to explore the effects of education governance.

## **Summary**

While this study has aimed to offer insights into education governance in Russia under the Putin regime, it is essential to recognize its limitations. The focus on CCC as the sole indicator of information control, attempting to capture regime threats by international sanctions, the lack of generalizability of the findings to other informational autocratic regimes, and the limitations in data collection and methodology highlight the areas for improvement for future research.

By addressing these limitations, scholars can develop a more comprehensive understanding of education governance in informational autocracies and such research can contribute to the development of strategies to combat indoctrination in informational autocracies. To better understand the impact of informational autocratic education governance on societies, future research should explore the long-term effects of informational autocratic indoctrination on pupils' political attitudes and values and the potential for resistance and dissent within educational institutions. Additionally, a more holistic approach with a mixed-methods design, or an expansion of the data set, would be wise for future research to consider.

## **7.3. Implications**

The potential implications of my study are twofold. First, my study can contribute to the research of indoctrination and education within informational autocracies. The findings are also valuable for understanding how informational autocrats use education to maintain their power. Second, the study provided insight into the case of Russian education specifically, which is valuable for better grasping Russian society and the motivations and strategies of the Putin regime. It is important to shed light on these topics given Russia's current stance in world politics and the Putin regime's actions.

### **Implications for Civilians, Policymakers, and Diaspora**

The findings from my study can provide insights for the Russian diaspora and civil society into how the Putin regime carries out education governance. These insights can be used to identify potential areas for intervention, which may include promoting alternative educational materials, developing educational initiatives, and building awareness around the regime's education governance methods. By understanding the methods used by the Putin regime, the diaspora and civil society can develop targeted strategies to counter the regime's methods and promote critical thinking, democratic values, and human rights within the Russian education system.

### **Implications for Future Indoctrination Research**

One of the aims of this thesis was to pave the way for future research on autocratic education governance, indoctrination, and its societal effects. One aspect to consider here is how the nature of indoctrination and propaganda has evolved in the Russian case. Relevant questions for future inquiries on Russian education include, for instance, whether indoctrination serve as a tool to signal the power of social control (Huang, 2015), or if it is intended to affect the values and beliefs of students (Copp, 2016)? Does indoctrination, in fact, make students more strategic (De Juan et al., 2021), and how can we trust that surveyed individuals' responses are sincere when the challenge of preference falsification is present (Kuran, 1991; Tannenber, 2021)?

The findings in my study suggested that the Russian regime uses education to justify certain events. Based on this, future research can consider expanding on what events are more likely to trigger regime justifications, for instance in educational content, to further identify autocratic leaders' motivations and strategies. The findings and methods presented in this thesis might have provided a foundation for developing new approaches to indoctrination research.

The proposed definition of indoctrination and the new perspective presented in this thesis acknowledges that indoctrination should be seen as a systematic and targeted phenomenon and a process that can occur in different types of autocratic regimes. This thesis focused on the input aspect of indoctrination when investigating informational autocratic education. Preference falsification, prevalent in autocracies, poses a significant challenge to studying indoctrination. In this study, I focused on the governance methods of informational autocrats to cope with the issue of preference falsification. Other ways to cope with preference falsification is by designing research methods to detect genuine beliefs and opinions from those expressed due to fear of punishment or social pressure. Utilizing anonymous surveys, experimental designs, and indirect questioning techniques can also address preference falsification.

Furthermore, I also used an original data set in this thesis, which could be used in future research on Russian education. Moreover, the granularity of the data enables an up-close analysis of textbooks in Russian education. Finally, the data used in this study is publicly available and transparent data, and might serve as a repository for book titles, authors, publishing houses, subjects, and grade variations, in English, during a time when this data is not necessarily accessible to all. This alone can prove useful for future research endeavors on Russian education.

## **Implications for Educators and Educational Institutions**

For educators and educational institutions in Russia, this thesis has highlighted the need to critically examine Russian educational materials. By understanding CCC and indoctrination within Russia, educators are better equipped to counteract informational autocratic education

governance, by fostering critical thinking, promoting media literacy, and encouraging open discussions about political issues. Education institutions should also consider how they can use alternative educational materials and resources to promote democratic values, human rights, and diverse perspectives to counter CCC's effects. However, it is unclear whether this is realistic given the state of Russian education, which was briefly accounted for in Chapter 1.

## **Implications for the Future of Russian Education: The Path Ahead**

Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Sergei Guriev stated, "Putin's regime has completed its reversion from a 21st-century spin dictatorship<sup>23</sup> to a 20th-century dictatorship based on fear" (Guriev, 2022). The trends investigated in the study of Russian education from 2006 to 2020 indicated the presence of military patriotism in Russia. These trends are highly problematic, however an even stronger reaction than the one seen in 2014 can be expected following the invasion of Ukraine. While writing this thesis, I observed the trends in Russian education in respect of the invasion of Ukraine. This is relevant as the ongoing war can constitute an even bigger crisis for the Russian education system than in 2014.

Further, I was informed of recent developments by a source with a background from the Russian education system. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine, parents and teachers instructed school children to write letters to Russian soldiers participating in the Russian invasion.<sup>24</sup> These letters were supposed to emphasize and glorify the heroic attitudes of the soldiers. Every other week, some schools would dedicate a desk in the classroom to a soldier fighting for Russia in Ukraine (Personal communication, December 13, 2022). While this highlights the increased focus on patriotism and militarism in education in Russia, it also sheds light on the other governance methods used. While this thesis has primarily focused on CCC, one should be aware of other factors contributing to the spread of military patriotism. For instance, it is clear that some civilians support the regime's policies and contribute to the education governance methods carried out by the regime through their grassroots initiatives.

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<sup>23</sup> "Spin dictatorship" and "informational autocracy" are similar concepts. Shortly after the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Guriev and Treisman published the book *Spin Dictators* (2022), which describes spin dictators/informational autocrats. Following the book release, Treisman also stated that we often see spin dictators, or informational autocrats, revert to old, openly repressive methods (Treisman, 2022).

<sup>24</sup> The following topic was planned at the federal level to be discussed on February 20, 2023, almost a year after the invasion: "Front Line Letter: Touch the Soldier's Heart!". Further evidence of letters to soldiers was discovered in the same lesson plan, in which part of the homework assigned for 5<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> graders was choosing to discuss with their parents whether they "would like to participate in the Letter to a Soldier campaign. What would you write in this letter?" (Appendix 3).

Information obtained from the source also indicates that there are also instances of teachers resisting the top-down initiatives from the Putin regime. For instance, one of the week's topics in "Important Conversations" in 2022 was "Russia is the world leader in the nuclear industry".<sup>25</sup> Here, the idea was probably to convey Russia's capability in nuclear bombs. Some teachers, however, took it upon themselves to instead talk about atoms, fusion and fission, and the periodic system. This was seemingly to diverge from what they were told to do by the regime and counteract the military-patriotic content (Personal communication, December 13, 2022).

It also appears that some parents actively resist the state's instilling of values by preventing their children from attending the subject of "Important Conversations" (Personal communication, December 13, 2022; Meduza, 2022a). Furthermore, as of March 4, 2022, more than 1,600 Russian independent book publishers, booksellers, editors, translators, critics, illustrators, designers, typesetters, proofreaders, printers, librarians, and book dealers signed an open letter condemning the invasion of Ukraine (Book Alliance, 2022). The letter and signatures were later removed (Kharitonov, 2022). The President of the Russian Book Union, Sergei Stepashin, later stated the following regarding Russia's invasion of Ukraine: "The special operation taking place now is the result of Western political games, to which Russia can no longer respond differently" (Stephashin, 2022).

In May 2022, the regime changed the ancient name "Kievan Rus", the name of a territory in ancient Ukraine, to "Rus", referring to areas under Russian occupation following the War (Mediazona, 2023a; Mediazona, 2023b). Most crucial of the policies from the regime is that, as of September 2023, training in handling rifles and hand grenades, military drills, and the use of personal protective equipment will be mandatory (Kapnik, 2023). These developments in History and FLS further substantiate that the Russian regime uses the content of education to justify its actions and counter opposition during moments of pressure.

In light of the findings presented in this thesis, and the aforementioned trends, what can we say about the future of Russian education? The future of Russian education appears to be past the crossroads, in which President Putin has moved from being an informational autocrat to becoming a traditional dictator. His measures include an increasing focus on military

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<sup>25</sup> This lesson plan was later removed from the Internet, but the topic was confirmed in a personal meeting.

patriotism and disseminating the regime's perspectives, crackdowns on dissidents, and the focus on historical and political events in education. It has now become uncertain whether we can categorize the Putin regime's indoctrination efforts as "covert", which is a characteristic of informational autocratic governance methods. It is, however, important to note that these developments are still resisted by some teachers, parents, and students, who actively push back against these initiatives. Overall, the future of Russian education is uncertain and highly dependent on the interplay between the regime's top-down initiatives, grassroots resistance, and broader socio-political and international factors. However, the education system will remain a crucial battleground for autocratic survival as the events unfold.

### **Implications for Cases Beyond Russia**

Some countries have similar patterns of educational control and indoctrination, and this might substantiate the wider applicability of the proposed theory on informational autocratic indoctrination. For instance, the Prime Minister in Hungary, Viktor Orbán, and his government, have reshaped the education system to instill nationalistic values and loyalty to the ruling party, Fidesz. The state has taken over the responsibility of supplying textbooks (McKenzie, 2019), and independent textbook publishers have been rejected from publishing textbooks (McKenzie, 2019). Also, the school curriculum has increasingly focused on more patriotism, religion (Scherle & Henrich, 2017), and militarization (Komuves, 2019).

In China, under Jinping's regime, the Chinese Communist Party monitors, and controls educational content, emphasizing patriotism and loyalty to the party while suppressing dissenting voices (Kairui, 2020; Jie, 2020). Since 2019, all primary and middle schools in China have begun using uniform and nationwide educational material developed by the government (Kairui, 2020). The head of the Textbook Bureau in the Ministry of Education stated that the textbooks highlight "the deeds of revolutionary heroes" and "inspire students to love the Chinese Communist Party and the Motherland" (Guancha, 2019).

These cases of education governance might reflect the theory presented in this thesis, as the centralization might have enabled the regime to pursue regime friendly values in educational content. Future research can consider exploring these and other cases in greater depth to further refine and test the proposed theory.

## Summary

For educators and educational institutions, the findings in this thesis highlights the need to critically examine the content of Russian educational materials. By understanding more about CCC and indoctrination attempts, educators can take steps to counteract the effects of informational autocratic education governance and promote democratic values, human rights, and critical thinking. Throughout this thesis, I have also sought to provide a foundation for developing more multi-pronged approaches to indoctrination research, such as by offering a revised understanding of the concept and addressing some of the methodological challenges associated with indoctrination. It has been emphasized that the data set collected for my study is useful for future research on Russian education.

In conclusion, I have sought to contribute to our understanding of how informational autocrats use education to maintain power. Current trends in Russian education warrant that we should pay close attention to education governance and acknowledge it as a key battleground in the fight for human rights in Russia and beyond.

## 7.4. Conclusion

In this thesis, I attempted to answer the following question, “How does the President of the Russian Federation, Vladimir Putin, carry out education governance as an informational autocrat, and to what extent is increased centralization of curriculum control relevant in explaining it?”. The case of Russian education under President Putin was closely examined, with an aim of providing insights into how informational autocrats govern and influence education. I found that President Putin’s education governance methods include allowing fewer publishing houses to publish textbooks, infusing military-patriotic and regime friendly values in education, and justifying regime actions in the educational content. President Putin and his regime is better equipped to pursue indoctrination of Russian students by using legislative efforts and federal lists by centralized curriculum control (“CCC”).

I began with establishing that indoctrination is *systematic attempts to create certain beliefs in people whilst suppressing discussion, critical-mindedness, and openness*. Based on this and the theory of informational autocracy (Guriev & Treisman, 2015; 2018, 2019, 2020), I



developed the concept of informational autocratic indoctrination. By the concept of informational autocratic indoctrination, it was expected that informational autocrats, given informational autocracy, would employ CCC, particularly in subjects of a societal kind. CCC was posited as a tool to stifle criticism and promote regime narratives to secure information control. Moreover, it was expected that this tool would be used by informational autocrats to a greater extent when facing regime threats than when not.

It was then argued that centralized curriculum control is a relevant strategy for informational autocrats such as President Putin. Following the proposed expectations, I suggested a research design, which was to study the concentration levels of the textbook market based on federal lists for primary and secondary education in Russia from 2006 to 2020. I then employed a quasi-experimental analytical approach, resembling difference-in-differences, and found that societal subjects were more concentrated than non-societal subjects in Russian education. The most prominent increase in concentration levels was found in the fundamentals of life safety subject (“FLS”). In FLS textbooks, there was evidence of military patriotism and regime justifications. History and social studies experienced lower concentration levels than anticipated, but they were subjected to other legislative measures, and both disciplines’ textbooks consisted of regime friendly values. The overarching conclusion is that the Putin regime employs various tools to secure curriculum control, such as through government decrees, subject reforms, and federal lists.

Throughout this thesis, I sought to provide a comprehensive analysis of the role of education governance in informational autocracies, using the Putin regime in Russia as a case. In the thesis, I highlighted the importance of understanding how autocrats like President Putin use education to maintain power. To further grasp education governance in informational autocracies, I suggested possible avenues for future research, such as regression-based approaches, comparative studies, and using other cases than the Russian one.

Furthermore, I suggested that the findings of this thesis might have implications for policymakers, the Russian diaspora, civil society, educators, educational institutions, and future research. By shedding light on the Putin regime’s use of CCC and the role of education in autocratic survival, I emphasized the importance of acknowledging education governance as a key battleground when combating indoctrination and promoting democracy.

This thesis can serve as a warning with regards to the Russian case. We should devote our attention to the potential transformation of Putin's regime and how this might affect Russian education. With the invasion of Ukraine in 2022, President Putin might have shifted from being an informational autocrat, where brutal measures were a last resort, to embracing the role of a brutal dictator. This development has implications for Russian education and society. If this transition is indeed taking place, it is crucial for researchers, policymakers, and the international community to monitor the changes in the Russian educational landscape and develop countermeasures in order to promote human rights, democracy, and peace in the region.

I also placed emphasis on how indoctrination is essential for information control in informational autocracies, as informational autocrats indoctrinate through their pursuance of information control. We must therefore investigate how informational autocrats strike a balance between (i) striving for prosperous societies, which can be achieved partly through education, and (ii) information control and autocratic survival, which can also be achieved partly through education. My suggestion to this question was to take a closer look at covert indoctrination measures, such as CCC, as a viable strategy for informational autocrats in countering regime threats and securing their survival.

In the introductory part of this thesis, I put forth what Nelson Mandela had aptly stated, "Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world" (1990). It has been illustrated that education can be a double-edged sword. Informational autocrats can wield it to maintain control over society and retain power. However, education can also empower individuals and societies to challenge misinformation and protect democratic values, potentially constituting an important tool for regime change. The challenge for democratic forces in the future is to ensure that education is utilized as a force for critical deliberation and voice rather than as a tool for autocratic survival.

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## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: Education department letter (Kaluga region)**

КАЛУЖСКАЯ ОБЛАСТЬ



МИНИСТЕРСТВО  
ОБРАЗОВАНИЯ И НАУКИ

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управления образованием

Руководителям подведомственных  
образовательных организаций

№ 20-08/251-22 22.02.2022  
На №

от

**О проведении единого  
урока**

21 февраля 2022 года состоялось обращение Президента Российской Федерации к гражданам Российской Федерации о признании независимости и суверенитета Донецкой Народной Республики и Луганской Народной Республики и последующей ратификации договоров о дружбе и взаимопомощи с обеими республиками.

В целях воспитания патриотизма и гордости за свою страну, формирования у обучающихся представлений об общности исторических судеб народов России и Новороссии министерство образования и науки Калужской области просит 24-25 февраля 2022 года организовать для обучающихся проведение единого урока, посвященного данному историческому событию, в формате классного часа, беседы или лекции.

В качестве материала для подготовки педагогов к проведению единого урока и при проведении урока рекомендуем использовать обращение Президента Российской Федерации, полный текст которого размещен на сайте Кремля по ссылке: <http://www.kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67828>.

Министр

А.С. Аникеев

Ермакова Ольга Игоревна  
(4842) 719314

**Translation:**

“On February 21, 2022, the President of the Russian Federation appealed to the citizens of the Russian Federation about the recognition of the independence and sovereignty of the Donetsk People’s Republic and the Luhansk People’s Republic and the subsequent ratification of the treaties of friendship and autonomy with both republics



In order to instill patriotism and pride in their country, to form an idea among students about the commonality of the historical destinies of the peoples of Russia and Novorossiya<sup>26</sup>, the Ministry of Education and Science of the Kaluga Region asks on February 24-25, 2022, to organize a single lesson for students dedicated to this historical event, in the format of classroom hours, talks or lectures.

As a material for preparing teachers for conducting a single lesson and during the lesson, we recommend using the appeal of the President of the Russian Federation, the full text of which is on the Kremlin website at the link: <http://kremlin.ru/events/president/transcripts/67828/>”

### **Appendix 2: “Russian spring”**

The “interactive map of Crimea” and videos meant for “Important Conversations” subject, can be accessed here: [https://razgovor-cdn.edsoo.ru/media/ie/crimea-57-1/index.html?back\\_url=/topic/43/grade/57/](https://razgovor-cdn.edsoo.ru/media/ie/crimea-57-1/index.html?back_url=/topic/43/grade/57/)

### **Appendix 3: Lesson plan**

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<sup>26</sup> Novorossiya means “New Russia”, and it refers to the historically large section of today’s Ukraine, formerly controlled by Russia before the USSR.

# ТЕМАТИКА ВНЕУРОЧНЫХ ЗАНЯТИЙ

## РАЗГОВОРЫ О ВАЖНОМ

- День знаний
- Наша страна – Россия
- 165 лет со дня рождения К.Э. Циолковского
- День музыки
- День пожилого человека
- День учителя
- День отца
- Международный день школьных библиотек
- День народного единства
- Мы разные, мы вместе
- День матери
- Символы России
- Волонтеры
- День Героев Отечества
- День Конституции
- Тема нового года. Семейные праздники и мечты
- Рождество

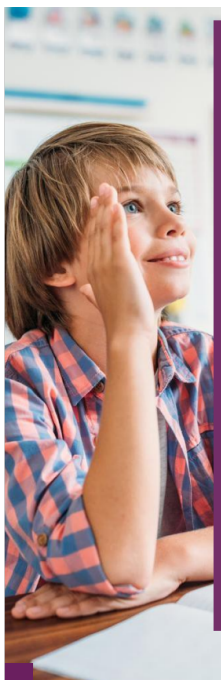
- День снятия блокады Ленинграда
- 160 лет со дня рождения К.С. Станиславского
- День российской науки
- Россия и мир
- День защитника Отечества
- Международный женский день
- 110 лет со дня рождения советского писателя и поэта, автора слов гимнов РФ и СССР С.В. Михалкова
- День воссоединения Крыма с Россией
- Всемирный день театра
- День космонавтики. Мы – первые!
- Память о геноциде советского народа нацистами и их пособниками
- День Земли
- День Труда
- День Победы. Бессмертный полк
- День детских общественных организаций
- Урок "Россия-страна возможностей"



## РАЗГОВОРЫ О ВАЖНОМ. 1-2 классы.

### ТЕМЫ ВНЕУРОЧНЫХ ЗАНЯТИЙ, РАЗРАБАТЫВАЕМЫХ НА ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОМ УРОВНЕ

Сентябрь				Октябрь				Ноябрь			
05.09.2022	12.09.2022	19.09.2022	26.09.2022	03.10.2022	10.10.2022	17.10.2022	24.10.2022	08.11.2022	14.11.2022	21.11.2022	28.11.2022
День знаний (зачем человеку знания?) - (викторина)	Что мы Родины зовем? (работа с интерактивной картой)	Мечтаю летать (работа с интерактивными карточками)	Я хочу увидеть музыку (музыкальный конкурс талантов)	О наших бабушках и дедушках (семейные истории)	Мой первый учитель (групповая работа)	День отца (творческая мастерская)	Я и моя семья (строим семейное дерево)	День народного единства (работа с интерактивной картой)	Память времен (викторина)	День матери (творческая мастерская)	Что такое герб? (работа с интерактивными карточками)
Декабрь				Январь				Февраль			
05.12.2022	12.12.2022	09.12.2022	26.12.2022	16.01.2023	23.01.2023	30.01.2023	13.02.2023	20.02.2023	27.02.2023		
Доброта - дорога к миру (мультипликационный концерт)	Герои Отечества разных исторических эпох (работа с галереей героев)	День конституции (эвристическая беседа)	Умеем ли мы мечтать? (конкурс рисунков)	Светлый праздник Рождества (творческая работа: елочная игрушка)	Ленинград в дни блокады (работа с книжным текстом)	Кто такие скоморохи? (интерактивные карточки)	Российские Кулибины (викторина)	Россия и мир (викторина)	Есть такая профессия - Родину защищать (обсуждение фильма о войне)		
Март				Апрель				Май			
06.03.2023	13.03.2023	20.03.2023	27.03.2023	03.04.2023	10.04.2023	17.04.2023	24.04.2023	15.05.2023	22.05.2023	29.05.2023	
Поговорим о наших мамах (творческая работа: рисунок)	Что такое гимн? (работа с книжным текстом)	Путешествие по Крыму (виртуальная экскурсия)	Я иду ... в театр (чтение по ролям)	О жизни и подвиге Юрия Гагарина (обсуждение фильма "Гагарин. Первый в космосе")	Память прошлого (конкурс стихов)	Заповедники России (виртуальная экскурсия)	День труда (Герои мирной жизни) (беседа с ветеранами труда)	Дети - герои Великой Отечественной войны (встреча с ветеранами)	День детских общественных организаций (работа с видеоматериалами)	Мои увлечения (творческий конкурс)	



## РАЗГОВОРЫ О ВАЖНОМ. 5-7 классы.

ТЕМЫ ВНЕУРОЧНЫХ ЗАНЯТИЙ, РАЗРАБАТЫВАЕМЫХ НА ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОМ УРОВНЕ

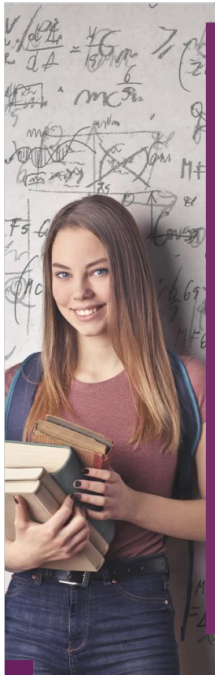
Сентябрь				Октябрь				Ноябрь			
05.09.2022	12.09.2022	19.09.2022	26.09.2022	03.10.2022	10.10.2022	17.10.2022	24.10.2022	08.11.2022	14.11.2022	21.11.2022	28.11.2022
День знаний (зачем учиться?) (интеллектуальный марафон)	Родина, души моей родника (работа с интерактивной картой)	Земля - это колыбель разума, но нельзя вечно жить в колыбели... (интерактивная звездная карта)	Моя музыка (музыкальный конкурс талантов)	С любовью в сердце: достойная жизнь людей старшего поколения в наших руках (социальная реклама)	Ежедневный подвиг учителя (мини-сочинение)	Отец-родоначальник (фотоистория)	Счастлив тот, кто счастлив у себя дома (групповая дискуссия)	Мы — одна страна! (работа с интерактивной картой)	Языки и культура народов России: единство в разнообразии (работа с интерактивной картой)	О руки наших матерей (конкурс стихов, конкурс чтецов)	Герб страны как предмет нашей гордости (экспертное интервью)
Декабрь				Январь				Февраль			
05.12.2022	12.12.2022	09.12.2022	26.12.2022	16.01.2023	23.01.2023	30.01.2023	06.02.2023	13.02.2023	20.02.2023		
Жить — значит действовать (проблемная дискуссия)	Герои мирной жизни (встреча с героями нашего времени)	«Величественны и просты слова Единого Закона всей Оптизы. Дарующего главные права: Работать, радоваться жизни» (эвристическая беседа)	Зачем мечтать? (групповое обсуждение)	«Дарит искры волшебства светлый праздник Рождества...» (музыкальная гостиная)	«...осталась одна Тана» (работа с дневником героя)	К.С. Станиславский и погружение в волшебный мир театра (чтение по ролям)	«Может собственных Платонов и быстрых разумом Невтонов российская земля рождать...» (интеллектуальный марафон)	Россия в мире (работа с интерактивной картой)	На страже Родины (литературная гостиная: рассказы о войне)		
Март				Апрель				Май			
06.03.2023	13.03.2023	20.03.2023	27.03.2023	03.04.2023	10.04.2023	17.04.2023	24.04.2023	15.05.2023	22.05.2023	29.05.2023	
«Я знаю, что все женщины прекрасны...» (конкурс стихов о женщинах)	Гимн России (работа с газетными и интернет-публикациями)	Путешествие по Крыму (виртуальная экскурсия)	Искусство и псевдоискусство (творческая лаборатория)	Новость слышала планета: «Русский парень полетел» (работа с биографией)	Надо ли вспоминать прошлое? (проблемная дискуссия)	«Зелёные» привычки»: сохраним планету для будущих поколений (фестиваль идей)	Праздник Первомай (встреча с людьми разных профессий)	«Словом можно убить, словом можно спасти, словом можно полить за собой повести...» (литературная гостиная)	День детских общественных организаций (работа с видеоматериалами)	Перед нами все двери открыты (творческий флэшмоб)	



## РАЗГОВОРЫ О ВАЖНОМ. 8-9 классы.

ТЕМЫ ВНЕУРОЧНЫХ ЗАНЯТИЙ, РАЗРАБАТЫВАЕМЫХ НА ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОМ УРОВНЕ

Сентябрь				Октябрь				Ноябрь			
05.09.2022	12.09.2022	19.09.2022	26.09.2022	03.10.2022	10.10.2022	17.10.2022	24.10.2022	08.11.2022	14.11.2022	21.11.2022	28.11.2022
День знаний (зачем учиться?) (интеллектуальный марафон)	Родина, души моей родника (работа с интерактивной картой)	Земля - это колыбель разума, но нельзя вечно жить в колыбели... (интерактивная звездная карта)	Что мы музыкальнее зовем (музыкальный конкурс талантов)	С любовью в сердце: достойная жизнь людей старшего поколения в наших руках (социальная реклама)	Ежедневный подвиг учителя (мини-сочинение)	Образ отца в отечественной литературе (литературная гостиная)	Счастлив тот, кто счастлив у себя дома	Мы — одна страна! (работа с интерактивной картой)	Языки и культура народов России: единство в разнообразии (работа с интерактивной картой)	О руки наших матерей (Чтоб жила на свете мама) (конкурс стихов)	Двуглавый орел: история легендарного герба (обсуждение видеоматериалов)
Декабрь				Январь				Февраль			
05.12.2022	12.12.2022	09.12.2022	26.12.2022	16.01.2023	23.01.2023	30.01.2023	06.02.2023	13.02.2023	20.02.2023		
Жить — значит действовать (проблемная дискуссия)	Герои мирной жизни (встреча с героями нашего времени)	Конституция — основа правопорядка (деловая игра)	Полет мечты (групповое обсуждение)	«Дарит искры волшебства светлый праздник Рождества...» (музыкальная гостиная)	«Никто не забыт и ничто не забыто» (работа с историческими документами)	С чего же начинается театр? (юбилею К.С. Станиславского посвящается) (анализ биографии театрального деятеля)	«Может собственных Платонов и быстрых разумом Невтонов российская земля рождать...» (интеллектуальный марафон)	Россия в мире (работа с интерактивной картой)	Идут российские войска (работа с видеоматериалами)		
Март				Апрель				Май			
06.03.2023	13.03.2023	20.03.2023	27.03.2023	03.04.2023	10.04.2023	17.04.2023	24.04.2023	15.05.2023	22.05.2023	29.05.2023	
«Я знаю, что все женщины прекрасны...» (конкурс стихов о женщинах)	Гимн России (работа с газетными публикациями, интернет-публикациями)	Крым на карте России (работа с интерактивной картой)	Искусство и псевдоискусство (творческая лаборатория)	Он сказал: «Поехали!» (работа с видеоматериалами)	Без срока давности (работа с историческими документами)	«Зелёные» привычки»: сохраним планету для будущих поколений (фестиваль идей)	История Дня труда (встреча с людьми разных профессий)	Русские писатели и поэты о войне (литературная гостиная)	День детских общественных организаций (социальная реклама)	Перед нами все двери открыты (творческий флэшмоб)	



## РАЗГОВОРЫ О ВАЖНОМ. 10-11 классы.

### ТЕМЫ ВНЕУРОЧНЫХ ЗАНЯТИЙ, РАЗРАБАТЫВАЕМЫХ НА ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОМ УРОВНЕ

Сентябрь				Октябрь			Ноябрь				
05.09.2022	12.09.2022	19.09.2022	26.09.2022	03.10.2022	10.10.2022	17.10.2022	24.10.2022	08.11.2022	14.11.2022	21.11.2022	28.11.2022
День знаний (что я знаю?) (групповая дискуссия)	Родину не выбирают... (конкурс стихов, конкурс чтецов)	Земля - это колыбель разума, но нельзя вечно жить в колыбели... (интерактивная звездная карта)	Что мы музыкально зовем (музыкальный юморный конкурс талантов)	С любовью в сердце: достойная жизнь людей старшего поколения в наших руках (социальная реклама)	Ежедневный подвиг учителя (мини-сочинение)	Роль отца в формировании личности ребенка (урок-рассуждение)	Счастливы те, кто счастлив у себя дома (групповая дискуссия)	Мы едины, мы — одна страна! (работа с интерактивной картой)	Многообразие языков и культур народов России (работа с интерактивной картой)	О руки наших матерей (конкурс стихов) (Она молилась за победу) (конкурс чтецов)	Герб как составная часть государственной символики Российской Федерации (обсуждение видеоматериалов)
Декабрь				Январь			Февраль				
05.12.2022	12.12.2022	09.12.2022	26.12.2022	16.01.2023	23.01.2023	30.01.2023	06.02.2023	13.02.2023	20.02.2023		
Жить — значит действовать (проблемная дискуссия)	Кто такой герой (герои мировой жизни) (проблемная дискуссия)	Главный закон России (деловая игра)	Полет мечты (групповое обсуждение)	«Дарит искры волшебства светлый праздник Рождества...» (Рождественские чтения)	Ленинградский метроном (работа с историческими документами)	К.С. Станиславский как реформатор отечественного театра и создатель национальной актерской системы (анализ биографии театрального деятеля)	Современная наука — современному человеку (встреча с молодыми учеными)	Россия в мире (работа с интерактивной картой)	«...ни солгать ни обмануть, ни с пути свернуть» (работа с видеоматериалами)		
Март			Апрель			Май					
06.03.2023	13.03.2023	20.03.2023	27.03.2023	03.04.2023	10.04.2023	17.04.2023	24.04.2023	15.05.2023	22.05.2023	29.05.2023	
«Я знаю, что все женщины прекрасны!» (мини эссе)	Гимн России (работа с газетными публикациями, интернет-публикациями)	Крым на карте России (работа с интерактивной картой)	Искусство и псевдоискусство (творческая лаборатория)	День космоса (обсуждение фильма «Время первых»)	Возмездие неотвратимо (работа с историческими документами)	«Зелёные» привычки: сохраним планету для будущих поколений (фестиваль идей)	День труда (и моя будущая профессия) (встреча с людьми разных профессий)	Современные писатели и поэты о войне (литературная гостиная)	День детских общественных организаций (социальная реклама)	Перед нами все двери открыты (творческий флэшмоб)	



## РАЗГОВОРЫ О ВАЖНОМ. СПО.

### ТЕМЫ ВНЕУРОЧНЫХ ЗАНЯТИЙ, РАЗРАБАТЫВАЕМЫХ НА ФЕДЕРАЛЬНОМ УРОВНЕ

Сентябрь				Октябрь			Ноябрь				
05.09.2022	12.09.2022	19.09.2022	26.09.2022	03.10.2022	10.10.2022	17.10.2022	24.10.2022	08.11.2022	14.11.2022	21.11.2022	28.11.2022
Я — студент СПО (групповая дискуссия)	Россия - Родина моя! (групповая дискуссия)	Русская космонавтика. Начало (лекция)	Путешествие в музыку (музыкальный конкурс талантов)	Пусть будет теплой осенью жизни (групповая дискуссия)	Учитель — профессия на все времена (студенческий проект)	История праздника (лекция)	Традиции и семейные ценности в культуре народов России (студенческий проект)	Мы едины, мы — одна страна! (работа с интерактивной картой) - Ж.Н. Критарова	Единство в многообразии: языки и культура народов России (лекция)	Начало всему — Мама! (конкурс чтецов)	Государственные символы моей Страны (лекция)
Декабрь				Январь			Февраль				
05.12.2022	12.12.2022	09.12.2022	26.12.2022	16.01.2023	23.01.2023	30.01.2023	06.02.2023	13.02.2023	20.02.2023		
Спужение - выбор жизненного пути! (групповая дискуссия)	Подвиг героя (студенческий проект)	Конституция — основной закон нашей Страны (лекция)	От мечты к открытию (тренинг)	Рождественские традиции в России (творческая мастерская)	Героический подвиг защитников Ленинграда (работа с историческими документами)	История русского театра (образовательный квиз) - А.В. Овчинников	Ценность научного познания (интеллектуальный марафон)	Россия в мире (работа с интерактивной картой)	К подвигу солдата сердцем прикоснись! (фронтонное письмо)		
Март			Апрель			Май					
06.03.2023	13.03.2023	20.03.2023	27.03.2023	03.04.2023	10.04.2023	17.04.2023	24.04.2023	15.05.2023	22.05.2023	29.05.2023	
Женщины — Герой Труд (встреча с ветеранами и героями труда)	Гимн России (работа с газетными публикациями, интернет-публикациями)	Историческая справедливость (дискуссия)	Искусство в нашей жизни (творческая лаборатория)	Бессмертный подвиг Ю.Гагарина (лекция)	Нюрнбергский процесс — как суд справедливости (работа с историческими документами)	Сохранение окружающей среды (студенческий проект)	День труда (беседа с ветеранами труда)	День победы (студенческий проект "Бессмертный полк")	О важности социально-общественной активности (лекция)	Перед нами все двери открыты (творческий флэшмоб)	





## РАЗГОВОРЫ О ВАЖНОМ. 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-9, 10-11, СПО



ПО ИТОГАМ КАЖДОГО ЗАНЯТИЯ ФОРМУЛИРУЮТСЯ ВОПРОСЫ И ЗАДАНИЯ ДЛЯ ОБСУЖДЕНИЯ ДОМА С РОДИТЕЛЯМИ



### ПРИМЕРЫ ЗАДАНИЙ

#### 1-2, 3-4 классы

Домашнее задание:  
Совместно с родителями сделайте фотографии или рисунки для нашей выставки «Удивительный мир родной природы». Выберите сюжеты, которые вас удивили.

#### 5-6, 7-9 классы

Домашнее задание (одно по выбору):  
1. Напишите письмо человеку, который является для вас героем. На каком основании вы сделали свой выбор?  
2. Напишите сочинение-миниатюру на одну из тем: «Моя семья – опора России», «Герои, о которых мало говорят», «Мой дом – моя страна», «Лучший город России – это ...» (дети выбирают город самостоятельно); «Мы – надежда России».  
3. Обсудите с родителями, хотели бы вы поучаствовать в акции «Письмо солдату». Что бы вы написали в этом письме?  
4. Дамир Юсупов, герой России, сказал: «Главное — что все вернулось домой». Как вы понимаете смысл этой фразы? Обоснуйте свой ответ.  
5. В любой технике выполните рисунок на одну из тем по выбору: «Мы – одна страна», «Когда все дома», «Герои рядом». Устройте выставку рисунков в классе. Расскажите одноклассникам о своем рисунке.

#### 10-11 классы. СПО

Домашнее задание (одно по выбору):  
1. Спросите родителей, в каких важных исторических событиях, упоминаемых на сегодняшнем уроке, принимали участие члены вашей семьи. Подготовьте небольшое сообщение об этом.  
2. Подберите стихотворение русского поэта на одну из тем урока: «Мы граждане великой России», «На русском дышим языке», «Мы – одна страна». Обоснуйте свой выбор.  
3. Напишите эссе на тему «Мой герой – какой он?»



### Appendix 4: R-code example

R Code	Explanation
<pre>grouped_fl &lt;- fl_recoded %&gt;% group_by(fl_year, publisher_code_new) %&gt;% summarise(num_books_per_publisher = n())</pre>	Grouping the data by year and publisher code and counting the number of books for each publisher in each year.
<pre>grouped_fl &lt;- grouped_fl %&gt;% group_by(fl_year) %&gt;% mutate(all_books_per_year = sum(num_books_per_publisher))</pre>	Summing up all books per year for all publishers.
<pre>grouped_fl &lt;- grouped_fl %&gt;% group_by(fl_year) %&gt;% mutate(all_books_per_year = sum(num_books_per_publisher))</pre>	Calculating the concentration of each publisher per year.
<pre>fl_summary &lt;- grouped_fl %&gt;% group_by(fl_year) %&gt;%</pre>	Summing up the mean concentration of publishers for each year, then converting it to HHI levels.

```
summarise(concentration_simple =  
mean(share), concentration_hhi =  
sum(share^2))
```

**Appendix 5: Front cover of a “fundamentals of life safety” textbook  
(Petrovich et al., 2021)**

