

ARMENIA-GEORGIA RELATIONS (1918-1921), AS REFLECTED IN SCHOOL TEXTBOOKS: “WARS” OR “DIALOGUES” OF MEMORIES

Introduction

School, as an important agent of socialization, has a crucial role in forming students' worldviews. The state, in its turn, “through school, indoctrinates ideological schemes, inculcates civic values, and prepares the student to play life roles in future adult life”.¹ From the other side, “Our images of other people, or of ourselves for that matter, reflect the history we are taught as children. This history marks us for life. Its representation, which is for each one of us a discovery of the world, of our pasts as societies, embraces all our passing or permanent opinions, so that the traces of our first questioning, our first emotions, remain indelible”.²

Within the structure of any school the textbook is one of the most influential tools: it serves as a basis for the teacher to organize the education and discipline of the students. Moreover, the textbook is seen as perhaps a more “regularized and controlled” tool by the state than the others: teachers and teaching practices in classrooms. Analyses of textbooks show the “official view”³ the state tries to impose upon its citizens starting from childhood, and it seems natural that the acknowledgement of the “others” on the level of states is mainly left up to the state and the school, though there are other socialization agents such as the family, peer groups, and media that participate in the formation of the world view of children.

This is an even more topical issue in states whose recent histories have been full of conflict and disputes with other states. From this point of view, the studies in Luboš Veselý's (2008) edited volume, which explore the images of “self” and “others” in the national history textbooks of the

¹ Расизм в языке образования, под ред. В. Воронкова, О. Карпенко, А. Осипова. СПб.: Алетейя, 2008, с. 6.

² M. Ferro. *The Use and Abuse of History or How the Past is Taught to Children*, London and New York, 2003, p. ix.

³ V. Shnirelman also speaks about this generally arguing that “the modern state, especially nation-state, greatly signifies the role of the ‘official version’ of national history, and does its best to impose it upon the citizens through mass media, education system, museums, advertisements, and political speeches”. (See also Шнирельман В. Войны памяти: мифы, идентичность и политика в Закавказье. М.: Академкнига, 2003, с. 14).

three South Caucasus republics⁴ are quite useful. Thus, the need for cross-country analyses and comparison of historical “myths” and memory politics to reveal differences in presentations of the past is urgent.

“It is high time to confront these differing presentations of the past, for with the widening of the world’s horizons, with its economic unification but continuing political disunity, our differing views of the past have, more than ever, become one of the factors in conflict between states, nations, cultures and ethnic groups”⁵. Then the author names society’s dominant institutions (e.g. states, churches, political parties, private interests) as owners or sponsors of the media or the means of production – including the schools and the textbooks.

This general statement by M. Ferro fits in the context of the three South Caucasus countries’ presentations of the past. This article will focus on the case of Armenia and Georgia. Currently the two states do not have any political disputes or open conflict. According to the main official documents defining the priorities and strategies of foreign policy and national security, they are on each other’s lists of friendly countries, despite their different geo-political orientations and economic interests. The National security concept of Georgia⁶ declares it to be in “close partnership” with Armenia, and the strategic concept of national security of Armenia sees Georgia as a “state in the region with high-level relations with Armenia”.⁷

Ferro wrote: “Independently from its scientific vocation, history effectively exercises a double function, both therapeutic and militant”.⁸ In the Armenia-Georgia case, thus, the “dominant powers” of both countries do not have incentives and agendas to make use of the militant function of history – unlike in the cases of Azerbaijan for Armenia and Abkhazia and South Ossetia for Georgia⁹. That is to say, they do not need to use the past

⁴ The goal as specified by the editor was “to promote the principles of tolerance and respect for other nations, as well as to give room to different points of view and assessments of events and history itself rather than promote efforts to find a compromise and unified history, which will inevitably be nothing more than a mere compendium of facts”. (Vesely, Luboš (ed.). *Contemporary History Textbooks in the South Caucasus*. Prague 2008, p. 9).

⁵ M. Ferro, *Op. cit.*, pp. ix-x.

⁶ The full passage in the concept paper reads as the following “Georgia enjoys a close partnership with Armenia in all spheres of bilateral interest. Georgia believes that strengthening good neighborly relations and mutually beneficial cooperation with Armenia is in the national interest of both countries, and it contributes to strengthening traditional friendship, economic prosperity and political stability between the two states.” See details in National Security Paper of Republic of Georgia at http://www.mfa.gov.ge/index.php?lang_id=ENG&sec_id=12&info_id=9052.

⁷ The National Security Strategy text in regard with Georgia starts with the following passage: “The relations between Armenia and Georgia have been traditionally friendly and facilitate significantly the maintenance of stability in the region”. See details in National Security Strategy of Republic of Armenia at <http://www.mil.am/arm/?page=49>.

⁸ M. Ferro, *Op. cit.*, p. xi.

⁹ The actual conflict situations involving Armenia and Azerbaijan, as well as Georgia and its Abkhazia and South Ossetia conflicts, have been a special focus both for “the dominant powers” when presenting the past (as M. Ferro points out), as well as for scholarly communities when defining research preferences since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Other dimensions such as common historical issues between Armenians and Georgians and between Georgians and Azerbaijanis are left without special attention.

as “one of the stakes in the clashes of the states, nations, cultures and ethnic groups”.¹⁰

Special research is needed to look into the issue of how a specific common past is interpreted and presented to the younger generation through schoolbooks. What will the analyses of the narratives and concepts reflected on the schoolbooks show? What was the choice of the “dominant powers”, which in this case are mostly the state and historians? Was it towards the concept of “wars of memories” as defined by Shnirelman¹¹ or “relationships of dialogue” defined by Bakhtin.¹²

In other words, in these wars of concepts, what function of history – militant or therapeutic – won out? If the decision is in favour of “dialogue”, the use of the past can be seen as “medicine” in preventing the possible transformation of the opposition of the “self” and “other” to the level of conflict and clashes.¹³ This is becoming an even more a topical issue for the post-Soviet republics in general and for Armenia and Georgia in particular.

As there are several natural obstacles in the way of the common cultural-historical space.¹⁴ Among them, as seen by several authors, are the issue of the declining cultural-historical distance between the societies – more so among the younger generation as a result of the conflict situation in the region – and differences between the geo-political orientations and economic interests of the countries.

Alteration of historical images and memories within a certain society as knowledge and ideologies develop and the function of history changes is another aspect of presentation – of the past.¹⁵ In the East, as M. Ferro states, from Prague to Ulan Bator, every variety of ethnic and national groupings found its history explained based on the same model, one supposedly conceived by Marx, but revised by Moscow.¹⁶ And currently, historians and textbook writers face the task of “correcting” the extremely skewed Soviet historiography, which was even more distorted during the first years of the newly independent states”.¹⁷ Hence, the issue of post-Soviet transformations in historiography and reformations in history teaching

¹⁰ М. Ферро. Как рассказывают историю детям в разных странах мира. М., 1992, с. 8.

¹¹ The concept and illustration for it on the case of Armenia, Azerbaijan, Nagorny Karabakh and Georgia, Abkhazia national histories and myths is the central concern of the book authored by Shnirelman. For details, please refer to the Шнирельман В. *Op. cit.*

¹² Национальные истории в советском и постсоветских государствах, под ред. К. Аймермахера, Г. Бордюгова, Москва, «АИРО-XX», 1999, с. 13.

¹³ К. Аймермахер, Г. Бордюгов, *Op. cit.*, p. 14.

¹⁴ Шнирельман В. *Войны памяти: мифы, идентичность и политика в Закавказье*. М.: Академкнига, 2003, с. 100.

¹⁵ М. Ферро, *Op. cit.*, p. ix. К. Аймермахер, Г. Бордюгов, *Op. cit.*, p.12.

¹⁶ М. Ферро, *Op. cit.*, p. x.

¹⁷ Шнирельман В. *Ibid.*

in each country becomes quite an important factor defining the above-mentioned possibilities for practicing the therapeutic function of history and dialogue of memories.

The article will try to demonstrate how the “clashes” between the First Republics of Armenia and Georgia, episodes which encompass the wider period of 1918-1921, have been presented in the history textbooks of both countries. We do not have any intention to express historical truth, nor do we want to consider the events from the point of view of historical science in Armenia¹⁸ and in Georgia.¹⁹ However a brief overview of the assessments and characteristics of post-Soviet historiography and shifts throughout the Soviet era, mainly “perestroika” has been provided to present a wider context for a better understanding of the developments related to the textbooks. Reformation in history teaching as a part of wider educational reforms will be discussed in the article in order to facilitate the understanding of actual possibilities and current realities of practicing textbook development and teaching in schools.

The article is based mainly on the analyses of the passages related to the nation-states’ emergence and their developments in the 20th century as described in textbooks (a total of 7 books have been reviewed) of national history textbooks in Armenia and Georgia. Specifically, it concentrates on the period of the democratic republic formation since 1918, Sovietization and Soviet republic formation, and finally the Soviet Union collapse and emergence of the independent state.

Analyses of the textbooks have been conducted in two directions: Soviet Period books – post-Soviet books: the last editions of the Soviet period (1986 and 1987) and post-Soviet editions – three in Armenia (1996, 2005, 2008) and two in Georgia (pre-reform period – 2003, and post-reform – 2008). This makes it possible to do a multi-dimensional comparison of Armenia-Georgia, Soviet vs. post-Soviet, and throughout the different editions of the post-Soviet era. Two additional methods have been used to draw the conclusions: desk research of materials regarding the whole topic and separate aspects of history teaching and historiography in both countries, as well as expert interviews with educational policy makers and implementers, and other related specialists.

¹⁸ The Armenian historiographical literature about the period of First Republic includes the following: V. Ghazakhtsyan. Republic of Armenia 1918-1920, Yerevan, 1993 (Armenian); G. Galoyan, Armenia and the Great Powers 1917-1923, Yerevan, 1991 (Armenian); E. Zohrabyan. Inter-ethnic Fights in Yerevan Province 1918, Yerevan 2000 (Armenia), A. Hakobyan, Republic of Armenia, Yerevan, 1993. Republic of Armenia 1918-1920 (political history), Collection of documents and materials. Yerevan 2000.

¹⁹ For account of the Georgian view of the Georgian-Armenian war see General G. I. Kvinitadze, Memories 1917-1921, Paris, 1985 (Russian).

History teaching reforms and textbooks in brief

In the end of the 1930s, histories of individual Soviet republics became part of the curriculum in schools.²⁰ After the collapse of the Soviet Union, significant reforms were initiated and have been implemented in independent Armenia and Georgia in order to put the education system in line with the market economy and democratic government systems, one dimension of which has been introducing new methods in the teaching of history, promoting critical and independent thinking, introducing a multi-perspective approach, and bringing awareness that history is interpretation.

However, reforms in history teaching in these two countries have proceeded with differing intensity, focus, and real intention to change history teaching: in Georgia this meant a total change of the existing system, one that intensified after the Rose Revolution,²¹ while Armenian reforms have been relatively mild and many other changes are still waiting to be initiated. According to the normative documentation accompanying reforms in Georgia, the new approach towards history teaching (world and national) includes the following principles and changes:

A) in terms of structure: integrated teaching (history with geography, world history and Georgian history), shift from pure chronological teaching to a mixed, thematic approach, and inclusion of civics in the curriculum.

B) In terms of content: to become more liberal (for example, in the curriculum, only certain concepts, content and details are left to the teacher's discretion), to provide alternative perspectives instead of a one-line narrative, to include more concepts about social life and religious and ethnic diversity.²²

Oliver Reisner, in one of his recent publications, states that “in contrast with the previous subjects ‘History of Georgia’ and ‘World History’ that were taught in an authoritarian manner, now pupils should be empowered to draw their own conclusions from a past presented from different angles in an integrated manner. This approach is in line with European methods of history teaching, as defined by the latest resolution of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe”.²³

²⁰ Шнирельман В. Войны памяти: мифы, идентичность и политика в Закавказье. М.: Академкнига, 2003, с. 73.

²¹ History Teaching in Georgia: Representation of Minorities in Georgian History Textbooks, CIMERA, Geneva 2007, с. 41.

²² Национальный учебный план для общеобразовательной школы 2008-2009, Тбилиси 2008. National Aims of Public Education, Ministry of education and sciences of Georgia.

²³ O. Reisner. Interpreting the Past – From Political Manipulation to Critical Analysis?//Writing National Histories: Coming to Terms with the Past//Caucasus Analytical Digest No. 8, 17 July 2009 at <http://georgien.boell-net.de/downloads/CaucasusAnalyticalDigest08-1.pdf> (05.11.2009).

Since the 2004 reforms, the government has been decentralizing and liberalizing textbook development, publication and dissemination. Though there are no precise statistical data on the practical usage of textbooks in Georgian schools, experts say there are three or four main versions of history textbooks used widely by the schools in practice.

In Armenia, Armenian history is taught in schools with one textbook version throughout the country; however, the law provides other alternatives as well.²⁴ Test trials using the multi-perspective approach are being implemented in current Georgian textbooks, a development which constitutes a “huge step towards a more reflective, multi-perspective approach towards national history”.²⁵

The authors of the Armenian textbooks have taken the approach of rejecting previous ideological bias and emphases, while adhering to the main one-line history narrative. The normative documentation and guidebooks call on teachers to switch from the knowledge-based learning approach to the “teaching to learn” approach, as well as to shift to student-oriented teaching practices²⁶. These changes, however, are mostly in line with the recent shift of Armenian schooling to a twelve-year secondary education instead of ten or eleven years under the previous system.

The new principles of education have been reflected particularly in recent editions of history textbooks in Georgia, both in terms of structure and content. Thus, passages including the period of 1918-1921 follow a specific structure: the material is divided into chapters, subchapters and specific passages with titles. The presentation of the material is organized in the form of some brief narratives, several pieces of “interesting to know” texts, as well as short passages from corresponding sources, among which one can often see sources presenting multiple views (e.g. passages from speeches of politicians, official documents, testimonies of witnesses, etc.). Every chapter contains tasks relating to the topics for class discussion as well as questions aimed at revealing the viewpoints of the students. The pages of the book are in colour and feature numerous photos.

The above discussion describes the principles of teaching and textbook

²⁴ The issue of practicing centralized textbook publication for the national general schools is on the agenda of many societies in transition, one counterexample, though is the educational system of Israel, which according to Marutyan is also undergoing transformation but tends not to level and unify content, preferring a more diverse approach instead. He also suggests comparing it to one episode from the Armenian reality when the president of a diaspora Armenian organization writes an open-letter to the President of Armenia, one of the recommendations was create a pan-Armenian textbook for Higher Education Institutions in English, Russian and Turkish and make it available online on the website of the Institute of History, National Academy of Sciences. Details see at <http://www.noravank.am/am/?page=analytics&nid=1854> (19.01.09), and “Azg” Daily #15, 31-01-2009.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Materials for 5-day training ‘History and Social Sciences’ for teachers’ qualifications. Yerevan 2007 (Armenian).

development as provided in official documentation and policy-makers' declarations, but one should not infer that they precisely reflect the realities of teaching and the current situation. They are the "instructions" or "wishes" about how the process should be organized. However, the reality seems to be more complicated and reveals series of problems, weak points, hardships and obstacles to successful implementation.²⁷ For various reasons, "a large gap remains between the intended objectives outlined in the ministerial regulations and their skilful implementation".²⁸ Without going deeper into the reasons for such weaknesses and possible recommendations for improvement, one should keep in mind the mentioned current teaching practices and the opportunity to implement "reformed" methods and principles.

Dynamics of historiography and history teaching through the Soviet and post-Soviet period

In general, historiography and, correspondingly, history teaching during the Soviet era established the Marxist tradition of positive historiography.²⁹ As L. Gigineishvili asserts, "the grand Marxist discourse was prevailing – as an inevitable dialectical process leading from the feudal society to the socialist, which itself was to be superseded by the communist".³⁰

On the other hand, within the framework of the dominant Soviet paradigm, it was possible to retain and form parallel national narratives, provided that they did not contradict the basic layout of the official narrative.³¹ Moreover, teaching national history was allowed, although it had to be seasoned with Marxist theories.³² As a result of this blend, the Georgian textbooks, for example, presented a vision of history that was largely the creation of Ilia Chavchavadze and his followers, that is, Georgia as a uniform phenomenon throughout the centuries, with its heroic and battered past.

²⁷ See also, O. Reisner, *Op. cit.*, N. Chikovani, K. Kakitelashvili, Representation of "others" in the South Caucasus secondary school history textbooks, pp. 58-83// *Contemporary History Textbooks in the South Caucasus*, ed. Luboš Veselý, Prague 2008, I. Gundare, *The Teaching of History in Georgia. With special focus on the Armenian and Azeri minorities and their representation in Georgian history textbooks*, pp. 23-64// *History Teaching in Georgia: Representation of Minorities in Georgian History Textbooks*, CIMERA, Geneva 2007.

²⁸ O. Reisner. *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

²⁹ See also N. Chikovani. *Op. cit.*, L. Gigineishvili, Post-reform history textbooks in Georgia: changing patterns and the issue of minorities in Georgian history, pp 7-24// *History Teaching in Georgia: Representation of Minorities in Georgian History Textbooks*, CIMERA, Geneva 2007, O. Reisner. *Op. cit.*, В. Шнирельман. Указ. соч., Ю. Анчабадзе, Национальная история в Грузии: мифы, идеология, наука, С. 161-178// *Национальные истории в советском и постсоветских государствах*, под ред. К. Аймермахера, Г. Бордогова, Москва, «АИРО-XX», 1999.

³⁰ *History Teaching in Georgia: Representation of Minorities in Georgian History Textbooks*, CIMERA, Geneva 2007, p. 10

³¹ M. Zolyan, T. Zakaryan, Armenia: the Images of "Self" and "Other" in Textbooks on History of Armenia, pp. 11-33 // *Contemporary History Textbooks in the South Caucasus*, ed. Luboš Veselý, Prague 2008, p. 18.

³² L. Gigineishvili, *Op. cit.*, p. 10.

However, the Soviet Georgian history curriculum differed from the Chavchavadze model in that Georgia was no longer supposed to harbour romantic aspirations towards anything better (save Communism), its historical hardships having ended in the blessed era of Soviet Georgia.³³ This might be one of the reasons why thorough and objective research on the first Democratic Republics of Armenia and Georgia was absent. Discussions of the period and the First Republic were either taboo or were replaced with several unconvincing and negative clichés³⁴. Georgian historians, as stated by Anchabadze, were mostly engaged in the study of the ancient and medieval periods, clearly ignoring the new and modern periods.³⁵

A vivid example of the above-mentioned tendency in history textbooks during the Soviet period is the way Armenia's declaration of independence was assessed as "just a formal thing" and the "only the way they established bourgeois-nationalistic dictatorship of Dashnaks, which in fact was ruled by foreign imperialists"³⁶ in the 1986 Armenian history textbook. The same is seen in the Georgian textbook, which states that "in fact, the declaration of the 'independent democratic republic'³⁷ by Mensheviks turned out to be an evident deception. In practice, it was an occupation".³⁸

In general, clashing historical narratives were among the core components of the process of the Soviet collapse and the formation of new independent states.

Consequently, historiography was one of the first disciplines to react and to undergo, and in some cases, initiate changes. Though the main avenues for shifting focus in the two republics were different – the Armenian case presented a "Karabakhization" of history,³⁹ and the Georgian case a focus on Abkhaz and Ossetia issues – one thing was common: revision of the idea and the period of the First Democratic Republics (1918-1921). This shift can be described as idealization versus previous demonization.⁴⁰

This idealization tendency in historiography led to diametrically contradictory information about those periods of history,⁴¹ and this was also

³³ L. Gigineishvili, *Op. cit.*, p. 10-11.

³⁴ А. Искандарян, Б. Арутюнян, Армения: «карабахизация» национальной истории, стр. 147-160// Национальные истории в советском и постсоветских государствах, под ред. К. Аймермахера, Г. Бордюгова, Москва, «АИРО-XX», 1999, с. 149.

³⁵ Ю. Анчабадзе. Указ. соч., с. 171.

³⁶ Тс. Aghayan, Sh. Harutyunyan, *History of Armenian People 9-10th*, Yerevan 1986, p. 70 (Armenian).

³⁷ This expression is frequently encountered in "parenthesis" throughout the whole narration in the textbook of the period both in Armenia and Georgia.

³⁸ В. Гучуа, Ш. Мескиа. *История Грузии. Учебник VII-X классов*, Тб. 1987, с. 204.

³⁹ See in А. Искандарян, Б. Арутюнян. Указ. соч.

⁴⁰ Там же, с. 155.

⁴¹ Б. Арутюнян. *Историческая Наука в Армении в 1988-1998 гг. Краткий очерк. Вестник Общественных Наук 2 (611)*, Ереван 2004, с. 55-67, с. 63.

reflected in the textbooks. In his article, “Time Turned Back: On the Use of History in Georgia,” Maisuradze discusses the so-called “contra-representative myth” of Georgian history, “retelling Georgian history in a way that contradicted Soviet and pre-Soviet versions..., which is anchored in an idealization of the past which serves to compensate on a psychological level for the difficulties of the past”.⁴²

Reisner also says the aim of textbooks from the 1990s was “to strengthen patriotic feelings to counterbalance the serious and traumatic defeats in Georgian state-building of the early 1990s”⁴³. The tendency for the theme to obtain special attention is clear in the analyses of history textbooks in both the Armenian and Georgian cases. In particular, the first cycle of revised history textbooks after the collapse of the Soviet Union included wider space (bigger texts and more photos). Similarly, idealization of actors from the period can be seen in the overly positive assessment of the government in the 2003 Georgian textbook. Here, it is worth mentioning that the “third generation”, or post-reform textbooks (2008) in Georgia abstain from any kind of assessment. Another interesting point that comes out of the comparative discussion of Armenian and Georgian revisions is that whereas the recent Georgian revision has somehow neutralized its direct evaluation, the Armenian recent edition, on the contrary, increased attention to the theme in comparison with the 2005 edition.

“Friendship (brotherhood) of nations” is another “revised” concept within the wider shifts of historiography and its reflection in the textbooks of newly independent republics, which is closely tied to ethno-political conflicts in the region. We discussed above the tendency for revisionist texts to focus on Armenia-Azerbaijan historical relations in Armenia, and the history of the Abkhazia and South Ossetia issues in Georgia. However, several other chapters of history were considered taboo in Soviet times: “black spots concerned relations between Armenia and neighbours”⁴⁴, among them was also the discussion of Armenia-Georgia relations. Analysis of the history textbook texts, both Armenian and Georgian, clearly shows the shift from the previous concepts of “friendship of nations” and “joint struggle for communism”.

The 1987 edition of history textbooks presents a slight allusion to the

⁴² G. Maisuradze, *Time Turned Back: On the Use of History in Georgia// Writing National Histories: Coming to Terms with the Past/Caucasus Analytical Digest No. 8, 17 July 2009*, p. 13.

<http://georgien.boell-net.de/downloads/CaucasusAnalyticalDigest08-1.pdf> (05.11.09).

⁴³ O. Reisner. *Op. cit.*, p. 3.

⁴⁴ S. Minasyan, *Armenia’s Attitude Towards its Past: History and Politics//Writing National Histories: Coming to Terms with the Past/Caucasus Analytical Digest No. 8, 17 July 2009*, p. 11.

<http://georgien.boell-net.de/downloads/CaucasusAnalyticalDigest08-1.pdf> (05.11.09).

issue of the “territorial, borderline dispute of 1918” between the Armenian and Georgian Republics, compared to a more significant presentation in all the post-Soviet editions. It is not presented as a separate issue, though there are two mentions of it. The first one is a rather indirect statement about “the fratricidal clashes organized by Dashnaks [in Armenia], Mussavats [in Azerbaijan] and Mensheviks [in Georgia],”⁴⁵ which in turn is included in a broader sub-chapter titled, “Internal and Foreign Policy of the Government”⁴⁶. In this sense, the 1987 Georgian textbook maintains total silence, without presenting any information, statement or hint regarding the issue.

Armenia-Georgia relations in 1918-1921: Reflections on secondary school textbooks across time and countries

The previous section briefly discussed common shifts of concepts from Soviet to post-Soviet textbook revisions. The following section provides a more detailed account of Armenia-Georgia relations of 1918-1921 in general, and in particular the “territorial dispute” or “short war” between the Armenian and Georgian Democratic Republics as presented in Armenian and Georgian textbooks. We seek to present the topic with structural components inherent to the term “conflict”, which will include the following topics: introduction, text explaining the issue; general concept, reasons, and roots; description of the starting point and the escalation of the conflict; conflict settlement activities, and presentation of the “final” resolution.

Neither Armenian nor Georgian textbooks present the conflict in a scheme of “conflict analysis”, however. The difference between the two is that passages in the Armenian textbooks have an organized structure (general concept, reasons, specific events, etc.) while Georgian textbooks are poorly structured and freely narrated and present a less coherent picture.

General approach to the issue

The general trend for organizing the post-Soviet Armenian textbooks is that the issue is presented under the title “Armenian-Georgian relations” as a subchapter to the chapter devoted to Armenia’s foreign relations during

⁴⁵ Ts. Aghayan, Sh. Harutyunyan, *Op. cit.*, p. 72.

⁴⁶ The whole passage reads as follows: “Dashnaks, Mussavats and Mensheviks stirred up national hatred, mutual hostility in multinational Transcaucasia. They kept on organizing fratricidal clashes with the aim to distort the cooperation of the workers, to shift their attention from the class struggle and in so doing strengthen their authority.” (see *Ibid.*)

the period. The choice of titles and distribution of themes put the issue in the context of “relations” rather than “hostility or conflict”. The 2008 Georgian edition textbook has a similar organization of titles and wording of themes: Armenia-Georgia relations are presented in the subchapter relating to foreign policy of the Republic of Georgia in the context of a wider geopolitical situation. While the 2003 edition presented the issue in a bigger chapter titled, “Struggle for the Territorial Integrity of Georgia”, with the following opening words: “encroachment upon the historical territory of Georgia”. Interestingly, the 1987 Georgian textbook did not contain any information, statement or hint regarding the issue. The 1986 Armenian textbook briefly refers to the issue of the “territorial, borderline dispute between Armenian and Georgian Republics of 1918”.

Introduction to the dispute

The Armenian text, before touching on the Armenia-Georgia conflict of the time, offers students an introductory text including statements with a friendly attitude towards Georgia and the Georgian people, unlike the Georgian textbooks, which do not contain any Armenia-friendly text. Particularly, “the establishment of good-neighbourly relations with direct neighbours-Turkey, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Persia” is presented as one of the directions of foreign policy of the republic.

Georgia is termed as a “friendly” country, second only after Iran among Armenia’s neighbouring countries. Georgia is presented as a country through which Armenia was linked to the world and through which trade passed. In later passages, the relationship between the Armenian and Georgian peoples before the given period is assessed as “friendly” and “good”, and their “joint struggle against alien conquerors”⁴⁷ is stressed.

General concept, reason, and roots

Within the broader discussion of the “territorial-border disputes” that the first Independent Armenian Republic had with its direct neighbours, the Armenia-Georgia case is presented with the following wording: “the newly declared Republic of Georgia intended to enclose Lori and Akhalkalak[i]

⁴⁷ V. Barkhudaryan, *Armenian History* 9, Yerevan 2008, p. 24 (Armenian). V. Barkhudaryan, *Armenian History* 8, Yerevan 2005, p. 17 (Armenian).

into its borderlines”⁴⁸. The unfair administrative-territorial division made during the Tsarist period (“Lori and Akhalkalak[i], two Armenian regions, had been included in Tiflis province”⁴⁹) is presented as the reason for the Armenia-Georgia territorial border dispute.

The 2008 Georgian textbook also refers to “disputes over the borders” as the reason for the “war between Armenia and Georgia”. While the 2003 edition presents the concept of “encroachment upon the integrity of the Democratic Republic of Georgia by the Armenian Republic”, providing the reason as “the rejection of the Armenian claims by the Georgian government” to hand over historically Georgian territories in southern Georgia (Javakheti); Kartli (Tbilisi, Gori), and Adjara (Batumi)”.⁵⁰

Starting point and escalation of conflict

Various editions of the post-Soviet Armenian textbooks mainly present the narrative of “the dispute which transformed into an armed conflict (or war)”. The 2008 textbook describes the starting point as “Armenian units entering Lori, shortly after Georgian authorities started violating the rights of the local Armenian population”.⁵¹ The 2005 edition, however, names Georgia’s entry into the region as the starting point for the conflict. The escalation is described in the following way “...the struggle for the region of Lori in 1918 grew into a short-term Armenian-Georgian war, which ended with the occupation of the region by Armenian forces”.⁵²

The 2008 Georgian textbook, quoting a passage from Georgian Democratic Republic leader Noe Zhordania’s speech,⁵³ presents Armenia as the attacking party. The 2003 Georgian textbook offers a picture where Armenia was the first to attack and “to start war against Georgia” with its “demand that Georgian government relinquish territories up to Gori (including Tbilisi)”. According to this narrative, in response to the Armenian attacks, the “Georgian regular Army and National Guard went on the offensive. The aggressor pulled back with big losses”.⁵⁴ Nearly the same content is in the

⁴⁸ V. Barkhudaryan, *Op. cit.*, p. 25, V. Barkhudaryan, *Ibid.*

⁴⁹ V. Barkhudaryan, *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ М. Вачнадзе, В. Гурули, *История Грузии XI*, Тбилиси, 2003, с. 103.

⁵¹ V. Barkhudaryan, *Armenian History 8*, Yerevan 2005, p. 17 (Armenian).

⁵² V. Barkhudaryan. *Ibid.* V. Barkhudaryan *Armenian History 8th grade*, Yerevan 1998, p. 41.

⁵³ “Citizens, what has happened is something that was not supposed to happen. At the time when the blaze of the world war has been extinguished, when the great powers have put their swords into the hearts and start a peaceful life, the Government of Armenia surreptitiously attacks the Republic of Georgia”. Noe Zhordania (see in N. Kvitaisvili, D. Malazonia, T. Malazonia, *History of Georgia 9th grade*, Tbilisi, 2008, p. 301 (Georgian)).

⁵⁴ М. Вачнадзе, В. Гурули. *Указ. соч.*, с. 106.

2008 edition (“The Georgian troops succeeded in repelling the attack of the Armenian troops and launched a counter-attack soon after”).⁵⁵

This description of events contains the most controversial information, because here we see completely different interpretations and facts about the same issue and period in Armenian and Georgian visions. Another matter is that the Armenian editions seem to keep nearly the same narration along with the various editions, while the two Georgian books have different emphases.

Conflict resolution/settlement activities

In post-Soviet editions of Armenian textbooks, the mediating role of the ally countries (military representatives of the Entente cordiale, England and France) in the conflict settlement is stressed while presenting the 1919 January agreement that designated Lori as a neutral zone: a general-governorship (Russian: “general-gubernatorstvo”) under the supervision of England. The 2008 Georgian textbooks refer to the Lori region as having been declared a neutral zone “over which Georgia did not have jurisdiction any more” as “the result of long negotiations.” Moreover, the textbook stresses that “the conflicting parties were compelled to peace”.⁵⁶

The 2003 Georgian textbook presents the resolution with the focus on England not as a just mediator, but as a “protector” of the Armenians (“England was helping Armenia to avoid a large military and political catastrophe”⁵⁷) and refers to Lori as a Georgian territory that was declared a neutral zone.

Armenian textbooks (1996, 2005, 2008) present the “Armenian-Georgian disputed territorial issue as finally resolved in 1921 when the Akhalkalaki region was attached to Georgia and Lori to Armenia”. The 2005 edition offers the following process of resolution “...Georgia also became Soviet (25 February 1921), with this the Sovietization of the whole South Caucasus occurred, thus spreading Russia’s influence in the whole territory of the region. Soviet Georgia recognized the Lori region’s attachment to Armenia. These two countries signed a separate treaty on the issue. And with the consent of Soviet Armenia, Akhalkalaki was attached to Georgia”.⁵⁸

This topic is covered in future chapters of the textbook regarding the

⁵⁵ N. Kvitaisvili, D. Malazonia, T. Malazonia. Ibid.

⁵⁶ N. Kvitaisvili, D. Malazonia, T. Malazonia. Ibid.

⁵⁷ М. Вачнадзе, В. Гурули. Там же.

⁵⁸ V. Barkhudaryan, *Armenian History* 8, Yerevan 2005, p. 49 (Armenian).

Sovietization process of Armenia and the first years of Soviet Armenia. Interestingly, Georgian textbooks remain silent on further developments around the issue and its final resolution. Similarly, the Georgian textbooks of the Soviet period (1987) do not contain any information regarding the issue. While the Armenian edition of the same period (1986) has some references to the theme, the dispute is not presented separately. Rather, it is mentioned twice, the first time in an indirect statement about “the fratricidal clashes organized by Dashnaks, Mussavats and Mensheviks”.⁵⁹

The second passage related to the issue is in the subchapter titled, “First Initiatives of the Soviet Authorities,” presenting the issues of formation and strengthening of the Armenian Soviet Socialist Republic. The textbook presents it as the “achievement” of Soviet rule in “expanding the territory” with Lori which previously had been declared a neutral zone at the initiative of the Entente states”. The issue is presented in the framework of an “armed revolt of the working class of Lori region against the Menshevik government of Georgia”. The final resolution is described as “the victory of the revolt with the help of 11th army, and Lori being joined to Soviet Armenia”.⁶⁰

Conclusions

School history textbooks are one of the means for children’s socialization that are most controllable by the state or other ‘dominant powers’. While discussing interstate relations in conflicting episodes from the past, the ideas expressed in the textbook can cause problems for the future, especially if the ‘wars of memory’ stance is preferred to that of ‘relationships of dialogue.’

This precaution also refers to the case of the Armenian and Georgian textbooks, for they contain latent conflict (in the sense that it is not much discussed and analysed against the background of more current and heated conflicts in Karabakh, Abkhazia and South Ossetia), particularly with regard to the presentation of the territorial dispute in 1918. One of the general trends for the post-Soviet shifts in the historiographies of both countries was the revision of issues referring to the period of the first democratic republics (1918-1821); the Soviet idealization was replaced by the post-

⁵⁹ The whole passage reads as follows: “Dashnaks, Mussavats and Mensheviks stirred up national hatred, mutual hostility in multinational Transcaucasia. They kept on organizing fratricidal clashes with the aim to distort the cooperation of the workers, to shift their attention from the class struggle and with these to strengthen their authority.” (see in Ts. Aghayan, Sh. Harutyunyan, *History of Armenian People 9-10th*, Yerevan 1986, p. 72).

⁶⁰ *Op. cit.*, p. 96.

Soviet one. Similarly, the Armenian-Georgian dispute at issue as well as the ensuing short war was left out by the Soviet textbooks, and came to the fore with the idealization elements in the post-Soviet textbooks in both countries (one exception is the Georgian textbook of 2008, which does not contain any explicit evaluations and interpretations in the narrative).

As to the description and interpretation of the dispute, the Armenian and Georgian post-Soviet textbooks present radically opposing viewpoints (with the difference that Armenian textbooks, while putting blame on the Georgian Menshevik government, still maintain a friendly tone towards Georgia, something that is absent in the Georgian textbooks).

Modern Armenian textbooks remain more traditional in the sense of maintaining a more uniform approach in narrating history with less space for pluralistic visions and assessments. In the case of the Georgian textbooks, after 2003 they adopted a more critical approach, giving room for various interpretations and with a bigger space for generating students' independent visions and estimations.

Though more multi-perspective than the Armenian textbooks, the latest Georgian approach to presenting history could be of considerable benefit and become a tool for the resolution of the wars of memory between Armenia and Georgia if it also incorporated the Armenian perspective. This, of course, could become a model for the Armenian counterparts too. Thus, there is a need for the textbooks in Armenia and Georgia to be brought to a certain unitary position in terms of being multi-perspective. This position will contribute to the processes of socialization of the Armenian and Georgian students in the Bakhtinian sense of "relationships of dialogue" or implement the "therapeutic function" of history as defined by Ferro.

In order to achieve such a solution, there is an obvious need for further joint discussions. One example of such efforts was the "Tbilisi initiative" of the Council of Europe, launched in May 2000 which resulted in the "Declaration adopted at the regional Conference of Ministers of Education".⁶¹ However, some time after the conference, the following statement was posted on the official website of the CoE: "The 'Tbilisi Initiative' project has produced significant results and achieved the major part of the goals planned. The only result which has not been achieved within the project was the publication of supplementary pedagogical material on the history of the Caucasus prepared by the teams of authors appointed by the Ministries of Education of the countries concerned. This material was

⁶¹ See details at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/Source/Cooperation/TbilisiInitiative/TbilisiDeclaration2000_en.pdf

intended to supplement and not to replace textbooks used in the countries involved in the project”.⁶²

Our study showed that the participants had to stop the publication process due to various disagreements among the parties (Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Georgia). As one of the members of the project argued, the participation of high-ranking officials such as ministers prevented the book from getting the needed approval for publication. Recently, the NGO Analytical Centre of Globalization and Regional Cooperation, with the support of Caritas France Foundation, published a book (edited by S. Grigoryan) titled “Historical sketches of the countries of the South Caucasus: A multicultural view on history” (2009).⁶³

Far from presenting a common history, the book includes three separate texts representing the history as viewed by each of the three countries.⁶⁴ Perhaps this is another way of solving the problem. One thing is clear: further research is needed to shed light on many other episodes of shared history not only within the history textbooks but also in finding parallels and contradictions in historiographies as a basis for possible discussion and joint efforts. Future research may answer the question as to why the territorial issue is so important for Armenians and Georgians (in this case); whether the content of the textbooks has deep roots in the historiographies and, if yes, whether those roots can be modified so that “two trees – Armenia and Georgia – may prosper under less risky terms under the same sun”.⁶⁵

⁶² See details at the official website of CoE at http://www.coe.int/t/dg4/education/historyteaching/cooperation/South-Caucasus/SouthCaucasusIntro_en.asp

⁶³ Очерки истории стран Южного Кавказа. Мультикультуральный взгляд на историю.

⁶⁴ See details at <http://www.acgrc.am/statement091221.htm>

⁶⁵ I am grateful to my colleague Levan Gigineishvili for his meaningful remarks on the article and for this last artistic expression.