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## INTRODUCING TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: DEALING WITH THE PAST IN ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJANI CONFLICT

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# **INTRODUCING TRANSITIONAL JUSTICE: DEALING WITH THE PAST IN ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJANI CONFLICT**

Editors: Philip Gamaghelyan, Sevil Huseynova, Vadim Romashov,  
Christina Soloyan

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[www.imaginedialogue.com](http://www.imaginedialogue.com)

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# Armenian and Azerbaijani History Textbooks: Time for a Change<sup>7</sup>

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**Flora Ghazaryan, Mirkamran Huseynli**

Despite the end of the second Nagorno-Karabakh war with a ceasefire agreement on November 9, 2020 and exchange of statements regarding unblocking relations, there has been no sight of rapprochement by the two respective states. This article casts national-history education as one of the areas where reconciliation between Armenian and Azerbaijani societies can be achieved. Furthermore, it adopts transitional justice as a theoretical framework while illustrating the practices and the impact of national-history writing in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Ultimately, the article reveals distorted narratives and ill-representation of neighboring communities in Armenian and Azerbaijani history-textbooks and gives recommendation for a policy change which would facilitate inter-communal reconciliation among the young generation in the foreseeable future.

## **Introduction**

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 past as societies, embraces all our passing or permanent opinions, so that the traces of our first questioning, our first emotions, remain indelible (Ferro2003, ix).

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<sup>7</sup> We take the chance to thank the *CaucasusTalks* team for the initial idea and our inspiration for the topic.

Within the structure of any secondary school in any post-Soviet country the textbooks remain as the main basis for education. These textbooks help the teachers to organize their courses. Meanwhile, they also “regularize and control” the information children learn in the classroom. S. Mkrtchyan who is a researcher specialized in the school textbook analysis sees the textbooks as a tool used by the state more than by other institutions to control the information provided in them (Mkrtchyan 2011, 169). According to V. Voronkov, this tool is used as an ideological input where students acquire “legitimate” knowledge and concepts, the parameters of which are defined by the state apparatus through the national education standards (Voronkov 2008, 6). In that matter, Marc Ferro considers that when the state indoctrinates its “legitimate” ideological schemes through textbooks, it cements the *vox populi* of the students by bringing up particular perceptions of national values and understanding (Ferro 2003). Equally Schwartz rightfully denotes that writing politically motivated historical narrative is a policy instrument for managing ethnic relations and mobilizing ethnic and nationalist resources (Schwartz 1994). Overall, the textbook became the *raison d’être* for the modern nation-states to indoctrinate its ideological schemes onto young generations guaranteeing their allegiance to its policies. Especially, there is a tendency in most of the young nation-states to typically present “history” as a discipline in a positivist way as a precise science. As French philosopher and Hermeneutics theorist Paul Ricoeur indicated, “history” has little to do with science and much to do with narrating a story and effectively creating a plot of which it is ideologically salient (Ricoeur 1981).

## History Writing and its Paradigms

This is not to say that history has no factual basis. The factual evidence behind “historical” events might be quite profound. However, out of the abundance of documents and competing interpretations, historians select the evidence that best fits their narrative of *organic and natural* nationhood/statehood, omitting and effectively “silencing” other voices that defy this selectively constructed narrative, which is particularly the common exercise for the school textbooks. The paradigms that fit to this form of history-writing were termed by the nationalism studies expertize (Smith 1991) as Perennialism and Primordialism. Perennialists believe that nations have continuously existed in every period of history. The historians who subscribe to this paradigm lay their emphasis on

continuity while simultaneously ignoring or omitting certain ruptures and discontinuities within that particular national history. Other historians, who subscribe to and employ Primordialist tone to the national histories, lay their emphasis on the organic nature of the nationhood while simultaneously othering out-group societies through the lens of 'their own cultural and biological givens' (Smith 1991).

Despite, neither Perennialism, nor Primordialism is any longer a dominant orthodoxy of nationalism studies scholarship, it is oftentimes directly or indirectly employed in the secondary school history textbook writing up to date, aiming to fortify nation-state driven narration of national continuity and existence as well as national organicism and naturalism. An example of the first pages from history textbooks of both countries is very illustrative in this sense. As such, the Armenian and Azerbaijani textbooks start with prehistoric times defining the geographic region where so-called "Armenian" and "Azerbaijani" states/dynasties were endemic since the cradle of civilization, thereby nurturing Perennialist historicism. By the same token, both history textbooks crudely trace the origins of their people back to the prehistoric collectivities purely as such, thereby nurturing a Primordialist sense of nationhood.

However, another paradigm called Modernism can give a successful defiance to both Perennialist perspective of national history-writing by disenchanting the modern state histories from their pre-modern and claimed dynastic pasts, and Primordialist perspective of national-history writing by presenting the constructed nature of nationhood in opposition to the myth of predetermined cultural and natural organicism. The paradigm of Modernism asserts that nations, national states and national identities are the products of changing patterns in social, political, economic and cultural domains of early modern societies, resulting from certain material changes and ideological currents which had set out as of the age of enlightenment and print capitalism up to the contemporary period. Therefore, this paradigm claims that the presence of current nations as *imagined communities* is not only chronologically recent, but also qualitatively novel which eclipses the Perennialist claim of ever-existing continuous national history. It also claims that the presence of current nations *per se* is a typical result of social-construct that emerged resulting from the changes within the above-mentioned domains, equally dwarfing the Primordialist claim of predetermined fixity and naturalism of national



history. That being said, the use of the modernist paradigm while narrating particular national histories challenges the state-driven national ideologies that place societies against each other for the sake of their own existence at any cost. It also restores justice - that had been deprived from young generations - *vis a vis* one's own self and one's rival society that is narrated as "historical other" (We will expound our theoretical framework of justice thoroughly in the coming paragraphs).

## **Functionality of National History as a Discipline**

In line with the interpretations given by the Modernist paradigm to the national formations and national constructedness, all the societies with varying ideological rulership - even those with radical left-wing agenda which is a rival to ethnic-nationalism - underwent similar transformations from dynastic statehood and religious-sectarian/confessional communality to the nation-state-hood and ethno-national communality throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. The best example is the Soviet Union, which was ideologically predisposed to suppress the idea of ethno-national institutionalization, but likewise applied these transformations to the Soviet member-states/societies and all the minority categories within these entities. (Brubaker 1998, 286). And it was this political era - epoch of nationalism - that brought young nation-states of Armenia and Azerbaijan into the idea of modern nationalisms, unintentionally serving as a mobilizing force for the genesis of the Karabakh conflict (Abbasov 2012, 25).

There is another aspect to note which is derivative of the fact that *modus vivendi* individuals witness only a small part of the history/national history at first hand. The rest of what the individuals know about their historical past is transmitted to them by ego-documents, written and oral narratives, and other means. Even the recent events, such as the First Nagorno Karabakh war, that the previous generation was a life-witness of, are likewise transmitted through media, second-hand oral stories, gossips, internet, and especially history textbooks (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev 2013, 169). Same is applicable for the Second Nagorno Karabakh war with us as a generation of life-witnesses.

Thus, history textbooks remain the most widely disseminated narrative, in which not only the most recent conflicts of post-Soviet period, but also those that took place centuries ago, are retrospectively interpreted

through the lens of the present situation (Rumyantsev 2012, 15). The version/s presented in the history textbooks are myths, constructed from carefully selected and even more carefully forgotten events which are - as discussed before - interpreted in line with Perennialist and Primordialist paradigms, which in their turn are interpreted in line with the ideology of either collective friendship or feud (Abbasov 2012, 41) or to put it in Mikhail Bakhtin's and Victor Shnirelman's words "relationships of dialogue" (Aymermakher 1999, 13) and "wars of memory" (Shnirelman 2003, 14).

As Ferro notes, regardless of its scientific vocation, history as a study exercises a double function: therapeutic and militant (Ferro 2003, xi). Hence, the choice of the function for history writing sums down to the politics of a certain nation-state towards its neighboring countries. For example, contrasting both the case of "Armenia versus Georgia" and the case of "Azerbaijan versus Georgia" in reference to their history textbooks would show that none has displayed any particular interest in making a patterned use of the militant function of history against each other. Contrary to this, Armenia and Azerbaijan use precisely this function while writing their national history and while dealing with the presence of one another in their national history. The same goes for Georgia *vis a vis* Abkhazia and South Ossetia (Mkrtchyan 2015, 170).

## **Historians and the Image of "Enemy" in National History Writing**

It is also important to address the climate in which the *modus operandi* authors of these history textbooks operate; as writing history and especially a national one becomes difficult when the historical facts that the historian deals with occur not in a distant past but within the lifetime of the historian. Thus, Armenian and Azerbaijani historians of post-Soviet period and particularly the authors of history textbooks found themselves squeezed between two parallel forces:

- a) the influence of dogmatic Soviet methodology of history-writing that affects not only the style but also the content of history writing,
- b) the nationalist discourse (Zolyan 2012, 146) that heavily persisted its reliance on Perennialism and Primordialism.

In addition to this, one also has to acknowledge the existence of Armenian and Azerbaijani schools of historiography prior to the Soviet Union. The utilization of Perennialist and Primordialist paradigms for the construction of national nature of two “national” histories was pioneered years prior to their Sovietization - during the first republican period - which was materialized during Soviet times albeit its Marxist-Leninist ideology and was continued during the post-Soviet period. Therefore, different editions of secondary school history textbooks - including the latest versions - in both Armenia and Azerbaijan, still claim non-interrupted continuity and descendancy from the dynastic and imperial past, as well as organic and natural fixity with regard to their nationhood *per se*.

The main revisions that occurred in these post-Soviet history textbooks of both countries are related mainly to the 19th and 20th centuries: the arrival of Russian Empire to the Caucasus, the 1918-20 period of nation-building and the establishment of the Soviet political regime. Additionally, as stated above, the beginning of the Nagorno Karabakh conflict followed by the First Nagorno Karabakh war caused a collective memory of a “historical rival/enemy” to be constructed. The discursive image of the “enemy” in general occupies a key role in the construction of ‘continuous, non-interrupted and organic national history’ narratives in both Armenia and Azerbaijan. The further back national history narratives went, the fewer changes occurred during the revision processes, whereas numerous conflicts and wars during the 19th and 20th centuries were retrospectively interpreted based on the Karabakh conflict (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev, 2013). Therefore, the events of the past are chosen, interpreted and sequenced in a way to serve and justify certain politics of these nation-states. As Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev state, sometimes this is done as an explicit political order with a final goal and aim to create a historical memory, making history ahistorical (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev, 2013).

### **Theoretical Framework: *Transitional Justice and Justice in Transition***

It is rather naive to assume that the authors of history textbooks were/are not aware of “uncomfortable events” that they “forget” to mention regarding their shared historical past with one or another neighboring

country. To illustrate our point, Soviet and later post-Soviet Armenian and Azerbaijani educational systems construct different historical narratives and myths which share one common aspect: “we” are always the glorified ideal heroes, and “others” are always and forever predatory and treacherous enemies. Authors of different editions of Armenian and Azerbaijani school history textbooks selectively present certain sets of facts and/or myths, as well as their nationally driven ideological interpretation to construct one and only officially acknowledged version of a narrative that focuses on military and political events and leaves out the everyday life of coexistence.

In this context, the rival societies, i.e. Armenians and Azerbaijanis, who place themselves against each-other with the antagonistic national ideologies - transmitted to them through various means including history textbooks in our case - are in a need of a concept which could address the traumatic after-effects in the post-conflict situation. Therefore, a new concept was finally introduced to the international community in early 1990s, shortly after the rapid implosion of the communist regimes in eastern bloc countries, which was termed as “Transitional Justice” (Parmentier 2016, 55). Therefore, we will attempt to analyze the national history school textbooks by using *Transitional Justice* as our main theoretical framework. However, we are also aware that *Transitional Justice* processes and mechanisms are typically carried out through a top-down approach where the states are regarded as the main point of reference, while civil societies are taken as gap-fillers or intermediary actors between the state apparatus and the individuals. That had been the classical method of *Transitional Justice* to aid societies to come to terms with a legacy of large-scale traumatic after-effects of any conflict which in the long-run was projected to serve justice and achieve reconciliation between the rival societies. However, the experience of utilization of this classical method yielded narrow implications for the broader justice and reconciliation between the rival\hostile societies, be it between the communities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in the Israel-Palestinian conflict, in Lebanon, in Iraq and et al. Therefore, instead of applying this classical method of *Transitional Justice*, we will be using Gready and Robins’ method of *Justice in Transition*. Unlike *Transitional Justice* which is defined in terms of a relationship between the state and individuals where the autonomy to initiate would be in the hands of a state, *Justice in Transition* is defined in terms of individuals and communities where the autonomy

to initiate alternatives, contest and challenge so called continuities of injustice would be in the hands of a civil society. The modes of organizations to combat state-end injustices for the civil society would be moving away from 'traditional, representative, recognized forms of citizen organizations to citizen-led, anti-hierarchical, horizontal networks and organizations' (Gready and Robins 2017, 966).

This is a more bottom-up approach in comparison to *Transitional Justice* that gives us an opportunity to not immediately but on a long run link our research not only to the state mechanisms, but also civil society. Moreover, Gready and Robins outline several repertoires of action for *Justice in Transition* - such as raising awareness through assemblies and through social media, employing unruly action where citizens occupy public spaces and demand policy change, and undertaking independent action by presenting alternative models - for the civil society to combat the state-dominated discourses and policies (Gready and Robins 2017). These repertoires of action will render civil society to effectuate and enforce their alternative models before the state apparatus.

Additionally, Gready and Robins define *Justice in Transition* as one that emerges from a particular time and place (Gready and Robins 2017). For our research we consider this particular time for a *Justice in Transition* to emerge- the beginning of the modern Karabakh conflict in late 1980s and the First Nagorno Karabakh war. As a *place* where this *Justice in Transition* forms we consider the ministries of education in both countries. Hence, our analyses of history textbooks' editions starts after the period of the first Nagorno-Karabakh war. To have a comparative perspective it also looks at several Soviet period history textbooks. The aim while analyzing the history textbooks is to show in a comparative manner the examples of *Continuity of Injustice* in history textbooks of both countries and to explain the political ends they serve to. By saying *Continuity of Injustice* the authors of this article do not think of historical injustices but rather historiographical injustices which entail selective approach and cherry-picking of events from the past that fit the national ideology and nation-states' political ends in the process of history textbook writing which in itself is coordinated and directed by the ministries of Education, i.e. by the states. We divide this *Continuity of Injustice* (from now on-*injustice*) and apply it to the history textbooks on three levels:

a) injustice towards one's national history,

- b) injustice towards neighboring countries' history,
- c) injustice towards rival/hostile neighboring countries' history.

Examples of *injustice* are numerous in the history textbooks of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Not surprisingly, these *injustices* often mirror each other, *tout court*. Both countries' history textbooks choose the demographic data of a certain region/city in a certain period selectively. For example, Armenians would not point to data when Muslims were the majority in current Yerevan or any other city/region of Armenia, while Azerbaijanis would and vice versa.

One example of such injustice is described in Gamaghelyan's and Rumyantsev's article regarding data on demographic changes in the South Caucasus region. Armenian textbook from 2008 (Barkhudaryan 2008, 51-3) focuses on the census data that shows the Armenian population to be around 40 percent in the early 20th century Nakhchivan/Nakhichevan. Later in the century this number shrunk to 10.8%, to 1.4% by 1979, and to zero percent by the end of the century. The demographic data presented serves to Armenian historians as an ultimate proof for the argument that "we" (i.e. Armenians) are indigenous to Nakhchivan/Nakhichevan region and that "we" were forced out from the region by discriminatory politics of Turks and Azerbaijanis ("others"). The logical continuation of such a narrative is that Azerbaijan has a continuous ethnic cleansing policy towards Armenians and that it is going to do the same with Nagorno Karabakh's Armenian population.

The Azerbaijani narrative repeats the same pattern of *injustice* in regard to Armenia. For example, in Azerbaijani history textbooks in the early 20th century the Zangezur (Syunik) region is presented as having a majority Azerbaijani population that has been systematically ethnically cleansed by Armenians with the support of the Soviet Union (Gready and Robins 2017). This serves the same narrative of "us" (Azerbaijanis) being indigenous to the area and "others" (Armenians) coming from west and south, occupied Azerbaijani lands. As Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev rightfully note, such selective use and historiographical abuse of demographic data is not limited to Zangezur and Nakhchivan/Nakhichevan regions. Similar narratives of *injustices* are composed also for the 17-18th century history of Nagorno-Karabakh, Yerevan/Irevan Khanate, more recent Baku pogroms, Khojaly massacre,

etc. (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev 2013, 171-3). Both countries' history textbooks are filled with such one-sided interpretations of selective data used and abused accordingly, each to legitimize their own versions of narrative.

The examples of *injustice* are not limited to demographic data only in the history writings of Armenia and Azerbaijan. The years 1905 and 1918 are regarded by both societies as the year of their massacre by the other side. As can be expected, the Armenian massacres are part of the Armenian narrative that regard the Azerbaijani massacres as "their state propaganda". Similarly, Azerbaijani massacres are commemorated as genocide in Azerbaijani history writing, whereas the Armenian one is completely omitted (Guliyeva 2010).

## Methodological Approach

As one can see from these examples, compilers of both Armenian and Azerbaijani history textbooks committed acts of *injustice* on two levels: a) injustice towards their national histories, b) injustice towards the national history of their rival society. The picture is the same in regards to the history of Georgia or the latter's history towards Armenia and Azerbaijan, bringing the third (c) level of *injustice* towards the neighboring society's history into the picture. In the coming sections of this article the authors present in more detail the three-levels of *injustice* in Armenian and Azerbaijani history textbooks focusing on a specific period; the first Republics of Armenia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan. For our research we consulted the Unesco Guidebook on Textbook Research and Revision, the national curriculums, national standards and criteria of school subjects, National Security Strategy, and last but not least history textbooks themselves.-

To begin with UNESCO's Guidebook methodology for textbook research and revision, it is a useful tool for peace-oriented approaches to textbook studies and projects which aims to rethink and modernize the content and methodologies applied during textbook re/writing. It also helps in overcoming biased representation of cultures, religions and issues of national pride. In the 2010 edition of the guidebook, a new emphasis is placed on the *quality education in conflict- and post-conflict conditions*. Pingel regards the *quality education for all* as a means to contribute to the stabilization processes in conflict-shattered societies (Pingel 2010, 5). In

this context, the *quality education* means developing critical thinking, ability to argue, form rational as well as reasonable opinion, and subjecting norms to critical examination. That is the only method for students to be able to introduce value judgment to the historical content. Yet, the prime obstacle lies with the individual nation-states as they have been hardly willing to incorporate and apply these qualities into their school textbooks. (Pingel 2010, 8). And it is not surprising that in the real-world practices, most of the nation-states prefer using history textbooks as a means to spread a nationalistic ideology and to mirror contemporary political trends which helps them to justify their historical legitimacy rather than achieving *transitional justice* between the societies. This creates narratives where the conflict for one party becomes a “war of liberation” and for the other, “revolt” against the legitimate power which is confrontational and uncompromising (Pingel 2010, 32). Therefore, the main goal behind textbook comparison and analysis for UNESCO Guidebook is to identify and eliminate factual mistakes, prejudices as well as distortions and omissions. Only afterwards, the authors of bi-textbook projects are to acknowledge the points they find in common vis a vis each other’s national-histories. Sometimes, authors would also acknowledge in their projects the differences of opinion they might have vis a vis each other’s national histories. Nonetheless, authors in sensitive societies like ours prefer not to mention their disagreements in their projects. This is meant to avoid sensitive issues where partners could disagree upon (Pingel 2010). Since we authors are currently in the same sensitive stage - due to the lingering wounds of the Second Nagorno Karabakh war - we will share only our compromised opinions and avoid potential disagreements we might have while studying Armenian and Azerbaijani history textbooks and while applying them to our proposed theory of three-leveled *justice in transition*. Hence, it is crucial for the readers of this field to be aware of such pitfalls and overcome our possible mistakes.

Last but not least, even though the UNESCO guidebook advises the authors of the textbooks and publishing houses to contact ministries before starting a project (Pingel 2010) at this stage of our research we did not contact any of the above-mentioned institutions given the intricate situation within both republics after the Second Nagorno Karabakh war. The passages analyzed from the textbooks are compared with those of academic research and debate to present the overall picture of the relations



of the first three South Caucasian Republics and contextualize the omissions.

Alongside this, we made ourselves familiar with the previous research done on the topic. This showed us that with minor exceptions such as Gamaghelyan's and Rumyantsev's analysis (Gamaghelyan and Rumyantsev 2013), the research which has been conducted on the issue of Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani history textbooks, even if in edited volumes, was critical, yet done from the perspective of each country separately. That being said, an overall umbrella theory and/or methodology was not developed that could have been applied to the analyses of the mentioned textbooks. This article aims to solve this issue. Using an interdisciplinary approach and paradigms from the fields of nationalism studies, comparative history, legal and political studies, we put forward the conceptual framework of three-leveled *injustice* in history textbook writing.

## **The First Azerbaijani Republic and its Relations with the First Republics of Armenia and Georgia (1918-1920)**

An analysis of history textbooks provides us with the "official view" of any state, especially the young nation-states, where it aims to impose certain representation of "self" and "others" upon its citizens from the early period of their life (Shnirelman 2003). From this point of view, particular case studies on Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia had already been done in Lubos Vesely's (2008) edited volume as well as in many other studies about post-Soviet countries' history textbook narratives (Shnirelman 2003; Aymermaher K. & Bordyugov G., ed., 1999; CIMERA, 2007; Rumyantsev 2008; Rumyantsev 2012). Even though these studies mostly focus on teaching from the point of view of "us" and "others", neither has viewed such representations from the perspective of Transitional Justice or as termed in our theory *Justice in Transition*. Therefore, the novelty of our analysis will be marked by its normative approach where we will juxtapose a normative standpoint to that period of history of Azerbaijan by highlighting three-levels of historiographic injustices, all of which were marked by its selective salience and cherry-picking of events in order to fit it to the national ideology. The new edition of Azerbaijani history textbooks (Aghalarov et. al. 2018; Mahmudlu et. al. 2016) is also part of the focus to inquire whether there are any differences

from the earlier editions in terms of its narrative, methodology and its use of vocabulary.

*Sources, National Curriculum Requirements and the National Strategy*

Before delving into the case study, we will introduce certain methodological aspects which are characteristic to the case of Azerbaijan. While studying history textbooks of Soviet Azerbaijan, we have relied heavily on İlham Abbasov's research (Abbasov 2012). When it comes to the history textbooks published during the post-Soviet period, we based the case study on various editions (as 2003, 2009 are the old editions and the one published in 2018 and 2016 are the new editions) of Azerbaijani history textbooks in order to unfold any change that occurred at that period. The main content to be evaluated within the framework of *Justice in Transition* will cover 1918-1920 where the representation of Armenians, Georgians and the self will be given a deliberate study. This study is expected to be centered on the 2018 and 2016 edition of 11th and 9th grade History of Azerbaijan textbooks.

As mentioned in earlier pages, we have also used the Azerbaijani national curriculum requirements and standards of general education for the history of Azerbaijan in order to understand the aim and purpose that it serves for its citizens. According to the national curriculum template for the History of Azerbaijan (Amirov 2011), the aim of the overall course is to develop an ability in students to objectively analyze the course of historical events, to juxtapose them with modern developments and come to an independent conclusion. Subsequently, such a deep and analytical grasp of national history is 'meant' to enable students to build up the spirit of patriotism, consciousness of active citizenship, respect for the other nations and universal values and devotion to the tradition of statehood as the Ministry of Education's national curriculum template states (Amirov 2011). It appears quite *non-sequitur* concluding that students' ability to objectively analyze national-history supplements to the patriotic spirit but this is a debate of another time. This aside, Azerbaijani national curriculum template does mention certain requirements as the aim of the overall course which are in accordance with UNESCO's guidebook for textbook revision, it is not entirely applied. On the contrary, they not only deprive any room for students to provide value judgment to historical facts and be able to evaluate them, but they convey it in a tainted manner by presenting historical events from the lens of contemporary political

developments, thus interpreting it anachronistically. And this is purposed to inculcate nationalist ideology and secure the country's historical legitimacy from its potential "adversaries".

What does it take for the editors to revise the history-textbooks in a way that would permit value judgment to the historical event? Firstly, the editors ought to center the textbooks on primary sources and use unbiased, neutral and bi/multi-dimensional narrative to interpret these sources. The existing narrative in Azerbaijani textbooks does nothing but navigate students to a pre-made, politically motivated direction by employing a one-sided perspective of history. Along with narrative, the selection of lexicon to describe so-called historic "Azerbaijani states" interaction with its adjacent polities and societies has also served the same politically motivated goals. It is not surprising that the lexicon used in Azerbaijani history-textbooks to depict any experience with Armenia is identical with the lexicon used in the Republic of Azerbaijan's National Security Strategy which shows the extent to which the country's security strategy influences its historical narrative and language in the history-textbooks. Azerbaijan's Ministry of Defense documented a sizable text dedicated to the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict where it addressed Armenia several times either as *düşmən* or *təcavüzkar ölkə* which translates as adversary or as aggressor country (Ministry of Defense of Republic of Azerbaijan 2022). Similar text was issued by Presidential decree with regards to the country's national security strategy where Armenia was depicted as an aggressor country - the same trend used in history-textbooks (Azerbaijan's National Security Strategy 2007).

It also goes without saying that existing historical narratives embellished in the school textbooks usually dominate the *vox populi* of the young generation in all three nation-states in the South Caucasus. It seems there has been an identical policy towards the history-textbooks in Georgia, Armenia, and Azerbaijan where all three sustain the tradition of teaching only one version of history, approved by the Ministries of Education of the respective states; hence many teachers base their classes solely on the history textbooks which eventually demonstrates how extensively it influences practically every resident of the country (Rumyantsev 2012). Concerning the allotted time to the History of Azerbaijan per week, the Ministry of Education allotted two weekly hours to 5th grade students,

one hour to 6th-7th grade students, two hours to 8th-11th grade students (Ministry of Education Republic of Azerbaijan 2021).

Considering the difference between various revisions of history textbooks, there have been two major revisions - Soviet version and post-Soviet version - in Azerbaijani History textbooks. Soviet version of history-textbooks has reduced itself primarily to class struggle influenced by Bolshevik ideology. In that manner, the narrative was constructed on the basis of Soviet memory politics which included commemoration of Bolshevik Internationalists, the 26 Baku Commissars, glorification of Communist heroes et al. This version of history writing served both Soviet nationality politics and Soviet socio-political necessity to construct the myth of "peoples' friendship". Additionally it also served to the attribution of enemy image in the example of either Musavatists and all those non-Bolshevik nationalist alike who were labeled as "Bourgeois leaders", or Turkey and Iran who were labeled as "Capitalist Countries" (Abbasov 2012, 22). The dissolution of the Soviet Union, however, necessitated a new version of national history which implied a reverse effect in the post-Soviet version of history textbooks. Following the emergence of new Azerbaijani nation-state, all those historical figures who had been attributed to be the enemy of the nation were reversed into national heroes, the events of 1918-1920 were given a particular attention and the myth of ever-existing "peoples' friendship" was replaced by another myth of every-existing "incorrigible foes".

Another visible difference between the Soviet and post-Soviet history textbooks in Azerbaijan is the manifestation of Karabakh as historic *la patrie*. Karabakh conflict as the paramount national question has been given unwavering attention where authors do their best to present Karabakh as the land inhabited by the Turkic tribes since pre-historic era. Satenik Mkrtchyan describes this tendency as "Karabakhization" of national history which was a similar narrative followed by the Armenian authors in Armenian history-textbooks (Mkrtchyan 2012, 50).

As mentioned in our theory, despite the fact that discourses concerning the "friend" and the "enemy" has been altered in line with the narrative of exclusive nationalism and "Karabakhization" in Post-Soviet Azerbaijani history-textbooks, utilization of essentialist paradigms such as Perennialism and Primordialism as well as the Soviet methodology of history-writing - rigid divisions of class struggle in line with dialectic

materialism - remains unchanged. For instance, the new edition still enjoys the perennialist tendency of calling Caucasian Albania, Atropatena, Shirvanshahs and regional Khanates as Azerbaijani states or those of the Turkic dynasties such as Sajids, Aghqoyunlu, Qaraqoyunlu, including Safavids and Afshars as Azerbaijani dynasties. Similarly, it preserves primordialist tendency of crudely tracing the origins of Azerbaijani people back to the Massagetic heroine Tomris, Oghuz hero Uruz, Agqoyunlu Uzun Hasan, Ismail Safavid and obliges the young generation to pledge themselves to its ascribed legacy (Mahmudlu and Jabbarov 2020, 6-7).

While comparing and contrasting the different editions of history-textbooks, we realized only minor revisions between different years of post-Soviet version of Azerbaijani history textbooks. It seems the latest edition (Aghalarov et. al. 2018; Mahmudlu 2016) entails only particular technical and structural changes. For instance, in the old edition of textbooks (Aliyev 2004; Mahmudlu 2003; Mahmudlu 2001, Mammadov 2008; Valiyev 2001; Mammadov and Qandilov 2009) everything from stone age till to antiquity, middle ages, modern era and contemporary period were allotted equally from 6th grade until 11th grade in a chronological order. In the new edition (Aliyev 2017a; Mahmudlu et. al. 2014a; Mahmudlu et. al. 2014b; Mahmudlu et. al. 2016), however, all this period was summed up from 6th till to 9th grade textbooks with certain reductions and 10th-11th grade textbooks cover the same period with much in-depth attention (Aliyev 2017b; Aghalarov et. al. 2018). The 2018 edition of 11th grade textbook has also been subject to only structural changes vis a vis 2009 edition where the presented facts remain almost same but are slightly restructured. The major change is in foreign policy section where the new edition (Aghalarov et. al. 2018) allotted one and half pages to the diplomatic relations with neighboring states and while the old edition (Mammadov and Qandilov, 2009) does not cover it. Besides, the 2009 edition uses the term Bolshevik-Dashnak alliance in Baku or Dashnak bandit forces in Karabakh, the 2018 edition has replaced the term Dashnak with Armenian. Except for these changes, the rest - methodology, content and language - has remained unchanged.

Regarding the topic of first Republic of Azerbaijan (1918-1920), the main issues covered on this period are March Days (1918), negotiations with Ottoman Empire in the aftermath of Brest-Litovsk treaty, Declaration of Independence in May 1918 and Ottoman-Azerbaijani cooperation for the

liberation of Baku from Bolsheviks in June-September 1918, periodic Armenian-Azerbaijani clashes in Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhchivan/Nakhichevan regions over the two years of independence, peaceful settlement of territorial disputes with Armenia, Russia and Georgia, the role of Azerbaijan in the Paris Peace conference and eventual demise of the first Republic as a result of so called “Armenian betrayal” and Soviet invasion (Aghalarov et. al. 2018; Mahmudlu et. al. 2016).

*Quantitative, qualitative measures, and linguistic dimension of Azerbaijani history textbooks*

Concerning the quantitative dimension of Azerbaijani history textbooks, we calculated how much space is given to Armenia and Georgia in the textbooks. In the same manner, we qualitatively analyzed what message the textbooks convey and particular lexicon employed in these messages, not to mention how historical facts, events, individuals and processes are portrayed; all done in compliance with the UNESCO guidebook on textbook research (Pingel 2010).

In both 9th grade and 11th grade history textbooks, Armenia-Azerbaijan relations are discussed within the context of the March Days of 1918 to which four to five pages are dedicated out of 188 and 207 respectively (Mahmudlu et. al., 2016; Aghalarov et. al. 2018). Other chapters, on the other hand, discuss Armenia-Azerbaijan relations in the period between 1918-1920 which is covered in three to four pages. Especially, 11th grade textbook specifically titled the main tensions that took place in Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhchivan/Nakhichevan regions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in 1918-1920 within the framework of domestic policy. Moreover, while discussing the tensions between Armenians and Azerbaijanis in these regions (in the 9th grade textbooks the latter was referred to as Turco-Muslims and in the 11th grade as Azerbaijanis), Armenians are referred as *Qarabağda məskunlaşan erməni quldur dəstələri* which translates as Armenian bandit groups who are settled in Karabakh. As a reminder, this linguistic style is identical with the current national security strategy of the Republic of Azerbaijan concerning Armenians living in the former Autonomous Oblast of Nagorno-Karabakh. Concerning the inter-state level of relations between Republics of Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is covered under the title of foreign policy separating it from above-mentioned affairs. It uses a precise language to avoid making any generalization towards Armenians in Karabakh and Armenians in

mainland Armenia as a whole body and targets only either paramilitary groups within Karabakh or Republic of Armenia as the source of confrontation. Georgia, on the other hand, is mentioned in both year (9th and 11th) textbooks rather intermittently within the contexts of Georgian-Armenian war, South Caucasus Conference, military alliance between Georgia and Azerbaijan along with Paris Peace Conference - all covered in two-three pages. While addressing Georgia, the editors of the textbook tend to employ either neutral language or portray it in a friendly tone (Mahmudlu et. al. 2016; Aghalarov et. al. 2018).

### **Examples of *Injustices*: Case Study of the Relations of the First Three Republics in South Caucasus**

#### *Inter-State relations and contested territories between Azerbaijan and Georgia*

As mentioned in the previous section, Azerbaijan-Georgia relations between 1918-1920 have been covered intermittently in both new (Mahmudlu et. al. 2016; Aghalarov 2018) and old editions (Mammadov and Qandilov 2009), and only within the framework of diplomatic relations with neighboring states. The 2017 edition of 11th grade mentions Azerbaijan-Georgia relations within the Caucasus Conference of 1918-1920 - it was meant to solve territorial conflicts and establish trilateral cooperation between the three neighboring states. However, due to disagreement between Armenia and Georgia over the districts of Borchali, Akhalkalaki and Lori, the conference scheduled for November 1918 did not take place. Furthermore, the textbook indicates forthcoming conferences that took place in April-June 1919 in Tbilisi and in December 1919 in Baku. Despite Azerbaijani side's proposal for a trilateral military alliance and even establishing a Confederation of South Caucasus states, the trilateral cooperation was not forthcoming. Instead, Azerbaijan and Georgia signed a separate military alliance in June 1919. Both 2009 and 2018 editions shortly indicate the territorial dispute between Azerbaijan and Georgia over the district of Zaqatala (Mammadov and Qandilov 2009; Aghalarov et. al. 2018). Despite the nature of the solution being mentioned as "peaceful", there is not much space given to territorial disputes between the two neighbors. The most intriguing part of Azerbaijani history textbooks regarding neighboring Georgia is the presented map where it displays the southernmost municipalities of today's Kvemo-Kartli and

Kakheti regions of Georgia as territories disputed with Azerbaijan albeit having no *ad verbum* mention of these disputed territories within the text. In general there has been very limited space given to the Georgia-Azerbaijan relations between 1918-1920 (Aghalarov et. al. 2018). The same pattern is also followed by the editors of Georgian history textbooks where Georgia-Azerbaijan relations in that particular period is either presented in a neutral tone or only mentioned within the context of Armenia-Azerbaijan clashes (Chikovani 2012). Besides, the same level of map is also presented in history textbooks of Georgia from the latter's perspective by having no mention of the nature or solution of the territorial dispute (Akhmeteli, Lortkipanidze and Pirtskhalava 2020).

In compliance with our theory, we can observe that authors of Azerbaijani and Georgian history textbooks committed certain acts of *injustice* on two levels. a) injustice towards their own national histories, and b) injustice towards the national history of a neighboring nation. The major *injustice* in this context is the fact that little to no space is given to the Azerbaijan-Georgia relations *per se* in both country's history textbooks which is an act of injustice on both levels. The striking injustice, however, is committed with respect to the one-sided presentation of the maps where Azerbaijani side presented the Zaqatala region as uncontested and certain Georgian territories contested with Azerbaijan having no *ad verbum* explanation given to these territorial disagreements. The Georgian side, on the other hand, presented the contrary version of the map similarly having no mention of the nature of the dispute between the two neighboring entities.

*Territorial disputes with Republic of Armenia and periodic clashes with Armenian (Dashnak) forces in Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhchivan*

Unlike Azerbaijan-Georgia relations, the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict has been given a sizable space in the textbook (Mahmudlu et. al. 2016; Aghalarov et. al. 2018). As mentioned above, Armenia-Azerbaijan relations have been covered within the framework of March days, domestic policy (Clashes in Nakhchivan, Zangezur and Karabakh regions) and foreign policy (state level relations between the two young polities).

The chapter which covers "March days" of 1918 preludes the event with certain epithets such as "Armenian bandit forces and their increasing scale of ethnic cleansing" and "the inherently hateful attitude of Armenians toward Azerbaijani people." Then the narrative presents the so-called



‘Armenian desire to cleanse Azerbaijani people’ - which resulted in the March massacre in Baku - with the reason for the so-called ‘Armenian wish to forge an Armenian state in South Caucasus especially after having lost their invented plan of the Armenian Empire’ (Mahmudlu et. al. 2016; Aghalarov et. al. 2018). This form of representation is intended to serve the essentialist nature of a so-called “Armenian virtue” in their relation toward Azerbaijanis. Besides, it also feeds to and reiterates the Azerbaijani belief that ‘Armenians are not native to the region’. Despite the presence of Bolshevik forces with ethnic Russian background that were also partakers in the clashes which eventually turned into a four-day massacre, the main attention has been given substantially to the deeds of Armenians. Even the lines which criticize the deeds of Baku Bolsheviks, tend to highlight the Armenian members of the political establishment. Most importantly, the textbook particularly tends to address these events as “Genocide” albeit providing no legal definition of the term to the reader or giving no justification why “March Days” should be regarded as such. Overall, the whole chapter aims to deflect the reader from the genuine reasons for the clashes and to present it as pure *a priori* nature atrocity emanating from ‘Armenian hatred’. The chapter finishes with the description of massacres that extended to the countryside of Baku governorate (guberniaa) where Muslim population had been subjected to the similar extermination (Mahmudlu et. al. 2016; Aghalarov et. al. 2018).

The forthcoming chapter of the textbook is dedicated to the early months of Democratic Republic of Azerbaijan (First republic) which was declared on 28th of May in Tbilisi. Even though the textbook does mention the Georgian declaration of independence that preceded two days earlier, it avoids mentioning anything regarding the Armenian declaration of independence. The story is continued with the young republic’s desire to liberate its capital from Armenian-Bolshevik forces which followed its appeal to the Ottoman state for military aid. While Ottoman-Azerbaijani forces are on the move toward the liberation of Baku, the textbook refers to the repressive nature of Armenian-Bolshevik rule in Baku where free press is banned, the industry along with major infrastructure is nationalized and how Armenians are in majority in the Red army. Eventually, the chapter ends with the liberation of Baku on 15th of September by the Ottoman-Azerbaijani forces (Mahmudlu et. al. 2016; Aghalarov et. al. 2018), yet the editors of the textbook do not seem to bother mentioning the similar massacre undertaken, this time toward the

city's Armenian population right after it was taken by Ottoman-Azerbaijani forces.

The next chapter covers the new republic's domestic policy where clashes in Nakhchivan, Zangezur and Karabakh regions have been given attention. While presenting events in the Karabakh region, the textbook continues addressing the Armenian population as "Armenians settled in Karabakh" in order to delegitimize any territorial claim they could raise toward Azerbaijan. Finally, after the liberation of Baku, the Ottoman-Azerbaijani coalition forces established control over the region and instituted the Karabakh General Governorate headed by Khosrov Bey Sultanov. The textbook mentions the existence of "Armenian National Council" or "Congress of Armenians of Karabakh" only a few times but in a disapproving tone. As reminded in the earlier chapters, the editors of the textbook here again employ a precise language to distinguish the Armenian paramilitary forces from the non-combatant Armenians in order to draw a picture of the relationship of dialogue with the civilian population, whereas the combatants were presented as the sole intruders who constantly kept breaking the peace. Concerning the Nakhchivan General Governorate, the editors highlight mostly the massacres committed toward Muslim population until the Ottoman arrival in June 1918 that ended the crimes of so called "Armenian bandit forces" in the region. The editors tend to either omit or underrate the periods in which Armenian forces had control over Nakhchivan/Nakhichevan, Zangezur and Karabakh regions. In the rare occasions where it was acknowledged, the Armenian forces were addressed as illegitimate paramilitary groups, either detaching their direct institutional ties from the Republic of Armenia in order to further delegitimize the latter's claim to the area or presenting the periods of Armenian rule as a minor importance. Generally, both national histories depict these three regions as part of their full control, despite both of them having only periodic control throughout 1918-1920. Similar one-sided representation is manifested in the presentation of maps where the above-mentioned regions are displayed as uncontested territories with full Azerbaijani control having left only central and northern lands of mainland Armenia as its legitimate territory (Aghalarov et. al. 2018). In the same manner, Armenian history textbooks tend to visualize in their maps these territories as part of their own (Barkhudaryan 2008).

The last chapter of the 1918-1920 period covers the young Republic of Azerbaijan's foreign policy and its eventual demise in April 1920 where its relations with the Republic of Armenia were shortly indicated within the context of recognition of Armenia's independence and its selection of Irevan (referring to today's Yerevan) as its capital. However, this move on Azerbaijani side was particularly interpreted by the textbook as 'loss of part of fatherland'. The rest of the chapter is dedicated to the Paris Peace conference where the allied *de facto* recognition of Georgian and Azerbaijani independence was indicated. Even though the allied *de facto* recognized the young Republic of Armenia too, the editors of the textbook prefer to sideline this fact. Unfortunately, nothing much has been pointed out on the subject of Armenian-Azerbaijani diplomatic relations as two neighboring states. Ultimately, the loss of Azerbaijani independence was covered under the sub-title of "Dashnak-Bolshevik Alliance" where the editors put the blame for the Soviet Invasion on Armenians yet again as the Soviet invasion of Azerbaijan took place simultaneous with the Armenian uprising in Karabakh. The editors present the clashes between Azerbaijani forces and "Armenian separatist forces" aided by the Republic of Armenia from the Azerbaijani perspective and, no surprise they give no reference to the Shusha/Shushi pogrom where the city's Armenian population were subjected to mass slaughter and extermination. Finally, the textbook continues the rest of the narrative with the nature and result of the Soviet invasion (Aghalarov et. al. 2018).

Overall, there is a certain representation of oneself and representation of Armenia in the Azerbaijani history textbooks that deliberately serves for purposes other than historical justice and bi\multi-dimensional representation of "others". Therefore, the two level injustice - those injustices can also be counted as injustice for both levels simultaneously as it is double-edged - is likewise committed by each history narrative. Firstly, a) an act of injustice towards their own national histories, on the grounds that there is a deliberate distortion of one's own history which was aimed to draw an absolute favorable picture of "self", be it with illustrations of one-sided maps or with deliberate omissions to purify oneself from "non-desirable elements". Such an act of injustice deprives the young readers to be acquainted with not only the representation of different dimensions of their national history but also the influence of political, ethnic and cultural mosaic that their history was literally shaped by. Secondly b) an act of injustice towards the national history of a rival

nation - in this case Armenians - as the latter's history is presented with the similar deliberate distortion yet with a contrary motive - aiming to delegitimize and downplay the latter's importance as part of regional history. Most strikingly, there is a certain representation of Armenians who were portrayed as an incorrigible adversary of *a priori* nature, reinforcing an essentialist picture towards Armenians in the *vox populi* of young Azerbaijani students. Such an act of injustice critically rules out any potential of reconciliation for the whole young generation in post-bellum Azerbaijan.

### **The First Armenian Republic and its Relations with the First Republics of Georgia and Azerbaijan (1918-1920)**

There have been various editions of Armenian history textbooks for schools over the last decades. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS) of the Republic of Armenia approves only one version of history textbooks for each year. This case study is based on the analyses of certain passages regarding the relations between the first three South Caucasian republics as described in the history textbooks. While we personally checked the 2015, 2014, and 2008 editions, for earlier editions we relied on the extensive research conducted on the same topic by S. Mkrtchyan (Mkrtchyan 2015). In addition to the textbooks we analyze, Mkrtchyan focused on the post-Soviet editions of history textbooks from 2005 and 1996, as well as on the last editions of history textbooks from the Soviet period (1986 and 1987). These textbooks are divided into four periods (ancient times, Middle Ages, early modern period, modern period) with each grade book focusing on a particular period. Until the recent changes (2014 edition onwards), pupils started to learn history from the grade 5 to grade 8. Currently, it starts from grade 7 to grade 9 (Subject Standards 2021, 5). From the 10th grade onwards, there are different history textbooks which are supposed to give high school pupils more in-depth education on the same topics.

#### *National Curriculum Requirements, National Security and Strategy*

National curriculum requirements or state subject standards of general education for Armenian history (Subject Standards) claim that the aim of the overall course is to educate state-conscious and nationally self-conscious citizens. The program is built around the following four key concepts: state, identity, culture, coexistence (Subject Standards 2021, 1-3).

The first three South Caucasian republics are only studied in the 9th and 11th grades. The Ministry of Education, Science, Culture and Sports (MoESCS) allocates one and a half hour weekly for history subject for the 9th grade and two hours for the 10th to 12th grades. High schools with Humanities track have more hours allocated weekly for History subject—three, five, and eight hours respectively per grade. The main issues covered on the topic of the first Republic of Armenia are May Heroic battles (separate section); treaties of Brest-Litovsk, Trabzon, Batumi, Paris, Sevres, Aleksandrapol, and Yerevan; Turco-Armenian wars; Armenian-Georgian and Armenian-Azerbaijani territorial issues (Subject Standards 2021, 64-8).

As it was in the case of Azerbaijani textbooks, the language used in the Armenian textbooks to describe historical relations of Armenia with neighboring Georgia, Azerbaijan as well as Iran and Turkey reflect the state's current political stance towards these countries. Republic of Armenia's National Security Strategy (NSS) document penned by the Ministry of Defense (Armenia's National Security Strategy 2020) states Azerbaijan as *hakarakord* (հակառակորդ), which is translated as adversary or rival. However, given the context, which mainly discusses Azerbaijan's stance in the Nagorno Karabakh conflict as a side which prevents and endangers peaceful resolution of the conflict, it is fair enough to say that Azerbaijan is regarded as an enemy neighboring state. Turkey is regarded as Azerbaijan's military-political ally. Both states (Azerbaijan and Turkey) are regarded in this document as security threats to Nagorno Karabakh and Armenia (NSS, 2020, 11). Georgia and Iran are regarded as friendly neighbors (*baridratsiakan* - բարիդրացիական), and their relations with Armenia are termed as mutually beneficial (NSS 2020, 12).

The main difference between the last Soviet and post-Soviet history textbooks in Armenia is the 'Karabakhization' of the history, as well as revision of the idea and period of the First Republic. Mkrtchyan describes this shift as idealization versus previous demonization (Mkrtchyan 2015, 176). Even though the histories of individual Soviet Republics became part of the school curriculums by the end of 1930s, they were presented on the basis of Soviet memory politics, putting a positive connotation on the Bolshevik revolution, sovietization of the republics, glorification of Communist heroes, etc. Similar to Azerbaijani case, this narrative served to the construction of the myth of 'people's friendship,' joint struggle for

communism, Soviet nationality politics, as well as to the attribution of enemy image to certain historical figures who in the post-Soviet narrative became national heroes (Garegin Nzhdeh, Andranik Ozanian, etc). Several chapters of history in the Soviet Armenian history textbooks were considered taboo. Among those were the relations of Armenia with its neighbors (Minasyan 2009, 11). Contrary to this, the idealization process of post-Soviet historiography led to a diametrically contradicting narrative about the first republics' period. Sovietization of Armenia was not glorified anymore, former Communist heroes are presented as anti-national actors, etc. The aim of the history textbooks from the 1990s onwards was to strengthen patriotic feelings. The 1987 edition of the history textbook contains a slight hint to the territorial issues between the first three South Caucasian Republics. However, Mkrtchyan notes that it is not presented as a separate issue, but rather as an indirect statement about "the fratricidal clashes organized by Dashnaks, Mussavats, and Mensheviks" in Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia respectively (Mkrtchyan 2015, 177-8).

*Quantitative, qualitative measures, and linguistic dimension of Armenian history textbooks*

Quantitatively, we calculate how much space is given in the history textbooks to Azerbaijan and Georgia. Qualitatively, we analyze what message the textbooks transmit (Pingel 2010, 66). In addition, we will investigate the language of the mentioned messages, as well as how facts, events, persons, and processes are portrayed.

In the 9th grade history textbook (175 pages in total) Armenian-Georgian relations in the context of the first three republics are given half a page space, while Armenian-Azerbaijani ones are given one page. In the 11th grade history textbook (230 pages in total) again in the context of the first three republics Armenian-Georgian relations are given one and a half page space, while Armenian-Azerbaijani ones are given three pages. It is important to note that the narrative in the textbooks does not contain the terms 'Georgian' or 'Azerbaijani' in terms of ethnic group or people. Instead, it uses the words Georgia and Azerbaijan. Even though the narrative discusses both the Armenian-Georgian and the Armenian-Azerbaijani territorial conflicts, it has a precise linguistic style that is in harmony with the National Security Strategy's presentation of each country. As such, there are almost no negative adjectives attached to

Georgia. The text mentions Georgia's uncompromising position, occupation of territories, violation of an agreement, but eventually states that friendly neighboring relations were restored. Whereas, for Azerbaijan (as well as for Turkey) the adjectives range from slaughtering, blood-thirsty to hostile characterizing them as rival entities who had unsubstantiated claims over Armenian territories and who pose a potential threat of deportation and massacres for Armenians from lake Sevan to Baku. In terms of self-presentation all actions of Armenian historical figures, apart from pro-Bolsheviks within the Armenian Republic, are presented as national self-defense.

### **Examples of *Injustices*: Case Study of the Relations of the First Three Republics in South Caucasus**

#### *Territorial disputes and short war between Armenian and Georgian Republics*

The issue is presented under the title 'Armenian-Georgian relations' as a sub-chapter devoted to Armenia's foreign relations during the period of the First Republic. Before touching the issue, the text gives a very brief context regarding establishing friendly neighborly relations with its direct neighbors. Iran is already mentioned as a friendly-neighbor country. According to the text, Georgia's territorial claims over Akhalkalaki, Borchaly and Lori regions, which all are claimed to be Armenian in the book, were preventing the establishment of friendly-neighbor relations between Armenia and Georgia. Due to Georgia's uncompromising stance it was impossible to avoid the war, the history textbooks state, which started as a dispute and transformed into an armed conflict (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 17). The 2005 edition names Georgia's entry to the region as a starting point of the conflict. According to the 2008 edition, Armenian units entered Lori after Georgian authorities started to violate the rights of local Armenians. The most recent textbooks for 9th (2014) and 11th (2015) grades repeat the 2005 edition narrative: "In October-November of 1918 Georgia attacked the regions of Akhalkalaki, Akhaltsikhe and southern Lori. In December Armenia started the defense of its territories against Georgia and won over the course of a 20-day war. With the mediation of Triple Entente a ceasefire was signed on December 31st 1918. A Reconciliation Conference that took place in Tbilisi between January 9-17<sup>th</sup>, 1919 announced Lori a neutral zone and Javakheti a

debatable territory. Friendly-neighborly relations between Armenia and Georgia were restored” (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 18). The Georgian narrative presents Armenia as a side that attacked first and one that had claims over the Georgian regions up to Gori, including Tbilisi. The 2003 edition of Georgian history textbook even calls the Armenian side an *aggressor* that was pulled back with great losses. The 2008 edition repeats the same narrative but is more cautious with adjectives: “the Georgian troops succeeded in repelling the attack of the Armenian troops and launched a counter-attack soon after” (Mkrtchyan 2015, 180-1). It is clear that both sides present completely opposing narratives about the same period and on the matters of who attacked first and what territories were claimed. The narrative in the Armenian textbooks continues as follows: during the 1920s Turco-Armenian war Georgia entered its military forces into Lori with an excuse to protect it from Turkish forces. However, violating its agreement with Armenia, Georgia established its military state in the Lori region (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 19). Georgian-Armenian territorial disputes finally resolved after the complete sovietization of the region in 1921 when Akhalkalaki region was attached to Georgia and Lori region to Armenia. The two countries signed a separate treaty on the issue. Soviet Georgia recognized the Lori region’s attachment to Armenia and Soviet Armenia gave its consent for the attachment of the Akhalkalaki region to Georgia. Georgian textbooks are silent on further development of the issue and its final resolution (Mkrtchyan 2015, 181).

As presented in the theoretical part of this article, the authors of all editions of both Armenian and Georgian history textbooks committed acts of *injustice* on two levels: towards their own national histories, and towards the national history of their friendly-neighboring nation. All the editions of these textbooks lack a bi/multi-perspective dimension. There are no explanations for the Georgian side’s claims over the disputed territories in the Armenian textbooks. There are also no justifications for the Armenian side’s claims apart from the historical legitimacy over the territories under question. This attitude is mirrored in the Georgian textbooks. However, apart from one mentioning of the term *aggressor* in the Georgian 2003 edition of the textbook neither of the sides present one other as a hostile country. Hence, one can assume that both countries’ aim is to create an image of a friendly state- one that corresponds to the description provided in the state’s national security strategy.



### *Territorial disputes between Armenian and Azerbaijani Republics*

Similar to the Armenian-Georgian disputes, the issue is presented in sub-chapters devoted to Armenia's foreign relations during the period of the first republic. However, unlike the Georgian case, Armenian-Azerbaijani relations are discussed interconnectedly with Armenian-Turkish ones in sub-chapters titled 'Threats to the internal stability' and 'Armenian-Azerbaijani relations.' The discussion in all the editions starts with a 'disclaimer' that a day after Georgia announced its independence, on May 27th, East Caucasian Muslim Republic declared its independence: "for the first time the toponym of north-eastern province of Iran -Azerbaijan- was used as a name for the country" (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014; Melqonyan et. al. 2015, 5). As the narrative does change neither in language, nor in agenda from one edition to another in the post-Soviet history textbooks, in the following lines we will present a summarized version of these narratives.

After the 'disclaimer' the text then continues to Turkey's and newly established Azerbaijan's claims for several regions of the First Republic of Armenia (Kars, Nagorno-Karabakh, Nakhichevan, Zangezur). These claims put the country under a hostile siege that created a necessity for the creation of an army in the First Republic of Armenia. Threats to the internal stability are presented as the use of spies and the diplomatic representatives of Azerbaijan in Yerevan (Khan Tekinski) to weaken the country from within: "Turkey was supporting local Muslim population against Armenian government with weapons and Azerbaijan with money" (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 12-3).

The tense relations between the Armenian and Azerbaijani Republics are presented as a result of the latter one's unsubstantiated claims over several Armenian regions. Those claims as well as the Ottoman military campaign to Baku in June 1918 are presented as *possibilities* for new deportations and massacres of Armenians in Baku and Yelizavetpol (today's Ganja) that forced the local Armenians to organize a self-defense. Immediately afterwards the text mentions that 30000 Armenians were slaughtered in Baku in that June (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 19-20).

The text then jumps to the regions of Nagorno-Karabakh and Zangezur where an 'anti-Armenian' Khosrov Bek Sultanov was appointed as a general and to Nakhichevan which was given to Armenia in the spring of

1919. Due to the skirmishes of local Muslim population supported by Azerbaijan and Turkey, the majority of local Armenian population of the region migrated (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 20). In the end of 1919 and beginning of 1920 Armenian-Azerbaijani rivalry restarted in the regions of Nakhichevan and Zangezur. Garegin Nzhdeh managed to establish a stronghold in Zangezur. Whereas, in the March of 1920 Azerbaijan started a large-scale attack in Karabakh, the textbooks state. During these attacks, on March 22-23, 1920, by the order of blood thirsty Khosrov Sultanov, Shushi's Armenian population (over 3 thousand people) were slaughtered and the Armenian districts of the city were burnt (Melqonyan et. al. 2015, 196). The 9th Congress of the Armenians of Karabakh proclaimed the region as part of the Republic of Armenia. Situation in the region drastically changed after April with the sovietization of Azerbaijan (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 21).

One of the vital issues for the Armenian Republic, as the textbooks mention, was the establishment of cordial relations with Russia which was going through internal struggles for power. Russia was not keen on recognizing the independence of Armenia as it saw the latter as a Triple Entente ally. After the sovietization of Azerbaijan, Soviet Russia's Command of 11th Red Army presented an ultimatum to Armenia forcing the latter to remove its military forces from Karabakh and Zangezur (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 30). According to the textbooks, Soviet Russia's eastern politics complicated even more the situation for the First Armenian Republic as it signed secret agreements with Kemalist Turkey and Azerbaijan against Armenia (Melqonyan et. al. 2015, 185).

In the regions of the Armenian Republic that Turkey and Azerbaijan claimed (Kars, Karabakh, Nakhichevan, Zangezur, Sharur-Daralagyaz, Surmalu, etc) local Turkish military units established independent republics, so called *shuras* that rejected to obey the Armenian government (Melqonyan et. al. 2015, 181). These are the units that Turkey supported with weapons and Azerbaijan with money. On June 18th, 1920 not far away from the capital Yerevan in Zangibasar, Armenian government gave an ultimatum to the armed Turkish forces. The latter refused to recognize Armenian power which was followed by three-day struggles after which

the region was *completely pacified*. Same happened in the regions of Olti, Artashat, Nakhichevan and Sevan (Melqonyan et. al. 2015, 186).

With the Tbilisi treaty, signed on August 10, 1920, Russia recognized the Armenian Republic. In return Armenia agreed to allow *temporarily* for Soviet military forces to be positioned in Karabakh, Zangezur and Nakhichevan. The Turco-Armenian war of 1920 allowed Soviet Russia to establish more firm ground in Armenia for the latter's sovietization which happened on October 28th. Along with the sovietization of Armenian Republic a treaty was to be sign according to which Russia and Azerbaijan were supposed to recognized Armenia's rights over Nakhichevan and Zangezur, while Armenia was to give up its claims over Karabakh and allow Russia to mediate its territorial issues with Turkey. However, Russia's soviet rulership did not agree to the terms of the treaty (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, and Amatuni 2014, 34).

According to the Batumi treaty, the Armenian side was supposed to dissolve its military units in Baku. Armenian National Assembly in Baku, however, disregarded this requirement and by cooperating with Democratic Commissars of Baku (headed by Stephan Shahumyan) started a self-defense. The book only talks about Armenian casualties (30 thousand) after the entrance of Turkish military forces into the city. 26 commissars of Baku among whom was also Shahumyan were shot (Melqonyan et. al. 2015, 194).

While the detailed Azerbaijani narrative of the same events is presented in the previous section of this article, we want to focus here on certain selective omissions of wording in the Armenian narrative. To start with, there is no mentioning of Armenian anti-Azerbaijani activities within the territories that were under the control of Azerbaijan's First Republic. As in the case with Georgia, there are no explanations for Azerbaijan's claims over the disputed territories in the Armenian textbooks, as well as justifications for the Armenian side's claims over these territories. While the violence by Azerbaijan is presented as massacres and slaughters, the Armenian violence in Zangibasar, Olti, Artashat, Nakhichevan and Sevan against its Muslim population is presented as 'pacification' of the region. This example is very illustrative to the point made in the theoretical section of this article: the creation of "we" as always, the glorified ideal heroes, and "others" as predatory and treacherous enemies. The nation which is presented from the self-defensive perspective, and which fights

for its right of existence as a glorified idea is pacifist in nature, incapable of slaughtering and massacre. However, the March events of 1918 in Baku which are omitted from the Armenian narrative of history textbooks say otherwise. The struggle for the control over the city between Bolsheviks (headed by Shahumyan), who managed to get support of local Armenian Dashnaks, and Musavatists resulted not only in the latter's loss but also around 6000 casualties who over the course of four days were massacred in the streets of Baku. These events played a significant role in the construction of an "enemy image" in post-Soviet Azerbaijan. Armenians were the enemy in 1918 and they are that enemy up to the modern conflict (Abbasov 2012, 33, 38).

As shown, in Armenian-Azerbaijani relations the authors of Armenian history textbooks again illustrate acts of *injustice* on two levels. However, this time the injustices are towards their own national history and national history of the 'enemy' neighbor. Unlike Georgia, which regardless of the conflict was presented as a friendly-neighboring country, Azerbaijan from the first statement in the textbooks is presented as a hostile state. In harmony with National Security Strategy's description of Azerbaijan as an adversary or enemy neighbor that prevents and endangers current conflict resolution, the national narrative in the history textbooks retrospectively crafted an equal image of an 'enemy' that has been present and endangered Armenia and Armenians since its proclamation in 1918.

## Recommendations

The escalation of the Second Nagorno Karabakh war in 2020, the situation between the two countries on the borders after the second war, as well as the process of final demarcations illustrate that there is still a long way for these two states to change their approach to one another in terms of their national security strategy and its implications on dozen domestic policy outcomes, including education and national history textbook edition - the focus of this article. This implies that it is highly unlikely for these states to appear as *deus ex machina* and voluntarily change the national standards for textbook writing in the near future. Therefore, any proposed change will not make the cut in the Ministries of Education in both countries. Consequently, we suggest creating alternative textbooks as the most possible outcome along with those approved/published by the respective states.

By using civil society/NGOs and various social media initiatives (such as Bright Garden Voices, Caucasus Crossroads on Facebook, CaucasusTalks, et al.) as a starting platform, we aim to raise awareness among the young generation through podcast and/or webinars, to inform them about the ways history textbooks are instrumented, the ends they serve to, and the desperate need for the alternative history textbooks that is neither taught at schools, nor is expected in the foreseeable future due to uncompromising rivalry between the two neighbors which turned the history writing into a bare fabricated story-telling.

## Conclusion

Teachers used history textbooks which in their turn were written by scholars who based their work on the requirements of the national curriculum. The state in its turn defines the curricular standards for textbook development (Mkrtchyan 2014, 152). Textbooks are not the only force that creates national stereotypes; hence their revision is not going to entirely eliminate an ethnocentric or nationalistic interpretation of the past (Koulouri 2001, 15). Textbooks cannot be innovative if the state ideology controls the system of their production. With the 'Karabakhization' of national histories of Armenia and Azerbaijan and after the First Nagorno Karabakh war none of these republics underwent the process of *transitional justice*. Moreover, for about three decades the frozen conflict that until now, a year after the Second Nagorno Karabakh war, sought its final resolution fueled more distorted representations of one's 'own' and 'others' national history. It is the hope of the authors that the current article with its theoretical approach will contribute to the processes of *transitional justice* of both republics.

## Disclaimer

*It is important to highlight that in this article we do not intend to express historical truth, nor do we want to consider events from the point of view of historical science in Armenia and Azerbaijan. Our prime aim rather will be to illustrate historiographic injustice that is committed by Armenian and Azerbaijani historical narratives. By the same token, there will be certain toponyms (city names) throughout the article which are potentially contested by either of the narratives. Therefore, when we critically analyze the national narratives, we will keep using both versions of the toponyms in order to give the reader a chance to be acquainted with both perspectives. However, when we simply*

*describe these narratives directly presented from the textbooks, we will keep only one version of the toponym (the one used by the textbook). This method will help the reader to see both bi\multi-dimensional perspective (the one we used) and the one-sided perspective (the one that is used in the history textbooks) of the narratives all at once.*

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