The Palgrave Handbook of conflict and History education in the post-Cold War era

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Luigi Cajani, Simone Lässig and Maria Repoussi (ed.)

Dominique du Toit
University of Pretoria
Pretoria, South Africa
dominique.dutoit@up.ac.za

In the last three decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the concept "history wars" has gained a growing interest from history scholars, teachers, civilians and politicians alike. This phenomenon finds its' popularity in the public debates over the content of official History in contrast to that which is ingrained in the public's memory. Acting as a contextual frame, the end of the Cold War, is used to guide the conceptual understanding of the conflict over history teaching, where the intention of the guide is to "map the conflicts, identify commonalities, locate and illuminate hidden rationales and connect the individual cases with the fundamental changes" (p. v) since the collapse of the Soviet Union. With this statement, the reader's expectation is that the reference guide will provide accounts of contemporary conflicts as they relate to the end of the Cold War. However, this is not entirely the case. The editors have used the collapse of the proverbial 'iron curtain' as a wider symbol for the start of an era of social media, globalisation and national populism.

The case studies provide a detailed and well researched account of the public debates around History and the teaching thereof. This is testament to the key questions posed in the introductory chapter which guided the analysis of each case (p. 9):

- Has there been any substantial conflict, public debate or controversy on history education in the country in question since the beginning of the 1990s?
- Had debates and controversies on history education taken place previously in the country? If so, what continuities and/or changes can be observed?
- What prompted the more recent controversy or conflict? What are the main concerns of the debate, its principal agents, its primary competing discourses and central arguments?

- What roles have the state, social groups, and agents and agencies of memory played in discussions of the controversy in public media? Have there been moves towards polarisation or resolution? Specifically, how have teachers, academics, journalists and politicians been involved?
- What was, or is, the nature of the relationship between collective memories, master narratives and counter-narratives of the past, and the progression of the conflict? How do memories and narratives interact with broader historical and educational discourses?

The history wars present, but are not limited to, a struggle of conflicting narratives and the primacy of these above the master narrative. This specific theme is especially prevalent in societies where the memories of the past contradict the retelling of the same past in the History classroom and textbooks. In addressing the above questions, cases provided insightful accounts of controversy which not only depict conflict between opposing narratives, but between historians, policy makers and other agents in the sphere of History education. The guide provides the reader with a conceptual understanding behind the politics of History education. Much of the controversy lies in the acceptance of History as a tool for identity formation, and in former Eastern Bloc countries, History teaching after the collapse of the Soviet Union concentrated on the formation of a national identity 'true' to the new nation state. Many of the former Soviet-controlled states are multinational which creates conflict within the nation-state when a specific ethnic identity is promoted. An example of this case can be seen in the report on Tatarstan and Russia respectively.

Tatarstan is a republic within the Russian Federation consisting of the specific national group, Tatars. Conflicts exist behind the negative representations of Tatars in federal Russian history textbooks, and the Tatars own collective memory surrounding their own role in Russian history. At the fundamental level of this conflict, is Tatarstan's history of being a minority and silenced group during the Cold War, but their status of being a minority group has to a certain extent not changed in the post-Cold War era. Nevertheless, the freedom awarded with the collapse of the Soviet Union allowed Tatarstan historians, politicians and activists to explore the history of Tatars independent from Russian control and ideology. By reporting on both Russia and Tatarstan, the guide provides a useful transnational perspective of the conflict and to be frank, a guide that bases its selection of cases on the era after the Cold War that does not have a chapter on Russia would have little credibility, if any. In the same

vein, not including the USA would have had the same effect. Keeping in mind America's historic policy of isolation, the controversy over what constitutes a world history in the American History syllabus, partly reflects the cause of debate between historians and conservative members of the public. In a battle between patriotism and critical historiography, the American case provides a strong argument towards the role of politics and media in shaping curriculum. As reported in the case of South Africa surrounding a political cartoon and textbook, and the feature films in the Netherlands and Romania, politics and mass media play an important role in the teaching of History. The above cases allow the reader to form an understanding of the interplay between public and academic history.

Within the realm of public history lies the centrality of the Church in some of the cases, providing key insights into the control that religion and collective memory holds in determining master narratives. Nationally, the debate within Serbia provides a conceptual understanding of how collective memory plays a role in the debates over History teaching. The controversy which appears occurs between historians and the Church over the Battle of Kosovo (1339) which is a key event in Serbian national identity and collective memory. With this controversy, textbooks and historical sources contradict the Church's notion that the battle against the Ottomans was lost due to treason within the Serbian camp. The symbolic nature behind the Battle of Kosovo was utilised to muster a national pride and identity during the Ottoman rule, as well as to foster nationalism in the run up to the dissolution of Yugoslavia. Not only is the Church in opposition with History teaching, but within the language and literature curriculum, the epic tales and poetic narratives of the battle are studied before students are introduced to the event within the History classroom, which raises the question on whether the outcomes of History teaching will be achieved or mistrusted. In addition, when viewed from a global perspective, the influence of the Church in the History curriculum as well as fostering a national identity finds resonance with the reports on Cyprus and Greece. Secular history such as in Cyprus, Greece and Serbia is similar to that in India. In the case of India, debates arose that a revision of the History curriculum in 2002 was an attempt at imposing religion as a school subject. The report highlights a strong correlation between those in power and the public in curriculum revision, even going as far as using History within political campaigns. In the mentioned cases, historians were key in the struggle against the secularisation and misuse of the History curriculum,

this is unfortunately not the norm.

Historians are widely assumed to be knowledgeable in the field of academic History, which is providing relatively objective accounts of the past, devoid of bias and ideological agendas. However, as detailed in the cases of Rwanda and Azerbaijan, historians are the forerunners for the use of History teaching to achieve a specific ideological agenda. Most of the politicians and policy makers in the Azerbaijani case are historians, however this does not mean that the History curriculum teaches critical thinking or objectivity. History in Azerbaijan particularly in the post-Soviet era, rather retained control over teaching and the dissemination of state-approved knowledge much like during the communist regime. The master narrative within Azerbaijan centre on the struggle against Armenia for territorial control over the Nagorno-Karabakh region. This conflict translates into the narrative of Armenia as a historical enemy, along with Russians and Iranians. This master narrative views Azerbaijanians as victims of an endless struggle against 'outside oppressors' and propagates a siege mentality. It comes as no surprise that the case study of Armenia includes a contradictory narrative, providing a useful transnational perspective. What the guide can be commended on, is for the inclusion of conflicting nations and their narratives, the Azerbaijani-Armenian cases, the Tatarstan-Russia cases, as well as the Rwanda-Burundi cases. These nations are engaged in a transnational history war which is ethnically based and emphasises the victimhood of both nations.

Within the scope of silenced histories after the 1990's, the inclusion of cases from the African continent is expected when taking into consideration the broad theme of post-colonial discourse. When thinking of colonialism, the popular narrative which comes to mind is the 'Scramble for Africa', hence the cases of Senegal, Zimbabwe, Sudan, Burundi and Rwanda. Often overlooked, is the post-colonial status of non-African countries such as New Zealand, Australia, India, Taiwan, Caribbean and Malaysia. For a reader with these expectations, the guide provides a conceptual shift by including not only the above post-colonial cases, but a report on France as a colonial power. The cases of Senegal, Rwanda, Burundi and Sudan present a contradiction to the trends in historiography within France, where the former places sole blame of ethnic conflict and negative intergroup relations on the nations' colonial legacy whereas the latter attempted to revise the History curriculum to present a positive view of France's colonial involvement. These trends present opposite sides of a "historiographical

spectrum", where the inclusion of both narratives within one History curriculum would equip learners with multiple perspectives and deny the amnesia of historical facts. The omission of certain facts within Historical narratives present the controversy surrounding History teaching when trying to satisfy the need for reconciliation. Furthermore, as presented in the cases of Chile, Argentina and Spain, History teaching is influenced not only by recovering from past atrocities, but also from navigating the agendas of the public. In Argentina, History education came under fire for its inclusion of the 'disappeared' people due to the accusation of the narrative teaching learners of a shameful past rather than glorifying the nation. This is also largely influenced by many of the role players during the dictatorship still hold influential positions within society.

Israel and Palestine's conflict has been widely researched and publicised, the History education deeply analysed that their inclusion in this guide is no surprise. Nonetheless, as with the Israeli case, it is noteworthy to state that on the outside the curriculum and textbooks appear to have changed towards the inclusion of multiple angles of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, however the implementation of a more objective history in the classroom is another story. This is largely due to the opposition of teachers, ministry officials and the general public. What the Israeli case presents and supported by the reports from Palestine, Tatarstan, Moldova, Armenia and Azerbaijan, is that History teaching and the content thereof struggles to move from a subjective, one-sided memory discipline to a critical discipline due to the ongoing political disputes within the nations themselves. These above cases present a strong argument that in nations recovering from recent conflicts or still engaged in hostilities have a strong collective memory of the conflict, which is often misused by historians, politicians and teachers alike. Furthermore, the master narratives within these nations provide a strong identification basis to promote a unified nation against an outside enemy. In this regard, collective memory becomes an obstacle towards reconciliation and peace.

From the outset, it can be stated that the book is an ambitious endeavour seeking to provide a contemporary account of changing shifts in History education of countries both formerly part of the Eastern Bloc, post-conflict countries struggling with notions of reconciliation, as well as countries which have "forgotten", or silenced histories. However, even though the introductory chapter provides a succinct "Terminology", the classification of who or what is regarded as a minority or silenced history remains

unknown. Without the classification of silenced histories outside those as a result of the Cold War, the broad perspective appears to be presumptuous. The inclusion of some African as well as of Latin descent countries would suggest that these nations classify as minority and silenced histories when taken in the context of a wider theme of dictatorships and colonialism. Furthermore, the selection process of which countries would be included centred on public "history wars", that is, controversy surrounding academic history versus popular history. However, there seems to be a certain amount of contradiction surrounding the selection of cases, where on the one hand it is stated that 62 scholars were invited to provide accounts of 57 countries, which would suggest purposive sampling based on a set of clearly stated criteria beforehand. However, on the other hand it is stated that some cases could not be included due to the sensitive context of the specific cases. This suggests that more than 62 scholars were approached to report on more than the included 57 cases, which invokes speculation surrounding the cases which scholars could not report on, which is ironic in itself as the very objective of the guide is to shed light on such silenced histories in an era assumed to be characterised by a greater flow of information and ideas (–I did notice the absence of the Koreas).

The very intention of bringing to light the minority and silenced histories, is to achieve a greater goal of de-Westernising History and in a broader sense, decolonise knowledge. However, it would seem that by including this agenda in a guide which also has the intention of discussing History education in a post-Cold War era, the status of silenced histories is still to a large extent not fronted. This critique still stands even with many of these silenced histories existing as a result of the Cold War. For future research and study, this guide lays the foundation for an academic piece solely dedicated to the history of the forgotten and silenced. Furthermore, the cases reported are highly valuable for future research in the field of victimology and the fostering of collective victimhood not only through public history, but through the school curriculum as well. Nonetheless, as achieved through all the cases in the guide, the recounting of the historical background of the debates around History education, provides a clear indication of the change and continuity, as well as the cause and consequences within each case. The guide is valuable in its reporting of a broad range of themes, successfully allowing the reader to make national, transnational and global connections, whilst providing an in-depth reference to the state of affairs of History education in a post-Cold War setting.