COLLECTIVE MEMORY AND MEMORY POLITICS IN THE CENTRAL CAUCASIAN COUNTRIES

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The recent media reports[1] about the progress made by a group of academics from Armenia, Russia, Georgia, and Azerbaijan working on a joint textbook on the history of the Caucasus from the ancient times to 1921 revealed how much tension this topic has created in the region.

The project known as the Tbilisi Initiative launched in 1997 was encouraged and funded by the Council of Europe within a program for promoting education reforms in the former Soviet republics. This work designed to provide objective and reliable information about the local nations' past was expected to help develop tolerance and openness and overcome xenophobia, prejudice, nationalism, chauvinism, etc.[2] The published interview,[3] however, revealed that the disagreements about the interpretations of history were too deep to be overcome: each national team set about writing its own history of the Caucasus.

This symbolic fact opened up a large layer of cultural, historical, political, and other aspects typical of the region that normally remains concealed. This shows that the sides cannot agree on an interpretation of even their distant past, to say nothing of the present.

In the present context of ethnic conflicts and war, it would be too much to expect the project to be an instant success: too many regional conflicts were accompanied by what is known as a "war of historians,"[4] in which historical facts were retrieved from archives to justify territorial claims. In other words, in Caucasian history is part of today's politics; and the stakes are too high to expect the project to succeed in the near future.

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[1] *Golos Armenii* [URL: http://armenianhouse.org/forum/], 10 June, 2005.

[2] See: M.V. Novikov, T.B. Perfilova, "Sovet Evropy i Rossia: reformirovanie shkol'nogo istoricheskogo obrazovania," *Iaroslavskiy pedagogicheskiy vestnik,* Nos. 3-4, 1999, pp. 22-31.

[3] In his interview with *Golos Armenii* newspaper, S. Melikian, one of the project's members who represented the Ministry of Education and Science of Armenia, said: "It was an uphill job from the very beginning. This especially held true for the Armenian team. You want to know why? It seems that the main reason for this was the Council of Europe's view of the history of these four countries, from which it followed that the joint work should go ahead smoothly without conflicts. This was how it wanted to organize a dialog between the Armenian, Georgian, and Azeri historians… At first, it was suggested that the texts should be agreed upon in the following way: historians from Armenia should approve the texts of their Georgian, Russian, and Azeri colleagues. I can't accept this… At best

we can accept the following pattern: each of the sides submits its text and is fully responsible for it; other teams have no right to suggest amendments, they should merely take the text into consideration … such amendments will not be needed... We could not agree with the Azeris on many issues. For example, they falsified the entire ancient period, not only of Armenia, but also of neighboring Iran… The Georgian team also indulged in falsifications … they greatly distorted many problems related to the history of Azerbaijan and Georgia... If our demands are accepted, the textbook will be published, and Armenia will take part in other projects. Yet I have my doubts. This textbook will probably be published, but without Armenia's participation" (see: [URL: http://armenianhouse.org/forum/], 10 June, 2005).

[4] *History Wars: The Enola Gay and Other Battles for America's Past,* ed. by E.T. Linenthal, T. Engelhardt, Metropolitan Books, New York, 1996.

This is not the only reason why the attempts to write a common history had to be abandoned. The participants failed to see eye to eye on the past because the past looks different when viewed from different countries; the sides interpret its actions and the actions of others in different ways. This means that the project is open to the interfering influence of forces and phenomena which belong to the collective memory category. It was these phenomena that doomed the Soviet project aimed at writing history textbooks for the Soviet peoples (the Tbilisi Initiative brings to mind the Soviet efforts in the same field) to failure. The history textbooks designed for the Transcaucasian republics, which bore the stamp of the Soviet "friendship of nations" ideology, became a target of nationalist attacks and failed to advance this friendship.

The peoples of Azerbaijan, Armenia, Georgia, and Russia can see for themselves how the images of the past transferred to the present revived old animosity and suppressed hatred and were used by all sorts of forces, ethnic "interpreters," agents, etc. to stir up and mobilize the popular masses. (Some nations were drawn into the process or became victims of it.) It is the collective memory that triumphed over history as presented by the Soviet textbooks.

The above raises questions about the relations between history, historical texts, and collective memory: Can new historical textbooks detached from the specifics of collective memory be written? To what extent can "revision of history" affect the collective memory, way of thinking, and conduct of a group?

To answer these questions let us discuss certain specific features of the Russian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Georgian forms of collective memory.

Collective Memory, Historical Narration, and Identity

The research boom of collective memory of the past several decades is marked by an extremely wide range of ideas about it.[5] Many researchers, however, do agree that historical narrations, historiography, and ethno-histories[6] of all sorts play an important role in molding the nation's collective memory. This idea is being most consistently developed within the sociocultural approach.[7]

J.V. Wertsch,[8] for example, understands collective memory as the memory formed by all kinds of "textual resources," especially narratives. According to this approach, historical narratives are

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[5] I have mentioned only few on the long list of research studies and ideas of collective memory: M. Bilig, "Collective Memory, Ideology and the British Royal Family," *Collective Remembering,* ed. by D. Middleton, D. Edvards, Sage Publications, London, 1990, pp. 60-80; J. Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration, and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century,* Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1992; J. Cole, *Forget Colonialism? Sacrifice and the Art of Memory in Madagascar,* University of California Press, Berkeley, 2001; A. Confino, "Collective Memory and Cultural History: Problems of Method,*" American Historical Review,* 1997, pp. 1386-1403; P. Connerton, *How Societies Remember,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1989; M.A. Conway, "The Inventory of Experience: Memory and Identity," in: *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives,* ed. by J.W. Pennebaker, D. Paez, B. Rime, Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Mawah, N.J., 1997, pp. 21-45; M. Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory,* Edited, translated and with introduction by L.A. Coser, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992; J.K. Olick, "Collective memory: The Two Cultures," *Sociological Theory,* Vol. 17, No. 3, 1999, pp. 333-348; *Collective Memory of Political Events: Social Psychological Perspectives.*

[6] See: A.D. Smith, "Nations and History," in: *Understanding Nationalism,* ed. by M. Guibernau, J. Hutchinson, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 9-31.

[7] See: M. Cole, *Cultural Psychology: A Once and Future Discipline,* Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, 1996; J.V. Wertsch, *Voices of Collective Remembering,* Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2002.

[8] See: J.V. Wertsch, op. cit.

considered to be cultural tools, promoting collective remembering. Certain properties of narratives shape this process. As one such property, Wertsch has identified abstract and generalized narrative forms that underlie diverse narratives, what he calls "schematic narrative templates."[9] In his view, "a particular set of these narrative templates forms … a 'textual heritage'" with its "uniquely national modes of explanation" for a nation-state. According to Wertsch, these templates differ from one cultural setting to another and require special analysis to reveal their role as a basic model for constructing plot lines for major historical events, including events that may not fit particularly well in this scheme. The example of such templates the author identifies is the specifically Russian schematic narrative template of "triumph-over-alien-forces."[10]

The Russian schematic narrative template consists of the following elements:

1. "An initial situation" … in which Russian people are living in a peaceful setting where they are no threat to others is disrupted by:

2. The initiation of trouble or aggression by an alien force, or agent, which leads to:

3. A time of crisis and great suffering, which is:

4. Overcome by triumph over the alien force, by the Russian people acting heroically and alone.

My study[11] has demonstrated that the Russian narrative template emerged at the turn of the 16th century as a product of several intertwining conditions and circumstances of political, religious, sociocultural, historical, and even psychological nature. It was in the late 15th and early 16th centuries that its ideological foundation arose: Moscow is the Third Rome, Russians are the God-Chosen People, Russians are the New People, etc. These ideological constructs, which can be described as mythologemes, fulfilled the function which, according to A.M. Lobok,[12] belonged to the myth as a construction material used to create a foundation for a new social entity and its shared identity. In the very beginning, it was the creation of "magic" Christianity and a corresponding type of thinking and consciousness; later this scheme, which contained narrative of the "sacrificial" type, was developed by the strengthening Russian state represented by the Moscow czars, Russian autocracy, and Communist rulers.[13]

By the time Russia set off on the road of imperialist conquests its schematic narrative template had been already cast. The "imperial" narratives, however, failed to fit the old, mainly sacrificial, template, therefore all key events, such as Russia's conquests or aggression, were interpreted as "liberation" from and "defense" against "alien enemies."

There is the opinion[14] that Russian historiography was never critical of the chronicles; moreover, for certain political reasons the Russian template was not only readily accepted, but also promoted through history textbooks and official historiography to become a fact of Russia's collective memory.

Russian historiography is not alone when it comes to a schematic narrative template. I have demonstrated[15] that most of the Armenian historical narratives are based on shared elements of a re-

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[9] See: J.V. Wertsch, op. cit., p. 62.
[10] Ibid., p. 93.
[11] See: R.R. Garagozov, "Collective Memory and the Russian 'Schematic Narrative Template,'" *Journal of Russian and East European Psychology,* Vol. 40, No. 5, 2002, pp. 55-89.
[12] See: A.M. Lobok, *Antropologia mifa,* Education Department of the Oktiabrskiy District Administration, Ekaterinburg, 1997.
[13] See: R. Garagozov, *Metamorfozy kollektivnoy pamiati v Rossii i na Tsentral'nom Kavkaze,* Nurlan Publishers, Baku, 2005.
[14] See: L.N. Gumilev, *Drevniaia Rus i velikaia step*, Terra Publishers, Moscow, 2000; V.I. Koretskiy, "V.N. Tatishchev i nachalo izuchenia russkikh letopisey," in: *Letopisi i khroniki. 1980,* Nauka Publishers, Moscow, 1981, pp. 5-13; V.K. Romanov, "Stat'ia 1224 g. o bitve pri Kalke Ipat'evskoy letopisi," in: *Letopisi i khroniki,* pp. 79-103.
[15] See: R. Garagozov, *Metamorfozy kollektivnoy pamiati.*

ligiously tinged historiographic pattern: at all times, the fate of the Armenians depended on their loyalty to their religion. Many narrations, all of them rooted in this ideological construct, betray a certain variant of this plot, which can be called the specific Armenian schematic narrative template. The template that describes the Armenians as "loyal people encircled and tortured by the enemies" consists of the following major components:

1. An initial situation in which the Armenian people are living in glorious times disrupted by enemy intrigues, as a result of which

2. the Armenians fell victim to aggression,

3. they have to live through a period of suffering and difficulties,

4. if they remained loyal to their faith, they overcame their enemies; if they betrayed their faith, they were defeated.

The conclusion drawn with respect to the Russian templates can be safely applied to the Armenian narrative template as well. The Armenian template does not follow historical events, but reconstructs them in a very specific, and sometimes, inventive way. More often than not these "histories" created by the Armenian Church tend toward the "sacrificial" type to an even greater extent than the Russian templates; they present events in a very specific religious-ideological light which has nothing to do with the findings of contemporary historians.[16]

I have already written that there are factors and circumstances which influence historiography and, by the same token, contribute to the narrative templates.

Most of the Armenian narrative templates were patterned according to the needs of the ruling clan, they were designed to glorify its members who patronized the authors of these narrations and to demonstrate the clan's ancient origins; this was done to present the rule of the clan as fully legitimate, therefore, these narrations were inevitably biased.[17]

Viewed in a wider historical and ideological context, it was the Armenian Church that patronized history-writing. We all know that the Armenian historical narrations were authored by members of the clergy, while the church itself as an institution responsible for the creation, preservation, and reproduction of certain historical writings was pursuing its own aims. These can be described as maintaining the numerical strength of its followers and increasing its influence on the minds, hearts, and ideas of the popular masses and the nobility. It is also responsible for the appearance of this narrative template based on the Oriental version of Christianity and obviously influenced by it. Hagiographic literature, Christian martyrologies, the Bible, and especially the Maccabees, etc. all left their imprint on the Armenian historical narrations, which perfectly fit the frameworks of providential and magic Christianity. It is for this reason that these compositions abounded in detailed descriptions (in the Christian moralizing vein) of the martyrdom of Armenians who suffered at the hands of "aliens."

I have demonstrated in my book that, as distinct from the Russian and Armenian historical narrative traditions, the Georgian and Azerbaijani narrations did not contain any pronounced narrative template.[18] These differences in the form of history-writing are responsible for the different forms of Russian, Azerbaijani, Armenian, and Georgian collective memory and identity.

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[16] See: R. Garagozov, *Metamorfozy kollektivnoy pamiati.*
[17] See: Th. Artsruni, *History of the House of the Artsrunik',* Translation and Commentary by R.W. Thompson, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1985.
[18] See: R. Garagozov, *Metamorfozy kollektivnoy pamiati.*

Collective Memory:
Patterns and
Manifestations

The schematic narrative templates present in the Russian and Armenian historic narrative tradition are responsible for special forms of collective memory and identity. I can point here to the following aspects.

In these cultures, the templates served as the foundation for historical narratives and are planted in the collective memory through the education system, primarily history lessons. In this way, they gradually develop from mere facts of the Russian or Armenian collective memory into a force that structuralizes the Russians' and Armenians' perception of themselves and their history, their interpretation of their own motives and the motives of others, etc. In other words, they develop into what can be called a collective memory pattern, understood as a certain configuration of collective experience responsible for sound ideas of the group's members about their historical past. It also influences their understanding and interpretation of historical events, motivations, and heroes.[19]

What I have in mind is very close to the interpretation offered by R. Benedict in her anthropological and culturological studies,[20] as well as that presented in the works by A.L. Kroeber and C. Kluckhohn.[21]

R. Benedict, who is well known for her classical anthropological works, developed the idea of patterns; she believes that each culture has its own unique configuration of elements united by the "ethos" of culture (cultural theme), which determines both the nature of the correlation of the elements of culture (its attributes) and their content (the "style" of culture). For example, some cultures are arranged around such ideas as equality and social justice, others, around individual responsibility and financial success, and still others, around military glory, hunting, etc.[22]

By way of developing these ideas, Kroeber and Kluckhohn formulated a theory of behavior patterns in culture. In one of their works, they wrote: "Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior, acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, and on the other as conditioning elements of further action."[23] The authors used the word pattern to describe the "main and recurring cultural elements" expressed in different ways (they can be explicated in individual and group behavior). Patterns can be applied to various elements and levels of culture. J. Chris has the following to say in this respect: all levels of culture are seen as open to patterning—to varying degrees and at different levels of comprehension.[24]

The pattern's most outstanding feature is its ability to blend with other sides of collective experience. For example, exploitation of the Russian narrative template by the Church and the state for their own aims created a specific attitude toward the state as an omnipotent force that ensures "triumph over the alien force." This attitude was marked by the cult of authoritarianism and feelings of

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[19] See: R. Garagozov, *Metamorfozy kollektivnoy pamiati.*
[20] See: R. Benedict, *Patterns of Culture,* Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston & New York, 1934.
[21] See: A.L. Kroeber, C. Kluckhohn, "Culture: A Critical Review of Concepts and Definitions," *Papers Peabody Mus.,* Vol. 47, No. 1, 1952, pp. 181-198.
[22] See: R. Benedict, op. cit.
[23] A.L. Kroeber, C. Kluckhohn, op. cit., p. 181.
[24] See: J. Chris, *Culture,* Routledge, London, New York, 1993, p. 27. Quoted from: A. Kroeber, C. Kluckhohn, op. cit.

collectivism which went hand-in-hand with the limited or suppressed value of the free and autonomous individual and civil society. This, in turn, left its imprint on such spheres of collective experience as everyday life in the family, the upbringing of children, attitudes toward the authorities and the state, etc. It is precisely this ability to blend with various sides of collective experience that accounts for the amazing ability of the narrative template to reproduce itself in new conditions and new generations, even those that have never been exposed to the traditional programs of historical schooling.

Over the course of time, especially between the late 18th and early 20th centuries, the Armenian schematic narrative template was actively promoted through a huge number of published historical works[25] used for teaching history in religious schools, etc. to become part of the Armenians' collective memory. Armenian clerics, of the Orthodox and Catholic branches alike, had an important role to play in the process, especially at the very beginning: they organized translations and mass publications of Old Armenian historical works.[26]

In the 19th century, the nationalist-minded Armenian intelligentsia—teachers, artists, writers, historians, etc., many of whom belong to the clerical environment by birth—continued what the Church had begun. They created historical and literary works based on the facts found in historical sources,[27] which meant that they were reproducing the same schematic narrative template with minor adjustments needed in the secular "epoch of nationalism." It was their intention to supplant the religious elements of the template with secular ones.

No wonder, according to R.G. Suny,[28] that at this time the Armenian Church and religion came under fire from Armenian nationalists convinced that the Church was interfering with their desire to adjust the template along secular lines. In the final analysis they did this: the "Armenian faith" was replaced by the "Armenian people" or "nation." The nationalist-minded intelligentsia changed the religious ideologeme that said "the fate of the Armenians depends on their loyalty to their faith" into a new, national idea. With some readjustment, the template's religious nature could be expressed in the following way: "the fate of the Armenians depends on their loyalty to their nation." After creating a powerful instrument for influencing collective consciousness and group behavior, the Armenian nationalists used it to achieve their own political aims.[29]

Over time, this template, which can be described as "loyal people encircled and tortured by enemies," blended with various sides of collective experience and developed into a pattern of the Armenians' collective memory, which is still influencing their collective behavior and their ideas about the world around them.[30]

Georgian and Azerbaijani historiographic traditions, which have failed to develop even the most rudimentary forms of narrative templates, have no pattern similar to that of the Armenians.

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[25] See: Agathangelos, *History of the Armenians,* Translation and Commentary by R.W. Thompson, State University of New York Press, Albany, 1976; K.N. Iuzbashian, "Introduction," in: Egishe, *O Vardane i voyne armianskoy,* Translation from Old Armenian by Academician I.A. Orbeli, Prepared for press, introduced and commented by K.N. Iuzbashian, Academy of Sciences of the Arm.S.S.R., Erevan, 1971, pp. 4-23; Moses Khorenats'i, *History of the Armenians,* Translation and Commentary on the literary sources by R.W. Thompson, Harvard University Press, London, 1978.

[26] See: C.J. Walker, *Armenia. The Survival of a Nation,* St. Martyn's Press, New York, 1990.

[27] See: R.W. Thompson, "Introduction," in: Elishe, *History of Vardan and the Armenian War*, Translation and Commentary by R.W. Thompson, Harvard University Press, London, 1982.

[28] See: R.G. Suny, *Looking Toward Ararat,* Indiana University Press, Bloomington, 1993.

[29] Ibidem.

[30] One example of this influence, which can be seen in how the Armenians perceive themselves and others, is given by the researcher: "Most Armenians rejected (and by and large still do reject) the Middle Eastern elements in their heritage, choosing to see themselves as an island of civilized Christian 'Europeans' in a hostile sea of barbarous Muslim Asiatics… All the strands of Armenian nationalism are to some extent irredentist: all consider the territory currently occupied by the Republic of Armenia to be only a fraction of what Armenians can legitimately claim and nurture hopes of one day recovering some of the land lost to Turkey, Georgia, and Azerbaijan" (E.M. Herzig, "Armenia and the Armenians," in: G. Smith, *The Nationalities Question in the Post-Soviet States,* Longman, London, 1996, p. 253).

This does not mean, however, that their collective memories do not have patterns, albeit of a different nature.

I have already written that the Azerbaijani historical tradition is a fairly young one: as distinct from the Armenians and Georgians, for a long time, the Azeris had no chroniclers to create historical chronicles and narrations. The Azeris had no "ethno-histories" similar to those produced by the Armenian Church, which used its specific historical narrations to build up a strong religious component of the Armenians' collective identity. Among the Azeris this role belonged to the dastans,[31] folk songs, tales, and legends extremely popular with the common people.[32] Because of the special nature of these texts, which helped create the Azeris' collective memory, we can surmise that they did contain a certain collective memory pattern: for a long time, epic songs in the native tongue served as the cornerstone of collective memory and developed the "national tradition of epic narration."[33] For this reason they could contain narrative templates potentially leading to certain collective memory patterns. This interesting and highly important problem is too vast to be discussed here; besides, I have undertaken to limit my discussion of the vast variety of collective memory text resources to historiographic texts only. I feel it important, however, to register this unique feature of the textual resources of the Azeris' collective memory.

Suffice it to say that thanks to their varied epic songs and rich folklore tradition, the Azeris can boast of an ethnocultural "memory text" which sets them apart from other nations. Meanwhile Islam, which in the early 8th century was accepted as Azerbaijan's main religion,[34] deliberately strove to overcome the narrow ethnic limits (as distinct from the Russian or Armenian churches, which placed their stakes on the exclusive nature of their ethnoses and/or their isolation). For this and certain other historical reasons, the Azeris long felt no need for ethnonational self-identity: they found the cultural components of their identity to be much more important.

A.D. Smith[35] has identified three transmissions or forms through which "ethnic histories," the content of collective memory, are passed: religious, cultural, and state. There are mixed forms, too. For the purpose of simplification, we can say that while the Armenian collective memory, which relied on historical narrations created within the Armenian Church, stemmed from the religious form to assume the form of religious socialization, the collective memory of the Azeris, based on language, epos, and other cultural elements, took the form of ethnocultural socialization through "cultural transmission."

The cultural instruments which serve as the cornerstone of the Azerbaijani collective memory are limited; at the same time, it has certain advantages. On the one hand, in the absence of fully developed "ethnic histories," for a long time this form of collective memory did not allow the Azeris to look at themselves as an ethnonational collective. On the other, this memory, while not being too concerned with the historical past, gave the Azeris a wider leeway when it came to the inevitable mythological images of the past: otherwise they would have been tempted and captivated by them. This offered many

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[31] Dastans—an epic genre of a mainly heroic nature, the most important among the Azeri (Oguz-Turkic) epic creations being the *Dede Korkut* dastan, which includes 12 individual songs recounted by a legendary holy wise man Korkut. Since such works had *plots* (each of the *Dede Korkut*'s songs has a plot and heroes), we can assume that they did contain narrative templates of sorts. For example, many of the heroic dastans dated to different historical periods and created in various sociocultural, political, and other contexts (*Kerogly*, *Molla Nur*, *Gachag Nabi*, and others) follow an identical plot: the hero or his near and dear ones suffer injustice (or loss). He rises to struggle (alone or as the head of the group he knocked together), takes revenge on his enemies and, in general, shows himself as a brave man of inordinate physical strength.

[32] See: A.L. Altstadt, *The Azerbaijani Turks,* Stanford Hoover University Press, Stanford, 1992; H.B. Paksoy, *Alpamysh: Central Asian Identity under Russian Rule*, Association for the Advancement of Central Asian Research, Hartford, Conn., 1989, pp. 1-2.

[33] A. Niabiyev, *Gatyr Miammiad dastany. Kitabda: gatyr Miammiad,* Aziarniashr, Baku, 1985, pp. 3-17.

[34] See: Z.M. Buniatov, *Azerbaidzhan v VII-IX vekakh,* AS Azerb. S.S.R., Baku, 1965.

[35] See: A.D. Smith, *Nations & Nationalism in Global Era,* Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995.

more options and opened many more roads to "inventing the past," along which contemporary historians and historiographers busy with creating myths will willingly travel.

In the post-Soviet period, the absence of historiographic tradition makes the task of writing history textbooks much more difficult. All attempts to reinterpret the Soviet version of Azerbaijan's history vacillate between the "nationalist" and "scholarly objective" poles. Conventional terms adequately describe the different aims and different interpretations stemming from these two different poles. In the former case, history is called upon to "educate" and "foster patriotic feelings" while carrying out a "national identity project." In the latter, history is expected to "provide information" and "develop analytical skills." It seems that this contradiction is evident in all other former Soviet republics. A "golden mean" between the two poles could have been described as success: today this can hardly be said about the new history textbooks written by Azerbaijani authors.[36]

While the Azerbaijani textbooks cannot provide a clear and integral picture, the Armenian history textbooks present a fairly clear-cut and logical picture of the past, which relied on the schematic narrative template described above. This picture, however, imposed by the "nationalist" pole is achieved through an extreme simplification of history. To quote from Marc Ferro, these textbooks present history in a naïve and pure way; it is populated by good and evil people, traitors and heroes. Armenia, which suffered many defeats in the past, is eager to beautify its history and present it in the noble light of martyrdom. The divided, plundered, and persecuted country is busy weaving a history for itself in the form of a golden legend about giants and heroes famous for defeating lions and slaying dragons. It is hard to imagine that this nation suffered defeats and lost its statehood. Indeed, the children's book on the history of Armenia published in 1979 in Venice by the Armenian Benedictine monks tells the story of the Armenians' misfortunes in a skilful and heart-warming way. After reaching the end, the reader still does not know when Armenia was an independent state and when it was ruled by other countries… Legends and reality are intertwined even when the matter concerns well-researched periods.[37]

In other words, the Armenian historical narrations which appeared in the Soviet period and are created today[38] and which to a large extent are a product of Armenian Soviet historiography, which used extensively and indiscriminately Armenian historical sources, are reproducing the Armenian schematic narrative template under the new conditions. These narrations, while concentrating on the "glorious past" marked by irredentism, are tied, once more, to the mythological images of the past; they clash with a strictly scholarly treatment of history.[39]

The continued existence of this template, a product of mythologized consciousness, leaves people tied to the mythological images of the past. It has been noticed[40] that it is responsible for the mythologized elements in people's ideas about the world. Superficial and undiscriminating histori-

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[36] The new post-Soviet textbooks on the history of Azerbaijan are full of contradictions; this makes it hard to acquire an integral picture of the country's past. This probably explains the fact cited by the Minister of Education of Azerbaijan at the ministry's 2003 fall meeting: students prefer to avoid maths exams (the old practice) and history (this is a new development).

[37] See: Marc Ferro, *The Use and Abuse of History: Or How the Past Is Taught to Children,* Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1984 (quoted from: M. Ferro, *Kak rasskazyvaiut istoriiu detiam v raznykh stranakh mira,* Vysshaia Shkola Publishers, Moscow, 1992, p. 178).

[38] See, for example, a recently published work by G.Kh. Sarkisian, K.S. Khudaverdian, and K.N. Iuzbashian, *Potomki Khayka,* Armianskaia entsiklopedia Publishers, Erevan, 1998.

[39] This is a bitter conflict which developed into accusations hurled at Western historiography engaged in Armenian studies. See, for example, the article "Intellektual'naia agressia protiv Armianskoy nauchnoy mysli finansiruetsia Gosdepom SShA," which appeared on-line in *Zemskoe obozrenie* (No. 38, 2003). The article quotes from a statement by a group of Armenian historians published within the framework of the first international congress of experts in Armenian studies (held in Erevan on 15-20 September, 2003) that said: "Intellectual aggression against Armenian scholarly thought and historiography is funded, in part, by the U.S. State Department and is reflected in consistent distortions of the key issues of Armenian history starting in the ancient times" [URL:http://www.regnum.ru], 2 April, 2004.

[40] See: E.M. Herzig, op. cit.

ans, politicians, political agitators, etc. are using the mythological images of the Armenian template to achieve their own political, ideological, and other aims.

Armenian historiography supplies a picture fairly typical of the nationalist historiographic trends in the post-Soviet states.

"Politics of Memory" and Prospects of Nation-Building

The current attempts of the conflicting sides to create national myths which cultivate the old images of hostility and hatred may become part of the "politics of memory"[41] and "identity politics"[42] in the conflicting states. They will push the elites toward nationalist projects of national identity and memory. The old examples of hatred and enmity are often used to justify the "clash of civilizations"[43] thesis, as well as talk about allegedly "primordial" and "eternal" cultural, religious, and ethnic "incompatibility." In the final analysis, the essentialists resort to these theses to camouflage their assertions about the "real" nature of memory and identity.[44]

Since the groups are dealing with historically approved images and narrations brimming with mutual hatred, their members will hardly be tempted to seek reconciliation. This "politics of memory" not only makes it hard to achieve any peace agreement—it interferes with the attempts to build up democracy and a civil society, the "democratic politics of memory" being one of the attributes of such a society.[45]

By admitting that the socially-adjusted instrument of collective memory is invented to pursue certain aims, strengthening the group's identity and solidarity, among other things,[46] we acquire the chance of modifying collective memory and of relieving it of the burden of old images, the staple food of collective experience.

It seems important, therefore, to take into account the collective memory dimensions responsible for reproducing the old images of hatred and enmity, as well as to investigate the possibility of relieving collective memory of the negative images of the past. This should be done to achieve conflict settlements, otherwise stability in one of the key geopolitical regions will remain frail.

Going back to the questions formulated at the beginning of the article about the correlation between history, historical narrations, and collective memory, the following answer suggests itself in the context of what was said above.

Anyone who wants the Tbilisi Initiative or similar projects to succeed must do a lot of preliminary work designed to cleanse the warring historiographies of their confrontational attitudes. It is absolutely necessary, in particular, to identify and reflect upon the schematic narrative templates and collective memory patterns, and comprehend the mythological components of the "hatred texts," as

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[41] J.R. Gillis, "Memory & Identity. The History of Relationship," in: *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity,* ed. by J.R. Gillis, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1994, pp. 3-24.

[42] *Identity Politics and Women: Cultural Reassertions and Feminisms in International Perspective,* ed. by V.M. Moghadam Boulder, Westview Press, 1994; E.E. Sampson, "Identity Politics. Challenges to Psychology's Understanding," *American Psychologist,* Vol. 48, No. 12, 1993, pp. 1219-1230.

[43] S.P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order,* Touchstone Books, New York, 1996.

[44] See: D. Senghaas, *The Clash within Civilizations. Coming to Terms with Cultural Conflicts,* Routledge, London, 2002.

[45] See: J.R. Gillis, op. cit.

[46] See: B. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism,* Verso, London, 1991; J.R. Gillis, op. cit.

part and parcel of the historical narrations, which feed confrontational attitudes. No joint historiographic project has a chance of survival without spadework.

Finally, the main thing: all those involved in such projects should first clarify their own ideas about the most desirable future for their nations and the Caucasus as a whole. No matter how strange this may sound, a joint history should start not with disagreements over the past, but with an agreement about the future. In other words, we are facing a dilemma: either the future for the sake of the past, or the past for the sake of the future. Which of the "politics of memory" should be selected: a course toward creating national mythologies which make nations prisoners of old enmities and hatreds and endanger the region's future, or a course toward a profound contemplation of the past for the sake of the future? Indeed, in the Central Caucasus, the future stands a chance of becoming a genuinely historical time to be brought closer through civil nationalism, a democratic state, and an open society, rather than through ethnic isolationism.[47]

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[47] It should be said in this connection that less "ethnic" nationalism in any society creates greater opportunities for achieving "civil" nationalism. In the final analysis, according to R. Poole (R. Poole, *Nation and Identity,* Routledge, London, 1999), the drift toward one or the other nationalism is determined not so much by history or geography as by the morals and politics prevalent in any given society.