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QUICK READ SYNOPSIS

The Politics of History in Comparative Perspective

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The Future of Memory

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Background

This article is premised on three related assumptions:

- The first, an empirical one, is that elite and public opinion in at least some countries has become increasingly aware of memory as something that is problematic and often a source of contestation.
- The second assumption, theoretical in nature, is that elite and public opinion in at least some countries has become more receptive to the implications of this information.
- The third, also empirical, is that growing awareness by the elite and the ordinary public of both the malleability and politicization of memory will have consequences for future efforts to influence and control memory at institutional, collective, and individual levels.

First Assumption

- The assumption has two components:
- awareness of memory as something that is not necessarily accurate, unchanging, and recallable; and
 - recognition that groups with competing agendas often struggle to shape and control memory on at least the institutional level.

NOTE: In Western Europe, especially in Germany and Italy, the media covers controversial political issues, and in Europe these have not infrequently concerned questions of historical memory and memorialization. Issues like the Waldheim affair in Austria and the U.S. pressures on Swiss banks raised past events, often crimes in which the state was complicit and that official versions of institutional memory sought to hide.

Second Assumption

The second assumption says that elite and public opinion in some countries has become more receptive to evidence indicating the malleability of memory.

- Many people recognize memory as a resource that groups in their society attempt to exploit, and they believe that this is feasible.
- As memory is considered by most people to make them who they are, they are most likely to safeguard and defend their memories—individual, collective, and official—when they are confident about and content with their identities.
- When identity becomes problematic, people are likely to be less committed to memories and commemorations on which existing identities are based or from which they derive justification.

NOTE: The paradigmatic case in postwar Europe was the Federal Republic of Germany. National identity, previously strong, became uncomfortable for many Germans by reason of the country's Nazi past and the postwar division.

Third Assumption

The third assumption is that growing awareness of memory as malleable and as a source of political contestation will have serious longer-term implications.

- It will affect the importance of memory for identity, the ease by which memory is reshaped or renegotiated, the means by which this is accomplished, and the shape and membership of communities.

Observations

The author observes a series of conditions, some of them in the form of hypotheses that are intended to serve as guides for future research:

- To the extent that people become conscious of any socialization process, they have greater potential to free themselves from it.
- Increased receptivity to self-congratulatory national narratives.
- The shaping and contestation of institutional memory by the state exercised through its control of the educational system and other vehicles for shaping mass opinion.
- International influences on institutional memory such as efforts of states and groups of states to shape the construction of official and collective memory in other states.
- Institutional memory as a form of reassurance.
- Shared remembrance—joint celebrations allow former enemies to recast the meaning of their relationship in a way that reduces dissonance and sustains the partially common identities former adversaries have come to develop.
- The proliferation of collective memory communities in states that include multiple nationalities or ethnic groups and multiple communities, institutional and some collective memories are more likely to clash to the extent that institutional memory excludes or deprecates these other nationalities or ethnic groups.
- The penetration of local collective memory by corporations and nonprofit organizations.
- Collective versus institutional memory is likely to become more apparent in authoritarian regimes as they find it increasingly difficult to maintain a monopoly over the flow of information.

Conclusion Scholarship on memory has focused almost entirely on reconstruction of the past for two reasons:

- It largely mirrors the conduct of the actual politics of memory.
- It is a field dominated by historians.

NOTE: There is no particular reason to think that future memory politics may be more future-oriented than in the past, but it is a possibility worth exploring. Either way, future memory is an important and neglected component, especially of individual and collective memory, and one worthy of serious investigation.

The American Past Politicized: Uses and Misuses of History

Michael Kammen, Cornell University

Background Scholars are intrigued by the ways history has so often been written and revised for partisan policy purposes, a phenomenon hardly unique to the United States.

- The role of court historians required to record events in a manner pleasing to their masters is by now a long-familiar pattern.
- Presidents too often engage in “revisionism.”
- Ever since Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s presidency the focus of inquiry has tended to concentrate on presidential invocations of the past and their skeptics.

NOTE: One can take note of the Revolutionary founders’ anxieties about the ways in which their deeds might be misunderstood or distorted, and how several of the most pivotal events in the national narrative came to be misremembered for politically self-serving reasons. Also note how the Supreme Court has often relied upon “law-office” history in support of outcomes the justices wished to achieve, and how prominent politicians have misread or misused history in making major policy decisions and in writing their memoirs.

Governmental Agencies During the twentieth century several new governmental agencies increasingly provided official versions of key episodes and aspects of American history.

- In notable instances they gradually rewrote or reinterpreted the public’s perception of the national past.
 - For example, the National Park system oversees a replica of George Washington’s birthplace and a re-creation of the cabin where Abraham Lincoln was supposedly born, both of which are highly suspected of inauthenticity.

Presidential Revisionists Presidents and their critics too often engage in “revisionism,” sometimes unwittingly but most often deliberately to persuade others to support their policy preferences and retrospective judgments.

- Historian Ernest May has presented a strong critique of Truman and his advisors for facing the cold war using inappropriate analogies based upon events from the 1930s and World War II.

- Kennedy and Johnson both misused historical arguments to justify the deepening American engagement in Southeast Asia.
- Nixon's published memoirs show the whole Watergate episode as an unfortunate but minor blip in an administration filled with achievements, above all in foreign policy.
- In his memoir, Clinton glossed over some issues that really mattered, like the failure of his health care initiative and his pushing Sudan to expel bin Laden.

Supreme Court The kind of historical treatise that Stephen A. Douglas wrote provides a fine example of what we commonly refer to as “law-office” history that omits anything germane that might be prejudicial to the case being argued.

- A notorious example of justices looking selectively to the founding of the nation for a rationale in decision making occurred in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* regarding slavery issues and the interpretation of the Constitution as an exclusively white man's document.

Brown v. Board of Education

John Davis of Lincoln University invited the help of two distinguished historians in the case of *Brown v. Board of Education*—C. Vann Woodward and John Hope Franklin—to provide contextual material.

- In one instance Davis responded to Woodward, “Your conclusions are your own. If they do not help our side of the case, in all probability the lawyers will not use them. If they do help our argument, the present plan is to include them in the overall summary argument and to file the whole work as a brief in an appendix.”
- Woodward and Franklin argued that the original equalitarian intentions of post-Civil War amendments had been eroded by political and economic pressures and extralegal tactics in the South.
- In this and many cases to follow, the Court made decisions based on “law-office history,” intervening in what were essentially political issues involving state constitutions and accepted usage over time.

History Standards

Our final example of American history being contested and politicized is seen in the production of new National History Standards designed to improve the quality of history education in primary and secondary schools.

- The authors creating these standards were committed to a view of the American past that placed greater emphasis on women and minorities.
- There was criticism of the infrequency with which George Washington's name appeared compared to the frequency with which Harriet Tubman was mentioned.
- In 1995 the U.S. Senate was manipulated into voting 99–1 to condemn voluntary criteria. Later that year, when Senator Bob Dole attacked them, the Clinton administration, most notably the Secretary of Education, who had been supportive, rejected the standards—a candid acknowledgment that politics took precedence over history.
- A bipartisan commission review noted that most of the criticisms had not been directed against the standards themselves but against some of the teaching examples and activities.
 - It urged that the latter be deleted from the final edition, that certain subjects receive expanded treatment, that some concepts be clarified, and that ethnic and gender issues be more effectively connected to their historical contexts.

Conclusion What took place between 1994 and 1996 was far more than a tempest in a teapot—it caused an entire nation to consider and reconsider how its history should be taught and understood in order to be meaningful and valued.

Blank Spots in Collective Memory: A Case Study of Russia

James V. Wertsch, Washington University in St. Louis

Background “History” instruction in Soviet and post-Soviet schools, as well as in virtually every other country in the world, involves a complex mixture of what would be considered a sound interpretation of past events based on the objective review of evidence, on one hand, and an effort, on the other, to promulgate collective memory, or a usable past, as part of a national identity project.

- In this context, notions of history and collective memory overlap.
- Both of the above ways of representing the past deal with events occurring before the lifetime of the people doing the representing, and both assume that the accounts being presented are true.
- It is often difficult to separate history from collective memory, and textbooks almost always involve a mixture of the two.
- Formal history and collective memory must be kept distinct for several reasons:
 - Collective memory tends to reflect a single, subjective, committed perspective of a group in the present, whereas formal history strives to be objective and to distance itself from the present and any perspective that is currently in favor.
 - In addition, collective memory leaves little room for doubt or ambiguity about events and the motivations of actors, whereas formal history strives to take into account multiple, complex factors and motives that shape events.

Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact With perestroika, and especially Gorbachev’s admission in 1989 that secret protocols had been part of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, the old Soviet version of the events of 1939 to 1940 could no longer be the official account.

- The most striking feature that distinguishes this from previous Soviet accounts is that the absorption of Latvia, Lithuania, and Estonia into the USSR was no longer formulated in Marxist-Leninist terms.
- Instead of focusing on the glories of the Soviet Union through the vision of the party, this account allows that mistakes were made.
- A striking feature of this account in the first stage of textbook revision is its awkwardness and ambiguity—new information appeared in a way that was inconsistent with the general flow of the text.
- During the second stage of textbook revision, a kind of “narrative repair” emerged to reestablish coherence based on a new narrative.
 - This new version moved beyond official Soviet accounts in that it made no attempt to deny the existence of the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

- In contrast to the narrative rift characteristic of the first stage, there is relatively little awkwardness or prevarication in this case, although some, to be sure, remains.

Schematic Narrative

The schematic narrative template at work in the case of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact is one that occupies a central place in Russians' understanding of crucial historical episodes and includes

- an initial situation in which Russia is peaceful and not interfering with others;
- the initiation of trouble in which a foreign enemy treacherously and viciously attacks Russia without provocation;
- Russia almost loses everything in total defeat as it suffers from the enemy's attempts to destroy it as a civilization;
- through heroism, and against all odds, Russia triumphs and succeeds in expelling the foreign enemy, thus justifying its claims of exceptionalism and its status as a great nation.

NOTE: This template reflects traumatic events from Russia's past. At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that this is a cultural and cognitive construction, a particular way of pursuing what Bartlett called the "effort after meaning," and hence not the only possible way to interpret events such as signing the secret protocols of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact.

Conclusion

Deep collective memory is very conservative and resistant to change, something that runs counter to observations about the radically new public versions of the past that emerged with the breakup of the USSR.

- It is important to note that post-Soviet Russian history textbooks include assertions that would have earlier put their authors in prison.
- However, focusing on this alone fails to take into account the important difference between a surface level of narrative organization, where radical changes in specific narratives may be found, and the schematic narrative templates that mediate deep collective memory.
- While the specific narratives about the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact may have changed in some surprising and seemingly radical ways, the underlying schematic narrative has been a very conservative force.
- When trying to resolve differences over the interpretation of past events, one useful means may be to introduce a heavier dose of objectivity and complexity into historical textbooks.
 - This suggests a different role for historians than is often assumed in academic discourse, and some historians resist precisely because they fear that it could lead to the elision of the distinction between collective memory and formal history that they have been so persistent in maintaining.

NOTE: The events surrounding the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact show that people are not likely to arrive at a common understanding of the past simply because they are exposed to a common body of objective information. So the best hope we may have is to recognize the existence and power of the narrative templates as a first step and then proceed to harness formal history in an effort to adjudicate differences over "what really happened" in the past.

Using the Past in the Nazi Successor States from 1945 to the Present

Jenny Wüstenberg, University of Maryland;
and David Art, Tufts University

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Background

This article focuses on how political elites used stylized histories of the Nazi past in the service of broader political goals, both domestic and international.

- The authors discuss debates about history, particularly in Germany, as a model for coming to terms with a traumatic past.
- They note that there are few studies linking ideas about history to broader political outcomes—this represents an area for future research.
- The article concludes by considering whether German memory politics will serve as a model for European memory.

Postwar Germanys

In both Germanys, the Nazi past played a crucial role in the struggle to regain legitimacy in the aftermath of humiliating defeat.

- Each state claimed to embody the correct lessons learned from the recent disaster, as well as a positive national tradition derived from previous democratic movements.
- The instrumentalization of the past prevented honest remembering:
 - The German Democratic Republic (GDR, or East Germany) fashioned itself as an antifascist state and repositioned itself on the victorious side of history.
 - The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, or West Germany) used anti-communism and the need for reintegration into the West to justify neglecting justice and historical truth.

Reckoning with the Past

With the foundations laid by the Allies and isolated individuals, the reckoning with the Nazi past in West Germany was gradually transformed in the 1960s and 1970s—several developments explain this change.

- A number of legislative and societal discourses, most importantly those on extending the statute of limitations on the crime of murder (and therefore on many acts committed under the Nazi regime), as well as new trials against war criminals, carried the moral, judicial, and political issues concerning the Nazi past into the public sphere.
- Since the 1980s, propelled by prominent public debates and grassroots activism, the discussion of the Nazi past has moved into the mainstream of German society and culture.
- A generational shift has moved into prominent societal and political positions those who were not involved in the Nazi regime but who were influenced by their parents' and grandparents' selective remembering of the past.
- However, the reckoning with the past has been complicated by the merging of the Eastern and Western cultures of memory, by the growing need to confront other pasts, and by the realization that the experiential generation is fading. Since unification, leaders have stressed that their good

record of memory proves their reliability as an international partner and their legitimate presence in the halls of power.

Austria

As in both the FRG and the GDR, historical narratives of the Nazi past served concrete political goals in Austria.

- Deceptively classifying Austrians as the victims of the Germans helped Austria's founders to disentangle their nation's identity from that of their northern neighbors.
- The defense that Austrians were, like Jews, victims of Nazism was used to parry claims from Jewish groups for restitution.
- Unlike in West Germany, there was virtually no public debate in Austria about their Nazi past for forty years.

NOTE: After forty years, a small number of Green politicians, artists, and intellectuals demanded that Austria critically examine its Nazi past and accept some responsibility for Nazi crimes. Austrian academics produced a number of scholarly works that examined, and challenged, the victim narrative.

Collective Memory Studies

The lack of empirical evidence connecting views of the Nazi past to support for democracy in the cases that have been most extensively studied points to a large issue in the field of collective memory studies: the lack of theorizing about, and testing of, memory's causal effects on politics.

- Despite a realization among political scientists that "memory matters," there are few studies that treat ideas about history as an independent variable and link it to distinct political outcomes.
- If the study of memory is still in its infancy within comparative politics, students of international relations have had relatively more to say:
 - Constructivists have been more engaged with the politics of history than other paradigms of international relations.
 - Since memory can be an important component of how domestic norms are framed and foreign policy is legitimized, it cannot be disregarded as a factor in international relations.

NOTE: In an example of how important memory has become in the negotiation of (inter)state power, Polish leaders stress that their memory work with respect to the massacres in Jedwabne signified Poland's status as a modern European state. Turkey's failure to confront the genocide of Armenians has repeatedly been cited as a reason to deny EU membership.

Conclusion

In Germany, the fact that the confrontation with the Nazi past has become not only a societal imperative but also a justification of state power makes an honest reckoning with history less subject to the political vagaries of the day.

- Does the German experience represent a form of "best practice" in the process of coming to terms with a traumatic past, one that deserves to be emulated by EU nations and others?
- Using Germany as a model would mean establishing an open and empathetic European dialogue in which "national histories are seen from a transnational perspective" and "external national borders [are] transformed into internal European ones."

Through a Glass Darkly: Consequences of a Politicized Past in Contemporary Turkey

Fatma Müge Göçek, University of Michigan

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Background

It is known that nation-states develop their own official narratives of history in an attempt to sustain their present rule through the control of the past.

- In Turkey the state has created an imperfect and faulty perception of historical reality and in so doing has impeded its chances of becoming a truly participatory democracy.
- This creates problems in the resolution of the three major political problems faced by the contemporary Turkish nation-state, namely, the massacres of the Armenians in the past, the treatment of the Kurds at present, and the contested partition of the island of Cyprus.
- The author believes that challenging the temporal boundaries of this Turkish official narrative by delving into the period preceding 1919 or 1923 reveals a possible peaceful solution that may advance a more democratic Turkey.

The Sèvres Syndrome

The theme that connects the above three problems in the current Turkish official narrative is that they were initially produced by the West to fragment the Turkish nation-state—this is known as the Sèvres syndrome.

- The fear of loss of territory and the fear of abandonment not only became prominent themes in the Ottoman Empire, but also persisted into the Turkish nation-state and still influence its official narrative.
- As the syndrome further envelops these problems in the paralyzing emotion of fear, it renders their possible resolution even more difficult.

The Kurdish Problem

Among the three issues, the Kurdish problem dominates the other two in duration and significance: unlike the Armenians and the Greeks the Kurds still live in Turkey and make up 20 percent of its population.

- Turkey's Kurdish problem is currently defined outside of Turkey as the oppression and denial of rights by a majority group (the Turks) of an ethnic minority (the Kurds), resulting in a civil war.
- In official Turkish discourse, however, there is no mention of the Kurdish problem nor the civil war, but rather reference to a socioeconomic issue in the southeastern region of the country.
- The suppression was accompanied by the disappearance of the word "Kurd" from the lexicon, the ban of the Kurdish language, the replacement of the Kurdish names of towns with Turkish ones, and the denial of the right of parents to give Kurdish names to their children.

NOTE: Today, even though the growth of the public sphere and civil associations in Turkey are indicators of democratization and economic development, the engagement of the Turkish state and especially the military in northern Iraq very conveniently curb these positive transformations.

The Cyprus Problem

The most significant historical event in creating the Cyprus problem in Republican history was the 1974 invasion of the northern tip of the island of Cyprus by the Turkish military after the Turkish-Cypriot community withdrew from the government to set up its own political structure.

- The Turkish government justified the invasion by stating that it was acting in its capacity as one of the guarantor powers of the 1960 arrangement.
- The attitude of the Turkish nation-state toward the Cyprus problem mimics its stand toward Greece, which has severely hindered the possibility of conflict resolution.

The Armenian Problem

Two secret Armenian organizations decided to draw attention to the 1915 ethnic cleansing of the Armenians the Ottoman state had committed without subsequent accountability through a series of assassinations of Turkish diplomats and the bombings of Turkish sites.

- The attacks caused both the state and military to intervene by fostering, organizing, and institutionalizing the propensity to symbolic violence against the Armenians through a national historiography and a series of organizations with the overt purpose of studying and researching the Armenian issue.
- The Turks, rather than confronting their past and the violence contained therein against minorities in general and the Armenians in particular, chose instead to deny it by constructing an official counternarrative.

NOTE: The author argues that peaceful solutions to these problems could become possible only and primarily upon challenging the temporal boundaries of the official Turkish narrative.

Conclusion

Even though the Turkish state, including the military, constantly condemns the expansionist tendencies of European powers, the West does nevertheless continue to occupy a privileged place in the mind's eye of Turkish state and society, thereby contributing to the democratization process.

- Significant developments have been Turkey's transition to a multiparty regime in 1946; its alignment with NATO in 1952; and its opening up in the 1980s to the world economy and making significant efforts to alter its state-controlled, protectionist economic and political structure.
- Still, the military continues to consider itself the guardian of the state, established and maintained according to Republican and secularist principles to be protected not only against external threats but also against its internal enemies.
- The first step the Turkish nation-state ought to take toward the resolution of its Kurdish, Cyprus, and Armenian issues is to confront its history in its entirety rather than through fragments.

The Japanese History Textbook Controversy in East Asian Perspective

Claudia Schneider, University of Leipzig, Germany

Background

Japan is criticized in most of the history debates taking place in East Asia for failing to come to terms appropriately with its past.

- The cold war alliance made it possible to leave many war-related questions unresolved, providing a lingering source of debate between Japan and its neighbors, who see themselves as its victims.

History Texts

- It was not until the 1980s, and particularly the 1990s, that many of these issues became contested.
- This article provides an overview of one of the most prolonged and notorious issues: the so-called “textbook controversy,” the debates surrounding the treatment—essentially the noncoverage—of Japanese wartime behavior in the country’s history textbooks.
- The textbook controversies attest to altered distribution of power in the region; changed state-society relations and prevailing national self-images; as well as the heightened significance of the past for the present—the global “memory boom.”

The transformation of history textbooks into objects of international debate dates from the summer of 1982.

- The debate was triggered by reports that the Japanese Ministry of Education (MOE) had ordered history textbook authors to make various revisions—changing the term “aggression/invasion” into “advancement” to describe Japanese military action in China.
 - The story was false, but a general problem of this sort did exist.
- Japan’s neighbors had reasons to complain: not only was textbook coverage of Japanese military action rather evasive, the dominant consciousness in Japan was not primarily that of having been an aggressor toward Asian countries, but rather of having been a victim.
- Until then, however, Japan’s neighbors had not complained. Thus, we have to look for reasons for the outbreak (and subsequent reiteration) not only in the Japanese, but also in the Chinese and Korean contexts.

The issue became both a source of and a potential challenge to government legitimacy.

- The hapless way the government handled it left such major domestic actors as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) and the MOE dissatisfied and contributed indirectly to Prime Minister Suzuki Zenko’s resignation.
- For China and Korea, playing the “history card” was a tool for shaming, pressuring, and gaining leverage on the Japanese government.
- This further indicates that (1) the international controversy has always been closely tied to domestic issues and (2) mass media has played a significant role.

Neighboring Countries Clause

An immediate result of the above was the Japanese MOE’s addition to the criteria for textbook authorization of what came to be called the “Neighboring Countries Clause.”

- It stipulated that consideration should be given to neighboring countries’ perspectives.
- The clause has been a source of discontent for conservative/right-wing forces who believe it is a sign that the Japanese are succumbing to diplomatic pressure on genuinely internal affairs. Conservative counterreactions include the writing of “revisionist” textbooks.

The 1990s

The 1990s saw a number of significant changes.

- In 1993, Prime Minister Hosokawa acknowledged that Japan had conducted a war of aggression.
- In 1995, a resolution in the Diet and a statement on August 15 by Hosokawa's successor, Prime Minister Murayama, contained formal expressions of apology and regret.

NOTE: Various revisionist groups were organized to counter this trend. They both contributed to and profited from a turn toward a defensive and defiant nationalism among parts of the Japanese population.

Korea and China React

South Korean and Chinese governments were put on the defensive by the textbook controversy.

- South Korean president Roh Moo-hyun launched diplomatic protests after pressure from the political arena and the public.
- The official Chinese reactions included the usual apolitical rhetoric and some cancelled visits, but no measures were taken with potentially negative long-term effects on their relationship with Japan.
- Popular nationalisms in both countries include strong anti-Japanese sentiments (caused by the wartime and colonial past).

Politics of Textbooks

The perceptions (and subsequent actions) of the involved actors, and of the general public, contribute largely to the tendency of textbooks to become objects of contention.

- First, because they are authorized or approved by the state, Japanese textbooks are imbued with a quasi-official character.
- Second, in many parts of the world, history textbooks are often seen as powerful symbols of a country's sincerity in dealing with a negative past.
- Third, their target audience, young children, causes them to be considered very influential in a double sense—both for the individual child's historical consciousness and for the nation's future.

NOTE: The promotion of patriotism remains a central goal of history education not only in the eyes of Japanese conservatives and revisionists but also in Korean and Chinese curricula.

Effects of the Textbook Controversies

In Japan, in dealing with the "fragmentation" of particularly contested and scrutinized issues, textbooks have displayed pendular movement, rather than a unidirectional trend.

- Textbooks *could* become somewhat more open in the treatment of other, related topics.
- Any insertions made in textbooks so far appear as signs of concessions in the political push and pull, not as reflections of revisions in the general agenda of the politics of Japanese history education.

In general, the two-sided controversy first raised awareness, but now tends to deteriorate mutual public perceptions.

- In Korea and China the controversy has fostered both counterreactions and introspection and established history textbooks as items worthy of reporting on, examining, and debating.

Conclusion

- Cross-nationally, the textbook controversies have prompted a number of initiatives by scholars and educators aiming at cross-national dialogue and mutual understanding.

Overall, Japan's strategy toward its neighbors is motivated by pragmatic concerns rather than by a moral conviction of the need to "settle the past."

- The country will thus continue to make indispensable concessions to accommodate criticism from other Asian countries, but no more.
- The ugly past does not go well with currently very vocal conservative calls for a more "patriotic education."
- Few Japanese see the country's relationship with its Asian neighbors as a high priority at this time, but a majority do acknowledge the need to reflect on Japan's past attacks and colonial rule over Asian nations.

NOTE: In sum, the author has sought to show that textbooks and textbook controversies are above all reflections of broader sociopolitical constellations and changes—more than just historically influential factors in their own right.

Disputes in Japan over the Japanese Military "Comfort Women" System and Its Perception in History

Hirofumi Hayashi, Kanto Gakuin University, Tokyo

Background

In 2007, then-Japanese Prime Minister Abe stirred up controversy by denying that "comfort women" were coerced by the Japanese military.

- He asserted that private agents, not the military, coerced the women.
- In contrast, Abe has been a fierce critic of the abduction of Japanese citizens by North Korea.
- Abe stated that he believes that Japan's war and the behavior of the Japanese military were righteous.
- Some of the main arguments in Japan are that the Nanjing Massacre was fabricated, that comfort women were regular prostitutes rather than victims of war crimes, and that Japan did not act aggressively.

The JWRC

The Center for Research and Documentation on Japan's War Responsibility (JWRC) advocates certain facts as documented in various materials:

- The former Japanese Army and Navy created the comfort women system to serve their own needs.
- The military decided when, where, and how "comfort stations" were to be established.
- The military was well aware of the various methods used to bring women to comfort stations.

NOTE: The JWRC expressed the strong hope that the world should acknowledge these facts and that a fundamental and final resolution to the comfort women issue would soon be reached. Yet the Japanese media ignored efforts of researchers and groups like the JWRC.

1991 Disclosure The situation changed dramatically in 1991 when a former comfort woman from South Korea, Kim Hak Sun, broke nearly half a century of silence and made her story public.

- Her and others' bravery in stepping forward encouraged Japanese activists, especially female activists, to organize support groups.
- The Japanese government refused not only to apologize to or provide reparations for the women but also to carry out any investigation.
- However, in January 1992, unearthed documents in the National Institute of Defense Studies proved conclusively that the military had played a role in the establishment and control of comfort stations.
- As a result, Prime Minister Kiichi Miyazawa publicly admitted that the Japanese military was involved, and he apologized for the comfort women system for the first time.

NOTE: The suffering of the women involved did not end with liberation. Many comfort women were unable to return home. Some still remain where they were abandoned. Former comfort women have suffered the aftereffects of disease, injury, psychological trauma, and post-traumatic stress disorder, as well as social discrimination for their pasts.

The Mid-1990s Ultrarightists began a systematic counterattack in the mid-1990s.

- They attacked textbooks that dealt with Japan's various atrocities, including the comfort women system, demanding that such material be deleted to recover a sense of national pride.
- Publishers of textbooks began to restrain the descriptions used.
- Later, the minister of education stated in 2004 that it was desirable for references to Japanese atrocities to be dropped.

NOTE: Against a background of economic depression and a climate of prejudice against other Asians, particularly the Chinese and Koreans, many Japanese have been influenced by these xenophobic campaigns.

U.S. Resolution The U.S. House of Representatives passed a resolution in 2007 to the effect that the government of Japan "should formally acknowledge, apologize, and accept historical responsibility in a clear and unequivocal manner" for the military sexual slavery, known to the world as comfort women.

- The Japanese government refused to accept this resolution in any way.
- In response, civic groups in Japan issued a statement on July 31, 2007: "What would make a Japanese Government apology to comfort women unequivocal?"
- Most of the mass media in Japan responded unfavorably to the statement.
- Others claim that the Japanese government has already apologized.
- Now, the number of politicians of the younger generation in the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and the Democratic Party refuse to admit that the Japanese military was involved in atrocities or that Japan has responsibility for the war.

*Foreign
Neighbors'
Reactions*

There is a tendency for younger politicians to be more antforeign, and it appears that the government of South Korea is at a loss as to how to respond, while the Chinese government remains silent in order to give priority to improving China-Japan relations.

- Although reconciliation is essential, attempts are being made at reconciliation without a formal state apology or individual compensation to victims.
- However, reconciliation needs to be achieved among the ordinary people of the Asia-Pacific region, including the victims, not among those in power.

The Politics of History and Memory in Democratic Spain

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Background

This article examines the political uses of history and memory in Spain since the death of General Francisco Franco in 1975.

- Once democracy was consolidated, professional historians clarified military responsibility for the civil war and documented the extent of the repression; the Right responded by reviving the Franquist myth of the civil war as a crusade against communism.
- "Memory" replaced history in public discourse with the breakdown of the transition consensus and the maturation of a generation with no recall of the war or the dictatorship.
- Demands for official condemnation of the dictatorship and public recognition of its victims culminated in the passage of the so-called Law of Historical Memory in October 2007.

Memory

Historical memory is a form of social memory in which a group constructs a selective representation of its own imagined past.

- Historical memory may legitimate or challenge the status quo, teach a lesson, validate a claim, consolidate an identity, or inspire action.
- There are as many stories about the past as there are social or political groups vying for power.

Spanish Model

The Spanish transition to democracy is viewed as a "model" transition because of its consensual, nonviolent character and positive outcome.

- The transition to democracy in Spain rested on a de facto "pact of silence" that avoided confrontation with those responsible for the dictatorship and denied public recognition of its victims.
- To avoid arousing the ire of the right, the first governments of the transition avoided purging Franco loyalists.
- Fear of military reaction and their own complicity in sustaining the dictatorship justified to many Spaniards the pact of silence.

The 1990s

By the 1990s, historians felt able to dispense with the myth of collective responsibility that had facilitated the Transition, and the historians began to investigate the policies and politics of the Franco regime.

- Persistent scholars began to document and quantify the human costs of the Franquist repression.
- The new statistics, which demonstrated conclusively that the victims of Nationalist repression vastly outnumbered those killed by the revolutionary Left, dealt another blow to the myth of equal responsibility.
- With the loosening of centralized state control, history textbooks had a greater variety of ideological perspectives on the past—most registered the hegemonic memory of the civil war as a fratricidal tragedy and showed the historical memory of the 1930s as a period when the political center was overwhelmed by extremists on the Left and Right.
- The socialists educational reform law (LOGSE) said history should enable students to “analyze and critically evaluate the realities of the contemporary world and the antecedents and factors that influence it.”
 - The LOGSE sought to instill the habits of mind and behavior appropriate to a democratic society.
 - Most history textbooks written after passage of the LOGSE prioritized historical knowledge over mythmaking and historical distance over passionate moralizing.

1990s History Wars

After each of several regime changes in the 1990s, winners sought to reshape the historical memory of the civil war and the dictatorship.

The Memory Boom

After the turn of the century, “memory” began to occupy a larger share of public discourse on the past.

- The shift in preference for memory over history tracked the continuing shift in the balance of political power toward the Right.
- Equally important was the international debate over how democratic or democratizing societies should confront histories of violence, repression, and genocide.
- The revision of official memory to include the individual memories of those previously silenced was understood to be a necessary first step toward reconciliation and democratic consolidation.
- Public intellectuals willing to concede the functionality of “forgetting” during the Transition insisted that Spain’s European identity depended upon official acknowledgement of the dictatorship’s crimes.

The Present

The “fever for remembering,” climaxed in 2006 when the Congress of Deputies endorsed a bill proclaiming the “Year of Historical Memory.”

Conclusion

History cannot administer justice; its moral authority comes from its regard for truth-seeking and its social utility from its power to explain and interpret.

- The recent turn to cultural history suggests a politically attractive avenue of research.
- Historians may make the “past that does not pass” less the source of continuing friction than the reason for a renewed commitment to democratic coexistence.

Australia's History under Howard, 1996–2007

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- Background* The conservative Coalition government led by Prime Minister John Howard was in power in Australia from March 1996 to November 2007.
- For a decade, Australian history was a battleground between the Howard government and its supporters and academic historians and other members of the so-called “left-wing intellectual elite.”
 - Australia's relations with its Indigenous people was the most emotive and controversial topic, but other aspects of Australian social and political history were also subjects of contention.
 - Howard's advancement of a particular understanding of Australian history was guided by personal conviction and background—his upbringing was conservative and insular, and his understanding of Australian history reflected this.
 - Howard sought to implement conservative social and cultural policies, while continuing to pursue neoliberal economic reform.
 - The Howard government's efforts on the terrain of the so-called “history wars” served two combined purposes:
 - to contest the supposed hegemony in public debate of an unpatriotic and negative liberal-left intelligentsia in universities and the media; and
 - to assert a positive, nationalistic view of Australian history that would enable Australians to feel “comfortable and relaxed” during more potentially unsettling economic reform.
- Influencing Public Debate* The Howard government used its control over funding for the higher education system and public broadcasting to influence public debate.
- Academics and public broadcasters were frequently weakened by funding cuts.
 - The federal education ministry became more aggressively interventionist in universities, forcing changes in governance and workplace relations onto them.
- Indigenous People* There are two main issues regarding indigenous people on which the Howard government took a markedly different position from its predecessor:
- native title to lands, and
 - restitution for past wrongs.
- NOTE: John Howard resisted the calls for a Commonwealth government apology on the basis that this generation could not be held responsible for well-intentioned errors of previous generations, and his government devoted considerable legal resources to opposing claims for compensation from members of what became known as the “stolen generations” (Aboriginal children moved to non-Aboriginal homes for a “better” upbringing).
- Native Title* Another unwanted legacy in Indigenous affairs (as far as the incoming Howard administration was concerned) was in the area of native title.
- In 1992, the High Court of Australia handed down the *Mabo* judgment, which essentially found that under common law, a residual form of native title to traditional lands still existed.

Australian History

- However, the incoming Howard government promised to roll back native title and provide certainty of tenure for rural landholders, the core constituency of the agrarian-based National Party.

While issues concerning Australian Aboriginal history were among the most politically and emotionally charged subjects of the Howard years' "history wars," debate was not confined to these topics.

- The government also expressed concern with the way in which Australian history was represented to the public in, for example, the new National Museum of Australia, and taught to students in schools. Both areas became targets of government intervention.
- Activist Keith Windschuttle claimed that the zigzag ground plan of the museum's building echoed the new Jewish Museum in Berlin, conveying a subliminal message that Australia had a genocidal past.
- In terms of the teaching of Australian history, Howard has long expressed concerns that Australian children were being denied their rightful heritage of pride in their country's achievements and were too often finishing their secondary school years without a clear sense of the overall national historical narrative.

The End Results

Undoubtedly, the politicization of Australian history has been detrimental to academic and public debate.

- The reputation of academic historians has been tarnished by the constant vituperative attacks from conservation opinion writers, a development that has assisted, or at the very least hindered, resistance to the downgrading of the humanities in the tertiary education sector.
- While the history wars have provided background noise for the depletion of humanities faculties in Australian universities, and have accompanied the frustration of Indigenous hopes for more emancipatory government policies and for a genuine reconciliation process, their influence has hardly been decisive.
- It may offer some comfort to Australian historians that their commitment to liberal democratic humanism, to scholarship, and to their students has transcended the politics of their calling for the past decade—which is, ultimately, as it should be.

Democracy and Memory: Romania Confronts Its Communist Past

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Background

How does Romania compare to other East European countries in terms of mastering its dictatorial past?

- The belated nature of Romania's decision to confront its communist totalitarian past was predominantly the consequence of obstinate opposition to such an undertaking from parties and personalities directly or indirectly linked to the previous communist regime.

- Both the National Liberal and the Democratic parties understood the importance of coming to terms with the past—the condemnation of the communist dictatorship has become one of the most hotly debated political, ideological, and moral issues in contemporary Romania.

The PCACDR

The Presidential Commission for the Analysis of the Communist Dictatorship in Romania (PCACDR) was continuously attacked from the extreme Left, the nationalist Right, and Orthodox clericalist and fundamentalist circles.

- The opponent's attitude was a sign that the Commission's chosen path was the right one, from an academic and moral point of view—a functional and healthy democratic society cannot endlessly indulge in politics of oblivion and denial.
- The work of the Commission was meant to pass moral judgment on the defunct dictatorship and invite a reckoning with the past via a painful, albeit inevitable, acknowledgement of its crimes against humanity and other forms of repression.
- The PCACDR comes close to the commissions for truth and reconciliation created in countries such as South Africa, Chile, Argentina, and Rwanda. In contrast to these commissions, the PCACDR had no decision-making power and no subpoena prerogative.

NOTE: For the first time in post-1989 Romania, the PCACDR rejected outright the practices of institutionalized forgetfulness and generated a national conversation about long-denied and occulted moments of the past.

The "Final Report"

The PCACDR Final Report identifies the nature of abuses and its victims, though not leaving aside the ideological context of the times.

- For the PCACDR, the communist regime represented the opposite of rule of law.
- Dealing with both the communist and fascist past must become a factor of communal cohesion as it imposes the rejection of any comfortably apologetic historicization.

NOTE: The main instrument for the process of mastering the past, employed by the PCACDR, was the deconstruction of the ideological certainty established by the communist regime upon which the latter founded its legitimacy.

Communist Condemnation

In Romania, the condemnation of the communist regime has taken place with a view to reconciliation, consensus, reform, and working through the past.

- It did not serve as a weapon of either President Bănescu against his enemies or as a means of rehabilitating any xenophobic and/or antidemocratic precommunist movements.
- An obstacle on the road to reconciliation is the fact that the perpetrators of Romania's communist regime have not been confronted, legally and institutionally, with their crimes.
 - Individuals identified as guilty of crimes against humanity or former members of Ceausescu's last Politburo have long been pardoned and continue to defend the old regime.

- The PCACDR, relying on President Bănescu's political commitment, created a document where responsibility for the past was claimed and individualized, but neither the Commission nor the president could impose reconciliation in the absence of repentance.

NOTE: The Commission's work and the intense debates surrounding it highlight one of the most vexing yet vitally important tensions of the postcommunist world: the understanding of the traumatic totalitarian past and the political, moral, and intellectual difficulties, frustrations, hopes, and anxieties involved in trying to come to grips with it.

Can Truth Be Negotiated? History Textbook Revision as a Means to Reconciliation

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Background

The transfer of knowledge from one generation to the next through textbooks is controlled not only by scholarly, quality criteria and by pedagogical standards but also by political interests.

- To overcome narrow national and nationalistic approaches to historical interpretations and geopolitical visions of the world, international textbook revision became a politically acknowledged and scholarly activity after the shock of the First World War.
- The well-known traditional model of interstate textbook projects created in the 1920s is characterized by bilateral or multilateral cooperation on equal terms such as the German-Polish or the Italian-Slovenian Textbook Commission, to mention two contemporary examples.

Textbooks Today

After the dissolution of the communist system and the opening of borders, the topics and methods of textbook revision underwent remarkable changes.

- Oversight of textbook revision went from bilateral, quasi-official commissions set up by educational authorities to groups of experts linked to the work of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and agencies of civil society.
- Challenges to textbook revision shifted from controversies over the past to debate about current, open, and often still violent conflicts.
- Controversial topics extended from conflicts between states to conflicts between groups within a state or society (or from war to civil war).

South Africa

In South Africa after apartheid, two factions put forward their vision of a revised South African historiography.

- African teachers expected a new and uncontested "black" history that would tell the one and only true story in contrast to the distorted one they had been exposed to for so many years.
- A pluralistic model was favored by a group of historians who worked at universities long since known for their antiapartheid position, and they

Bosnia and Herzegovina and Rwanda

advocated the use of new source materials about African history, innovative methodological approaches such as multiperspective interpretations, group discussion, oral history, and testimonies.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe passed a resolution on "Education in Bosnia and Herzegovina" in the year 2000 that proposed a moratorium on the teaching of the war of 1992 to 1995.

- Contrary to the expectations of its creators, it has not stimulated enquiries into the war and its causes, but only created a vacuum that offers very little scope for intellectual curiosity and the development of new approaches to teaching issues of contemporary history.
- In Bosnia and Herzegovina almost all the different stages and methods of textbook revision have been used in their school books in order to reconcile three almost incompatible versions of history.
 - It was the process itself that counted and caused a change in attitude. The experts acted independently from a political agenda prescribed by local ministries or the International Community, and used the best pedagogical practice and subject knowledge.
- The same logic underpinned the Rwandan government's decision to abandon history teaching altogether until a new consensual concept had been developed—categorized as an approach-avoidance conflict.

Communication Process

Projects conducted by NGOs often aim expressly to break down communication barriers that politicians could not or did not want to overcome.

- The work of NGOs, which are composed of devoted intellectuals and teachers and parents, helps to create a nucleus for a civil society that can counterbalance backward-oriented political agencies.
- As a rule, the teaching units produced by NGOs are meant to provide additional material that does not replace regular textbooks.

Reconciliation

Considering the ban on history teaching in Rwanda and the low profile history teaching was granted in South Africa for almost ten years, one may wonder what role truth commissions played in both countries.

- The establishment of truth through a communal communicative process prevalent in truth commissions have almost nowhere changed the restricted notion of the one and only objective truth that shapes the way history is presented in school textbooks.

Japan, Korea, and China

Five bilateral or multilateral history textbooks have been written in East Asia in recent years, the most ambitious being a book written by a team of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean authors.

- These books cannot replace the obligatory history books—it is a big step forward to use books that offer a wider view and do more than reflect one's own well-known and canonized national narrative.
- The question of whether a Japanese-Korean-Chinese textbook commission should be set up can become obsolete if efforts on the level of NGOs, universities, international governmental organizations, and pedagogical institutes can produce sustainable results.

NOTE: That it is possible to develop a joint history textbook is a value in itself, even if it is not widely used. It refutes the former opinion that the narratives are so different and so consistent with the respective national pride and historical canon of each nation that they cannot be changed by means of international comparative research and debate.

Challenged Histories and Collective Self-Concepts: Politics in History, Memory, and Time

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Background

All societies at some time confront evidence of past actions undertaken in their name that violate their fundamental principles and conflict with their current self-image.

- The author suggests two sources of tensions between “bad acts” and positive self-concepts:
 - First, past actions not considered wrong when they were undertaken are deemed to have been inconsistent with current expectation.
 - Second, transsocietal differences in normative frameworks lead to criticisms of others’ behavior, behavior in which the critics’ societies likely engaged at an earlier time.
- Accusations or criticisms of actions in the past now considered deplorable generally meet with defensive, often hostile responses.

NOTE: History, memory, and identity are implicated in each other. For some, memory has become a way, perhaps *the* way, of thinking about history; and identity is sometimes said to be produced by mixtures of real and imagined histories. All three are contingent on context and circumstance and on the instrumental purposes to which they can be put.

Power and Choice

Power to interpret and apply (use in instrumental ways) history, memory, and identity can be exerted at all levels, from the state and society at one end of the scale to individuals at the other.

- The plausibility of this claim depends on context: autonomy for individuals, associations and institutions (below the level of the state) to exercise and act on choices covaries with the openness of the state, the degree of social modernity, and the space allowed by social control.
- The possibility that choice and power can be exercised at any or all of these levels makes the relationships between history, memory, and identity even more indeterminate.

NOTE: The task is less the determination of the bases in history of the attacks on particular positions, or which constructions of the memories of particular actions or events should prevail, than the practical uses to which elements of the past can be put toward current political ends.

Political Influences

Politics is often a significant force in the construction of the past and the shaping of collective memory.

- The displacement of norms in time and the dramatically shrinking normative and communicative space among societies are two important contextual factors.

Peoplehood

Peoplehood is a *political* state of being, and it has far-reaching political implications.

- It entails conscious association, based on reflection, not simply physical or psychological proximity or economic interdependence.
- Most members of a society enter it through birth, yet peoplehood entails learning and socialization to a shared story and what it represents.
- Stories of peoplehood are instrumental in constituting collectivities—they propagate the values and norms around which collectivities form, and with and through which their members identify.
 - The author believes that stories of peoplehood must be positive.
 - Individuals need to maintain a high opinion of themselves, a sense of their probity and righteousness.

Lessons Learned

What, if any, lessons, do collectivities learn from actions that violate their avowed sense of who they are as a people, especially actions undertaken in their name or by their agents?

- This is a timeless concern with moral progress by societies—the author's concerns here are much narrower and more down-to-earth, that is, whether awareness of appalling acts in a collectivity's past, committed in its name, affect its self-image, and if so, how.
- It is unclear whether we are justified in applying today's criteria for moral behavior to actions that occurred decades, even generations, ago.

Questions

How do we ascertain awareness and recognition of the incompatibility between such atrocities as the wanton mass killing of innocent civilians or torture, on one hand, and the prevalent positive collective self-concepts all peoples have, on the other?

- In short, what must we know, when must we know it, and whose awareness or knowledge counts?
- How should we react to such actions?
- What is a collective self-concept, and how, if at all, can we know it?

Effects on Domestic Politics

A collectivity's response—through its public authorities, social or political elites, and educational system—to “news” of gross violations by its members can profoundly affect its domestic politics and international relations.

- In recent years, a large and still growing literature has focused on the political consequences of how the past has been addressed.
- If such narratives are to retain their power to shape collective self-concepts—if they are to serve as the basis for responses to the question “who are we?”—they must be interpreted and frequently reinterpreted, edited, revised, or updated.