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# TEACHING THE SOVIET PAST

## White Paper

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ANALYSIS

# Imprint

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## About this publication

This paper presents the initial results of longitudinal critical discourse analysis of Soviet coloniality through memory politics via school history textbooks in a Soviet post-colony, the Republic of Armenia, starting with its independence in 1991 and over the period of 1950-2023.

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# 1. The Rationale

On August 15, 2024, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation issued an official statement concerning history textbook reform in Armenia. The statement read, "To question the special role of the Russian Empire, and subsequently the USSR and Russia, in the formation of today's Armenia means going against well-known facts" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, 2024). This statement reaffirms the role of textbooks as discourses of power and reassures the rationale of this study-to examine the imperial (colonial) legacy in history education.

The Soviet Union, with Armenia as one of its borderlands, did not just collapse. The Union dissolved leaving manifestations of Soviet coloniality at least in official memory regimes across the post-Soviet states through latent and vivid traces of colonial discourses. Colonial discourses are knowledge statements that implicitly or explicitly justify colonization (e.g. through a rhetoric of political or economic modernization, saving a nation), construct colonized identities, and define and reproduce

colonial relationships (see Bhabha 1994; Ashcroft et al., 2007; Annus, 2018). Coloniality is the power matrix that determines the post-colonial notion of being and exerts economic, political, and knowledge control (see Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012; Mignolo 2023). As App Annus points "Soviet colonialism brings with it Soviet coloniality as a general state of affairs or a cultural logic" (Annus 2018, 6), as a hegemonic context.

This study, its initial results and recommendations are steps towards decolonization of history education in Armenia since postcoloniality does not "automatically free the colonized people of the colonial discourses" (Spivak 1996). This white paper draws on initial results from a longitudinal critical discourse study<sup>1</sup> of school history textbooks and curricula in the Republic of Armenia, starting with its independence in 1991 and from 1991 to 2023<sup>2</sup>. This paper presents the initial results as a case study of Armenia's Sovietization discourse.

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<sup>1</sup> Critical discourse studies is a school of multi-theoretic, multi-method, and interdisciplinary approaches (van Dijk, 2013) that treat discourse as a "relatively stable use of language" (Wodak & Meyer, 2015, 6), i.e. a multimodal "social practice" (Fairclough and Wodak 1997, 258).

<sup>2</sup> The year 2023 marks the beginning of the new

phase in textbook production in Armenia following the introduction of a new national curriculum in 2021 (see Decree N136-Ն dated 10.02.2021). New textbooks covering the Soviet period have not been released as of May 2025, hence do not constitute objects of the current analysis.

## 2. Introduction

This paper starts with two strands of discussion: whether the Soviet Union was a colonial empire and what transformations of Soviet memory (through history education) happened in the last 30 years across the fourteen<sup>3</sup> post-Soviet nationalizing<sup>4</sup> states. This two-fold discussion aims at charting a historical context for a critical comparative understanding of the Armenian case. The discussion is based on the context of Soviet nationalities policies as an element of the *mission civilisatrice* that in the modern sense constructed many if not all the Soviet nations and explains the post-independence/post-colonial nationalizing.

The Soviet Union had made nations “not just as it pleased” (Suny 1993, 160) but responding to circumstances in a “deeply contradictory” (Suny 2011, 492) process where “national integration and affective connection rose and fell” (Suny 2012, 24). The Soviet nationalities policies through a combination of “constructive measures and chronic ethnophilia” (Slezkine 1994, 415), had simultaneously resulted in both nation-building and wreckage (see Brubaker

1996, Suny and Martin 2001, Smith 2019). When the Soviet Union collapsed, the “volcano of nations” (Brzezinski 1989, 1) turned into a “veritable laboratory of modern national identity formation” (Suny 2011, 527) demonstrating traces of anti-colonial revision of history. Nationalism, as in the case of post-colonial Africa, became one of the common early post-independence post-Soviet pursuits<sup>5</sup>. Brubaker notes that after independence, the former Soviet states shared a claim that they (defined as of and for the core nations) were weak and required remedial (mnemonic) action to redress previous suffering and strengthen (Brubaker 2015, 165). In a rare comparative analysis, Beissinger and Young (2002) show how similar patterns were observed in postcolonial Africa with less mnemonic ambivalence towards the colonial past, probably because the colonizers were geographically far from the colonized, hence, an imminent coercive force was geographically far.

David Moore (2001) famously asked whether “the Post in Postcolonial was the Post in Post-

<sup>3</sup> The analysis excludes Russia as the hegemonic center which requires a different perspective of analysis.

<sup>4</sup> See Brubaker, R. 2015. Nationalizing states revisited: projects and processes of nationalization in post-Soviet states. In J. L. Jackson & L. Molokotos-Liederman (Eds.), *Nationalism, Ethnicity and Boundaries: Conceptualising and Understanding Identity Through Boundary Approaches* (pp. 165-191). Routledge.

<sup>5</sup> Within the post-colonial thought there is a broad denigration of anti-colonial (nativist) nationalist endeavors (see Lazarus 1999) as derivative means to new forms of subordination and continuous disenfranchisement and inarticulacy of the already disenfranchised (see for example Chatterjee Partha. (1993). *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World: A Derivative Discourse*. University of Minnesota Press; Spivak, G. C. (2009). *Nationalism and the Imagination*. Lectora,

15, 75-98. ISSN: 1136-5781 D.L. 395-1995). This disparagement is on the other hand contrasted with viewpoints that treat the reinventing/revalorizing of pre-colonial past as an act of envisioning a post-colonial alternative social order, an opportunity for political/social imagination (see Parry, B. (2004). *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*. Taylor & Francis.; Lazarus, N. (1999). *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*. Cambridge University Press.; Aijaz, A.. (1992). *In Theory: Classes, Nations, Literatures*. Verso. ), a continuation of history paralyzed by colonialism (see Cabral, A. (1974). *Return to the Source*. Monthly Review Press.) or a necessary reversal of colonialist alterity production (see for instance the Négritude movement and commentary from Sartre, J.-P. (1988). *What Is Literature?* and Other Essays. Harvard University Press.; Fanon, F. (1977). *Black Skin, White Masks* (C. L. Markmann, Trans.). Grove Press.).

Soviet” reorienting postcolonial studies from the focus on Western colonialism. Conventional race-imbued definitions of colonialism do not exactly apply to the Soviet context. However, the Soviet Union fits ‘expanded’ definitions of colonialism as imperial domination through political-economic institutions and cultural forms (Lampland, 2000; Kuzio, 2002; Suny 2006). This line of argument aligns with Spivak’s point on the futility of conventionalizing Soviet colonialism under the traditional models (see Collier et al.; 2003; Spivak 2006), one of the reasons why postcolonial studies often ignore the “second-class” empires (see Young 2016; Albrecht, 2020). The establishment of non-conventional Soviet colonialism engenders Soviet coloniality not as strictly a Western coloniality but what Michael David-Fox calls “a middle course between the Scylla of exceptionalism and the Charybdis of shared modernity” (David-Fox, 2015, 4). Hence, this study adheres to the definition of the Soviet

Union as a colonizing empire.

To systematize the discussion of mnemonic transformations across the post-Soviet space, this study adopts Bernhard and Kubik’s 2014 classification of memory regimes. They identify three official memory regimes<sup>6</sup>: fractured (divergent interpretation of the past as the “true” version in sharp contrast to dominant interpretations deemed “false”), pillarized (co-existence of pluralist interpretations despite disagreements), and unified (harmonized interpretation of the past). It is important to note that these regimes function parallel to other vernacular memory regimes within the society. The overview of the academic literature on history textbook studies across the post-Soviet space allows to hypothesize that except for fractured memory regimes in the three Baltic states<sup>7</sup> (where the Soviet past has been continuously treated as colonization) and to some extent Ukraine<sup>8</sup> (and is certainly fractured

<sup>6</sup> “Dominant patterns of memory politics in a given society at a given moment in reference to a specific highly consequential past event or process” (Bernhard and Kubik 2014, 4).

<sup>7</sup> See the following sources for the Baltics: Kaarlõp, H., Oja, M., & Poom-Valickis, K. (2022). Teaching Issues Perceived to Be Controversial in History: Estonian Teachers’ Epistemic Cognition. *Journal of Social Science Education*, 21(1), 99-126. <https://doi.org/10.11576/jsse-4450>; Oja, M. (2020). History Education: The Case of Estonia. In I. Kestere, E.-S. Sarv, I. Stonkuvienė, & Baltic Association of Historians of Pedagogy (Eds.), *Pedagogy and Educational Sciences in the Post-Soviet Baltic States, 1990–2004: Changes and Challenges* (pp. 143-166). University of Latvia Press. <https://doi.org/10.22364/bahp-pes.1990-2004>; Abens, A. (2020). The Challenges of Teaching History in a Democracy: the Case of Latvia. In I. Kestere, E.-S. Sarv, I. Stonkuvienė, & Baltic Association of Historians of Pedagogy (Eds.), *Pedagogy and Educational Sciences in the Post-Soviet Baltic States, 1990–2004: Changes and Challenges* (pp. 126-142). University of Latvia Press. <https://doi.org/10.22364/bahp-pes.1990-2004>; Ahonen, S. (2017). The Lure of Grand Narratives: A Dilemma for History Teachers. In H. Å. Elmersjö, A. Clark, & M. Vinterek (Eds.), *International Perspectives on Teaching Rival Histories: Pedagogical Responses to Contested*

*Narratives and the History Wars* (pp. 41-62). Palgrave Macmillan UK. DOI 10.1057/978-1-137-55432-1; Kello, K. (2017). Identity and Othering in Past and Present: Representations of the Soviet Era in Estonian Post-Soviet Textbooks. *Journal of Social and Political Psychology*, 5(2), 665–693. <https://doi.org/10.5964/jspp.v5i2.737>; Raudsepp, A., & Veski, K. (2016). Colonialism and decolonisation in Estonian history textbooks. *International Journal of Research on History Didactics, History Education and History Culture. Yearbook of the International Society for History Didactics (ISHD), The International Journal of Research on History Didactics. Yearbook Of The International Society Of History Didactics (ISHD)*(37), 155-168. [https://ishd.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/issue\\_2016.pdf#page=119](https://ishd.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/issue_2016.pdf#page=119); Wulf, Meike. 2016. *Shadowlands: Memory and History in Post-Soviet Estonia*. Berghahn Books.; Klumbyte, N. (2003). Ethnographic Note on Nation: Narratives and Symbols of the Early Post-socialist Nationalism in Lithuania. *Dialectical Anthropology*, 27, 279–295. 10.1023/b:dial.00000006191.

<sup>8</sup> See the following sources for Ukraine Kasianov, G. (2022). *Memory Crash: Politics of History in and Around Ukraine, 1980s–2010s*. Central European University Press.; Verbytska, P. (2019). Ukraine. In L. Cajani, S. Lässig, & M. Repoussi (Eds.), *The*

after the Russian invasion), and the unified colonial memory regimes (in Belarus and Tajikistan<sup>9</sup>) official memory reconstruction in the other former soviet republics resulted in a mélange of primordial/nationalist narratives combined with varying degrees of anti-colonial sentiments and colonial discourses. Azerbaijan, for instance, seems to have combined anti-colonial criticism of Soviet expropriation of its natural resources with the praise of Azerbaijani input in Soviet scientific progress, while Turkmenistan in contrast silenced the Soviet past in favor of mythical primordial nationalizing. Kazakhstan, for instance, incorporated “Soviet heroes as symbols of Kazakhstani values and independence” (Rees 2020, 458) while sometimes using the term ‘Russian colonization’ (though this was later changed to ‘Tsarism’), sometimes ‘colonization’ and at times latently talking about colonial rule (Kissane 2005, Burkhanov and Sharipova 2023). Armenia, as Zolyan (2023) points out, “appropriated” the Soviet period as a “second republic” to showcase a continuation of statehood between Armenia’s first (pre-Soviet) and current (post-Soviet) republics. Probably because the idea of statehood is viewed in national historiography both as a long-term dream after losing it in the middle ages, and as a form of a post-Genocide counter-measure. .

Leo Tolstoy’s text about the diversity of unhappiness among families probably best describes the variance among the pillarized memory regimes across the post-Soviet space. Anti-colonial rhetoric in textbooks often limits to ‘safer targets’ of criticism (e.g. use of one’s natural resources for others, ignorance towards local cultures) yet appropriate elements that ‘strengthen the nation’ (rhetoric of national input in modernity and the WWII called the Great Patriotic War) without systematic decolonization of discourses probably to avoid manifest conflict with the Russian Federation. Depending on the nature of the political negotiation within the society and in foreign relations, history textbooks in many post-Soviet states seem to have over time mediated the negative (colonial) aspects of Soviet colonialism with the rhetoric of modernity to which coloniality is the Janussian ‘other face’ (see Quijano, 2007; Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). However, colonialism is often justified by its mission civilisatrice, and such claims are abundant across many post-Soviet republics.

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*Palgrave Handbook of Conflict and History Education in the Post-Cold War Era* (pp. 695-706). Springer International Publishing; Korostelina, K. (2013). Mapping national identity narratives in Ukraine. *Nationalities Papers*, 41(2), 293–315. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2012.747498>; Korostelina, K. (2010). War of textbooks: History education in Russia and Ukraine. *Communist and Post-Communist Studies*, 43, 129–137. 10.1016/j.postcomstud.2010; Marples, D. R. (2007). *Heroes and villains : creating national history in contemporary Ukraine*. Central European University Press.; Richardson, T. (2004). Disciplining the Past in Post-Soviet Ukraine: Memory and History in Schools and Families. In F. Pine, D. Kaneff, & H. Haukanes (Eds.), *Memory, Politics and Religion: The Past Meets the Present in Europe*. Lit Verlag.; Janmaat, J. (2002). Identity Construction and Education: The History of

Ukraine in Soviet and Post-Soviet Schoolbooks. In T. Kuzio & P. D’Anieri (Eds.), *Dilemmas of State-Led Nation Building in Ukraine* (pp. 171-190). Bloomsbury Academic.

<sup>9</sup> The research about Belarus points to it moving from a short-lived fractured/pillarized official memory regime to a dominantly Soviet-continuous unified memory regime since 1995 (see Guzenkova 2003, Bukhovets 2009, Zadora 2021). Zadora (2021) shows how the terminology of Soviet rule as a ‘totalitarian’ one during the first four post-independence years was changed into an ‘administrative system’ after Lukashenko came to power. In Tajikistan, the short-lived revision of Sovietization as oppression gave way to a predominantly Soviet-positive remembrance with insubstantial elements of criticism (see Blakkisrud and Nozimova 2010, Nourzhanov 2014, Clark 2019).



### 3. The Case in Armenia

Sovietization is a centripetal concept to examine discourses of colonialism as it marks the period when Armenia's interwar first-republic statehood was curtailed: Armenia was Sovietized after only two years of independence. Chapters on Armenia's Sovietization provide the following historical context with minor, non-essential differences across textbooks published over the last 30 years.

On August 10, 1920, the Treaty of Sèvres was signed between the Allies of World War I, including Armenia and the Ottoman Empire. By signing the treaty, the Ottoman Empire recognized Armenia's independence, and Armenia (70,000 square kilometers) was promised reunification with its historic lands under Ottoman control to comprise a 160,000 square kilometer territory with exact borders to be decided by the U.S. President Wilson's legally binding verdict. The Government of Armenia aimed to establish good relations with Soviet Russia which was in internal turmoil. The Soviet Russian government was reluctant to establish relations with Armenia considering an ally of the West. After the Sovietization of Azerbaijan, the Soviet Russian government presented Armenia with an ultimatum to vacate the regions of Karabakh and Zangezur. The Republic of Armenia sent a delegation to Soviet Russia to establish good relations and overcome the conflict. Soviet Russia demanded Armenia abandon the Western platform to solve the issue of territorial disputes with Turkey and leave the issue to Russia. Regardless of disagreements, Armenia and Russia signed an agreement on recognizing the Republic of Armenia. Armenia agreed to temporarily hand over the control over Karabakh, Zangezur, and Nakhichevan to Soviet Russia. On April 26, 1920,

Turkey's leader Kemal approached the leadership of Soviet Russia to jointly resist all threats of Western imperialism, including Armenia referring to the obligations under the Treaty of Sèvres. On September 23, 1920, the Turkish army attacked Armenia. While Armenians fought courageously, the castle of Kars fell, and Armenia lost the war. Armenia's failures allowed the Soviet Russian government to persist with the Sovietization plans. The Russian delegation visited Armenia for negotiations. By the end of autumn of 1920, Armenia was incapable to withstand the Bolshevik-Turkish pressure. The Caucasus Bureau of the Russian Bolshevik party had structured Armenia's Military-Revolutionary Committee which, headed by Sargis Kasyan and accompanied by the 11<sup>th</sup> division of the Red Army, marched into Armenia on November 29 and proclaimed Armenia's Sovietization. On December 2, 1920, the agreement between Russia and Armenia proclaimed the birth of Armenia's Soviet Socialist Republic.

The discourse on Sovietization, therefore, constructs a single-perspective historical context of the inevitability of Armenia's Sovietization under geopolitical conditions beyond Armenia's control (a pact between the Bolshevik Russia and Turkey). The learning activities, even though propose a question of whether Sovietization was indeed inevitable, provide no additional resources for students to consider another perspective. The perspective of inevitability is further reinforced by additional information in textbooks on how the Soviet Russian army crushed the ongoing revolts against Armenia's Sovietization in the early months of Soviet rule. Hence, the inevitability discourse is articulated as a discourse of a given condition, fate.

Spivak (2006, 828) in response to the question



of whether post-Soviet is also postcolonial, states “when an alien nation-state establishes itself as a ruler, impressing its own laws and systems of education, rearranging the mode of production for its own economic benefit, “colonizer” and “colonized” can be used”. The discourse of inevitability directly links with Spivak’s point of an alien rule. The textbooks literally present a case when an alien state establishes itself as a ruler using force. However, the textbooks systematically evade any evaluation of Armenia’s inevitable forced Sovietization as colonization. They latently view Armenia’s Sovietization as a “lesser evil”- what if Turkey took all the territory. By ignoring to discuss Armenia’s miscalculations with the Treaty of Sèvres, its ramifications for Turkey and Armenia’s possibility to a deal with Turkey without the Bolshevik Russia, the textbooks continue the Soviet history textbook statements of “the saving of Armenians by the great Russian nation”. Instead, textbook authors use the phrase “Armenia’s First Republic gave way to what is considered Armenia’s second Soviet Socialist Republic” (Gevorgyan, Khachatryan, & Virabyan, 2014, 35) or phrases such as “Armenia’s Sovietization” and “change of power in the history of Armenia’s statehood as Armenia’s first republic was replaced by the second” (Melkonyan, et al., 2016, 58).

Furthermore, discussing the adoption of the first constitution of Soviet Armenia, even when the textbooks note that it repeated the Soviet Russian constitution, there is no discussion of colonization – “when an alien rule establishes its laws...” Though the 2014 edition of the 9<sup>th</sup>-grade Armenian history textbook by Manmar Publishing House calls the 1921 soviet elections in Armenia “not democratic” (Barkhudaryan, et al., 2014), it argues that these were not democratic “because of the class discrimination” and not because of the impossibility of holding democratic elections, as manifestations of free will, among colonized subjects. The 12<sup>th</sup>-grade textbook by Zangak Publishing House (2023 edition), though discusses the violent process of Sovietization, states that the military communism policy “did not correspond to the socio-economic conditions of Armenia as it was carried out haphazardly, without accounting for the local

peculiarities” (Melkonyan, et al., Armenian History: Secondary School Textbook for Grade 12, 2023). In other words, there might have been socio-economic conditions where the totalitarian rule would correspond, or, if the local peculiarities were accounted for, the totalitarian regime would play out just finely. Thus, textbooks evade the discussion of apparent Soviet colonization and, at times mask it under a quest to construct a discourse of statehood continuity.

The rhetoric of a civilizing mission often serves as a justification for colonization. While the 2011 edition of the 9<sup>th</sup>-grade textbook by Zangak Publishing House, discussing Sovietization, states that “democracy, multiparty and pluralism” had no place in the Soviet “totalitarian” rule, it also softens this statement by pointing out that Armenia received protection from external threats, wide opportunities for economic, scientific, educational and cultural development. The textbooks across different publishing houses share a generally positive assessment of the protection and economic support in the early 1920s from Soviet Russia pointing to the provision of goods, finances, and human resources, “forgetting” that Soviet Russia was not supporting an alien state but its colony, was not “protecting” but had conquered a state through use of force. Furthermore, almost all textbooks contain separate chapters dedicated to socio-cultural progress (modernity) during the Soviet years. Even when discussing the human cost of Stalinist industrialization, the textbooks often view this cost from the “lost opportunity” principle- in other words, it is bad that Stalin killed so many people, as these people would propel the modernizations. A similar view is projected with reference to WWII. For instance, the 2011 and 2023 editions of 12<sup>th</sup>-grade Armenian history textbooks by Zangak Publishing House state that while hundreds of thousands of Armenian soldiers participated in World War 2 (called the Great Patriotic War), the numbers would have been higher if not for Stalin’s repressions (see Melkonyan, et al., 2023).

## 4. Reflection on the Discourse

The post(de)colonial lens is relatively new to the study of Armenia's Soviet past. There are a handful of studies of how the Soviet past is represented in Armenian history textbooks. Some studies broadly refer to the historical culture rather than textbooks per se. However, these studies offer valuable insights. Iskandaryan and Harutyunyan<sup>10</sup> (2003) note that Armenia could be characterized by the "absence of Russophobia so characteristic of the former USSR". They argue that the principal contradiction in Armenia's path to post-Soviet independence "was not along the Yerevan-Moscow axis, but along the Yerevan-Baku axis, or even the Yerevan-Stepanakert-Baku axis" (Искандарян and Арутюнян 2003, 145). This argument, while important, seems to forget that the Yerevan-Baku axis was plotted on the cartesian field of Soviet/post-Soviet (Russian) hegemonic influence. Hence, consecutive Armenian governments, in their hopes for the colonizer's favor (i.e. support in the Nagorno Karabakh issue), constructed memory politics that effectively mainstreamed colonial discourses of Soviet protection and progress.

Melkonyan<sup>11</sup> notes that while almost all post-Soviet states label Soviet Russian foreign policy as "conquest" or "occupation," Armenian historiography, both in Soviet and post-Soviet times, chose to apply the terms "entry," "accession," or "the establishment of Russian domination" (Мелконян 2022, par. 5). He justifies this claiming that "the status of a union republic, the highest in the Soviet Union, in any case, created several opportunities for the socio-economic and cultural development of the republics and had some attributes of statehood, such as borders, constitution, authorities, state symbols - flag, anthem, national schools and so on" (Мелконян 2022, par. 8). Melkonyan's explanation is a textbook example of how colonization is justified with its

benefits, and again, forgets that protection and progress came at a cost of significant territorial (as notes by the same textbook authors) and human costs, and independence. Such arguments hinge on the perspective of the "inevitability" of Armenia's Sovietization, a single perspective mainstreamed through textbooks that creates a context where Armenia is presented as 'at least gaining some statehood and protection'.

The neighborhood of Turkey and the memory of the Genocide also play a crucial role in cementing the image of the Soviet Union as the protector and rooting out the image of the colonizer. Libaridian points out that "for too long, the fear of neighbors distorted the perception of national interests and has been confused with strategic thinking and limited thinking in the context of physical survival" (Libaridian 2007, 202). This explains why "there were no witch hunts, no zeal to avenge the abuses of the past or to punish former leaders for the state of affairs at the time the ANM (Armenian National Movement) took over the government from the Communists in 1990" (Libaridian 1999, 20). Zolyan, studying select examples in history textbooks, notes that "Armenia's political and intellectual elites tried to form a complex attitude to the Soviet past, neither rejecting nor appropriating it completely, but assimilating it within the paradigm of national history. Zolyan terms this as "mnemonic ambiguity" (Zolyan 2023, 1).

The initial results of our analysis show that the relationship is not of mnemonic ambiguity but rather of mnemonic ambivalence – "a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite" (Ashcroft et al., 2007, 10). A context, where colonization is evident, yet any discourse of it has been long silenced in hopes of vague favors (to support the Nagorno Karabakh phase of Armenia's historic claims),

<sup>10</sup> A prominent Armenian historian, Dean of the Faculty of History at Yerevan State University and author of history textbooks.

<sup>11</sup> Another prominent historian, Director of the

Institute of History of National Academy of Sciences of Armenia and author of multiple history textbooks across the last 20 years.

and evasion of inevitable punishment (after the favor turned unfavorable). This ambivalence supported a host of other policies which resulted in what Suny described in 2017 by stating that “the imperial relationship between post-Soviet Russia and Armenia is in many ways far more colonial than those relationships were before 1991” (Suny 2017).

## 5. Recommendations

Citizens who apply multi-perspective active historical thinking have better chances to evade 'historical truth' indoctrination through schools and media, assess the legitimacy of historical claims and interpretations, differentiate between the uses and abuses of history, and acknowledge that 'historical facts are cooked and served' through interpretation. Historically literate citizens can think about historical significance, use primary source evidence, identify continuity and change, analyze cause and consequence, take historical perspectives, and understand the ethical dimension of historical interpretations.

This paper recommends adopting a decolonial lens of multi-perspectivity in history education. Decolonial thinking presumes to provide learners with sufficient resources to question narratives. Armenia should integrate the Council of Europe's "Quality History Education in the 21st Century Principles and Guidelines" to review the discussion of the Soviet past. All the history textbooks that this paper studied share faux multi-perspectivity contrasting Soviet colonial practices with the positive rhetoric of modernization. By doing so, the textbooks generate a narrative, that the Soviet rule was not perfect, but it was overall positive for Armenia. Without decolonization, history textbooks will ensure the curricular continuity<sup>12</sup> of colonialism, serving as a powerful instrument for mainstreaming and recontextualizing Soviet colonial discourses.

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<sup>12</sup> See for instance Jansen, J. D. (1990). Curriculum as a Political Phenomenon: Historical Reflections on Black South African Education. *The Journal of*

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