

Section «Foreign Languages and Area Studies»

The Prospects of Creating a Common Textbook on the History of South Caucasus

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The peoples of South Caucasus have a reach history with long and stormy events, and their cultures attract great interest not only locally, but also globally. But as of today the relations between the three major nations of this region, i.e. Armenians, Georgians and Azerbaijanis, are very complicated and are strained in their nature up to the cases of open hostility. In this context, the creation of a common textbook on the history of South Caucasus is not only of a scientific importance, but also that of political. The creation of such a textbook or at least the executed activities for creating such a textbook will contribute to the peaceful settlement of the conflicts in South Caucasus and the comprehensive study of the history of the peoples in South Caucasus. As it was demonstrated by the sociological survey results undertaken specifically for this work, the main cause of the conflicts in South Caucasus region, according to Armenian respondents, is political and not ethno-cultural[6], as it is often presented by the governmental circles of these three countries. It is obvious that the official historiography of South Caucasus is saturated with such political and ideological stereotypes when historical events are used to complicate the existing political problems. This historic course is materialized in school and university textbooks, it is actively followed by the media, various political parties and their subordinate organizations include it in their programs. At present, the dominant historiography of South Caucasus countries can be characterized as nationalistic, when historians seek to prove the uniqueness of the titular nation with all possible and impossible means. A question arises why not trust that history and whether or there are other versions of that history. It is known that today each nation has several versions of its history. For example, the history of the Armenian people studied by the older generation in Soviet Armenia is significantly different from the one that is studied by the Armenian children enrolled in the Diaspora, as well as from the western or Russian interpretations of the Armenian history. They are the three versions of the same history[1]. Moreover, we cannot argue that one of them is more real and legitimate than others.

Despite their obvious similarities, these three nations have their distinct features which are not only the basis of their national identity, but also the main obstacle of the dialogue. This fact should necessarily be taken into account by the creators of the common textbook on the history of South Caucasus. Unlike Armenians and Georgians, who have millennial tradition of historiography, the historical school of Azerbaijan, for example, was formed only at the beginning of the past century.

So, what are the necessary factors to create a common textbook? First, regardless of the ethnic and territorial problems between these nations, the co-existence and multilateral development of Armenian, Georgian and Azerbaijani nations should occur in this region. Unlike political issues, business and cultural relations between these peoples have always been characterized by mutual understanding and solidarity[2]. It can be concluded from this

that we should develop these ties which will promote the establishment of political agreement in the region.

Second, the nations of South Caucasus must understand that the gained independence and the common development are of higher priority than the regional differences which are historically continuous.

Third, due to a number of circumstances, mutual hostility and hatred are quite popular among common people. Moreover, an interesting pattern is observed; it is more moderate in urban areas than in rural areas. Therefore, there is a problem to form a positive public opinion, for which as an invaluable service can be the common history textbook.

Fourth, we should not constantly emphasize what differs us from one another, and focus only on war and destruction, but it is necessary to separate the historical facts unifying us and present them properly[4].

Fifth, the nations of South Caucasus and their ruling circles should finally understand a few simple truths; on the background of current rates of migration (which is observed in all countries of the South Caucasus), unemployment, serious environmental problems, the constant focus on territorial issues is just without prospect. We should realize that Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan together are greater force in the Middle East than individually, and being unanimous citizens of South Caucasus will be very honorable for the representatives of any nation in this region, solving the problems of ethnic identification associated with globalization, not falling into extremes. The creation of a common history textbook is certainly a long and difficult work, during which the scientists and politicians of the three countries need to agree with every word, phrase and sentence. Maybe the parties understand and use the same concept in different ways, as too often the application of the terms of *nation* and *people* leads to confusion. It should not be assumed that there are such problems only in the presentation of the common history of South Caucasus countries. If we take a slight look at the world practice of creating common textbooks, we can see that the situation is not so tragic. For example, the creation of French-German history textbook [5] took place only about half a century after the last military conflict between them, and during the works of compiling textbooks, French and German colleagues had been debating for several years why the word of nation was used for indicating the collectivity of the French in the ninth century, and in the case of the Germans. It was in the XIX century, though it was accepted that the nations are the birth of capitalism[3].

It is the first attempt that creation of a common textbook on the history of South Caucasus has been undertaken which needs a subsequent comprehensive study.

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Illustrations



Рис. 1: Armenian teacher, well-speaking in Azeri language, teaches Azerbaijani girls and boys the basics of Georgian language[7].