Ideologies and National Identities in Armenia's Education Discourse: Path-Dependent Relics of the Communist Past?

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Abstract
Following Armenia's defeat in the Second Nagorno-Karabakh War, a political process began to reform the country's education system to convey a new form of national identity and a revised understanding of the role of education for the state. Drawing on Armenia's amended educational legislation and six semi-structured interviews with schoolteachers, this paper examines how these reforms were perceived and how teachers reconstructed their professional roles and national identities in the classroom. Building on scholarship on communist legacies in the post-Soviet space, the study employs path dependence theory and the discourse-historical approach (DHA) within critical discourse analysis (CDA) to analyse the data.

The analysis shows that the reform discourse gestures towards liberal and egalitarian ideals. However, the pastoral, collectivist, and hierarchical educational ideals of communism persist among schoolteachers, as does universalism in legislative discourse. Teachers also engage in reflections on identity that lead to contestations over its meaning. Some stigmatise the current national identity and replace it with universalist ideals, and others destigmatise and reaffirm pre-war identities. Patterns also emerge in how teachers interpret educational ideologies. Those with stronger national orientations tend to emphasise civic responsibilities, whereas those with universalist ideals adopt more pastoral roles. The overall findings indicate a continued presence of communist educational ideals and national identities that are either ethno-cultural or universalist in nature, with a limited connection to statism.

Introduction

Armenia's defeat in the 2020 Nagorno-Karabakh war, followed by its recognition of the region as part of Azerbaijan, marked the beginning of a profound shift in Armenia's political discourse surrounding national identity and the role of education in its prosperity. Following the defeat, the ruling party called for emergency elections, campaigning under the slogan 'There is a future'. Once the elections secured their political representation, a discursive process began to define what this future meant for a defeated state and how it could be secured under an existential threat. The pre-war identity was framed as unfit by the ruling party to provide this future and had to be reconsidered, a process of which Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan himself decided to become the torchbearer.

At first the revisions of national identity took a discursive form. In his public statements, the prime minister created a dichotomy between 'Real Armenia' (the Republic of Armenia) and 'Homeland Armenia'. In Armenian collective memory, 'Homeland Armenia' usually refers to Nagorno-Karabakh and Armenian-populated regions in Eastern Anatolia, Turkey. But in diasporic and more nationalist discourses,

the notion may also extend to regions where Armenians historically lived or maintained cultural presence, such as in southern Anatolia and areas stretching towards the Mediterranean.

Media channels and even the arts were used to communicate the dichotomy. The prime minister wrote and shared a poem about people 'ceaselessly searching for homelands' without realising that the homeland lies within the internationally recognised borders of the Republic of Armenia.[1] This 'Real Armenia' could no longer rely on its past national symbols; it needed to be adorned with a new conception of Armenian identity. Mount Ararat (elevation 5137 m) became one of the first symbolic targets of Homeland Armenia. This mountain, which overlooks Armenia's capital yet lies within the Republic of Turkey, holds a significant place in Armenian mythology as the site from which Armenians emerged as an ethnos and spread throughout the region. Now, this mountain, outside the borders of the country, needed a replacement. The prime minister launched a campaign to substitute Ararat with Aragats, Armenia's highest peak, and replaced the photo of Ararat in his office with one of Aragats.[2]

The political discursive developments were combined with systematic changes in Armenia's education. At first the prime minister declared that Armenia's problems, from security to diplomacy to public administration, were linked to education.[3] Multiple reform projects were initiated, unprecedented in scale since the collapse of the Soviet Union. The reforms included the development of a national education strategy and a ten-year roadmap, the introduction of teacher attestation programmes through competency testing and pay adjustments, and revisions to the national curriculum and public school textbooks.

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1   An extract from the poem: Nikol Pashinyan, Facebook post, 18 August 2024, https://fb.watch/u4dlJCofXc.

2   J. Kucera, 'Between Two Mountains, an Armenian Search for Identity', *RadioLiberty*, 6 March 2024, www.rferl.org/amp/armenia-mount-ararat-aragats-pashinian-azerbaijan-national-identity/32850668.html.

3   'PM Pashinyan Sees Serious Problem in Education Sector', *Armenpress*, 28 April 2022, https://armenpress.am/hy/article/1081825.

Later on the government-led discussions and projects extended to redefining what it means to be educated,[4] including debates on the need to revise history textbooks and their content, and to rename them from *Armenian History to History of Armenia.*[5] More than improving the national education standard, the projects were envisioned to establish the Real Armenia and cultivate citizens with corresponding aspirations and ethics.

Politicians in post-conflict contexts commonly leverage education to amend state prospects, through both learning and sociological interventions, such as revisiting national identities and value systems in education.[6] Yet, the ways people take up and respond to revised identities are not reducible to political decisions alone, but are conditioned by a constellation of social, cultural, and historical factors. Focusing on education and educational reforms as a context and teachers as a study group, this paper examines how they perceive their roles in response to political shifts and engage in identity revisions to process the post-war reality, and draw on their classroom roles to inform students' understandings. Drawing on an overview of educational legislation and six semi-structured interviews with schoolteachers analysed through critical discourse analysis (CDA), this paper examines educational ideologies and the reconstruction of national identity in Armenia's education system. It argues that the post-defeat identity crisis has permeated classroom discussions, where teachers actively reflect on their national identities and professional roles, seeking either to preserve or to reconfigure them.

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4   These discussions were ongoing at the time of writing. However, in November 2024, after the completion of this paper, the prime minister and his spouse launched a campaign titled 'Learning Is Trendy', a state-funded programme that advanced an elite-defined understanding of what it means to be educated. A. Barseghyan, 'Pashinyan and His Wife under Fire for Using State Budget for Education Campaign', *OCMedia*, 9 June 2025, https://oc-media.org/pashinyan-and-his-wife-under-fire-for-using-state-budget-for-education-campaign.

5   These debates were ongoing at the time of writing; however, in July 2025 the minister of education announced on her official Facebook page that the first renamed textbooks would be introduced in schools starting in September 2025, accompanied by an editorial note encouraging students to critically engage with interpretations of historical events. Zhanna Andreasyan, Facebook post, 27 July 2025, www.facebook.com/share/p/17VC1gmbht.

6   See e.g. C.P. Loss, 'Educating Citizen-Soldiers in World War II', in *Between Citizens and the State: The Politics of American Higher Education in the 20th Century* (online edn). Princeton Scholarship Online, 2011. https://doi.org/10.23943/princeton/9780691148274.003.0004. J. Dierkes, *Postwar History Education in Japan and the Germanys: Guilty Lessons*. Routledge, 2010. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203864586.

While the war served as a catalyst for change, the resulting identity reconstructions combine elements of both transnational and ethno-cultural national identities. Furthermore, teachers' educational ideologies diverge along a spectrum between pastoral and civic orientations. The paper contends that, at their core, these reconfigurations reproduce historical legacies of communist ideologies and the national identities institutionalised under them.

The paper is structured as follows: it begins by drawing on existing literature on education and schooling to argue that schools have historically served as sites for disseminating state ideologies to younger generations. It then turns to the Soviet Union, examining how its education system was mobilised for ideological reproduction and as an instrument for fabricating Soviet national identity. This discussion is supplemented by an overview of Soviet identity and its characteristics, which provides the groundwork for analysing its legacies in post-Soviet countries. The paper then outlines the research methodology, combining path dependence[7] with the application of CDA to six semi-structured interviews with schoolteachers. The findings section begins with a CDA of educational legislation, followed by a discussion of interview data on national identities and educational ideologies, and their connection to historical legacies. The last section synthesises the findings and draws the overall conclusions of the study, pointing to potential areas for further research.

Literature Review

Mass Schooling and Statism

Since the birth of Enlightenment-era philosophy, education has been seen as a ray of light in the darkness of religious episteme, a place to find one's truth and reach Rousseauian innate, yet enchained, freedom. Ever since the Enlightenment, this stream of philosophical positions has been so strong that the link between the functionality of education, as the

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7   J. Mahoney, 'Comparative-Historical Methodology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 30 (2004): 81–101. J. Mahoney, 'Path Dependence in Historical Sociology', *Theory and Society* 29, № 4 (2000): 507–48. www.jstor.org/stable/3108585.

insertion of young individuals into the system of statism, was exchanged for a commonly held belief that education in the world divided between state borders is oriented towards autonomy and freedom.[8] Yet, a historical analysis of school formation and the identity and workforce production politics of modern education systems worldwide shows that such systems are not much concerned with emancipation.[9]

At least in Europe and its zones of influence, the emergence of mass schooling was not a state response to the premises of Enlightenment philosophy. Much of the historical and sociological analysis attributes it to state attempts to nationalise their populations for their gain.[10] The theories outline parallel developments in European countries that resulted in school formation: the transition from agrarian to industrial societies and the need for nationalisation of states in response to external security threats.

Before industrialism, agrarian societies were characterised by self-sufficiency. Families and communities were able to reproduce their social structure and culture by teaching young ones the skills needed within their households or communities. The surfacing of industrialisation demanded a less specialised and more adaptive workforce that could undertake various jobs and switch positions after receiving a general level of training in state-sponsored proto-schools. The emerging social demands led states to become involved in the educational process and to

8   C.A. Säfström, 'Rethinking Emancipation, Rethinking Education', *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 30, Nº 2 (2011): 199–209. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-011-9227-x. L. Radford, 'Education and the Illusions of Emancipation', *Educational Studies in Mathematics* 80, Nº 1/2 (2012): 101–18. www.jstor.org/stable/41485970.

9   E. Gellner, *Thought and Change*. University of Chicago Press, 1964. E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. Paris: Payot, 1983. I. Hunter, *Rethinking the School: Subjectivity, Bureaucracy, Criticism*. Routledge, 1994. G. Baldi, *Ideas, Institutions, and the Politics of Schools in Postwar Britain and Germany*. Palgrave Macmillan Cham, 2022, pp. 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-98156-3.

10   Gellner, *Thought and Change*. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*. F.O. Ramirez and J. Boli, 'The Political Construction of Mass Schooling: European Origins and Worldwide Institutionalisation', *Sociology of Education* 60, Nº 1 (1987): 2–17. https://doi.org/10.2307/2112615. Hunter, *Rethinking the School*. P.H. Lindert, 'The Rise of Mass Public Schooling before 1914', in *Growing Public: Social Spending and Economic Growth since the Eighteenth Century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004, pp. 87–127. B. Ansell and J. Lindvall, 'The Political Origins of Primary Education Systems: Ideology, Institutions, and Interdenominational Conflict in an Era of Nation-Building', *American Political Science Review* 107, Nº 3 (2013): 505–22. https://doi.org/10.1017/S0003055413000257.

use their superior resources to meet those needs that community-based educational units could not fulfil.[11]

Gellner concludes that national education systems and mass schooling emerged at the centre of the statist world order, and, as a by-product, homogenised populations and created nations. This prompts him to redefine the Weberian definition of the state: 'At the base of the modern social order stands not the executioner but the professor. Not the guillotine, but the … *doctoral d'etat* is the main tool and symbol of state power. The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than is the monopoly of legitimate violence.'[12]

The theoretical consensus linking the formation of mass schooling to the state's industrial and national imperatives leads to several inferences. Firstly, the institutionalisation of schools connected the centralised state with its populace, making education one of the earliest forms of direct state control over its young generations, their upbringing, moralisation, and knowledge control. Secondly, we may feel reluctant to adopt Gellnerian functionalist views and may opt for more contextual explanations for education's institutionalisation. However, even with the latter, it becomes difficult to envision an education system that fulfils its Kantian vision of human emancipation, as such an idea is counterintuitive to the concept of statism which education serves. Thirdly, the direct control of state regimes (democratic, authoritarian, or totalitarian) over education places such systems in a volatile position, prone to ideological indoctrination for political reproduction. The example of the USSR, a totalitarian state where power was not derived from the governed,[13] clearly demonstrates the instrumentalisation of schools for political ideological reproduction.

Education in the USSR and Its Legacies

In the USSR the education system, from teaching practices to curricula and overarching ideology, was designed to indoctrinate students and

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11   Gellner, *Thought and Change*.

12   Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 34.

13   H. Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. Penguin Classics, 2017.

reproduce communist ideology across generations. It was controlled by the state to cultivate the *Soviet Man*, an individual who internalised the worldview of Marxism-Leninism, conformed to the regime, feared the state, and relied on it even in the planning of daily lives and activities.[14]

The rationale of this system could be traced to Lenin's belief that working-class people were unaware of the exploitative nature of the existing social class structures, justifying external interference.[15] Unlike the working class, his party possessed the knowledge and ideological training to make decisions for the population for their emancipation. Starting in the 1920s, schools and the teaching workforce were utilised as channels for party propaganda and indoctrination.[16] With the ideology of the New Soviet Man forming the foundations of the USSR's education system, behaviour control, or character training of students (воспитание/vospitaniye), became an integral part of the school curriculum. School assignments across all subjects were designed to instil communist values in students and teach them to prioritise collective interests over individual desires.[17] Such training had to be entrusted to teachers.[18]

As the conduits of ideological reproduction, the Soviet state trained its own workforce of teachers.[19] Soviet pedagogues underwent party-controlled training and were considered members of the *intelligentsia* ready to create and disseminate Soviet culture. The state's reliance on the teaching class for propaganda also accorded teachers a special social status. Although

14   M. Soboleva, 'The Concept of the "New Soviet Man" and Its Short History', *Canadian-American Slavic Studies* 51, Nº 1 (2017): 64–85. https://doi.org/10.1163/22102396-05101012.

15   Lenin in J. Ehrenberg, 'Communists and Proletarians: Lenin on Consciousness and Spontaneity', *Studies in Soviet Thought* 25, Nº 4 (1983), p. 285. www.jstor.org/stable/20099235.

16   S. White, 'Propagating Communist Values in the USSR', *Problems of Communism* 34, Nº 6 (1985): 1–17. V. Shlapentokh, 'The Soviet Union: A Normal Totalitarian Society', *Journal of Communist Studies and Transition Politics* 15, Nº 4 (1999): 1–16. https://doi.org/10.1080/13523279908415418.

17   I. Schlesinger, 'Moral Education in the Soviet Union', *Phi Delta Kappan 46,* Nº 2 (1964): 72–75. www.jstor.org/stable/20343249.

18   J. Muckle, *A Guide to the Soviet Curriculum: What the Russian Child Is Taught in School.* Routledge, 1988. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003521877. J. Muckle, *Portrait of a Soviet School under Glasnost*. Palgrave Macmillan, 1990. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-349-21077-0.

19   Muckle, *Guide to the Soviet Curriculum*. Muckle, *Portrait of a Soviet School.*

they were not well paid, their profession was prestigious and respected.[20] Additionally, their role as moral trainers further expanded their social significance.

After the collapse of the USSR, even though its economic and political legacy was dismantled, its institutional legacies have persisted, as shown in studies on the shadow of communist governance modes and lifestyles in post-communist republics.[21] The continuity is also evident in education. Studies indicate that in the education system, post-Soviet reforms often reproduced patterns established under Soviet rule. Studies across Russia, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Kyrgyzstan show that despite policy amendments to increase autonomy and academic freedom, to improve institutional governance or modernise curricula, and to decentralise educational ideologies, hierarchies, top-down governance, and frameworks rooted in Soviet morals and centralised control have endured.[22]

20   J.I. Zajda, *Education in the USSR*. International Studies in Education and Social Change. Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1980. Retrieved from www.sciencedirect.com/book/9780080258072/education-in-the-ussr.

21   M.S. Shugart, 'Politicians, Parties, and Presidents: An Exploration of Post-Authoritarian Institutional Design', in *Liberalisation and Leninist Legacies: Comparative Perspectives on Democratic Transitions*, ed. B. Crawford and A. Lijphart. University of California at Berkeley, 1997, pp. 1–40. Retrieved from https://escholarship.org/uc/item/58k2v56g. C.H. Fairbanks, Jr., 'Twenty Years of Postcommunism: Georgia's Soviet Legacy', *Journal of Democracy* 21, № 1 (2010): 144–51. https://doi.org/10.1353/jod.0.0135. A. Obydenkova and A. Libman, 'Understanding the Survival of Post-Communist Corruption in Contemporary Russia: The Influence of Historical Legacies', *Post-Soviet Affairs* 31, № 4 (2014): 304–38. https://doi.org/10.1080/1060586X.2014.931683.

22   G. Kliucharev and J. Muckle, 'Ethical Values in Russian Education Today: A Moral Maze', *Journal of Moral Education* 34, № 4 (2005): 465–77. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057240500412521. A.J. DeYoung, 'The Erosion of *Vospitaniye* (Social Upbringing) in Post-Soviet Kyrgyzstan: Voices from the Schools', *Communist and Post-Communist Studies* 40, № 2 (2007): 239–56. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.postcomstud.2007.03.005. I. Chirikov and I. Gruzdev, 'Back in the USSR: Path Dependence Effects in Student Representation in Russia', *Studies in Higher Education* 39, № 3 (2014): 455–69. https://doi.org/10.1080/03075079.2014.896181. T. Bogachenko and L. Perry, 'Vospitanie and Regime Change: Teacher-Education Textbooks in Soviet and Post-Soviet Ukraine', *Prospects* 45 (2015): 549–62. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-015-9370-1. L. Leišytė, A.L. Rose, and E. Schimmelpfennig, 'Lithuanian Higher Education: Between Path Dependence and Change', in *25 Years of Transformations of Higher Education Systems in Post-Soviet Countries: Reform and Continuity*, ed. J. Huisman, A. Smolentseva, and I. Froumin. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, 2018, pp. 285–310. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-52980-6_11.

Education and the Making of Soviet National Identities

One way to understand national identities in the post-Soviet republics is to trace their origins back to the Soviet Union and the nationalist paradigm it created. On the one hand, this paradigm was ethnic and cultural, shaped by Lenin's language policies, Soviet institution-building, and cultural initiatives. On the other hand, it reflected imperial nationalism and transnationalism, designed to construct a unified Soviet nation,[23] while leaving open space for ethnic and cultural elements for each group.

The Soviet national identity was created through nationality policies that were often contradictory in nature, with scholars such as Smith arguing that they are best understood not as a single unified policy.[24] When the Soviet Union was established, most of its peoples were not fully formed nations. Lenin's initial vision was to promote the self-determination of peoples, believing that this would eventually lead to the creation of a supra-ethnic and supra-national community capable of quenching imperialism.[25] During the nativisation period, the communists focused on developing minority languages and creating respective writing systems, publishing in those languages, opening schools that used them as the medium of instruction, and promoting their associated cultures. As a result, cultural and ethnic forms of national identification and political autonomy were maximised, while the authority of the Communist Party was maintained and Russian imperialist-nationalism was condemned.

23 I. Ekua-Thompson, 'Imperial Nationalism, Sovietism, and Transnationalism in the Soviet and Post-Soviet Sphere: A Case Study of Estonian Subcultural Identity', *National Identities* (2025): 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/14608944.2025.2500626.

24 J. Smith, 'Was There a Soviet Nationality Policy?', *Europe-Asia Studies* 71, № 6 (2019): 972–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2019.1635570.

25 H. Kohn, 'Soviet Communism and Nationalism: Three Stages of a Historical Development', in *Soviet Nationality Problems*, ed. E. Allworth. New York and Chichester, West Sussex: Columbia University Press, 1971, pp. 43–71. https://doi.org/10.7312/allw92908-006. R.G. Suny, 'Nationalist and Ethnic Unrest in the Soviet Union', *World Policy Journal* 6, № 3 (1989): 503–28. www.jstor.org/stable/40209117. R.G. Suny, 'The Contradictions of Identity: Being Soviet and National in the USSR and After', in *Soviet and Post-Soviet Identities, ed.* M. Bassin and C. Kelly. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012, pp. 17–36. R. Suny and P. Goldman, 'State, Civil Society, and Ethnic Cultural Consolidation in the USSR—Roots of the National Question', in *From Union to Commonwealth: Nationalism and Separatism in the Soviet Republics*, ed. G. Lapidus and V. Zaslavsky. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992, pp. 22–44.

The paradigm shifted when Stalin seized power, moving from Lenin's anti-Russian imperialism to an era that emphasised Russian superiority within the Soviet brotherhood.[26] Under Stalin the goal was to use Russian culture to strengthen loyalty to the Soviet state and to suppress other expressions of national identity, but it 'accidentally' led to the rise of Russian nationalism.[27] The creation of the Russian national identity was accompanied by the universalisation of other national identities to encourage them to adopt Russian culture. During the Second World War, this was supplemented by special propaganda designed to indigenise the war effort among non-Russians.[28] By drawing on ethnic symbols, national heroes, and idioms, the Soviet leadership reinforced local national practices—even as the idea of Russians as the 'elder brother' became more firmly rooted.

Stalin's period was followed by Khrushchev's thaw, which manifested itself in education through policies that curtailed minority-language instruction, introducing reforms that encouraged the adoption of Russian over indigenous languages for compulsory study.[29] However, the decentralisation and greater autonomy during Brezhnev's tenure,[30] followed by Gorbachev's glasnost, fully opened the political scene, leading to the rise of national consciousness and the first ethnic conflicts in the USSR.[31]

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the time frames for each Soviet leader alongside their corresponding policies on nationalism and Marxism-Leninism, with the former fluctuating more than the latter.

26   Kohn, 'Soviet Communism and Nationalism'; Suny and Goldman, 'State, Civil Society, and Ethnic Cultural Consolidation'.

27   D. Brandenberger, 'Stalin's Populism and the Accidental Creation of Russian National Identity', *Nationalities Papers* 38, Nº 5 (2010): 723–39. https://doi.org/10.1080/00905992.2010.498464.

28   B. Schechter, '"The People's Instructions": Indigenizing the Great Patriotic War among "Non-Russians"', *Ab Imperio* Nº 3 (2012), 109–33. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/imp.2012.0095.

29   A. Kelly and I. Kovalchuk, 'Ukrainian Education and Russian Literature: Curriculum Change in a Time of War', *Slavonic and East European Review* 102, Nº 3 (2024): 526–57. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/see.00038.

30   R. Hornsby, 'Introduction', in *Protest, Reform and Repression in Khrushchev's Soviet Union*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013, pp. 1–20.

31   M.R. Beissinger, 'How Nationalisms Spread: Eastern Europe Adrift the Tides and Cycles of Nationalist Contention', *Social Research* 63, Nº 1 (1996). Suny, 'Contradictions of Identity'.

The time gap between 1982 and 1985 is due to the rapid succession of two leaders during this period, neither of whom had sufficient time to implement significant policy shifts.
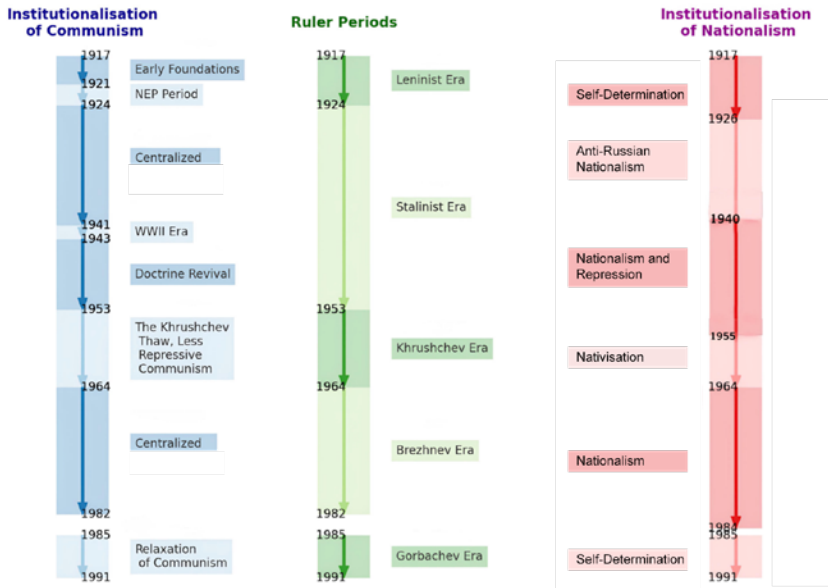

Figure 1. Soviet ideological and political trajectories, 1917–91

Thus, we can delineate several characteristics of Soviet national identity. In the Lenin era, it was characterised by non-Russian ethno-nationalism, which strengthened ethnic and cultural identities across the republics, but later shifted towards Russian ethno-nationalism. In parallel the Soviets also promoted a transnational identity for the Soviet nations. The USSR lacked a centralised, universal approach to nation formation, yet it consolidated local identities in lines of cultural and ethnic categories. The peoples of the socialist republics simultaneously incorporated loyalty to the Soviet Union as a motherland with their ethno-national identities.[32]

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32   Suny, 'Contradictions of Identity'.

Given the existing literature on Soviet national identity building and cross-country comparisons that trace institutional challenges to communist legacies, the subsequent analysis builds on the hypothesis that traces of both ideological paths, the continuation of the USSR's communist ideologies, including its moral framework and belief system in society at large, and the inconsistencies of nationalism and national identity, will be reflected in Armenian education.

Methodology

Theoretical Lens, Data Collection, and Analysis Methods

As its theoretical lens, this study employs path dependence to capture the connection between the current state of affairs and its historical context. It utilises Mahoney's definition of self-reinforcing events in path dependence,[33] in which initial historical occurrences influence subsequent ones by establishing institutional patterns that are continuously adapted. Consequently, once the motion is set, it becomes almost impossible to return to previously available options due to the institutional reproduction, established habits, and costs that are hard to challenge.[34] The utilisation of path dependency allows the paper to set up the initial hypotheses that the USSR's legacy has set into motion institutionalised ideologies around education and national identity that bear deterministic consequences to this date.

To answer the research questions and to measure the validity of the initial path-dependent hypothesis, the paper relies on qualitative data from six semi-structured interviews with schoolteachers, each of which lasted between 40 and 60 minutes. The interview format was chosen due to

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33   Mahoney, 'Comparative-Historical Methodology'; Mahoney, 'Path Dependence in Historical Sociology'.

34   Mahoney, 'Comparative-Historical Methodology'. P. Pierson, 'Increasing Returns, Path Dependence, and the Study of Politics', *American Political Science Review* 94, Nº 2 (2000): 251–67. https://doi.org/10.2307/2586011. C. Tilly, 'How (and What) Are Historians Doing?', *American Behavioral Scientist* 33, Nº 6 (1990): 685–711. https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0002764290033006005.

the flexibility it provided to both the interviewees and the interviewer,[35] and it enabled the interviewer to maintain control over discussion topics, while also providing space to ask follow-up questions in case new themes emerged during the interview.

Furthermore, the discourse-historical approach (DHA) to CDA was employed to analyse the interview materials. CDA was selected for its ability to analyse language in relation to social and political dynamics, and the DHA was chosen for its focus on the historical context of discourse.[36] Following Wodak and Meyer's analytical framework of the DHA,[37] this paper looks at three aspects of the interview data: the discourse itself, how it influences identity, and how it relates to a historically conditioned context.

Interview Participant Profiles and Selection Criteria

The interviewees were selected through multiple networks. Three teachers were recruited after responding to a Facebook post about the research project in a teacher group. At the time of the interviews, they were employed in public schools across different regions of Armenia. Two teachers based in the capital were recruited through a government-affiliated body, the National Centre for Educational Development and Innovation (NCEDI), which is responsible for training and accrediting teachers according to the standards established by the Ministry of

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35 Lincoln and Cuba cited in L. Cohen, L. Manion, and K. Morrison, *Research Methods in Education*, 8th edn. London: Routledge, 2018, p. 313. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315456539.

36 N. Fairclough, 'Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse: The Universities', *Discourse & Society* 4, Nº 2 (1993): 133–68. www.jstor.org/stable/42888773. N. Fairclough and R. Wodak, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', in *Discourse Studies: A Multidisciplinary Introduction*, ed. T. van Dijk. London: Sage, 1997, 2.258–84. T.A. Van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. D. Schiffrin, D. Tannen, and H.E. Hamilton. John Wiley & Sons, 2005, pp. 352–71. https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470753460.ch19. T.A. Van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', in *The Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, ed. D. Tannen, H.E. Hamilton, and D. Schiffrin. John Wiley, 2015, pp. 466–85. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118584194.ch22. R. Wodak and M. Meyer, 'Critical Discourse Analysis: History, Agenda, Theory and Methodology', *Methods of Critical Discourse Analysis* 2, Nº 1 (2009). McGregor in T. Mogashoa, 'Understanding Critical Discourse Analysis in Qualitative Research', *International Journal of Humanities, Social Sciences and Education (IJHSSE)*, 1, Nº 7 (2014): 104–13. Retrieved from www.arcjournals.org.

37 Wodak and Meyer, 'Critical Discourse Analysis'.

Education. At the time of the interviews they held part-time jobs as public schoolteachers and full-time positions as teacher trainers. The last teacher was recruited through personal connections that referred to teachers working in regional schools.

The list below presents the study participants, who were assigned pseudonyms for confidentiality purposes. Identifying details, such as schools and institutional positions, have been abstracted to prevent direct identification while retaining information relevant to the research.

- Aram: A male history and social sciences teacher in his late thirties, working in a small village school. He taught in Nagorno-Karabakh before the forced displacement. Before becoming a teacher, he worked in the military on a contract basis.

- Ani: A female Armenian language and literature teacher in her late thirties, working in a conflict-zone village school bordering Azerbaijan. She has been there since the start of her career, has received training from Teach For All, Armenia, and the NCEDI, and occasionally delivers lectures to other teachers.

- Narek: A male teacher-trainer for the NCEDI in his mid thirties, also teaching social sciences and history part-time at a private school in the capital, which uses its own teaching methods.

- Alina: A senior NCEDI official and part-time Armenian language and literature teacher in her late forties, based in the capital city.

- Karo: A male history and social sciences teacher in his early forties, working in a conflict-zone village school bordering Azerbaijan. He has been at this school since the start of his career and is currently receiving training from Teach For All,

Armenia. He served as a reservist during the Second Nagorno-Karabagh War.

- Liana: A female primary teacher in her early forties, working in the capital. She has taught in multiple schools throughout her career, both in the capital and in the regions, and occasionally delivers lectures to other teachers.

Methodological Challenges and Researcher Positionality

The methodology, theoretical framework, data collection, and analysis methods employed in this study, as well as its qualitative nature, introduced inherent limitations that were mitigated through reflexivity.

This research relies on historical analysis to explain teachers' interpretations of national identity and educational ideologies. While this approach provides contextual insight, it inevitably omits alternative explanations. For instance, political discourse in Armenia around education and identity has shifted considerably since the war; however, the influence of teachers' political affiliations on their perceptions was not discussed in the interviews or addressed in the study. This limitation is partially offset by the inclusion of teachers occupying government-affiliated positions, who are likely to be closer to the government-led political discourse.

The relatively small sample size of six interviews and the demographic profiles of the participants are another limitation. The study participants represented a younger cohort of teaching professionals and a balanced gender distribution, which is not fully representative of the teaching population, where older and predominantly female teachers make up a larger proportion. Including more diverse demographic profiles could have yielded different understandings of national identities and educational ideologies, though these limitations are somewhat mitigated through triangulation of the interview data with policy reform analysis.

Moreover, the age imbalance is likely to diminish over time due to the generational turnover in the profession over the next decade.

Additionally, the interview questions assumed a level of awareness among the participants regarding state education legislation and the rationale behind educational policies. Many teachers, including those in government-affiliated institutions and teacher-trainer roles, demonstrated limited awareness of these, indicating a lack of cohesion around government-defined educational goals. Consequently, when discussing 'teachers' ideological types', it is important to note that ideal types were not strictly observed, and teachers occupied fluid positions along a spectrum.

CDA inherently involves selecting certain aspects of discourse for examination while leaving others unexamined.[38] This selection process means that both the researcher's attributes and knowledge systems influence the study and shape the 'truths' constructed within it. Thus, the study adopts an epistemological stance that treats truth as socially constructed and influenced by both intrinsic and external factors. Significant effort was made to engage in reflexivity and with extensive literature to mitigate confirmation biases, and to rely on direct quotations and empirical evidence from interviewees. It is also recognised that the researcher cannot fully perceive the world from the perspectives of others. The study's conclusions should therefore be understood as an interpretation of complex social and historical influences rather than an absolute representation of objective reality.

Data Analysis

Armenian Education Legislation Overview and Analysis

To contextualise the teacher interviews, it is useful to look at the discourse of the New Education Standard (2021), adopted after Armenia's defeat

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38   Van Dijk, 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (2005) and 'Critical Discourse Analysis' (2015).

in the Nagorno-Karabakh war, alongside the Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education (2009). The Law defines the purpose of Armenia's state education as 'the process of bringing up and educating individuals' in 'the spirit of patriotism, statehood, and humanism', preparing them to 'orient themselves professionally'. It emphasises 'comprehensive individual development, civic consciousness, respect for individual rights and freedoms, dignity, patriotism, hard work, responsibility, tolerance, and the formation of an environmental worldview' (Article 4).

The Standard, by contrast, spells out the competencies students are expected to develop, most of which target knowledge-based skills such as language, mathematics, and science. Competency number four, however, goes beyond individual abilities and situates students within the state and society, and links character development to social roles:

> students should contribute to social development based on the rule of law, democracy, social justice, and freedom. They should develop a love for their homeland, understand national, state, and public interests and priorities, and value human life and dignity. They should recognise the cultural, state-legal, and economic spheres of society, analyse them comprehensively, show initiative, make independent decisions, and take responsibility for the consequences. (Section 2:4)

The analysis of the legislative amendments shows an egalitarian transition in how the state conceives the relationship between citizens and education, manifested in three ways: first, a shift from emphasising individual moral traits to civic responsibilities; second, a redefinition of students' roles in relation to the state; and third, a reshaping of teachers' classroom responsibilities. Yet, references to communist universalism remain intact.

The first shift—from value nurturing to civic traits—is evident in how the Law's emphasis on patriotism as the ultimate goal of education has evolved in the Standard towards statism and liberal values. The

Law mentions 'patriotism' three times in the context of student traits. The Standard uses the term only in the phrase 'patriotic citizen', implying that patriotism is valued in relation to citizenship and the state. Similarly, the Law lists traits such as 'diligence' and 'decent behaviour' alongside 'civic consciousness, human rights, and freedoms', suggesting a syntactic equalisation of disciplinary and civic values. In contrast, the Standard omits terms like 'diligence' and instead emphasises traits that foster egalitarian social outcomes. Competency number three, for example, expects students to demonstrate 'honesty and responsibility towards themselves and others, regardless of age, gender, nationality, level of well-being, appearance, abilities, profession, beliefs, and other characteristics'. The transition is also evident in the way these two policies treat the role of teachers. The Law assigns teachers disciplinary roles to shape 'proper behavioural responses' among students, which is reminiscent of communist moral conformity imposed from above. The Standard does not assign corrective roles to teachers and instead promotes a self-reflective understanding of student behaviour. Table 1 offers a visual representation of the discursive shifts.

Law of the Republic of Armenia on Education (2009)	New Education Standard (2021)
The development of patriotism	Patriotic citizen
	Love for homeland
Decent behaviour	Behaviour for self-improvement
Diligence	Reflects on work, has work skills, and works under pressure
Teachers form proper behaviour and manners among students	Learners learn self-reflection and self-organisation skills
National values	National and state interests
National and universal values	National and international cultural values

Table 1. Discursive shifs in Armenia's educational legislation, 2009–21

Aside from the changes, Armenia's educational legislation references 'humanism' and 'universal values' as moral benchmarks alongside national values, without providing clear definitions for these terms. While global

education systems may use universalism to integrate diversity, it is rare for educational laws to emphasise 'universal values' or 'humanism' in their opening articles. France's Code de l'éducation[39] uses education to promote national values that are intrinsically liberal and democratic. It states that 'In addition to transmitting knowledge, the Nation sets as the primary mission of the school to share with pupils the values of the Republic.' The UK's Education Act (2002), Section 78 (1), mentions that the national curriculum in England and Wales promotes 'the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society'.[40] Yet, any appeals to humanism and universalism are absent in both legislations.

Although the word choices in the Armenian legislature may be unintentional or contingent, they suggest that the communist ideological legacy persists as an underlying path through self-reinforcement. The references to 'humanism' in particular echo Marxist-Leninist philosophy, which posited a shared moral framework and envisioned the triumph of communism as leading to universal emancipation and global equilibrium. Nonetheless, Armenia's new Standard tries to replace communist moralism with more egalitarian moral principles and to reframe a rudimentary, state-detached form of patriotism as a more civic and state-oriented ethos.

National Identities in Transition: DHA Analysis

The interview data suggest that, following the Nagorno-Karabakh war, teachers consistently engaged students in classroom discussions about the post-war situation through allegories and metaphors to process the reality of defeat. This process sometimes prompted reflection on their own identities. These reflections gave rise to two distinct responses. On the one hand, some teachers contested historical narratives and stigmatised existing identities, finding solace in constructing new forms of identity that aligned more closely with the experience of defeat.

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39   France, Code de l'éducation, www.legifrance.gouv.fr/codes/texte_lc/LEGITEXT000006071191.

40   UK, Education Act 2002, www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2002/32/section/78.

Moreover, they tended to justify the newly adopted identities by the ideas of universalism and, at times, anti-nationalism. On the other hand, a different group of teachers returned to historical narratives for another reason: to destigmatise the defeated identity. In this case, history provided a safer place, where the nation was stronger, held better moral values, and had a historical destiny. It allowed them to demonstrate their loyalty to the pre-war national identities after the defeat. However, both responses of the majority participants decoupled the state from their identities and at times relied on ethnic-cultural or transnational identities. This indicates an absence of firmly institutionalised state-centred nationalism and points to a continuation of the Soviet identity paradigm.

In her classroom Alina, a government-affiliated teacher, used the example of *the legend of Ara the Handsome, king of Armenia, and Queen Semiramis of Assyria* to engage students in discussions about the post-war defeat situation. According to the legend, the 'lustful' queen of Assyria heard of the Armenian king's beauty and sent messengers to propose marriage. The union would have united the two enemy states and allowed them to rule both countries. Ara rejected the offer, which provoked Semiramis to wage war against Armenia to capture him and force him into marriage. During the battle Assyria defeated Armenia, and Semiramis's soldiers mistakenly killed Ara, leaving the country under Assyrian rule. After the war, Alina began asking her students what would have happened if Ara had been more diplomatic and accepted Semiramis's offer. 'I ask now, was he not wrong? Could he not have accepted Semiramis's proposal diplomatically, instead of going to war? Why not accept and expand the territory, improve the economy, and see what he could do with that woman later on?'

In Alina's classroom the legendary proposal served as a metaphor for Nagorno-Karabakh and its potential surrender without another war. This allegory allowed her to engage students in discussions about the political decisions of the defeat and to explore alternative scenarios. Interestingly the rationalisation of national myths to critically engage with the present

ultimately led her to reproduce the existing scenario of capitulation, without questioning the subsequent issue of state sovereignty.

Narek used a similar approach to discuss the post-conflict situation through metaphors, without direct references to the actual political events and students' experiences. When discussing the issue of conflict resolution as a soft skill, he switched the topic to international relations and open borders. He discussed the importance of neighbourly relations with other states, and guided the students to think of 'scenarios in place so that if we decide to trust the neighbours, it is well calculated'.

The revisiting of the past to analyse the present reality then turns into identity stigmatisation, when events of the past are reframed into historical narratives that are sometimes falsified to serve contemporary contestations. Alina's contemplations of alternatives in historical events extended to the teaching of the Armenian genocide, which led to identity stigmatisation. After the Nagorno-Karabakh war, Alina began questioning the responsibility of Armenians in the Armenian genocide. She said, 'We often discuss where our fault was, why we didn't self-organise.' Alina provided answers to the questions she posed to her students. Those answers suggest a perceived moral turpitude among Armenians. To avoid such scenarios, she concluded that Armenians had to learn 'to support the successful among them instead of engaging in betrayal and envy'. The idea that both historical and current misfortunes are a consequence of the lack of collective probity also appeared in the interview with Aram. After the war Aram began revisiting history to find examples of immoral historical figures causing collective tragedies; as he said, he began discussing treason and negative collective traits of Armenians, such as jealousy and envy.

When the collective identity is presented as possessing wicked traits, the national narrative and its myth—the *Platonic noble lie* the state tells to secure its legitimacy—also become deficient and require adjustments. Alina recalled explaining to her colleagues that Armenia should follow France's method of teaching history. According to her, in France there

is no separate subject for national history; it is integrated into the world history curriculum. This contrasts with Armenia, where students take two parallel subjects: world history and Armenian history. She said, 'I discussed it with the teachers; they protested and got confused. For them, it is only about the words "Armenian history"; national emotions are more important.' As social constructs, nations rely on the collective memory of shared past events, myths, and traditions to create a sense of community and continuity. When Alina opposes the teaching of the collective memory, she challenges the condensation of narratives that form historical truth and are used to create the nation itself. However, it is not that she asks for forgetting. She wants it to be discussed to the extent that it contributes to the formation of the collective memories of other nations, that is, world history. It is this subjective form of history that needs to be adjusted to fit a different reality, one in which the nation is considered and justified in relation to others, rather than solely to itself. Moreover, Alina did not seem to question why she wanted this change, or why her colleagues in a country with a population the size of Paris resisted the idea of adopting the teaching style of a state that was once one of the largest empires in history.

Ani shared similar stories in her interview. She noted that after the war it became painful for her to observe students expressing nationalistic and chauvinistic views. When asked what she considered expressions of chauvinism, she identified her students' support for the Armenian guerrilla movements during the genocide and their heroisation of Armenia's army commanders in the First Nagorno-Karabakh War as examples of extremism. The figures associated with the resistance during the genocide and the First Nagorno-Karabakh War effectively prevented the complete decimation of Armenians and are embedded in the Armenian collective identity and narratives as liberation movements in response to existential threats. However, in the post-defeat context, the figures representing nation-state ideologies are recast as chauvinists, and their ideologies of resistance are perceived as a source of harm. Extremism is not identified with perceived others who might be harmed by it, but rather in relation to the self. In the next step, national narratives and

figures that demand opposition to capitulation are seen as needing adjustment and replacement with more reconcilable ideals and figures.

Liana's engagement with the revision of identities took a different direction. To process the identity crisis, she drew on her pre-war teaching practices to destigmatise the defeated identity and reinforce her loyalty to it. She mentioned her pre-war custom of taking her students to Armenia's main military pantheon, Yerablur. After the war, when the pantheon gained hundreds, if not thousands, of new graves of young military conscripts, and the capitulation of Nagorno-Karabakh, she paused this ritual of patriotic expression. A year passed, and she reimagined the concept of identity and began attaching symbolism to the loss: 'I began telling them [her students] Yerablur is not just a graveyard but a museum of heroes.' When students countered her and mentioned their disappointment, she told them: 'What truly matters is that you have a homeland. It doesn't matter who governs Armenia; it is you who are responsible for it.' Karo shared a similar story from his classroom discussions, explaining how he guided his students to view the situation through the lens of continuity in Armenian identity and a history marked by both victories and defeats.

Both Karo and Liana concluded that the education system needed a revamp to strengthen national identity. When asked how this could be achieved, they suggested integrating national cultural expressions, such as songs and dances, and embedding national value systems into education. However, when asked to define these value systems, neither Liana nor Karo provided clear answers. Instead, they referred to humanist principles or proposed reinforcing patriotism by making education more culturally national. They argued that transforming education in this way would have bolstered national identity, which, in turn, could have challenged the prevailing sense of defeat. If ideology and identity had been strong, they reasoned, people would have felt responsible for reconciling the traumatic present with the victorious past. Unlike the first group of teachers, who employed historical narratives to stigmatise and reshape current identities, this group sought to reconnect with the

pre-war identity and utilise it to frame the present reality as an interruption to be rectified through the consolidation of national identity.

Teachers' Interpretations of Civic and Pastoral Roles

The interviewed teachers diverged in their understandings of the purpose of Armenia's education system, their professional roles, and the ideological foundations guiding their work. These divergences crystallised into two orientations: one pastoral, justified through universalist ideals and prioritisation of individual character-building; and another civic and national, which ties education to the state's prosperity and nation-building. Notably, teachers who held stronger national ideals tended to ascribe to themselves more civic roles compared to those who gravitated towards more universalist understandings of identity.

Narek, a government-affiliated teacher-trainer, was the only respondent who explicitly connected Armenia's education standards to the state, describing the purpose of education as 'to create a citizen of a future rule-of-law state, equipped with skills, knowledge, and a value system of liberal democracy'. Alina and Ani, by contrast, referred to the specific traits-related competencies outlined in the Standard, listing qualities such as resilience, teamwork, and adaptability to changing environments. Aram, on the other hand, associated the mission of education with the well-being of teachers. He suggested that if he were to establish an educational ideology, it would prioritise teacher welfare and grant teachers greater disciplinary authority in schools.

In the conversation about teachers' responsibilities toward the state and society, similar patterns emerged. Those who embraced stronger national ideologies articulated a clearer sense of statism and the reciprocal relationship between educators and the state. They viewed teachers as responsible for educating students about their duties as citizens. Narek, for example, mentioned teaching about civic activism and protests during extracurricular activities, and Liana defined her role as 'educating the

generation that will defend the rights of the state tomorrow'. Moreover, Ani and Alina redirected the discussion towards morality. Ani saw her role as shaping society by instilling proper values: she said, 'If the teachers are forgiving, so are the students.' Aram's response was the epitome of the perceived hierarchy of morality between students and teachers, describing his duty as to 'make students useful to society, preventing them from ending up in prison'.

The ideological fault line persisted when the teachers discussed the value systems they sought to promote. Narek, Liana, and Karo emphasised values linked to civic ethics and liberal responsibility, such as tolerance and respect, self-awareness, and the pursuit of justice and truth. Conversely, Alina and Ani framed their values in universalist and collectivist terms. Alina described her end goal as nurturing selflessness: 'If we care for each other and ourselves become one that lives for the world, we are successful.' Ani's response revealed inner contradictions: she spoke of granting students freedom 'in their minds and actions', but later added, 'I don't like individualism; I value teamwork and how much students push their friends.' Aram once again reinforced discipline and hierarchy, saying that 'if there is no discipline, the student will dominate, and you cannot conduct a lesson'.

The ideological divergence partially maintained itself when the teachers were asked whether Armenia needed a state-imposed educational ideology. Most respondents supported such a framework. Narek argued that 'such matters cannot be left to individual discretion', and Aram nostalgically compared it to the USSR's five-year plans, suggesting that Armenia lacked such a structure. Karo and Liana were the only respondents who did not provide absolute answers and attributed importance to the relative independence of the teachers. Liana remarked, 'While it would be better to have guidance from the state, there should be space for individual approaches to be developed.' Karo similarly proposed that the state could define an overarching ideology, which teachers would then localise through their own work practices.

Discussion on National Identities and Path Dependence

The study's analysis points to a transitional phase in Armenia's educational discourse, which has started with state-initiated policy reforms in education and moved to individual deliberations and revisions of identity and ideology among the teaching population. The analysis of the Law on Education (2009) and the New Education Standard (2021) shows a redefinition of the foundations of education. There is a shift from the cultivation of individual character traits toward civic responsibility and social participation. Although the new Standard moves closer to a framework centred on the state and civic roles for students, it retains elements of moral universalism and suggests that the ideological renewal is incomplete and continues to carry communist legacies. Moreover, the interviews with schoolteachers reveal a dynamic interplay between identity deliberations and diverging ideas about educational ideologies. The teachers' classroom practices often involve identity revisions, which can take the form of stigmatising or destigmatising certain identities, promoting universalist or counter-national ideas, recreating historical narratives, or omitting aspects of the present to preserve national myths.

The prevalence of such ideals, even among government-affiliated teachers, indicates a potential disconnect between state-building and nation-building, suggesting that the foundations for the former are being discarded. Kymlicka argues that state-building inherently involves nation-building;[41] even seemingly benign decisions, such as selecting an official language or establishing national holidays, determine which group's identity warrants state recognition. When the state's national identity achieves a dominant position, it also helps to maintain unity among citizens around these identities and support state power, so that it maintains the identity. In this context, the gap in teachers' understanding of the relationship between the state and national identity may eventually undermine the state's ability to cultivate a coherent civic ethos.

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41   W. Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*. Oxford: OUP, 2001.

The consideration of the Soviet legacy may explain this phenomenon in Armenia. The USSR had little incentive to foster national consciousness tied to statism, as this could threaten the integrity of the federation. Instead, nationalism was allowed only within cultural and ethnic limits. Moreover, the inconsistency and ambivalence regarding the relationship between the state and national identity created a legacy of uncertainty around them.[42]

In the same vein, the Soviets labelled figures and movements advocating for national sovereignty as chauvinists. For example, Ukrainian nationalists resisting Soviet control were portrayed as Nazi-backed insurgents, which equated their actions with those of Nazi Germany across the Soviet republics—a narrative that was also employed by the Russian government.[43] Nationalism was depicted as a source of social disorder, while the universalism of communism was presented as a model of social harmony. Just as non-Russians in the USSR were expected to adopt the Russian language, culture, and even naming conventions to integrate into the dominant system, some study participants saw the elimination of nationalist sentiments among their students as a way to align Armenia with the world and prevent potential conflicts.

At the opposite end of the spectrum, some teachers' responses and their emphasis on the reinforcement of national identity independently of the state can also be understood in relation to the Soviet legacy. Historically the Soviet state's unwillingness to protect Armenians and, at times, its complicity in their endangerment contributed to perceptions of unstable social realities as direct threats to national identity, creating protective

42   J.O. Pohl, 'Stalin's Genocide against the "Repressed Peoples"', *Journal of Genocide Research* 2, Nº 2 (2000): 267–93. https://doi.org/10.1080/713677598. J. Laycock, 'Armenian Homelands and Homecomings, 1945–9: The Repatriation of Diaspora Armenians to the Soviet Union', *Cultural and Social History* 9, Nº 1 (2012): 103–23. https://doi.org/10.2752/147800412X13191165983079. J. Laycock, 'Belongings: People and Possessions in the Armenian Repatriations, 1945–49', *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History* 18, Nº 3 (2017): 511–37. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/kri.2017.0034.

43   T. Erlacher, 'Denationalizing Treachery: The Ukrainian Insurgent Army and the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists in Late Soviet Discourse, 1945–85', *Region: Regional Studies of Russia, Eastern Europe, and Central Asia* 2, Nº 2 (2013): 289–316. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/reg.2013.0010.

forms of nationalism detached from state authority.[44] Events such as the First Nagorno-Karabakh War and the 1988 Sumgait pogrom compounded the historical traumas and reinforced an 'everyone is against us' mentality. Given this context, the strengthening of national identity outside state structures and the instilling of responsibility in the individual, rather than relying on governmental action, may reflect a path-dependent pattern of self-preserving nationalism.

Although this paper provides historically grounded explanations for the patterns observed in Armenian educational discourse, it does not address the political discourses and movements that may shape the contestations or drive them. The focus on historical legacies leaves room for future research to explore how political agendas condition identity formation in education and to deepen understanding of the intersection of history, politics, and pedagogy in shaping national consciousness.

Conclusion

This study contributes to understanding how the post-war identity landscape in Armenia shapes educational discourse and reforms, as well as individual teachers' contestations over identity and social roles, and links these practices to Soviet-era legacies. Scholars across various disciplines have examined how communist ideologies and social structures continue to manifest in post-communist societies in areas such as political distrust, low voter turnout, and practices in education, institutional culture, and the curriculum.[45] While previous research has explored communist legacies in Armenia's political institutions,[46] this study is one of the

44   P. Rutland, 'Democracy and Nationalism in Armenia', *Europe-Asia Studies* 46, Nº 5 (1994): 839–61. https://doi.org/10.1080/09668139408412202.

45   Shugart, 'Politicians, Parties, and Presidents'; Kliucharev and Muckle, 'Ethical Values'; Fairbanks, 'Twenty Years of Postcommunism'; Chirikov and Gruzdev, 'Back in the USSR'; Obydenkova and Libman, 'Understanding the Survival'; Bogachenko and Perry, 'Vospitanie and Regime Change'; Leišytė et al., 'Lithuanian Higher Education'.

46   Y. Paturyan and V. Gevorgyan, 'Trust towards NGOs and Volunteering in South Caucasus: Civil Society Moving Away from Post-Communism?', *Southeast European and Black Sea Studies* 14, Nº 2 (2014): 239–62. https://doi.org/10.1080/14683857.2014.904544.

first to undertake a sociological analysis of identity and self-perception in relation to the state and historical legacies.

The analysis focused on two dimensions: the framing and understanding of educational ideologies and values, and the formation of national identity in relation to historical legacies. Using path dependence theory, CDA, and the triangulation of policy documents with interviews of six teachers, the study identified divergences between state legislation and teacher perspectives on identity and educational ideologies. The policy texts showed a stronger emphasis on civic-centred education and national ideals grounded in liberal democratic values. Yet their references to universalist moral frameworks suggest that elements of the communist ideological legacy remain. Moreover, the teacher interviews showed that participants navigated post-war realities through processes of national identity revision, stigmatisation or destigmatisation, and reinforcement or distancing, often using universalist ideals as justification. Furthermore, the teachers did not demonstrate a coherent understanding of state educational ideologies or of their own roles vis-à-vis the state and students.

Given that this research is limited to a CDA of six teacher interviews and two policy papers, the findings should not be generalised to the entire Armenian teaching population. The results might have differed if participants had been drawn from other professional networks, if they had been approached within their communities, or if political discourse as a driver of ideological and identity contestations had been examined. Despite its limitations, the study identifies emerging trends in national identity, educational ideologies, and teachers' understandings of their roles in Armenia. Future research could expand on the findings by incorporating the political dimension into analyses of identity formation and its interaction with historical legacies in education.

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