The Past in Peril
Greek History Textbook Controversy and the Macedonian Crisis

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Abstract

The conflict between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia over the name and historical heritage of Macedonia, which in the early 1990s erupted in a diplomatic and political crisis, can in part be analysed as a “history war”. In this article, the Macedonian conflict’s roots in and impact on debates concerning the contents of history education in Greece, at the time of the crisis, are examined, along with the conditions of textbook production against the backdrop of the political conditions which gave rise to revision. Using samples from Greek press and educational journals, professional and identity political interests are analysed as boundary-work, brought about by the need for various advocates of “national values” in history education to demarcate themselves from extreme nationalism, in the name of science and patriotic duty.

Keywords: history wars, textbook revision, textbook controversy, boundary-work

History is impartial. And it is not pedagogically correct nor nationally desirable to load teaching with emotion or ideological colouring (Voros, 1994:7).

In recent decades Greece has experienced a number of history textbook controversies – the most recent and widely publicised in 2006-2007 – which in several cases have resulted in textbooks, whose contents have been considered as undermining national identity, being withdrawn from circulation by the authorities following pressure from various interest groups (Repoussi, 2007; Kokkinos and Gatsotis, 2008; Liakos, 2009). Although several researchers have made reference to these non-state actors involved in educational debate and the process of textbook revision, Greek textbook research has tended to centre on content analysis of the textbooks themselves (Koulouri and Venturas, 1994). The elements in focus are usually the national ideology reproduced in the books, the cultivation of stereotypes, the structure and underlying norms of the official narrative and the space assigned to certain events or perspectives (Hamilakis, 2003). A main conclusion of this research is that history teaching in Greece is traditionally dominated by an ethnocentric approach, aimed at imbuing a national consciousness in the minds of the pupils (e.g. Frangoudaki and Dragona, 1997; Avdela, 2000; Kokkinos and Gatsotis, 2008), and that the textbooks which have caused controversy...
and been withdrawn, were taken out of circulation because they deviated from the national norm – for example, by introducing non-ethnocentric perspectives to the teaching of history – or presented controversial historical issues associated with the national past in a “heretic” way (e.g. Kokkinos and Gatsotis, 2008).

In this article, I aim to step outside of the textbook and instead discuss how the debate on history education in Greece has been shaped in conjunction with a larger political crisis, in which the nation was perceived to be threatened, and the interests involved. The historical setting of this study is the “culture war” between Greece and the recently independent Republic of Macedonia over the name “Macedonia” and the historical symbols and heritage associated with it. The period in focus is the most intense phase of the still unresolved conflict, 1991-1995, years of a both foreign and domestic political crisis when Greek diplomacy was engaged in an attempt to block international recognition of the new neighbouring state. The official Greek position was that there could be no other Macedonia than the northern Greek region with the same name and that the neighbouring state’s use of this very name constituted the theft of Greece’s national past, perhaps even with the annexation of parts of the Greek province of Macedonia as the ultimate goal.

However, the Macedonian conflict cannot solely be understood as a controversy between two nation-states laying claims to a historical and cultural heritage. Since the onset of the diplomatic conflict coincided with a period of domestic political crisis in Greece, the perceived external threat against the nation proved instrumental in the ongoing quest for setting the agenda of societal debate. “Greece is [...] the history, cultural inheritance and varied richness of our people”, local politician and commentator Nikolaos Martis argued in 1983 in an attempt to sound the alarm regarding the perceived threat from nation-building in Yugoslav Macedonia. “And if someone is intriguing against it, every Greek no matter where he stands has a duty to defend it. [...] This is a task especially for our educators” (Martis, 1984:115-16). An important aspect of this struggle was thus to set the agenda of educational debate by attempting to exert an influence on the contents and overall orientation of the history curriculum, in its capacity as a repository for the national values and knowledge of the national past perceived to be in peril.

In the study, I examine the conditions of textbook production against the backdrop of the political developments which contributed to the need for revision, and discuss analytical approaches to the study of educational debate and some of the interests at stake in them – professional as well as identity political. The material referred to involves samples from mainstream press and educational journals from the period in question and, in some cases, sources that have been cited and discussed by other researchers. ²
Background: Textbook Revision and Controversy in Greece

In order to understand the responses to the Macedonian crisis and the calls for the promotion of values perceived to be national, one needs to set them in the context of educational politics and the general conditions of history textbook production in Greece. As historian Susanne Popp has noted, different schoolbook admission procedures play an important role in the making of the history textbook controversies known as history wars, and partly explains why these controversies are a recurring phenomenon in some national contexts but not in others. Using an illustrative comparison between Japan and Germany – both countries with troublesome national histories and thus potential for controversy – she observes that while the highly centralised character of Japanese schoolbook production and distribution promotes public focus on and scrutiny of the authorisation of new textbooks every fourth year and thereby “create [...] favorable conditions for angry public debate, in part orchestrated by the mass media”, the German system, where textbooks are authorised on the regional level of federal states in very heterogeneous educational environments, “does not help to attract public attention” (Popp, 2009:113-14). The result of the complexity of these uncoordinated procedures is that textbook controversies (on a national level) are less likely to occur in the German context than in the centralised Japanese one.

The conditions in Greece support the validity of this observation. History textbook production and distribution were brought under the auspices of the state-run publishing organ OESV (later renamed OEDV)³ in 1937, in a period of authoritarian rule (the Metaxas dictatorship), and have remained so up until today (Papagiannidou, 1993; Hamilakis, 2003; Repoussi, 2007). The guidelines and instructions regarding contents are provided by another state organ, since 1985 known as the Pedagogical Institute, which appoints the authors employed in the writing of textbooks (http://www.pi-schools.gr/pi_history/). The Pedagogical Institute answers in turn to the Ministry of Education and Religious Affairs which reserves itself the right to scrutinise and, if deemed necessary, to make changes in the textbooks produced. Consequently, the contents of history textbooks have ultimately depended on the political camp in office at the time of their conception. This helps explain why controversies over history education, textbook contents and public memory have been increasingly common in Greek public debate since the 1980s.

The downfall of the military regime in 1974, the process of the transition to a parliamentary democracy and the political rehabilitation of the previously banished Left, the vanquished party of the Greek civil war, brought about the need for textbook revision. When, for the first time ever, a party that explicitly claimed a socialist identity – Andreas Papandreou’s PASOK – came to power after the 1981 elections, a series of changes was introduced in the field of education. Since one of PASOK’s aims was to rehabilitate the wartime (left-wing) National Resistance, to which the ruling party claimed an ideological affinity, and include it in the official national narrative (Liakos, 2004:370; Bontila, 2008; Rori, 2008), new history textbooks were
launched in order to replace those in use during the preceding decades of right-wing political hegemony.

However, not all textbooks were written in service of this political ambition to revise the image of the recent national past since there also was a more general spirit of change, reflecting international intellectual and methodological trends in the teaching of history. In 1984 a new history textbook, written by the renowned Greek-Canadian historian Lefteris Stavrianos, a leading champion of the teaching of global history, was introduced in the history class of upper secondary school (Stavrianos, 1984). It was an attempt at a non-ethnocentric approach to the teaching of history by emphasising global developments (such as the agrarian, industrial and technological revolutions), instead of the political history of the Greek nation that had traditionally been in focus. Stavrianos’ textbook became the target of fierce attacks in public debate by Christian organisations which accused it of atheism due to its Darwinian evolutionary biology and Marxist approaches, as well as by other conservative groups and a number of parliament deputies. The textbook was criticised for attempting to undermine “the foundations of Greek civilization” (Mavroskoufis, 1997, cited in Hamilakis 2003:43; Bougatsos, 1992:57-63). Nevertheless, the book remained in use until 1989, when the Pedagogical Institute decided to have it withdrawn and replaced by an older textbook.

Yet Stavrianos’ book was not the only one to be withdrawn from schools at the time. In 1990, the Pedagogical Institute decided to remove another history textbook from the curriculum on the grounds it was marred by inaccuracies and ideological bias, and that it placed too little emphasis on Greek history. A book on historical methodology from 1983 intended for upper secondary school shared the same fate in 1991 (Kokkinos and Gatsotis 2008).

Within a short span of time, 1989-1991, three history textbooks resulting from PASOK’s textbook revision in the early 1980s had been withdrawn from use in public schools on the basis that their contents were incomprehensible, unpatriotic or even damaging to the pupils’ national sentiment. This development should be seen within the context of the domestic political situation near the end of the 1980s. In 1989, the PASOK government that had been in office since the beginning of the decade collapsed in the wake of major corruption scandals and, after inconclusive elections, was replaced by a coalition government of conservatives and an alliance of communists and other far-left parties. One of the first actions this coalition took was the mass destruction of the security police files on suspected leftists that had been on record since the civil war (Liakos, 2004:351). This gesture of conciliation and overcoming of past grievances (through the erasure of their tangible traces), which seemed to stress the importance of national unity, can also be interpreted as a clear indication for educators as to what type of history ought be emphasised in history teaching.

After 1990, when the conservatives were able to form a government of their own, demands to promote national values in history education emerged with increasing frequency in public debate. This trend has been manifest in mainstream media as
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well as in educational journals. The events of the preceding three years, commentator Kyriakos Plisis wrote in 1992, had shown that neither “laboratory ideologies” nor common economic interests proved to be as cohesive forces as the nation and the values it represented. Plisis expressed his regret that the reaction against the dictatorship in the 1970s had led to a marginalisation of these values, as embodied by knowledge of the nation and its past. The process of European unification in the wake of the Maastricht treaty made the reintroduction of this knowledge even more appropriate, he argued, since “[w]ithout national identity, no country can correctly play its role in this multinational union”; therefore, “in order to become proper Europeans, we must first become proper Greeks”. The way to accomplish this was to safeguard and protect the traditions and the history that constituted the national identity from foreign influence (Plisis, 1992).

The coming of the Macedonian crisis added a dimension of urgency and threat to the debate on the contents of history education. International initiatives aimed at the recognition of the Republic of Macedonia were seen by some commentators as directly linked to and caused by the educational reforms of the 1980s, with their perceived damaging effects to the historical and national consciousness of pupils and the preparedness to cope with the external “threat” (Toulomakos, 1992; Stergiou, 1992a). The authorities’ short-term response to these calls was the announcement that new teaching materials were to be issued as part of the government’s effort to inform teachers, pupils and their parents about the Macedonian question. One textbook exclusively dedicated to Macedonia was to be distributed for immediate use in public schools, while another textbook covering the Macedonian question as well as a number of other “national issues” and intended for use in upper secondary school was to be prepared in the following year (Stergiou, 1992b). The debate concerning these textbooks will be subjected to scrutiny in what follows.

Who Has the Right to Speak about and on Behalf of History? Guarding the Boundaries of Science in the Debate

Early in 1992, Minister of Education Giorgos Souflias a conservative announced the publication of a special textbook aimed at informing pupils on the historical roots of the present crisis in a “valid, objective and scientific” manner (Souflias in Bastias and Christopoulos, 1992:5). The textbook, Macedonia: History and Politics, was the work of scholars employed at the Society for Macedonian Studies and had earlier been distributed abroad by the Society’s diaspora branch. It presented the history of Greek Macedonia in a linear narrative, from antiquity to the present, with an emphasis on evidence proving Hellenic presence through the ages. It was received by mainstream media in a generally positive manner as a commendable but long overdue initiative (Kathimerini, 22/04/1992; Stergiou, 1992b). Exceptions are found in left-wing press which described the initiative as reminiscent of similar initiatives made by the junta, also pointing to inconsistencies in the views presented regarding the naming of the
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Slavs in the Macedonian region (Kostopoulos, Trimis and Psarris, 06/02/1992). However, what is of concern in this presentation is the critique voiced from a different point of view, the one traditionally associated with right-wing nationalism.

In an article in the conservative Estia, the textbook came under attack by Dimitris Michalopoulos, an assistant professor of history, who accused it of reproducing Bulgarian propaganda rather than serving the national interest and “historical truth”, with the approval of the party in office (Michalopoulos, 1992a). Michalopoulos pointed to contradictions in the logic of the textbook’s narrative and choice of historical “facts”. According to him, it left pupils with the impression that the Bulgarians – in his view the eternal enemies of the Greeks and the real instigators behind the Macedonian conflict – had held legitimate territorial claims to Macedonia in the early 20th century and that the region is Greek only due to the ethnic cleansing and persecution of Bulgarian populations. The inconsistencies of the textbook – the very same that had been pointed out by left-wing journalists, but interpreted in a diametrically opposite manner – were presented by Michalopoulos as a deliberate violation of truth, the first time that enemy propaganda was voiced in a Greek schoolbook. In an attempt to identify the instigator of the textbook, Michalopoulos pointed to similarities with a “vulgarized, simplified sort of study” written in English by historian Evangelos Kofos, the Foreign Affairs Department’s expert on Balkan affairs. Considered by many the established authority on the Macedonian question in Greek post-war historiography, Kofos was accused of undermining Greek national claims to the Macedonian historical heritage, thus paving way for national enemies who questioned the Greekness of Macedonia. In a postscript, Michalopoulos expressed his dismay with the Ministry of Education whose officials had received his remarks on the textbook with “frosty – if not hostile – indifference” (Michalopoulos, 1992b).

Michalopoulos continued to launch his attacks against the textbook on Macedonia in letters to the editors and in newspapers to which he was a regular contributor. A response to the accusation was published by Giorgos Babiniotis, the president of the Pedagogical Institute and himself a known advocate of the confrontational official policy in the Macedonian name issue (Babiniotis, 1992). Babiniotis did not so much address the issue of editorial choices behind which historical facts and circumstances or perspectives should be emphasised, which had been the core of Michalopoulos’ argumentation. He instead expressed his regrets and concerns that an attempt “of national significance” at informing both pupils and teachers on the Macedonian question had met with reactions that were “extremist” and “dangerous” from a colleague like Michalopoulos. Babiniotis asked why the Pedagogical Institute, “which has thrown itself into a difficult struggle for the substantial assistance of education” with new textbooks and programmes of further training for educators, should have to preoccupy itself with “fantasies”. Therefore, he stated that he saw no reason to engage in a discussion that had no meaning, and urged all who wished to introduce better teaching materials in schools to consider the goals that “we have put forward...
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as Pedagogical Institute: to inform the pupils seriously and sensitize them nationally. Not to fanaticize them” (Babiniotis, 1992).

Babiniotis’ rhetorical strategy, in which serious and nationally desirable knowledge is juxtaposed against extremist and fanatic misrepresentation of knowledge, can be analysed as a form of boundary-work. The theoretical concept of boundary-work was coined by the sociologist of science Thomas F. Gieryn. Like other human activities, in Gieryn’s view science is the result of social processes and something whose contents are subject to constant negotiation and change. This is not to be understood as a perception of knowledge as fabricated, i.e. inherently “false”, but as dependant on the social and cultural contexts in which it acquires meaning and authority as true (Gieryn, 1995: 440, 1999). Boundary-work is the concept Gieryn employs to describe the discourses by which selected qualities are attributed to “scientists, scientific methods, and scientific claims for the purpose of drawing a rhetorical boundary between science and some less authoritative residual non-science” (Gieryn, 1999:4-5). He argues that this rhetorical drawing (and re-drawing) of boundaries is especially manifest in “public science”, i.e. the venue “in which scientists describe science for the public and its authorities, sometimes hoping to enlarge the material and symbolic resources of scientists or to defend professional autonomy” (Gieryn, 1983:782). The professional ambitions of the different scientists engaged in the quest for these resources, for example public funding, lead to clashes of interests which may express themselves in what Gieryn refers to as “credibility contests”, i.e. strategic struggles over the legitimacy of a certain view or claim to expertise. It is in these contests that boundary-work becomes an important resource for the purpose of establishing epistemic authority. While Gieryn specifically studies boundary-work in the context of the natural sciences, I find the concept to be also applicable to the humanities and social sciences since their respective scholarly communities operate under similar conditions in the public arena.

Gieryn identifies three types of boundary-work that are employed in these credibility contests, depending on the situation: a) expulsion, which characterises contests between rival authorities when each claims to be scientific and seeks to have the other expelled and exposed as pseudoscientific; b) expansion, which is used when rival epistemic authorities attempt to monopolise jurisdictional control over a disputed ontological domain; and c) protection of autonomy, which is a strategy of demarcation that is employed when professional autonomy is deemed to be threatened by powers outside of the scientific community, for example legislators and policymakers who encroach upon or exploit scientists’ epistemic authority for their own purposes (Gieryn, 1999:5-17).

Babiniotis’ intervention in the debate can thus be read as an example of both expulsion and protection of (in this case the Pedagogical Institute’s) autonomy. The need for such boundary-work was obviously present in the debate since it attracted a number of individuals with claims to expertise on nationally desirable knowledge.
Michalopoulos’ articles were not isolated examples of criticism against the textbooks and attempts at setting the education agenda. Some of these attempts were direct attacks against and calls for the dismantling of the Pedagogical Institute. Thus another commentator, Ioannis Toulomakos, a professor of classical philology and ancient history, used what he portrayed as the “failure” to teach national – especially ancient Macedonian – history properly as an argument in favour of his own demand for the creation of a new national council for education. This should be composed of scientifically and pedagogically competent, internationally recognised scholars who would be in charge of quality control and the approval of history textbooks (Toulomakos, 1992).

The ongoing diplomatic crisis, to which Toulomakos explicitly referred in his article, thus created favourable conditions for expansion, in Gieryn’s sense. Arguably, this brought about the need for vigilance and defence against domestic “intruders” in the institutions concerned with history education, in much the same manner as national history had to be “protected” from the alleged forgers of history and extremists in the new neighbouring state across the Greek-Yugoslav border. Concerns regarding the boundaries between an education which emphasised national values, understood as something positive and desirable, and that of evil nationalism sometimes emerged in the educational journals of the period. The previously mentioned educational commentator Kyriakos Plisis thus distinguished between ethnocentric “nationalistic education” that had been predominant until quite recently and “national education” that ought to be given from then on. He clarified that he did not make a plea for nationalism of the sort that “blind[s] the citizens and lead[s] them to fanaticism and intolerance”, but rather a humble sort of love for the fatherland, its past and its traditions (Plisis, 1992).

Gieryn’s concept of boundary-work is suited to the study of history wars, as I have sought to demonstrate with reference to the educational debate during the Macedonian crisis since this debate, and textbook controversies in general, largely concerns questions of legitimacy and epistemic authority, where conflicting views are played out in public media.

**Which History Is to Be Taught? Conflicting Demands in History Education**

The question of who is the most appropriate expert on and spokesperson for national history is connected to the second theme of the analysis, namely what kind of history is to be taught at school. In 1995, a group of what was said to be concerned citizens called “Initiative for the restitution of ancient history at upper secondary school” sent a letter of protest to the Minister of Education. The authors claimed that the history curriculum suffered from a disproportionate amount of modern history that came at the expense of ancient history. In their view, the latter was in danger of being abolished in history education, with potentially damaging repercussions for the pupils’ historical consciousness and national identity, and consequently for the nation itself.
Thus, the demand for the restitution of ancient Greek history was explicitly linked to the discourse on the threat against national security that the conflict over the name Macedonia had produced. The authors of the letter argued that:

[... in an era of spiritual, national and moral crisis, the knowledge of our classical civilisation, which addresses both the soul and the emotion is an immediate need. [...] Our youth finds it impossible to be convinced and convince others of the rightfulness of our national issues, since, with the abolition of ancient history, pupils are not taught issues of immense importance, such as the Greekness of Ancient Macedonia [...], the civilising of western Europeans through the Greek colonisation, the awakening of the people of Asia through the policy of Alexander the Great and his successors, the importance of the Greek victory in the Greek-Persian wars etc. (cited in Mavroskoufis, 1997:313-314; translated and cited in Hamilakis, 2003:43)

The letter from the group was passed on to the Pedagogical Institute which, after discussing it and accepting its arguments, decided to write a new textbook specifically covering “the cultural contribution of Hellenism” to world history, from antiquity to the Renaissance, and intended for use in the first year of upper secondary school (Asimomytis et al., 1997). Archaeologist Yannis Hamilakis has set the trend towards a greater emphasis on antiquity and archaeological artifacts in history education against the background of the conflict between Greece and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia (Hamilakis, 2003). Undoubtedly, the prestige that classical studies and archaeology enjoy in Greece was further boosted by spectacular excavation finds made at Vergina in Greek Macedonia in the late 1970s. Among these finds was a golden crest decorated by a star, which eventually became one of most contested symbols in the Macedonian conflict due to the display of it in the flag of the neighbouring state. The “theft” of this symbol stressed the national importance of archaeology. Writing in 1989, Evangelos Kofos had remarked that “Greek Government financial assistance to archaeologists, traditionally meagre, has become suddenly generous”, something which could be attributed to the challenge posed by nation-building in Yugoslav Macedonia (Kofos, 1990:131).

However, the one-sided focus on the representation of antiquity in school textbooks in Hamilakis’ analysis has the result that no attention is paid to other demands made in the same time period for textbook revision. Such demands were also advanced within the framework of the Macedonian conflict, but with what at least appears as diametrically opposite views concerning what type of national history should be taught. The interest group’s fear concerning the future of ancient history in public schools and society might be seen in the context of the growing criticism, expressed in the public debate, against the dominant focus on antiquity. Below I will dwell upon a sample of this critique which is of significance here because it specifically addresses the question of nationally desirable history education.

In June 1993, a petition signed by 111 scholars and intellectuals of Greek descent working at universities abroad and in diaspora associations in North America and
Western Europe was published in a Greek weekly magazine. The petition called for the teaching of modern and contemporary history in Greek schools as well as the abandonment of the dominant line of arguments in the name conflict (Hatzigeorgiou et al., 1993). The scholars were part of a network devoted to the promotion of Greek interests – chiefly in the context of the Macedonian name dispute – and prided themselves for having organised protest rallies as well as having responded to various articles of “anti-Greek” content in foreign media. However, they had concluded that the attempts to inform members of the Greek diaspora, and by extension non-Greeks, of the historical roots of the Macedonian question and other contemporary problems Greece was facing, were severely hampered by the lack of basic knowledge of modern Greek history. The cause of this ignorance, the petitioners argued, was to be found within the education system of Greece which, allegedly, in secondary education assigned no time at all to the teaching of Greek history of the 19th and 20th centuries due to the “politically charged events of this period”, i.e. the Civil War and other taboos. This had had the effect that Greek citizens, in Greece as well as abroad, were unable to see contemporary problems in their proper historical setting and thus unable to find the right arguments in disputes with “those who injure Greece either out of ignorance […] or out of designs”. Regardless of the eventual outcome of the name dispute, the diaspora activists argued, the “Macedonian problem” along with other issues concerning national security would continue to haunt Greece for many years, and it was therefore of the utmost importance that the young be educated about the historical causes of the present challenges to the nation. For these reasons, the 111 petitioners proposed the immediate implementation of a history course in secondary schools, exclusively oriented to historical developments in Greece (and by extension, the Balkans, Europe and the rest of the world) between 1830 (the year of national independence) and 1974 (the year of the Turkish invasion of Cyprus and the transition to a democracy in Greece). Special emphasis was to be put on the history and problems of the borderlands – Macedonia and Thrace – but also of the Pontian Greeks, Cyprus and the Greek diaspora. This presumably modern approach to history, although highly ethnocentric in its scope, was also justified through references to a future convergence of European history educations, predicted to be the outcome of the rapidly growing EC cooperation. Since history education in Western countries tended to focus on the 20th century, according to the petitioners it would be counterproductive to Greek national interests not to teach Greek adolescents the modern history of their country.

The petition was a critique of the perceived dominance of classical history in school curricula, which was pointed out as one of the main reasons for the failure to successfully communicate the official Greek standpoint in the Macedonian conflict home and abroad. But it also contained another discernible dimension, which in my view can be connected to identity politics. The Macedonian conflict coincided in time with attempts to assert more profound political rights for the diaspora and involve its organisations as consultant bodies in the Greek state’s policymaking, expressed
in proposals for parliamentary representation (Danforth, 1995:90). The timing of this process with the outbreak of the diplomatic conflict suggests the relevance of the diaspora’s cultural and political ambitions in the analysis of the “history war” in educational debate. Due to late 19th and 20th century migration, the Greek diaspora has, arguably, no place in a history discourse that only sees to ancient glories, even though the Hellenistic world that arose from Alexander’s campaigns could be construed as a predecessor, venerable by the virtue of its distant location in time, to the contemporary transnational community of Greeks. A reorientation of the discourse on national history towards the modern era, however, would make it possible to highlight the narratives of suffering and forced exile around which especially Pontian Greek identity, in Greece as well as overseas, increasingly tended to be woven toward the end of the 20th century. As Robin Cohen has argued, all scholars preoccupied with the study of diasporas “recognize that the victim tradition” – i.e. the notion of victimhood through exposure to a traumatic historical event as the main cause of a certain group’s dispersal from an original homeland – “is at the heart of any definition of the concept” (Cohen, 1996:513) Nevertheless, as Cohen continues, the concept of diaspora has in contemporary parlance come to encompass a multitude of other meanings and historical, social and economic circumstances that create diasporas around the world, for example trade or labour migration (Cohen, 1996:513-17). Regardless of the varying causes behind the emergence of the present-day Greek diaspora, the notion of victimhood and the prestige attributed to it provided a powerful incentive for framing a historical narrative which paid particular attention to more recent events that Greek expatriates around the world could relate to. It might have been this potential the petitioners had perceived as in danger of being lost, as long as school curricula and the argumentation for the official Greek position remained fixed on antiquity.

It seems as if this demand was also met. In the 1999-2000 academic year, a new textbook on contemporary “national issues” and their historical roots was introduced in upper secondary school. Entitled Issues of History, it included chapters covering the Macedonian question, Greek-Albanian and Greek-Turkish relations in the 20th century, the Cyprus conflict, the Greek diaspora, and Greece and the European Union. A subsequent edition of this textbook added a new chapter on the history of Pontian Hellenism, written by a leading advocate of Pontian Greek memory-political demands (Nystazopoulou-Pelekidou et al., 2002). However, the impact of this particular textbook in history education should be regarded as limited since it has only appeared in an optional history course that few pupils bother to choose (Karakatsani, 2002).

**Concluding Remarks**

Recent research suggests that the controversies seen around the world since 1990 over history education ought to be analysed as “battles in the same war which is being waged in different parts of the world”, thereby calling for a global approach to the study of them (Repoussi 2009:75-76). Scholars such as Repoussi (2009), Nash,
Crabtree and Dunn (1998), Macintyre and Clark (2004) have identified common aspects in these “history wars” in different countries. They argue that the conflicts are rooted in movements for conservative restoration, discernible from the 1980s onwards, which can be understood as “essentially a backlash movement to the gains of the sixties”, in the field of education (Repoussi, 2009:76). The principal combatants of these controversies are thus advocates of nationalism and a restoration of traditional values in, among other things, history education, on one hand and, on the other, advocates of what is sometimes referred to as progressive education. As demonstrated throughout this article, there is much that suggests that the Macedonian conflict can be analysed in this larger context; however, the approach to the study of these controversies outlined by these researchers entails the risk of analysing them in terms of binary oppositions. As Susanne Popp has argued, each case of textbook controversy or “history war” must be recognised as having many causes, from which follows that it must be studied in the context of national and international comparison (Popp, 2009:120). In this article, I have briefly addressed some elements of the complexity of the Greek history wars, with an emphasis on a particular aspect of the war over the past. This aspect can be described as the needs of various advocates of “national values” in history education to demarcate themselves in the name of science, reason and patriotic duty from a nationalism considered too extreme. Embedded in this is the clash of different “nationalist” agendas, or rather professional and/or identity political agendas framed in the discourse of nationalism, within the same national context. These interests have been discussed with reference to Gieryn’s concept of boundary-work, which I hope will also be of use in a more elaborate study and analysis of the issues touched upon in this article.

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Endnotes

1 The term “culture war” was applied to the Macedonian name controversy by the anthropologist Loring Danforth (1995).

2 The impact of the Macedonian conflict on Greek history textbooks produced in the 1990s has been briefly described by Despina Karakatsani, who nevertheless does not put it in the context of educational debate nor textbook controversies rooted in domestic political concerns. Karakatsani, 2002; also see Hamilakis, 2003:50-51.

3 Organismós Ekdóseos Scholikόn Vivlíon, the Organisation for the Publication of Schoolbooks; later Organismós Ekdóseos Didaktikόn Vivlíon, the Organisation for the Publication of Textbooks.

4 The study that Michalopoulos referred to is Kofos (1990); originally published in European History Quarterly 19 (1989).

5 The Pontian Greeks descend from the Black Sea region (Pontos), in present-day northeast Turkey, from which they were deported in 1923. In the late 1980s an identity-political movement emerged which called for recognition of the events that led to their expulsion as constituting genocide, aimed at the extinction of Pontian Greeks. A day of remembrance of this Pontian genocide was decided upon at the congress of Pontian Greek diaspora organisations in 1992. This day of commemoration, it was argued by a leading advocate of this cause, would give the benefit of a common historical memory and ritual that would serve to strengthen a sense of a Pontian Greek identity in Greece as well as in the diaspora (Charalambidis and Fotiadis, 2003:13).