

Competition and Cooperation in International Relations: the Shifting Politics of History Education and Identity Making

Eleftherios Klerides

Abstract

The 2006 Stocktaking Report of UNESCO on school history in Southeast Europe stresses that “History teaching plays an important role in the development of identity. In Southeast Europe, as elsewhere, history education has commonly been used as a tool for promoting nationalistic ideologies. However, it has also gained recognition as having a key role in the process of reconciliation, democratization and long-term stability” (p. 7). The current paper argues that this statement captures a certain truth about the relationship between history teaching and the making of identity: the shift from ‘traditional history’ and the making of *homo nationalis* to ‘new history’ and the making of *homo interculturalis*. But it does not capture other important truths about the historical and political embeddedness of this relationship and its shifting contexts. It specifically obscures changes in international relations that made this shift possible, by creating new spaces, technologies and networks of knowledge building. Perhaps more importantly, this statement suppresses contestation and a rivalry in imagining the form of this relationship. That is, as the new globalising imaginary of ‘new history’ and *homo interculturalis* interacts and endeavours to recast the entrenched institutions, policies and sites of the globalised imaginary of ‘traditional history’ and *homo nationalis*, it is met with opposition, triggering hegemonic struggles often with unpredictable ends.

Keywords: Shifting Politics of History Education and Identity Making