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Disputed territories & memory

## Literature Review:

# The role of nation states in managing memories of disputed territories

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Authors:

Vahe Boyajian, National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia

Ryan Brasher, Forman Christian College, Pakistan

M. Usman Farooq, Forman Christian College, Pakistan

Ammar Ali Jan, Forman Christian College, Pakistan

Phillippe Lecrivain, Educational & Cultural Bridges, Armenia

Agnieszka Nowakowska, University of Warsaw, Poland

Sophie Whiting, University of Bath, UK

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The Politics of Remembering – Ammar Ali Jan

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Collective Memory: The Politics of ‘Remembering’ and ‘Reminding’ - M. Usman Farooq

## ABSTRACT

Issues of memory are closely linked to nation states' identities, and memories of a shared past play a pivotal role in the process of nation building. A history of shared suffering is regularly mentioned in official narratives with the expectation of making people rally around the flag. However, nation states equally have the power to use narratives based on particular memories to promote democratic pluralism within that country's territory.

This section of the literature review begins with a discussion linking the growing field of memory studies to political science research on 'the state'. In exploring different state structures and democratic cultures, these factors raise important questions around the possibility for agonistic interactions across different 'political regimes'. To examine the role of nation states in managing memories across disputed territories this section also discusses the centrality of borders to the modern nation state. Borders represent primary institutions of the state and bear both inclusive and exclusive characteristics. Borders are therefore places where the similarities and differences of certain groups expose themselves more vividly and also where 'transborder people' provide a potential challenge to state building projects. Rather than being at the periphery, borders are central to state building narratives.

In exploring the mechanisms in which nation states promote, as well as challenge, antagonistic memories of disputed territories this literature review also explores the role of education systems, political leaders and diaspora groups across numerous comparative case studies. Feminist research spanning the topics of memory, nationhood and peace building is also discussed in order to explore the potential for agonistic memory in breaking down essentialized constructions of identity (us/them; victim/perpetrator; masculine/feminine) supported through antagonistic narratives of the past.

Through these various perspectives, this section questions the possibilities of nation states engaging in agonistic practices and the political will to resist the temptation of imposing a uniform top down memory of the past.