

Palgrave Handbook of Attacks on History

Background

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A Handbook rather than a monograph or collection

The Project's outcome should be a Handbook rather than a monograph because its topic is too large to cover single-handedly. It should be a Handbook rather than an edited collection because its aim is not to present random chapters about its topic but an overview that, in principle, is as systematic as possible.

Within the universe of Palgrave Handbooks, it supplements *The Palgrave Handbook of State-Sponsored History after 1945* (2018). The latter explains how States produce history themselves, the present Handbook how States (and non-State actors) attack the history produced outside their sphere. In this respect, it is its twin. The proposed handbook is also close to *The Palgrave Handbook of Conflicts in the Teaching of History since the End of the Cold War* (2019), to the extent that some conflicts in history education have degenerated into attacks on history education.

Market

The potential readership for the Handbook is large.

The **primary market** consists of members of the historical profession, including professional historians (academic historians, history teachers), archivists, archaeologists, and memory, museum and heritage professionals; political scientists, sociologists, philosophers, moral philosophers, and human rights scholars; scholars of international relations, media and communications, and global development studies; and amateur historians. Advanced history students constitute another segment, especially since chapters of the Handbook could easily be assigned as obligatory, recommended or supplementary material for courses in historiography and in the theory and ethics of history. A last segment are national historical associations and academies. In all these circles, the debate about attacks on history has been reignited (see "project description" and "unique selling points").

The **secondary market** lies outside academe and includes decision-makers and analysts in education ministries and foreign ministries; (potential) providers of data, assignments, and budgets for historians; the subjects of historical research, notably biographees; civil society groups and networks at the nexus of education, monuments, human rights, and academic freedom; specialized journalists, diplomats and military staffs, and, last but not least, those involved in conflicts with historians (disgruntled source producers, commissioners, sponsors, university administrators, complainants, judges).

Unique selling points

- No work comparable to the one proposed here exists on the market. There is no scholarly (nor any other) competition for this Handbook. The closest comes a series of reports produced regularly by UNESCO and the Global Coalition to Protect Education since 2007. This series of currently eight reports is very useful for its methodology. Its scope is wider (education instead of history) but its attention to history as such is poor to non-existent. The same is true for the Scholars at Risk series *Free to Think* produced annually since 2015.

The present Handbook will build on the editor's *Censorship of Historical Thought: A World Guide 1945–2000*, published 21 years ago (Westport CT/London: Greenwood Press, 2002; xviii + 695 pages), but it takes into account developments during the last quarter of a century (2000–present) and broaden the scope from “censorship” to “attack” and from a single-author guide to a multi-author venture. As such, it fills a lacuna and forms a unique contribution to the field of historical writing.

- The Handbook situates the proliferating phenomenon of attacks on history in a scholarly context, detached from party politics. Proof for this are its extensive discussion of the notion of “attacks” and related concepts in the [Introduction](#), and the novel and extensive typology of attacks that forms the skeleton of the book (see “[Table of Contents](#)”). If no such scholarly work exists, charlatans can and will fill the void. Therefore, the proposal is inspired by a sense of duty and a sense of urgency since much internet talk on the distortion of history is highly politicized.
- The Handbook offers a unique blend of theoretical and empirical analysis that allows readers to enter it through two attractive portals: a theoretical one via the introduction, some global chapters, and the index; and an empirical one in the chapters related to specific types of attack.
- There are no books that focus exclusively on the negative political impacts on historical writing from a global perspective. The reasons are mainly political and social: political establishments generally do not trust works that touch the weak points of their ideological foundation and are often inclined to censor them; public opinion has a general predilection for positive stories. Attacks inevitably expose the dark sides of historical writing and this Handbook will try to bring them into the open. It is an unexpected vantage point from where to study historical writing.
- Between June and November 2022, the editor has given six invited lectures on “Attacks on History.” He noticed that a recent number of attacks on history (summed up at the beginning of the [Introduction](#)) aroused new and strong scholarly and social interest in the topic (resulting in invitations to lecture in the first place and in vivid discussion afterward). This public curiosity may be channelled toward deeper insights into the political and social backgrounds of historical writing.