

មជ្ឈមណ្ឌលឧកសាស្ត្រកម្ពុជា

Genocide Education in a Global Context: A Comparative Study of the Holocaust and Khmer Rouge Regime*

By Kamboly Dy

Introduction

Teaching about genocide became part of the global education movement at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Since then, the history of genocide and other related topics, especially grave human rights violations, have been taught and debated across continents. A number of genocide scholars, especially in Europe and North America, have developed curricula and guidebooks, and introduced them into secondary schools and universities. Thousands of books and articles on genocide education have been published in a number of languages. Today, there is a truly transnational group of genocide scholars who aim to bring about awareness and knowledge of past atrocities so that the conditions that have led to genocide and mass atrocities will not occur again.

However, academic traditions and philosophies of education differ from one country to another. Genocide education remains in a transitional stage in many post-genocidal countries, especially those in the developing world, due to political and social concerns and lack of resources and motivation. It is important that students have the opportunity not only to learn the history of genocide in their home country but also genocides in other parts of the world. The comparative study of genocide in an academic setting is important in the sense that it allows students to grasp that the problem of genocide is a matter for all human beings. It is not only about victims of the Holocaust; it is not only about Cambodian people; it is about all of us who have the shared responsibility to learn, to understand, and to prevent future genocide and other serious crimes.

This paper examines the similarities and the differences between the study of the Holocaust and genocide education in Cambodia. It will show that by and large the differences far outweigh the similarities as the Jewish community and Cambodian government have taken radically different approaches in the pursuit of genocide education. It also explores how comparative genocide education can contribute to the promotion of a better understanding and analysis of the past, how reconciliation might be achieved, how social beliefs are reshaped, and how political conditions influence historical narratives of genocide. Most post-genocidal countries face a number of challenges in writing about the history of the atrocities committed on their

* I am especially grateful to Professor Tom La Pointe for his inspired and insightful comments on several versions of this paper. I am deeply indebted to Mr. Youk Chhang, Director of the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam), who has guided both professional and academic life for me. My thanks also go to Professor Alex Hinton and Professor Nela Navarro, who have helped me in many ways during my graduate study at Rutgers University.

soil, and it takes many years to overcome them. Moreover, only in politically stable circumstances can students learn about past atrocities accurately. This paper also observes that overcoming these challenges takes concerted efforts and the commitment of the governments and their people. At the end, the paper recommends that both educators and genocide scholars use a more comparative approach to genocide education and expand their focus on the mass atrocities that have taken place in other countries, such as Cambodia and Rwanda. Putting mass atrocities from around the world into the comparative genocide curriculum will enable students to see how the actions of these countries' leaders led to genocide, and, as Edward Kissi wrote, enable us to see "the roles that history, ideology, revolution, states and culture play in the genocidal process."¹

Holocaust Studies and Cambodian Genocide Education: History and Challenges

Genocide education has become a global concern in contemporary society. The study of the annihilation of eleven million people in German-occupied Europe was not given much attention during the first two decades after the end of World War II. From the 1960s to the 1980s, however, Holocaust education underwent considerable progress. Survivors started to share their stories and began to talk publicly, and a number of publications were issued. However, only after the end of the Cold War, almost half a century later, was Holocaust education given serious attention and broadly publicized. One of the remarkable events was the construction of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in 1993.

Since then, the history of the Holocaust has been widely studied in many schools, universities, and institutions worldwide. The study of the Holocaust has set a precedent for other post-genocidal countries to push for genocide education in their own schools. Although it took about three decades to introduce Holocaust studies to school curricula, in the three decades since the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodia is still struggling to incorporate genocide education into its curriculum.

Holocaust studies. The destruction of European Jews and non-Jews in German-occupied Europe has been studied and remembered not only within Jewish communities but also by the rest of the world.² As a result, those who have no direct connection to the fate of the Jews during the Holocaust also share some understanding of their suffering, an understanding that Daniel Levy and Natan Sanaider term "cosmopolitan memory." The two scholars argue that the Holocaust "has become a moral certainty that now stretches across national borders and unites Europe and other parts of the world."³ In this sense, the experiences during the Holocaust belong not only to the direct victims of the Nazi regime, but also to all victims of the crime of genocide and the larger society in general. However, reaching this point required that many political and social obstacles, spanning more than half

¹ Kissi, Edward (2004). "Rwanda, Ethiopia and Cambodia: Links, Faultlines and Complexities in a Comparative Study of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6:1, 116.

² Levy, Daniel and Sznajder, Natan (2002). "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(1), p. 88.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

a century, be overcome. The examination of how the Holocaust has been remembered in America, Germany and Israel, as well as in many other countries, is very important as an example for Cambodia and other post-genocidal countries. Understanding how the Holocaust became prominent on the international stage will help inspire post-genocidal countries to start developing an interest in genocide education and provide strategies to incorporate comparative genocide education in their national curriculums.

In the years immediately following World War II, the world was nearly silent on the killing of Jews; in fact, the Holocaust did not even have a name yet. Former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill called the annihilation of the Jews by the Nazis “a crime without a name.”¹ Immediately after the collapse of the Nazi regime, the Nuremberg Trials were held to prosecute Nazi leaders for many crimes; however, none of them was accused of the crime of genocide, since the term “genocide” had not yet been coined.

Levy and Sznajder argued that “Germany, Israel and the US had different motivations for being silent about this past.”² The succeeding German government considered itself to be a complete break from the Nazi regime. They claimed that they were also victims, and that the crimes committed were organized by a small group of people in the name of Germany. In Israel, the first official commemoration of the Jewish annihilation was celebrated fourteen years after World War II. In the minds of Jewish victims in Israel, recalling their suffering meant reminding people in the world about “Jewish passivity as a consequence of the lack of sovereignty...a reminder of helpless passivity typical of Jewish existence outside the sovereign space of the territorial states.”³ Until 1954, students in Israel had limited access to Holocaust studies, which were incorporated into Jewish history and the history of World War II. Dan A. Porat argued that, “the Holocaust was ignored so that Israeli students could overcome what was perceived as a national humiliation.”⁴

On the other hand, the absence of Holocaust studies in the early post-war period in the United States was largely due to politics. In order to compete with the Soviet Union on the Cold War battlefield, the US did not want to risk facing a fractious Europe, which included its former enemy Germany. In this political context, raising awareness about the Holocaust would have meant working against Germany and strengthening the Soviet Union. Moreover, the memory of the Holocaust would also remind the world that America stood by and did not intervene on time, passively allowing the Nazis to kill millions of innocent civilians. For American Jews, talking too much about the Holocaust would mean naming Germany as the perpetrator. This

¹ Power, Samantha (2002). *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Harper Perennial, p. 17.

² Ibid.

³ Ibid. pp. 94-95.

⁴ Porat, Dan A. (2004). “From the scandal to the Holocaust in Israeli Education,” *The Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 39, No. 4, October, p. 621.

could jeopardize the Jews' relationship with the US at a time when they needed its support for the fledgling state of Israel. Together, these factors contributed to making the Holocaust nearly invisible in America.¹

Genocide scholar Omer Bartov sees the absence of Holocaust studies differently. Bartov argued that the historical unconsciousness of the Holocaust during the post-World War II period was due to "anti-semitic prejudice" and communist ideologies. Many documents and archives related to the Holocaust were locked away and unavailable for research.² Therefore, during the first decade after the war, the Holocaust was excluded from historical account of the Second World War, and this period was marked by many Holocaust scholars as the period of "Holocaust denial."

From the 1960s to the 1980s, survivors and the general public in Germany, Israel, and the United States began to speak more openly about the Holocaust and to include it in school curricula. According to a study by Yuval Dror, Holocaust curricula in Israeli secondary schools improved dramatically following the Eichmann Trial in 1961.³ Events from the Holocaust were broadcast in the media, and a number of papers were published that reached wider audiences than in the previous decade. One of the key publications on the Holocaust was Anne Frank's diary, which has been translated into many languages including the Khmer language.

According to Levy and Sznajder, the Holocaust by that time had become part of Israeli politics. The Jews needed a strong state with enough military capability to protect their national sovereignty and identity as Jews within a specific territorial boundary. As the two scholars emphasize, "it was mapped onto the Arab/Israeli conflict and has remained there ever since."⁴

In the US between the 1960s and 1980s the Holocaust was regarded as a universal memory that must be retained to prevent future genocides. It also became a policy of the Carter administration to establish good relationships with Jewish-American communities, which had become more prominent and politicized. Israel's victory in the 1967 war was a battle cry for American Jews to awaken from their long sleep. They began to talk about their past victimization. The stories of their suffering also became a political vehicle the US government used to further its support of Israel,

¹ Diner, Hasia (2003). "Post-World-War-II American Jewry and the Confrontation with Catastrophe," *Jewish Studies: New and Notable Books and Journals*, Indiana University Press, pp. 443.

² Bartov, Omer (2004). *The Holocaust as "Leimotif" of the Twentieth Century*, *Zeitgeschichte*, 31(5), pp. 315-16.

³ Dror, Yuval (2001). "Holocaust Curricula in Israeli Secondary School, 1960s-1990s: Historical Evaluation from the Moral Education Perspective," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 30.

⁴ Levy and Sznajder, op. cit., p. 96.

both politically and logistically.¹ More importantly, in the 1980s the Israeli parliament adopted Holocaust studies as a compulsory subject for secondary schools in Israel.²

The end of the Cold War was a turning point in world politics. It also saw a shift in emphasis to a universal moral value in which the Holocaust played an important role. Israel, as Levy and Sznajder demonstrated, viewed the post-Cold War period as the time for a peace process between Israelis and Palestinians and the end of using the Holocaust for political purposes. Thus, the Holocaust became an emblem intended to inspire compassion toward both Jewish and Palestinian victims.³ In Germany, the Holocaust became a major part of national history since Germany was seeking political and cultural integration into greater Europe. Diner notes that, "the prevention of another Holocaust became a civilizational foundation of a new official European memory."⁴ Thus, the Holocaust became perhaps the prevailing symbol of European collective memory, which led to an emphasis on immediate interventions in other cases of genocide and compassion for all victims regardless of their politics or race.

During this period, the Holocaust also became part of the discourse of education in the United States. This progress was due to several related factors: many publications on the Holocaust period were newly available in English; many survivors had by this time immigrated to the United States after the war; and, finally, the US undertook a policy designed to raise moral consciousness against human rights violations. Beginning in the 1990s, the Holocaust became a popular subject in many schools, universities and other private and public institutions, both inside and outside Israel and the United States. Moreover, the construction of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum (USHMM) in 1993 has contributed significantly to making the Holocaust a global subject and a global memory.

The original aims of Holocaust studies were several. These included "remembrance and knowledge of the Holocaust itself; the role of anti-Semitism in the Holocaust, and a broader understanding of the factors involved in the development and perpetuation of modern-day anti-Semitism; and the broader understanding of factors contributing to the violation of human rights and tendencies toward genocide, and how to prevent such factors from triumphing."⁵ Thus, Holocaust studies aim not only to educate young people about the historical facts of the Holocaust, but also to reduce anti-Semitism and increase compassion toward people and commitment to the respect for human rights.

¹ Diner, op. cit, p. 445.

² Dror, op. cit., p. 31.

³ Diner, op. cit., p. 97.

⁴ Ibid., p. 100.

⁵ Gallant, Mary J. and Hartman, Harriet (2001). "Holocaust Education for the New Millennium: Assessing our Progress," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 11.

Holocaust educators have recently taken another step forward to assess the existing curricula, gauge the progress made in Holocaust education, and determine new directions for future initiatives. The assessments focus on whether the objectives are achieved, whether the programs are delivered efficiently, and whether the learning outcomes are satisfactory. Moreover, they also attempt to see if the existing curriculum is sufficiently accurate and comprehensive. Gallant and Hartman suggest that assessment provide answers to the following questions: “Do teachers have adequate training? Do they spend enough time on the various materials? Are they precise in their delivery? Are emotions evoked but not challenged to appropriate action outlets? Is the material presented to the appropriate target population? Do they present material in an appropriate order to achieve the objectives? Is it fragmented or coherent?”¹

In addition, the assessments aim to see how students can link the content of the text to the context of their present lives after studying the Holocaust and to determine whether their knowledge of the Holocaust could have some part in their future careers or their activism as citizens. In this sense, the assessments are designed to determine what parts of Holocaust studies have more impact and are of more interest for students so that educators are able to prioritize and to achieve the best match between objectives and educational materials.

Cambodian Genocide Education. In the early 1980s, shortly after the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, Cambodian school children were taught about the Khmer Rouge genocide in politically charged, propagandistic ways, which sought to instill in them a desire for violence, hatred and revenge. Because Cambodian society at that time prioritized basic economic recovery, the suffering of the Cambodian people under the Khmer Rouge became a folktale for young Cambodians who were born after the regime collapsed.

As the years passed, the educational content devoted to Khmer Rouge history did not improve. The curriculum on Khmer Rouge history provided by the People’s Republic of Kampuchea’s (PRK) Ministry of Education (1979-1991) was a political tool designed mainly to justify the Vietnamese presence in Cambodia. Children from grade one and up were taught via school textbooks to hate and fear the Khmer Rouge. For example, a reading textbook for grade one (published in 1979 by the PRK’s Ministry of National Education) contained the following two sentences devoted to the Khmer Rouge period: “Our people supplied foodstuffs to soldiers who were sweeping up the traitors Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique. The United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea eliminated the traitors Pol Pot-Ieng Sary clique.”²

While most researchers on Democratic Kampuchea put the number of deaths during the genocide at between 1 million to 2 million, students during this period were taught that over 3 million people were killed by the Khmer Rouge. In the reading

¹ Ibid. pp. 13.

² Reading book for grade 1, Part 1, Publication of the Ministry of National Education, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1979, pp. 43 and 46.

book for 2nd grade, the following sentences appear: “Pol Pot-Ieng Sary cliques killed more than 3 million people and completely destroyed everything in Cambodia. We are absolutely furious and strongly struggle against these atrocities.”¹ These textbooks were used during the period from 1979 to 1991) to teach young Cambodians who were born after the Khmer Rouge.

In 1991, all of the political factions that had been vying for power in Cambodia, including the Khmer Rouge, reached a peace agreement and agreed to hold the first national election in 1993 under the direct supervision of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC). The election marked a turning point in Cambodian politics and in the country’s education system. The PRK’s textbooks were replaced by new textbooks. But none of the new textbooks included an account of the Khmer Rouge era. The Cambodian Government claimed that the absence of Khmer Rouge history was necessary “for the sake of national reconciliation.”

Teachers were instructed not to mention the Khmer Rouge in classrooms. From 1991 to 2000, political instabilities and work toward national reconciliation ensured that the account of the Khmer Rouge history would continue to remain absent from school curriculum, even though officials at the Ministry of Education had frequently discussed putting the Khmer Rouge atrocities into the curriculum.

Following the defection and collapse of the Khmer Rouge in 1999, civil society began to demand that curriculum be revised to include an account of the Cambodian genocide. The Ministry of Education finally revised the existing curriculum in 2000-2001 and published new social study textbooks for grades 9 and 12. The new textbooks included an account of Cambodian modern history from 1953 up to the 1998 national election, which included an account of the Cambodian genocide. But the Khmer Rouge history was shockingly brief, far too brief to ensure that young generations of Cambodians understand what really happened at that time. Indeed, the 9th and 12th grade textbooks devoted only a few sentences and a few paragraphs respectively to the Khmer Rouge era.

Teaching Khmer Rouge history in classrooms remains an issue in Cambodia today. The history has long been a center of controversy in Cambodian education due to its political nature and the highly disputed history of the communist party. At the root of this controversy, on the one hand, is the fact that several high-ranking officials of the current ruling Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) are former members of the Khmer Rouge. On the other hand, decisions on the content of the curriculum still lie in the hands of politicians, and the depiction of modern Cambodian history in the two social studies textbooks remains politically controversial. For example, while the 12th grade textbook (2001 edition) does mention the Cambodian Peoples Party’s (CPP) victory in the 1998 national election, it neglected to mention that the Royalist Funcinpec Party won the first national election in 1993. Prince Norodom Ranariddh, then head of the Funcinpec Party and President of the Cambodian National Assembly, criticized the book for failing to mention his party’s victory, and called for

¹ Reading book for grade 2, Party 1, Publication of the Ministry of National Education, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1979, p. 59.

further revisions.¹ In response, the section on Cambodian modern history, including the account of the Khmer Rouge era, was removed entirely from the 12th grade textbook. Later, in the middle of the 2002 school year, Prime Minister Hun Sen ordered the withdrawal of all 12th grade social studies textbooks.² Meanwhile, the government has done little to develop new curricula or to publish new texts that focus on the Khmer Rouge regime in significant ways. To date, Cambodian students study history without textbooks.

Since it was formed in 1980, Cambodia's Ministry of Education has had firm control over the content of school curricula for all levels of education. The Ministry instructs teachers, textbook writers, and curriculum designers on the topics to be taught and the fundamental objectives of teaching history. However, the last few years have seen considerable progress in terms of genocide education and the government has taken positive steps to seriously consider the matter.

Progress in developing genocide education in Cambodia is largely due to the efforts of the Cambodian non-government organization, the Documentation Center of Cambodia (DC-Cam). In 2007, DC-Cam published a textbook entitled *A History of Democratic Kampuchea (1975-1979)* and requested that the government include all or part of the book in the high school curriculum. The government's initial response did not give much reason for optimism.

On September 26, 2006, Prime Minister Hun Sen wrote a note ordering his Deputy Sok An to establish a government working commission to review and reconsider DC-Cam's request. The commission was established on October 6 by government decree. It had seven members and was chaired by Im Sothy, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Education. All of the other members were officials from the Ministry of Education and Royal Academy of Cambodia. No private experts or educators were allowed to be involved in the process.

On December 14, the commission met to discuss the draft of the book. Member Sorn Samnang commented that the book "goes too far beyond the period 1975 to 1979. It describes each political regime....it should be kept for at least 60 years before starting to discuss it."³ Kuoy Theavy commented that, "we are worried that if we show violence, there will be more and more violence."⁴ Other members suggested changes in the text and the deletion of some chapters. However, Im Sothy voiced conditional support for the effort made in producing the text. The meeting minutes quoted him as saying:

¹ Lor Chandara (2002). "Prince Ranariddh Slams New History Textbook," *The Cambodia Daily*, April 27-28.

² Pin Sisovann (2002). "Prime Minister Orders Recall of Textbooks," *The Cambodia Daily*, April 29.

³ Minutes of meeting of the government working commission to discuss the draft of the "History of Democratic Kampuchea" which was convened at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Education on December 14, 2006. The entire pdf file of the minute can be found at <http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/A11.pdf> .

⁴ Ibid.

This text is well written and well prepared for historians for further study. Writing a history textbook to be put into the official curriculum for general knowledge meets a lot of difficulties. Even Japan, which has many experiences in writing history books, still encounters a lot of problems in writing history related to Korea and China....This "A History of Democratic Kampuchea" can only be used as supplementary material to write a history textbook for general knowledge.¹

At the end, members of the government working commission unanimously agreed that "the text will be used as core supplementary discussion material and a base to write a history lesson for students in general education."² Later, in early 2008, DC-Cam continued sending letters to the Ministry of Education urging it to accept DC-Cam's proposal to expand genocide education as well as to raise the status of its published Khmer Rouge history book beyond that of supplementary material. At this stage, DC-Cam proposed that it undertake four main activities in cooperation with the Ministry:

- The preparation of guidance materials for teachers
- Pedagogical workshops for teachers
- The preparation of students to become teachers
- The translation of the textbook into five languages in addition to Khmer and English: Thai, Vietnamese, Mandarin, Japanese and French.

On April 30, 2008, the Ministry of Education sent a formal letter to DC-Cam endorsing all four points. The government allowed the use of the existing history book and the development of a pedagogical curriculum through private initiatives. This was the first time that the government had made a decision to use anything other than the traditional state-sponsored history textbook and curriculum design. The letter stated that DC-Cam could work collaboratively with the Pedagogical Research Department and Teachers' Training Department of the Ministry of Education (as well as international experts on genocide education) to implement this project. The government also asserted the importance of teaching the history of genocide in Cambodia.³ By mid-2008, Cambodia was on its way to change the history of the Khmer Rouge genocide from a forbidden subject to a required subject in the high school curriculum.

However, even thirty years after the fall of the Khmer Rouge, the history of Cambodia's genocide is still a politically sensitive event because of its links to previous regimes. Talking about Khmer Rouge history, one cannot avoid discussing events during the French colonial period, Cambodia under Prince Norodom

¹ Ibid.

² Ibid.

³ Letter from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to Mr. Youk Chhang, Director of DC-Cam. The entire letter can be found pdf file at http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Letter_from_Ministry_of_Education_to_DC-Cam--Eng.pdf.

Sihanouk, the Khmer Republic regime, and the US bombings of Cambodia. Nor can one stay away from a discussion of the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea regime, the State of Cambodia (SOC), the transitional period of the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, and the second Kingdom of Cambodia. The full dimension of the Khmer Rouge genocide cannot be understood unless it is presented within the framework of the emerging communist movement in Cambodia from the 1940s through its total collapse in 1999. This framework allows students to trace the development of the Khmer Rouge movement and to link this movement to other historical events for further research and broader understanding. And this will help to preserve the memory of the past to prevent, as Yair Auron said, “the forgetting that is always present alongside memory.”¹

Analysis of Textbooks

Historically, school textbooks – both on the Cambodian genocide during the 1980s and on the Holocaust during the 1960s – were developed by the Ministries of Education. It is inevitable that each country, whether during peacetime or after emerging from genocide or violent conflict, will prepare such texts in accordance with their social views and state objectives. As Daniel Bar-Tal wrote, textbooks “construct the social reality of the students. They enforce the self-perception values of a society, or more accurately its dominant elite, required norms, societal goals, nature of relations with different outgroups, stereotypes of other groups.”² Students often gain their first exposure to their country’s history and other important social events through textbooks. In preparing school textbooks of all kinds, especially the history of genocide, it is important that authors attempt to be accurate, impartial, and balanced in terms of politics.

History, geography, literature and Hebrew textbooks in Israel during the 1960s were designed to teach Jewish children that the country that is Israel today originally belonged to the Jews, who created the nation of Israel and lived there for centuries. They also stress that the Arab peoples, especially Palestinians, had no claim on this land. In addition to glorifying the efforts of their Jewish ancestors to take care of the land, the textbooks depicted the Arabs as ignorant, “unenlightened, inferior, fatalistic, unproductive, apathetic, dirty and noisy.”³ These textbooks’ negative treatment of Arabs contributed to the seemingly incurable conflict between the two nations.

As discussed earlier, during the 1950s and 1960s, Jewish communities in all parts of the world focused little attention on educating their children about the suffering of the Jews during the Holocaust. Instead, their textbooks focused almost exclusively on the origin of Israel and the Israel/ Arab conflict to generate the social perceptions that

¹ Yair Auron (2005). *The Pain of Knowledge: Holocaust and Genocide Issues in Education*, New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.

² Bar-Tal, Daniel, (1998), “The rocky road toward peace: Beliefs on conflict in Israel textbooks,” *Journal of Peace Research*, Vol. 35, No. 6, p. 725.

³ *Ibid.* pp. 726.

the Arabs were hostile and cruel people who wanted to annihilate Jews like the Nazis. Thus, the Arabs were labeled “robbers, bloodthirsty mobs, killers, gangs or rioters.”¹ Similar sentiments can be found in Cambodian textbooks during the 1980s, which described the sufferings of the people under the Khmer Rouge and labeled the Khmer Rouge “devils” or “monsters.”

In the 1980s and 1990s, however, curriculum developers in Israel reduced the amount of space their textbooks devoted to negative views of the Arab world. As Bar-Tal notes, during this period “there is less emphasis on inculcation of blind patriotic beliefs and less ethnocentric, self-presentation of Jews.”² Instead, the curriculum was designed in an effort to introduce unity between the Jews and Arabs, and to reduce prejudice against the Arabs. Today, textbooks on the Holocaust around the world are diverse. They are no longer created by Ministries of Education exclusively; many NGOs and Holocaust museums design both books and curricula that are used in formal and informal education.

Similarly, Cambodian textbooks during the 1980s became part of the domestic conflicts among rival Cambodian political factions as well as the international conflict among the super powers involved in the Cold War. With assistance from Vietnam, the PRK attempted to bring communism to Cambodia in the hope that it would become a socialist country like Vietnam. It also aimed to prevent the return of the Khmer Rouge and other Cambodian factions that were forming armed forces along the Cambodian-Thai border. Generally, the main aim was to completely abolish what they called “the genocidal clique of Pol Pot.” With these objectives, the textbooks were used to introduce the crimes of the Khmer Rouge into classrooms as early as primary school. The textbooks also glorified the good acts of the United Front for the National Salvation of Kampuchea (UFNSK), a group of Khmer Rouge defectors who escaped to Vietnam, formed an armed force along the Vietnamese border, and with the Vietnamese military took control of Cambodia and ousted the Khmer Rouge from power in January 1979.

In addition, the textbooks included the conduct of the Vietnamese in liberating Cambodia and helping Cambodian people in all areas. They constantly invoked “Kampuchean-Vietnamese friendship” and called upon young people to adopt the resistance movements of Cambodia, Vietnam and Laos as a model in fighting “reactionary” enemies. Excerpts from a textbook published in 1980s read:

Our people are determined to overcome all kinds of up-coming dangers and happily strive to defend and build up the country. They believe that the pure and correct Socialism will absolutely bring peace and good living conditions.... After the liberation of 7 January 1979, Vietnamese people helped us to build up the country in all kinds.³

¹ Ibid. pp. 726.

² Ibid. p. 739.

³ Reading textbook for grade two, part one. Publish by the Ministry of National Education of the PRK. Published in Phnom Penh.

We are striving to strengthen and expand Kampuchea-Vietnam-Laos friendship to be even stronger and long lasting....Friend Vietnamese have helped and supported, in every possible way, our Cambodian people....Most farmers in Svay Rieng province lacked cattle, plows, rakes, etc. Our Friend the Vietnamese bought plowing machines to plow our people's rice fields for four days. We, male and female students, strongly love our brother Vietnamese, for they eliminated our Kampuchea foes.¹

We clearly know that apart from Vietnam there are other socialist nations such as Laos and the Soviet Union, which are supporting us in every section.²

The school textbooks during the PRK period were strongly influenced by the Vietnamese world view. They had to "please the Vietnamese advisers who would not have appreciated any critical allusion to the Vietnamese role. Therefore, [PRK historians] had to operate in a restricted framework."³ Cambodian textbooks in the 1980s also introduced hatred toward the enemies of Vietnam, including America, China, and their allies. They labeled America as imperialist and the Chinese as expansionists and hegemonists, who supported the Khmer Rouge from the pre-revolutionary period until the peace agreement in 1991. Through textbooks, the PRK blamed China for the deaths of millions of Cambodians and the almost complete destruction of the country's infrastructure:

Cambodian people won over the invasive, country-swallowing China Beijing.⁴

Recently, our people have eliminated the genocidal regime of Pol Pot-Ieng Sary and their master, the Beijing expansionists.⁵

Under the ideas of the great crazy hegemonists Beijing, Democratic Kampuchea became the invaded base and was a pedestal for them to attack the nearby countries in Southeast Asia. The power holders in Beijing ordered Pol Pot and Ieng Sary to invade and offensively fought against the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.⁶

¹ Reading textbook for grade one. Publish in 1982 by the Ministry of National Education of the PRK. Publish in Ho Chi Minh City, pp. 93-172.

² Reading textbook for grade 2, part 2. Publish in 1981 by the Ministry of National Education of the PRK. Publish in Phnom Penh, p. 130-131.

³ Frings, K. Viviane, (Oct., 1997), "Rewriting Cambodian History to Adapt It to a New Political Context: The Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party's Historiography," *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol. 31, No. 4, Cambridge University Press, p. 812.

⁴ Reading textbook for grade one, part one. Publish in 1979 by the Ministry of National Education of the PRK. Published in Phnom Penh, p. 42.

⁵ Reading textbook for grade 2, part 2. Publish in 1981 by the Ministry of National Education of the PRK. Published in Phnom Penh, p. 86.

⁶ Reading textbook for grade 3, part 1. Publish in 1981 by the Ministry of National Education of the PRK. Published in Ho Chi Minh City, p. 63-65.

All people in Indochina have confronted to fight the enemies together: the French colonialism, American imperialism, and Beijing expansionism and its lackeys Pol Pot-Ieng Sary, who were the masters of genocide in Cambodia.¹

Under the Pol Pot-Ieng Sary-Khieu Samphan regime, more than three million Cambodian people were killed and all properties were completely destroyed.²

National security was a main emphasis of the PRK, since the Khmer Rouge and two non-communist factions were still fighting to attain the complete withdrawal of all Vietnamese forces from Cambodian land. According to the views expressed in the textbooks, the PRK strongly believed that the United States, China and France were attempting to take over Cambodia by using Pol Pot and former President Lon Nol as their tools. The textbook for grade 3 presented the following negative stereotype:

The emperor and expansionist Beijing exercised genocidal policy in Cambodia, which they chose their absolute slaves Pol Pot-Ieng Sary to act as murderers. They hoped that they would be able to send millions of Chinese soldiers and people to live in Cambodia in order to convert Cambodia into the front garrison to serve the expansionism in Southeast Asia. In late 1979, Beijing was having an agreement with Washington in order to form a separate movement against the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea. The expansionist Beijing and the American Imperialists had a big plan to send Lon Nol, who is the puppet of the Americans, and the soldiers loyal to Lon Nol to lead a movement to destroy the Peoples Republic of Kampuchea. Beijing policy to restore the dictatorial bloodthirsty regime of Pol Pot-Ieng Sary will absolutely not be achieved. The Peoples Republic of Kampuchea with the support from Socialist countries will not fall into the trap of the reactionary, imperialist and expansionist regime.³

Education on the Cambodian genocide was absent during the 1990s. In 2001, as discussed above, the Cambodian government published new social studies books; their contents are much better than the ones in the 1980s. These texts attempted to transmit a new educational agenda and social beliefs; however, there were still many areas where information was deficient. There is little discussion, for example, of the Khmer Rouge. The description of the Khmer Rouge in the grade 9 social studies book reads:

¹ Ibid. p. 80-81.

² Reading textbook for grade 3, part 2. Publish in 1984 by the Ministry of National Education of the PRK. Publish in Phnom Penh, p. 36-37.

³ Reading textbook for grade 3, part 1. Publish in 1981 by the Ministry of National Education of the PRK. Publish in Ho Chi Minh City, p. 108-109.

From April 25 to April 27, 1975, the Khmer Rouge leaders held a special general assembly in order to form a new Constitution and renamed the country “Democratic Kampuchea” A new government of DK, led by Pol Pot, came into existence, after which the massacre of Khmer citizens began.¹

This content has little benefit or consequence in terms of generating historical awareness, much less an ability to understand and conceptualize the conditions in the past in order to apply them to the present and future. Despite its paucity, this passage did present history in a more accurate and less hostile manner than more ideological representations produced during the 1980s. Moreover, although this was a small change, it is symbolically important, for it was a sign that the Cambodian government was taking a different approach in teaching Cambodian children about their country’s past trauma.

The textbooks in both Israel and Cambodia indicate that the leaders of both countries attempted to inculcate prescribed social beliefs to young people through indoctrination, political propaganda, and hatred toward their countries’ enemies. The textbooks in Cambodia presented a positive self-image of the winners of the war, while discrediting its losers. The state also used the country’s modern history to justify particular government perspectives. These manners, attitudes and beliefs have taken root in Cambodian society and today are part of the vicious circle of conflicts, violence, and political suppression. Therefore, in preparing school textbooks on the history of genocide and violent conflicts, it is important to ensure that the textbooks used in schools contain only historical facts and are free from political propaganda.

Accurate and unbiased textbooks alone will be of little value without effective pedagogy and teaching methodology, the importance of which emphasizes the key role of students and teacher guidebooks and teacher trainings so that teachers are able to teach the history of genocide objectively. In developing both student and teacher guidebooks, it is important to emphasize the connections between genocide education and public life, genocide education and social justice, genocide education and the changing of negative social beliefs, as well as the role of genocide education in reconciliation. Putting this statement in the form of a question, one can ask: What can genocide education contribute to the struggle for justice, memory, social change, reconciliation and genocide prevention? This question will be discussed in more detail below. Here, I term these contributions “genocide education activism” since they offer young people opportunities to actively participate in the process of moving toward a more just society. Moreover, with current innovation in methodology, genocide education can offer opportunities to promote “tolerance, inclusiveness, and ability to deal with conflict nonviolently, and the capacity to think critically and question assumptions that could again be manipulated to instigate conflict.”²

¹ Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Royal Government of Cambodia, Social Study textbook, Grade 9th, Lesson 12, page 169, Edition 2000. (Unofficial translation by Bun Sou Sour, Documentation Center of Cambodia).

² Cole, Elizabeth A. (2007), “Reconciliation and History Education,” in “Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation,” edited by Elizabeth A. Cole, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., Carnegie Council for Ethnicity in International Affairs, p. 2.

Curricula on genocide education should be designed in a way that provides students with an opportunity to trace the key events that led to a genocide within a chronological framework. This allows students to identify, analyze, evaluate and investigate historical events and interpret them in light of the past. A well-written text will enable them to think critically, debate ideas in class, and form their own independent judgments. Moreover, in Cambodia, with effective pedagogical strategies, students will be able to transform themselves from passive to active learners. To accomplish this, students need a curriculum that is more relevant to their current conditions and lives and that exposes them to the real world experiences and enable them to contribute to social reconstruction. As Alison Kitson argued, “much of its success might well depend on a teacher’s ability to draw very particular lessons from the past in order to illuminate the present and actively address the kinds of current attitudes that impede conflict resolution.”¹

Comparative Analysis

Historically, the Holocaust and Cambodian genocide are similar in their devastation of human suffering, but the ways in which their histories have been treated are dramatically different. Holocaust studies have developed from an initial unwillingness to talk about the Holocaust to an immense amount of writing and scholarship on the subject, in addition to radio broadcasts, films, and more recently, e-learning. In fact, some scholars claim that the Holocaust receives a disproportionate amount of attention today compared to other genocides. The Jewish community itself actively worked to disseminate and finance activities designed to foster awareness of various dimensions of the Holocaust, such as by sponsoring organizations and institutions to hold seminars or conferences.

In contrast, the teaching of genocide in Cambodia devolved. Initially, the Cambodian educational system devoted attention to the genocide with relatively long sections in its textbooks that were highly politicized and often nearly pure propaganda. Later, the depiction of Democratic Kampuchea was reduced to only five sentences; and finally, the text on Cambodian genocide disappeared entirely from textbooks and school curricula.

In the three decades since the collapse of the Khmer Rouge, the majority of the Cambodian people have been struggling to live in a country that was devastated by civil war, internal conflicts, political instability and national insecurity. People have taken their own suffering for granted. Only with the emergence of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, officially known as the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia (ECCC), and the publication and nationwide distribution of the DK history book did people begin a broader dialogue with their neighbors and families about their pasts.

¹ Kitson, Alison, (2007), “History Teaching and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland,” in “Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation,” edited by Elizabeth A. Cole, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, INC., Carnegie Council for Ethnicity in International Affairs, p. 129-130.

Geoffrey Short has pointed out a number of important problems in teaching about the Holocaust. The poor development of textbooks, curricula, and additional sources for teaching can possibly lead students to view genocide education in a way that is different from the educators' original objectives. In this sense, it is important to thoroughly study the quality of genocide education offered to high school and college students. A study on the development of texts about the Holocaust intended for high school students in England in mid-1990 showed that most teachers failed to deliver the history of the Holocaust objectively in class.

When skewed perceptions are given to students, or teachers fail to present enough information, students may have equally biased perceptions about the victims of genocide. Short argued that given such a one-sided view of Jewish history, in addition to the historical distortions, "some students might conclude that there is no smoke without fire and assume that Jews are, at least to some extent, the authors of their own misfortune."¹

The "one-side view" that Short observed has been a prominent issue in Cambodia since the collapse of the Khmer Rouge in 1979. The PRK government blamed the Cambodian genocide on the Khmer Rouge, its allies and the super powers, namely, the US and China. In contrast, the Khmer Rouge believed that the murders that occurred between 1975 and 1979 were clearly committed by the Vietnamese, who wanted to "sweep away" the Cambodian people in order to take over Cambodian land. Even today, many members of the Cambodian Diasporas and people living inside the country still believe that the blame for the Cambodian genocide can be laid squarely at the feet of the Vietnamese.

As evidence of this misconception, in November 2007, a group of Cambodian nationals in France announced that they were trying to reestablish the government of Democratic Kampuchea in order to save Cambodia and Cambodians from Vietnam. The unofficial translation of the statement they released is as follows:

I would like to announce to all Cambodians of all statuses to know that I am going to establish the government of "Democratic Kampuchea" that the general opinion confuses that it was the government that executed genocide and that the Vietnamese eliminated it on 7 January 1979. The leaders of Democratic Kampuchea are innocent people. They are the real patriots and liberated Khmers from the Vietnamese. But foreigners have played tricks to have the international court to prosecute these leaders. Democratic Kampuchea has to win....The United Nations has to find out the truth even though the world opinions still get confused....We should not leave those who don't know the truth to continue to serve as the slaves of the Vietnamese and continue to kill Khmers....The United Nations...has to give justice to Democratic Kampuchea and find out which group killed almost two million Cambodians....It was clearly the "high organization" organized by Vietnam who took control of Phnom

¹ Ibid. p. 4.

Penh and all provinces....Democratic Kampuchea was not the one who committed genocide....¹

For thirty years, the Cambodian people (much less those in the rest of the world) have not been able to make a clear determination of what was going on during the period of Democratic Kampuchea. The same questions have been haunting them for years. These questions include: Why did the Cambodians kill their own people? Did Vietnam and China want to swallow Cambodia by eliminating the Cambodian people?

Historical accounts of the Holocaust also contain omissions. As Geoffrey Short observed, the texts on the Holocaust that were used to teach students in Britain, Canada and the United States failed to mention the role of the churches in anti-Semitism. According to a study of 23 history teachers in Toronto in May 1998, nearly half of the sample talked very little about the role of anti-Semitism and the other half said almost nothing in their classrooms. To some, teachers in North America and Europe seem to have less compassion toward the Jews when teaching about their fates. They normally, as Short puts it, "spent longer on the woeful response of the western powers, the treatment of non-Jews victims and the similarities and differences between the Holocaust and more recent genocides."² Those who developed curricula did not want to reveal the Christian origins of anti-Semitism, which tended to emphasize that anti-Semitism and prejudice against Jews did not exist prior to Hitler's time.

Similarly, having suffered from Khmer Rouge persecutions and without pedagogical training and curricula, many Cambodian teachers are likely to convey Khmer Rouge history in emotional terms. This, instead of generating critical thinking and understanding toward compassion and national unity, can possibly instill a sense of hatred and revenge among students. Under political pressure, some teachers may not dare to discuss the relationship of some current government officials with the Khmer Rouge. This would lead to gaps in the historical account. When developing curricula devoted to genocide education, it is important to guard against personal emotion and to remain politically neutral. Otherwise, teachers may teach their own version of the truth and produce a biased interpretation of the history of genocide.

In the United States, developments in the curricula on the Holocaust have long been a matter of concern because of persistent misrepresentations. A study conducted during the 1990s showed that the curriculum in California gave the impression that "Hitler's primary targets were blacks rather than Jews."³ Other curricula in the state also misrepresented the position of the United States in the operation to rescue Jews.

¹ "Association Pour UN Cambodge Libre" or "ACL". The announcement was released on November 20, 2007.

² Short, Geoffrey (2000), "The Holocaust Museum as an educational resource: A view from New York City," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, Vol. 9, No. 1, p. 6.

³ *Ibid.* p. 6.

This same situation existed with the curriculum developed in Cambodia during the PRK regime, which aimed to instill in students the concept of socialism and anti-Khmer Rouge sentiments. The misrepresentations were intentionally placed in the texts in order to shape the way the students viewed the Khmer Rouge and, Vietnamese forces in Cambodia, to garner support for the PRK government, and specifically, to advance a historical interpretation that was in the government's political interests.

Today, Holocaust studies are a required subject in many American high schools and universities. The scope and the amount of text to be put into the existing crowded curricula is also another main challenge. In some cases, high school history teachers in the United States inevitably have to leave some of the topics out of the discussion. Cambodia also faces the challenge of determining how much material to include in its curriculum. The Cambodian government commission that was established by government decree to review the draft of *A History of Democratic Kampuchea*, also complained about the length of the text, which was a little under one hundred pages in English. Sorn Samnang suggested that the Cambodian Ministry of Education "should consider the appropriate balances between study hours, number of pages, number of parts, and number of history lessons in comparison to other lessons and courses."¹

However, as noted earlier, in Cambodia, the Ministry of Education has only recently adopted a history book, *A History of Democratic Kampuchea*, as part of its nationwide curriculum in secondary schools, and this material is the only source of genocide education for high school students at this point. Hopefully, in the future, Cambodian educators will have a variety of materials about the Cambodian genocide so that they can begin to develop effective pedagogical methodologies for instructing students. As Gallant and Hartman claim, "Careful comparisons of different strategies...can help educators make informed choices for their own programs and learning situations so as to assure the most efficient use of resources for the achievement of the most appropriate and important objectives."²

Museums also have an important role to play in supplementing the implementation of genocide education in schools. Holocaust scholars and educators have effectively incorporated museums into their curriculum; a museum visit not only saves time but also gives visitors a visceral, visual and auditory experience of the Holocaust. Beyond educating students, museums have also functioned as centers to educate the public about the Holocaust. All Holocaust museums in North America, Israel and Europe comprise photo exhibitions, film footage and artifacts. Thus, the museum can convey detail more quickly than a curriculum can cover. The topics they address range from

¹ The Commission was established by Cambodian government after receiving draft and request from DC-Cam to put in whole or in part the text on the history of Democratic Kampuchea prepared by DC-Cam into high school official curriculum. The commission chaired by Im Sethy, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Education, held its first meeting on December 14, 2006 to discuss and review the draft. For the entire minute meeting, please go to DC-Cam's official website: <http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/A11.pdf>.

² Gallant, Mary J. and Hartman, Harriet (2001). "Holocaust Education for the New Millennium: Assessing our Progress," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 22.

the life and civilization of the Jews in Europe before the Holocaust to the history of anti-Semitism, the rise of the Nazi Party in Germany, the implementation of the Holocaust, and Jewish resistance. Holocaust museums also exhibit the fates of non-Jewish victims, the establishment of the state of Israel, and the post-war Jewish experience in the United States.

The same lessons apply to the case of Cambodian genocide education. Textbooks alone cannot give students a full account of the Khmer Rouge. Bringing students to visit genocide museums, killing sites, former security centers and mass graves will enable them to understand more about people's lives during the Khmer Rouge, the factors that helped the Khmer Rouge take power, and the genocide's aftermath. After visiting a museum such as Tuol Sleng, students may have a broader dialogue in the class about what they have seen in addition to what they have learned. In this sense, the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum will play a role that is similar to the one the US Holocaust Memorial Museum plays for students in the United States. Because the government-run Tuol Sleng Museum places little emphasis on pedagogy, it will need assistance in developing itself into an educational institution capable of teaching the public about the Cambodian genocide and augmenting curricula in schools. The museum has the potential to become an integral part of both formal and informal genocide education in Cambodia for people of every age and educational level.

The experience of educators teaching about the Holocaust has shown that some students have developed an anti-German sentiment. Likewise, teaching about the Cambodian genocide can produce more anti-Vietnamese, anti-Chinese, or anti-former Khmer Rouge cadre prejudice. Therefore, textbook developers and museum curators have to be careful when they plan their work and in structuring discussions about the differences between national and ideological identities. Students should learn that not all Germans were committed to the Nazi Party; similarly, students should understand not all Cambodians were committed to the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), and that not all Vietnamese or Chinese were involved with the Khmer Rouge genocide.

Moreover, the anti-German perception has sometimes led to the interchangeable use of the terms "Nazi" and "German" depicted "not only in popular publications but in scholarly ones as well."¹ In comparison, it is possible that in Cambodia there could be confusion in the usage of the terms "Khmer Rouge" and "Cambodians" or "Vietnamese" and "genocide." If the distinction is unclear, it could lead to a distortion of historical facts and to further political conflicts among the nations in Southeast Asia and among ethnic groups within Cambodia.

How can comparative genocide education help solve social problems?

Comparative genocide education will allow Cambodian students to see beyond the Cambodian genocide and realize that similar heinous crimes and inhuman acts have also taken place in many other parts of the world throughout human history.

¹ Mork, Gordon R. (1980), "Teaching the Hitler period: History and Morality," *The History Teacher Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp. 509-522.

Moreover, comparative genocide education encourages students to generate the critical thinking skills they need to reflect on their country's current political and social situation, and to participate in the world mission to combat the reoccurrence of genocide. In addition to understanding the past and developing cognitive skills, comparative genocide education allows children to develop ethical and moral values including compassion and tolerance for others. Comparative genocide education gives young people an opportunity to have an overview of genocidal regimes and contrast the views of those regimes' leaders with other social mores, which will equip them with ideas for dealing with deeply rooted social prejudices.

Significantly, comparative genocide education also helps to shift post-genocidal countries away from prejudicial thinking about their own country. For instance, because Cambodia and its people have experienced hard times for many decades, the population generally seems to believe that Cambodia is synonymous with killing, conflict, war, power struggles, hardship, and poverty. The Cambodian people, most of whom are Buddhists, are likely to accept what they view as fate and let the situation go with little sense of struggle to change their destiny. These social perceptions continue to exist in a strong form in Cambodian society today. A comparative approach to genocide education will enable Cambodians, especially young generations, to understand that genocide is not unique to Cambodian culture and history. With the benefit of comparative genocide education, Cambodian people can see how victims of the Holocaust and other genocides have struggled to survive and overcome all obstacles.

Moreover, comparative genocide education allows students to go beyond historical description to figure out the connection between war and genocide. As Christopher Fettweis observed, genocide has almost always happened in or shortly after the presence of war. The slaughter of Armenians by the Turks occurred during World War I; the Holocaust occurred during World War II. Looking to the connection between the Holocaust and World War II, Fettweis, although he denied the uniqueness of the connection between World War II and the Holocaust, asserted that, "At the very least, the war made the Holocaust more likely, and easier for the Nazis to accomplish. It greased the gears of the genocide machine, creating an atmosphere where ideas that during times of peace would have been unthinkable became reasonable and acceptable."¹

Likewise, Pol Pot and his associates established the killing fields in Cambodia during civil war and the second Indochina War in the 1970s; the Bosnian Serbs exercised ethnic cleansing of Muslims during the internal wars in the former Yugoslavia; and the Hutus' massacre of ethnic Tutsis and moderate Hutus in Rwanda was a direct outgrowth of that country's civil war. Such comparisons can give students a perception that wherever war occurs, there is a prospect of genocide, or at least when war occurs, it creates the conditions that can lead to genocide and mass murder. It is evident in Cambodia that war generated deep hatred among the extreme nationalists

¹ Fettweis, Christopher J. (2003) "War as catalyst: Moving World War II to the center of Holocaust scholarship," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5:2, p. 234.

toward their enemies. But soon, they could not differentiate who were enemies and who were not, which led to mass killings in the country.

Many foreign visitors who spent their holidays in Cambodia during the 1960s described Cambodia as an “island of peace.” They called the capital city of Phnom Penh the most beautiful city in Southeast Asia. Cambodia was indeed a Buddhist and civilized country. But civil war and internal power struggles, as well as the devastation brought about by international wars, pushed the country to the abyss of evil. These circumstances led to the Khmer Rouge thinking that the ideas of democracy and peaceful political struggle could not be applied in Cambodia and that totalitarianism, communist ideologies, and warfare were the only ways to solve Cambodia’s long-standing conflict. And as occurred with the Nazis, the impossible and unthinkable became possible and thinkable. The Khmer Rouge came to the conclusion that people just like themselves and of their own race became their enemies. Therefore, it is crucial to study the nature of war, the nature of the Holocaust, and the nature of Cambodian genocide and conflict comparatively if future genocide is to be prevented.

A comparative study also allows students to understand that genocide is not “a problem from hell,” as Samantha Power has ironically titled her book. It is clearly a man-made phenomenon that can be prevented when people are given opportunities to look more deeply into the circumstances that led to genocide. Genocide-like events can possibly occur as long as the circumstances are right. Understanding this historical basis of genocide will help to counter the old perception that such atrocities will inevitably happen.

Looking at both the Holocaust and Cambodian genocide, it is evident that the study of the Holocaust is important for both the Jewish people and others around the world who are then empowered to promote genocide prevention, respect for human rights, democracy, peace and reconciliation. In this respect, Cambodian people need full access to their country’s history of genocide in order to lead the country toward rule of law, full democracy, peace and unity. Despite the advances in Holocaust studies over the course of more than 50 years, in the words of Yuval Dror, “there remain some fundamental omissions in formal and non-formal secondary school curricula...and a great deal of room for development and improvement in order to reflect the concerns of modern society.”¹

Introducing the Khmer Rouge genocide and other genocides comparatively in Cambodia is an important step toward reshaping social beliefs and making social and political changes in this chronically damaged society. For decades, political leaders have shaped social beliefs among the population, which divided the country into social and political factions, and eventually led to the ultimate disaster of the Khmer Rouge era. Extreme nationalism and patriotism generated loyalty, love, care and sacrifice for the sake of the nation alone. Instead of increasing cohesiveness and

¹ Dror, Yuval (2001), “Holocaust Curricula in Israeli Secondary School, 1960s-1990s: Historical Evaluation from the Moral Education Perspective,” *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, Vol. 10, No. 2, p. 37.

unity within society, these extreme beliefs indoctrinated people to the point that they were able to kill their own relatives and destroy their thousand-year religious and cultural heritages.

Today, attitudes toward social problems such as corruption, impunity, social exploitation of the poor, power struggles, gun violence, drug trafficking, human rights abuses, human trafficking, and so forth, create the perception among the population that these ills are part of their daily life and that they cannot be solved. They eventually become part of Cambodia's language, symbols, myths, culture and collective memories. These social beliefs have caused outbreaks of conflict, civil war, violence and the continuation of these social problems, which still exist today and will continue to exist in the future if genocide education remains absent from schools. Cambodia must be given a chance to learn from its mistakes, much as Germany did; today, Germany is one of the world's champions of human rights. If we are to shape Cambodian children's attitudes now, we must empower them to learn from the past and shape their future in a different way.

An examination of comparative genocide education shows that genocide education during a country's post-genocidal period is almost always politicized to meet state objectives. It takes several decades to shape the way that genocide education is correctly introduced into schools. It took about four decades for Israel to change its textbooks from introducing prejudice to reducing prejudice and from separating the Jewish community from the Arab world toward a move to strengthen Jewish-Arab coexistence.

Likewise, it has taken Cambodia thirty years to change its textbooks, to evolve from introducing political propaganda, indoctrination, hatred, and revenge to texts that are historically accurate and politically unbiased. Perhaps time is the answer, for it gives countries and people perspective. The Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport aims to formally introduce genocide education to the high school curriculum by the year 2009.

It is important to reshape social beliefs by constructing knowledge through comparative genocide education. This requires strong political will on the part of post-genocidal countries, which must attempt to separate genocide education from politics. Post-genocidal or post-conflict governments have to take their hands out of textbook and curriculum development and allow professional educators to work freely on both writing textbooks and designing pedagogical and methodological curricula. This will raise the chances that historical texts will be presented in a balanced manner, and will include both the bright and dark sides of history so that students are able to think critically. When developing products for students, textbook writers and curriculum designers have to bear in mind that the ultimate goal of genocide education is not only to prevent genocide but also to foster civic responsibility in order to achieve sustainable and long-lasting peace and national reconciliation. As Dan A. Porat pointed out, educators "must question not only the accuracy of the depiction but also how the teaching of an event reflects the social and

political context in which the narrative was shaped and how the account is expected to shape the concurrent social and political circumstances.”¹

Conclusion

In the years immediately after World War II, nations did not give much attention to genocide education (much less comparative genocide education) as a measure to confront recurring past atrocities. Rather, the main focus was the competition for economic and political power, and the competition for ideological influence in various parts of the world. This left a “loophole” that encouraged more killings and grave human rights abuses in many parts of the world, as evidenced in Cambodia from 1975 to 1979, Rwanda in 1994, and ethnic cleansing in Bosnia in 1995. In the beginning of the 21st century, the world is constantly being alerted to the on-going acts of genocide and other human rights abuses in Sudan and possibly Burma. Scholars, researchers and educators have begun to see the important role of comparative genocide education in solving this problem.

However, genocide education around the world continues to concentrate on the events associated with the Holocaust, while little attention is being paid to the genocides that are occurring in many developing countries. Genocide scholars and educators should turn their focus toward issues in the third world. The Cambodian case could be the best example for such a study, since it has overcome many obstacles over the course of three decades to providing genocide education.

Education on the violent past plays an important role in the development of every country, and post-genocidal countries in particular. Despite this, deeply divided and fragile societies like Cambodia encounter many challenges. The fragility is not rooted only in people’s attitudes but also in social infrastructure and political institutions. Since the Cambodian people have experienced many cycles of violence, they have lost confidence in the country’s social and political systems. The manipulation of history, especially Khmer Rouge history, by politicians has posed even greater challenges for the country to fix as well as to regain the trust of its people.

In this sense, comparative genocide education plays a key role in social reconstruction, social reconciliation, and trust building. Unfortunately, the history of genocide has long been politicized in Cambodia as part of nation building and has been used to achieve political objectives, especially during the 1980s and early 1990s. However, like Holocaust education, teaching genocide in Cambodia is more hopeful in the present situation due to the positive reactions and changes in the government policy toward teaching the country’s history. The Cambodian genocide will become a more practical topic for historical study if the government expresses more willingness to revise textbooks and curricula, and loosens state control on the writing of textbooks. Hopefully, with the advent of genocide education, and, in particular, comparative genocide education, in Cambodia, Cambodian students will begin to receive the encouragement, motivation and skills they need to become responsible global and local citizens.

¹ Porat, Dan A, (Oct., 2004), “From the scandal to the Holocaust in Israeli Education,” *The Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 39, No. 4, p. 620.

Bibliography

- Authers, Ben, et al. (2007). "Engaging Academic Activism, a Preface," *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 29:4, 311-316.
- Ayres, David M. (2000). *Anatomy of a Crisis: Education, Development, and the State in Cambodia, 1953-1998*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press.
- Bar-Tal, Daniel (1998), "The rocky road toward peace: Beliefs on conflict in Israel textbooks," *Journal of Peace Research*, 35:6, 723-742.
- Bartov, Omer (2004). "The Holocaust as Leitmotif of the Twentieth Century," *Zeitgeschichte Journal*, 31:5, 315-327.
- Bartrop, Paul (2002). "The relationship between war and genocide in the twentieth century: a consideration," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 4:4, 519-535.
- Cole, Elizabeth A. and Judy Barsolou (2005). *Unite or Divide? The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict*, Special Report to the United States Institute of Peace.
- Cole, Elizabeth A., ed. (2007). *Teaching the Violent Past: History Education and Reconciliation*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., Carnegie Council for Ethnicity in International Affairs.
- Diner, Hasia (2003). "Post-World-War-II American Jewry and the Confrontation with Catastrophe," *Jewish Studies: New and Notable Books and Journals*, Indiana University Press.
- Dror, Yuval (2001). "Holocaust Curricula in Israeli Secondary Schools, 1960s-1990s: Historical Evaluation from the Moral Education Perspective," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 10:2, 29-39.
- Fein, Helen (1993). "Revolutionary and Anti-revolutionary Genocides: A Comparison of State Murders in Democratic Kampuchea, 1975 to 1979, and in Indonesia, 1965-1966," *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 35:4, 796-823.
- Fein, Helen (1993). "Revolutionary and antirevolutionary genocides: A comparison of state murders in Democratic Kampuchea, 1975 to 1979, and in Indonesia, 1965 to 1966." *Comparative Study in Society and History*, 35:4.1
- Fettweis, Christopher J. (2003). "War as catalyst: Moving World War II to the center of Holocaust scholarship," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 5:2, 225-234.
- Frings, K. Viviane (1997). "Rewriting Cambodian History to Adapt it to a New Political Context: The Kampuchean People's Revolutionary Party's Historiography," *Modern Asian Studies*, 31:4, 87-846.

Gallant, Mary J. and Hartman, Harriet (2001). "Holocaust Education for the New Millennium: Assessing our Progress," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 10:2, 1-28.

Kissi, Edward (2004). "Rwanda, Ethiopia and Cambodia: Links, Faultlines and Complexities in a Comparative Study of Genocide," *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6:1.

Letter from the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to Mr. Youk Chhang, Director of DC-Cam. The letter can be found pdf file at http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/pdf/Letter_from_Ministry_of_Education_to_DC-Cam--Eng.pdf.

Levy, Daniel and Sznajder, Natan (2002). "Memory Unbound: The Holocaust and the Formation of Cosmopolitan Memory," *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5:1.

Lor Chandara (2002). "Prince Ranariddh Slams New History Textbook," *The Cambodia Daily*, April 27-28.

Minutes of a meeting of the government working commission to discuss the draft of the "History of Democratic Kampuchea" which was convened at the meeting hall of the Ministry of Education on December 14, 2006. The entire pdf file of the minute can be found at <http://dccam.org/Projects/Genocide/A11.pdf>.

Mork, Gordon R. (1980). "Teaching the Hitler Period: History and Morality," *The History Teacher Journal*, Vol. 13:4, 509-522.

Official letter from His Excellency Im Sothy, Secretary of State of the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, to His Excellency Sok An, Deputy Prime Minister in Charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers, January 3, 2007,

Pin Sisovann (2002). "Prime Minister Orders Recall of Textbooks," *The Cambodia Daily*, April 29.

Porat, Dan A. (2004). "From the scandal to the Holocaust in Israeli Education," *The Journal of Contemporary History*, 39:4, 619-636.

Power, Samantha (2002). *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Harper Perennial.

Reading textbook for grade 1, Part 1, Publication of the Ministry of National Education of the PRK, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1979.

Reading textbook for grade 1, Publication of the Ministry of National Education of the PRK, Ho Chi Minh City, 1982.

Reading textbook for grade 2, Part 1, Publication of the Ministry of National Education of the PRK, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1979.

Reading textbook for grade 2, Part 2, Publication of the Ministry of National Education of the PRK, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1981.

Reading textbook for grade 3, Part 1, Publication of the Ministry of National Education of the PRK, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, 1981.

Reading textbook for grade 3, Part 2, Publication of the Ministry of National Education of the PRK, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 1984.

Reading textbook for grade 9, Publication of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport of the Royal Government of Cambodia, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2000. (Unofficial translation by Bun Sou Sour, Documentation Center of Cambodia.)

Resolution on the Establishment of the Government Working Committee to Review the Draft of "A History of Democratic Kampuchea," October 6, 2006.

Short, Geoffrey (2000). "The Holocaust Museum as an Educational Resource: A View from New York City," *The Journal of Holocaust Education*, 9:1, 1-18.

Yair Auron (2005). *The Pain of Knowledge: Holocaust and Genocide Issues in Education*. New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction Publishers.