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# Genocide in the Classroom: How transitional societies are affected by the quality of genocide education

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Genocide in the Classroom:  
How Transitional Societies are Affected by the Quality of Genocide Education

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## Introduction

"Thus for the time being I have sent to the East only my 'Death's Head Units' with the orders to kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish race or language. Only in such a way will we win the vital space that we need. Who still talks nowadays about the Armenians?"

- Hitler<sup>1</sup>

## Background and Purpose

How much of the existing conflict in the world is related, directly or indirectly, to a lack of remembering the past? How much intolerance, racism, and violence is caused by a lack of understanding and misinformation presented to children in primary and secondary school? The past century has been a stage to almost ten genocides, but they have been so often debated and contested that it could be difficult to sometimes perceive them as historical events. A combination of disagreement between neighboring countries and ethnic groups, dishonestly in academic and governmental policy, and simple lack of discourse has created a situation in which many children and adolescents never learn about mass human rights violations that occurred in the very country in which they live and go to school.<sup>2</sup>

As defined by the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide drafted by the United Nations in 1948, a genocide is essentially mass murder or persecution with a specific intent and target of destroying a specific racial, ethnic, religious

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<sup>1</sup> The History Place, "Genocide in the 20th Century," The History Place, <http://www.historyplace.com/worldhistory/genocide/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Leah Davidson, "French Senate Supports Armenian Genocide Bill," *The BU Campus*, February 7, 2012, <http://thebucampus.ca/2012/02/french-senate-supports-armenian-genocide-bill>

or national group.<sup>3</sup> The acts that constitute a genocide are numerous and include everything from actual murder to rape in order to force pregnancies, but what arguably matters the most in determining whether such crimes against humanity can be classified as genocide or not has to do with the perpetrator's intent. The objective to destroy an entire racial, ethnic, religious or national group of people, such as Hitler's Holocaust against European Jewry, is what legally decides if a mass atrocity is, in fact, genocide.

Since 1900, every inhabitable continent excluding North America has experienced at least one genocide. If those time parameters are set to include the past several hundred years, even the United States of America is not exempt from that statistic. The destruction of Native American populations in North America following the English colonization of the region could be argued either way. On the one hand, the Native American population in the area now known as the United States of America went from close to 12 million to not even 1 million in four hundred years. American policy at the time had a motive of acquiring the lands that were inhabited by the Native Americans. The actions used by the government to fulfill this motive thus included an element of intent to rid these lands of Native Americans by "educating" Native Americans to forcibly change their culture and transfer their children to boarding schools,<sup>4</sup> which is an element of genocide specifically mentioned in the 1948 Convention. On the other hand, many historians believe that the loss of Native American society was due more to new diseases brought from Europe and for that reason lacked the specific intent of destroying required in the definition created in 1948.<sup>5</sup> But even if we

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<sup>3</sup> United Nations, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide."

<sup>4</sup> Ward Churchill, *Struggle for the Land: Native North American Resistance to Genocide, Ecocide, and Colonization*, (San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2002), 57.

<sup>5</sup> Guenter Lewy, "Were American Indians the Victims of Genocide?" George Mason University, <http://hnn.us/articles/7302.html>.

disregard North America, more recent examples, such as the Holocaust, the Cambodian Genocide and the triangular conflicts in the Balkans demonstrate the ever-present existence of the worst possible crime against humanity: the intended mass destruction of specific groups of people, also known as genocide.

If we make the broad assumption that by this point in time we have the general understanding of how societal discrimination can create a cycle of violence, we must ask one question: Why is it that ethnic groups in many nations that experienced genocide still face violence and discrimination even after the conflict has ended? We might hope that the old adage often taught to children by their parents of “learn from your mistakes” could be applied, that by now the world should be aware and know what to look for when faced with discriminatory politics and violence in society. But looking back at the past several decades of education policies implemented by different governments around the world, one of the reasons for the continuing tensions after the actual violence becomes apparent. When children are taught intolerance and not educated about mistakes made by past governments and leaders, they are not being provided with the information they need to ensure better policy in the future.<sup>6</sup> They are indeed being allowed to continue a vicious cycle of intolerance and violence against those different from them, leading to the same circumstances that started the genocide. This paper will serve as a comparative study about the values, methods, and approaches of three European countries towards teaching the history of their genocides, followed by an analysis of the contemporary ethnic conflict and racism issues in each respective country. Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina, both having experienced genocides in the past century, are two prime examples of the situation

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<sup>6</sup> Lynn Davies, *Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos*, (London: RoutledgeFalmer, 2004), 5.

in which the government fails to create a clear, fair picture of the past violence and racism. Different ethnic groups in the Balkans teach different versions of their intertwining histories in segregated classrooms, creating a generation of children who are used to and comfortable with a separated society. Alternatively, the Turkish government has mandated a history curriculum that denies the genocide against the Armenians, which has created tensions between the Turkish government and Armenians and led to violence between the groups. On the other hand, in the sixty years since the Holocaust ended, Germany has gone to great lengths to make sure that the younger generations are properly educated about their country's past to promote commemoration; but this has not had the completely successful effect the government hoped for. Many German students and adults feel a level of bitterness towards Jews and Israel because they feel that they are being taught to have culpability for the crimes committed by their grandparents.

There have been studies done about the use of education as a tool for reconciliation after a conflict, such as the case studies of Rwanda and Israel by Marian Hodgkins and Zvi Bekerman respectively, that will be examined later in this study. However, there is a lack of literature contrasting how education is used in different places and the resulting social integration or discrimination. This study will serve to provide a comprehensive comparison that can be viewed as a combined study of the pre-existing scholarship by merging education theory with practice in a special and unusual scenario. Additionally, this study will address cases all affected by the same type of conflict and in the same continent, therefore facilitating the comparison.

## **Methodology**

One of the key elements of this study is confirming that schools both have a high level of

influence on the social perspectives of children and are the ideal place to study the evolution of morals in a post-conflict society. Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, a Belarusian psychologist, was famous for his sociocultural theory that stated that children construct and learn their behaviors and knowledge based on their interactions with the elders that surround them in combination with ideas obtained beforehand. Based on this idea, it is imperative for younger generations to be taught not only the most truthful account of their nation's history but also to be taught tolerance and acceptance of other people, even after conflicts. Because his theory is so broad, it could also be interpreted to show that students learn either racism or tolerance at home. However, because schools create a communal environment with data more readily available, this study will focus on classroom interactions. Harold Fishbein, a psychologist, subscribed to several theories, one of which posited that children learn morals based on what they are told by authorities,<sup>7</sup> meaning that the focus should be on schools to teach students about morals, racism, and intolerance. Although rather broad, these theories will serve as a basis in this study to support the idea that genocide education is an inherent part of preventing violence in transitional societies.

More specifically, the basis of this comparative study will come from three authors who have written about a similar topic. Lynn Davies believes that by omitting the uncomfortable parts of conflict, schools do not teach their students to “demand a better foreign policy”.<sup>8</sup> She argues that a part of the reason that war is still an accepted method of conflict resolution is because of “grave omissions [and] contradictions”<sup>9</sup> from the curricula of schools globally. This helps us to understand what it is about the history education in

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<sup>7</sup> Harold D. Fishbein, *Evolution, Development, and Children's Learning*, (Pacific Palisades, CA: Goodyear Publishing Company, Inc., 1976).

<sup>8</sup> Davies, “Education and Conflict,” 5.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

our case studies that leads to continued discrimination and violence. In addition, two other case studies about education in Israel and Rwanda, similar to the ones in this paper, will serve as comparisons for the examples that will be discussed in this study. Marian Hodgkins, who wrote about education in Rwanda after the genocide of 1994, believes that the Rwandan government's effort to cover up the past and to focus on the high points of the country's history is actually detrimental to the reconciliation that is vital in a post-genocidal society. Zvi Bekerman observed a new type of bi-lingual and bi-cultural school in Israel that uses open discussions to deal with controversial and difficult issues between Israeli and Palestinian students and analyzed its successes and failures. These studies will be used to provide a comparison for education theory, curriculum, and methods throughout this paper in the analysis of the education in Germany, Turkey, and the former Yugoslavia. Additionally, this paper will use articles and interviews with students from respective countries to gather an understanding of how public education about genocides is treated. Unfortunately, because of language barriers, there will be a moderate lack of primary sources, however there is a high level of confidence that using secondary sources and interviews will provide for a complete overview of the educational situation in each country. In addition to the articles and interviews, non-governmental organization reports will be used to analyze the current situation in each country regarding racism and intolerance.

### **Case Studies**

The genocide against the Jewish population in Europe, the Holocaust, is arguably one of the most recognized in the world despite taking place close to three decades after the first genocides of the twentieth century. It had one of the highest death counts in history,

particularly of Jews, with the most popular estimate rounding out at six million, and also led to the creation of the term *genocide*. The German government has since created a history curriculum that fully addresses the Holocaust in a manner that portrays Jews, Roma, Sinti, and others as the victims and Nazis as the perpetrators.<sup>10</sup> Students are taught about World War II from a young age, and the topic recurs in classes as they continue through middle school and high school. Additionally, they are taken on field trips to concentration camps and are involved in other projects that reinforce the message that the government wants to convey, of both remembrance and commemoration of the past and prevention of the same thing happening in the future. This approach towards education, in addition to other measures taken by the government, could be considered part of the reason that racism and intolerance in Germany has dropped so drastically since the end of World War II.<sup>11</sup> But the German system is not perfect: individual interviews, newspaper articles, and journal articles alike show that there is a sentiment of “Holocaust fatigue,” that students feel bitter towards the Jewish population in Germany because they feel culpable for a crime committed several generations ago.<sup>12</sup> From this we can see that despite the efforts made by the government to prevent the possibility of another genocide, an over-emphasis on the material and a lack of room for oppositional opinions creates a marginalized population that actually increases discriminatory sentiment instead of decreasing it. However, despite its pitfalls, the German approach towards history and Holocaust education is much more conducive towards reconciliation than that of Turkey.

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<sup>10</sup> Heiner Salomon, interviewed by the author, Maastricht, The Netherlands, March 15, 2012

<sup>11</sup> Council of Europe. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. *ECRI Report on Germany (fourth monitoring cycle)*. 2009.

<sup>12</sup> Dan Fleshler, "Does Education Fuel Anti-Semitism?: German Study Says Holocaust Studies May Increase Hatred," *The Jewish Daily Forward*, February 24, 2012.

In Turkey, the Armenian genocide of the early twentieth century is not only ignored in daily life and in education, but even talking about it is criminalized.

The genocide against the Armenian population in Turkey was, chronologically, one of the first genocides of the twentieth century, taking place between the years of 1915 and 1918. However, it was not recognized as such until after 1948, when the term was first recognized legally. The government of Turkey persecuted the Armenian minority population in the country, leading to the exile and death of several million people.<sup>13</sup> Although the government maintains that this forced movement was because of ongoing conflict, it had more to do with making the state “ethnically pure” of all non-Turks.<sup>14</sup> This violent history has led to present day tensions between Turkey and Armenia due to the different portrayals of what happened in the early twentieth century. According to the Armenian government, and the opinion generally accepted by scholars and other governments, the Turkish state carried out a genocide against the Armenians. The Turkish government, on the other hand, has labeled it a bloody civil war, but maintains that it lacks the definite intent required to label it genocide.<sup>15</sup> The Turkish government has mandated a history curriculum at Turkish school that denies that the atrocity was a genocide. This has arguably created and maintained a schism in society between the ethnic Turks and the remaining Armenian population, as visible by the social segregation of the two groups.<sup>16</sup> Despite an admittedly noticeable improvement, likely encouraged by European Commission against Racism and Intolerance reports among others, Turkey has maintained

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ben Kiernan, *Blood and Soil: A World History of Genocide and Extermination from Sparta to Darfur*, (Harrisonburg, VA: Yale University Press, 2007).

<sup>15</sup> The University of Michigan-Dearborn, "Fact Sheet: Armenian Genocide," The University of Michigan-Dearborn, <http://www.umd.umich.edu/dept/armenian/facts/genocide.html>.

<sup>16</sup> Belinda Cooper and Taner Akcam. "Turks, Armenians, and the 'G-word'," *World Policy Journal* 22, no. 3 (2005).

a high level of ethnic separation almost a century after the violence. This denial of genocide is one issue that affects public education; another is societal segregation caused by a lack of consensus regarding conflict. This has been the case of the former Yugoslavia since its genocide occurred almost two decades ago.

Slobodan Milosevic, a leader in the Balkans in the last decade of the twentieth century, envisioned a greater Serbia after the fall of Franz Josep Tito and Yugoslavia. He desired a clean race and territory that resided in the region purified of all of the other religions and cultures, similar to Hitler's idea. During Tito's regime, relative multiculturalism and acceptance were encouraged in order to promote the success of the communist regime. He wanted the ethnic Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians to be able to coexist peacefully and to create one united nation in the southeast of Europe. Ten years after Tito's death, however, Milosevic's desire for Serbian supremacy led to a decade of violence and racism.<sup>17</sup> Unlike the violence that occurred in Turkey and Germany, the massacres of this war came from all sides, although the majority of it came from the Serbian ethnic group. Despite the initial violence coming from the Serbs living in Bosnia and Herzegovina, it soon became a triangular conflict with perpetrators and victims from all ethnicities. Because this violence only happened in the past two decades, tensions have remained high in the region between the warring ethnic groups. These tensions and lack of reconciliation are clearly demonstrated in the manner in which history education is taught to children living there. The main ethnic groups, the Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, have all taught history since the beginning of the twentieth century with drastically different, and often conflicting, perspectives. This has been done in their respective schools, which are

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<sup>17</sup> Kiernan, "Blood and Soil."

segregated, creating a scenario in which small, ethnically divided groups of people in one country are not unified in their idea of history. This has created moderate continuing racism in society even after the violence has ended, such as the segregation of municipal institutions, such as firehouses. Compared to Turkey and Germany, it is clear that the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina is still fresh: the generation that fought the war is still alive and hold clear grudges against members of other ethnic groups. The situation of the younger generation is turning into more of that of Turkey, where students are learning to harden the lines of separation between groups. This is in contrast to Germany, where ethnic groups coexist, for the most part, in both society and politics.

### Expectations

An issue, of course, in judging the accuracy of a particular history curriculum in a country is just that: what sort of accuracy, or truth, is desired? Is it on the individual level or the national level? Does it matter if one person saw something different and therefore disagrees with a widely accepted idea, or should the history of a country be taught as majority rule? Should outside opinions be considered as a way of legitimizing what is made official, or should a nation's past, particularly with regard to violence, be left within the country between its own people? Additionally, does creating an "official truth" to be used in classrooms create more discrimination by marginalizing those with differing opinions? These are all questions to be considered in evaluating the degree of accuracy, effectiveness and legitimacy of a school education with regard to past violence. However, the most important is the level to which the education is able to bring future generations back together after a tragedy rips communities apart. After a genocide, the government's focus needs to be working from the ground up with the younger generation to make sure that

reconciliation is achieved so as to avoid future conflict and to allow for peaceful coexistence, whether in the same country or across the globe. The expectation of this study is not to create utopia-like peace in a nation that has experienced genocide; rather it aims to evaluate how education can be used as a tool to promote peace between ethnicities formerly at war. My hope with this study is to promote education as an effective means of post-conflict reconciliation so as to avoid future violence and racism.

This first section of this study after the introduction will address the definition of genocide as explained by the 1948 Genocide Convention, its position as a contentious topic, and the need for genocide education, all with a focus on the idea of intent. The second section will be an overview of the psychology and sociology of classroom education, ranging from a very broad theory down to several case studies that will serve as comparative anchors for the case studies. The third, fourth, and fifth sections will be the center point of this paper, the case studies. In order, they will look at the history of conflict, genocide education, and contemporary racism in Germany, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Each of these sections will also contain an analysis based on the theories introduced in section three and recommendations for possible improvements to the state's current approach to history curricula. The sixth section will show the dichotomy of genocide education as defined by the previous sections: the idealistic view and the realistic view. Finally, the last section will be the conclusion of the study.

## Genocide

“We are in the presence of a crime without a name.”

- Winston Churchill<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

In order for a concept to be taught properly and in a manner that has a positive impact on society as a whole, it must be defined. By no means does the definition have to be a simple or concise one, but it must exist, even if, as it with the case of genocide, it is oft-contested one. By defining a concept, one admits its existence and therefore, in the case of such a severe human rights violation, the necessity to face the issue of commemorating it in the past and preventing it in the future. Although history has seen many wars that involved the intentional destruction of a specific group of people before the creation of the word “genocide,” its application to civil conflicts remains a contested area of discussion. In particular, this section will address the element of “intent” that is a vital part of the definition of genocide and, as we will see later, is often used by the government to deny genocide, both in politics and education. Even in states that have not experienced genocide, politicians have gone to great lengths to avoid calling specific events by that title in order to avoid having to becoming involved in it, such as the Clinton

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<sup>1</sup> Dominik J. Schaller and Jurgen Zimmerman, "Introduction," In *The Origins of Genocide: Raphael Lemkin as a Historian of Mass Violence*, eds. Dominik J. Schaller and Jurgen Zimmerer, (New York City: Routledge, 2009), 4.

Administration's approach to dealing with Rwanda.<sup>2</sup> As such, the creation of the word "genocide" has been both a blessing and a curse in advocating human rights and ensuring that proper education regarding the matter is achieved. Finally, this section will also address why this study is focusing on genocide rather than other mass atrocities, with an emphasis on understanding government intent and the necessity for commemoration.

### Definition

Since the adoption of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in 1948, the definition of a genocide has been relatively clear to most of the world as "...the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religion group."<sup>3</sup> This issue in this definition is the lack of specifics of how to define and prove the intent of the perpetrator. This lack of clarity has led to a vast array of contention regarding whether certain events qualify as genocide or not. In particular, the absence of information to prove intent creates an issue because it means that governments can claim that a genocide did not happen simply because there was no intention to kill the people. If this is the case, as it is in Turkey, history education will then reflect the views of the government, which might mean that students never learn about the element of "intent," a vital part of preventing future tragedies. This section will briefly examine the history of genocide and will then explore the political use of the word as it relates to

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<sup>2</sup> Eagleburger, Larry et al. "'The CNN Effect': How 24-Hour News Coverage Affects Government Decisions and Public Opinion": an interview with Larry Eagleburger, Claus Kleber, and Steven Livingston. By Stephen Hess, *Brookings.edu*, January 23, 2002, [http://www.brookings.edu/events/2002/0123media\\_journalism.aspx](http://www.brookings.edu/events/2002/0123media_journalism.aspx)

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, "Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide" (New York: 1948).

education, with both parts focusing on the idea of “intentional destruction.”

### **A Brief History of “Genocide” as a Legal Term**

Location of the first retrospectively recognized genocide of the twentieth century, the territory that is now known as Namibia was the home of two major tribes, the Herero and the Nama. In the 1880s, Germany colonized Namibia. Shortly thereafter, the Herero cattle farmers were indebted to the Germans after they had aided the farmers when large parts of their cattle stock were killed off by a famine. The Germans, unpaid by the Herero, simply took away their remaining property to make even on the deal they had made. The German army general who was in Namibia at that time was replaced by Lieutenant General Lothar von Trotha, who arrived in Southwest Africa with murderous intentions:<sup>4</sup> “The exercise of violence and crass terrorism and even with gruesomeness was and is my policy. I destroy the African tribes with streams of blood and streams of money. Only following this cleansing can something new emerge, which will remain.”<sup>5</sup> Seventy-five to eighty percent of the Herero were killed or died from disease and starvation by the end of 1905,<sup>6</sup> making the German occupation of Namibia the first genocide of the twentieth century, complete with the element of intent, a vital part of the definition that would be formulated four decades later. However, at the time, international law only dealt with issues between states and did not deal with crimes committed by representatives of the state.<sup>7</sup> In addition, no word existed to describe such a

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<sup>4</sup> Kiernan, “Blood and Soil,” 382-3.

<sup>5</sup> Jan-Bart Gewald, *Herero Heroes*, (Oxford: James Currey Ltd., 1999), 174.

<sup>6</sup> Lynn Berat, “Genocide: The Namibian Case against Germany.” *Pace International Law Review* 5 (1993): 184.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

heinous crime as what had been committed in Namibia. This issue of a crime without a name continued during the first half of the twentieth century, through the Turkish genocide of the Armenians, up until the end of World War II.

After escaping from Poland during World War II in 1939,<sup>8</sup> Raphael Lemkin arrived in the United States and addressed an issue that, until that point, had gone unnamed. Lemkin wanted to give the most atrocious crime in the history of humanity a name and to create a treaty that would prohibit it. He believed that doing this would bring more attention from larger and more powerful states who would, in turn, have a name for the crime they were fighting in Eastern Europe that, thus far, been nameless.<sup>9</sup> Despite Lemkin's attempts to create a treaty that would call for the international protection of ethnic and religious minorities, he was unsuccessful until 1944 when he published *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, which, for the first time, publicized the word "genocide."<sup>10</sup> His success was inspired by George Eastman, who named his new camera "Kodak." This name was short, easy to pronounce, distinctive, and easy to remember. Using these criteria, Lemkin created a word that he hoped would invoke rage among those who heard it.<sup>11</sup>

Genocide, the name given by Lemkin to the thus far nameless crime being committed in Nazi Germany, is a combination of the Greek and Latin roots "geno" (meaning "a group of people") and "cide" (meaning "to kill").<sup>12</sup> According to Lemkin,

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<sup>8</sup> Schaller and Zimmerman, "Introduction," 4.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Power, Samantha. *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*. New York: Perennial, 2002.

<sup>12</sup> Holocaust Museum Houston. "What Is Genocide?". Edited by Holocaust Museum Houston. Houston, 2011.

it meant specifically “the destruction of a nation or of an ethnic group.”<sup>13</sup> He said that it did not necessarily imply the immediate destruction of an ethnic or national group, rather the “coordinated plan of actions”<sup>14</sup> aimed at doing so. In his definition, he included the “disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups ... the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and ... the lives of the individuals ...”.<sup>15</sup> Genocide became the word to define the killing of not only a group of people, but the deliberate and calculated annihilation of a culture, a language, and all other institutions that formed the identity of that group. As a final part of his definition of genocide, Lemkin states that “genocide is directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against the individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group.”<sup>16</sup> This new word was meant to create the concept of the destruction of a group of peoples, but only with the specific intent of doing so.

Indeed, the final version of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, which passed in the United Nations General Assembly with a unanimous vote, listed the actions which constituted the act of genocide. These included:

- (a) Killing members of the group;
- (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;<sup>□</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, (Clark, New Jersey: The Lawbook Exchange, Ltd., 1944), 49.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

- (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;<sup>17</sup>
- (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;<sup>17</sup>
- (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.<sup>17</sup>

Additionally mentioned in Article II of the Convention was the necessity of “intention” in order to qualify an act as genocide. The murder of enemy combatants, along with civilians (which is a violation of the Geneva Conventions), although horrific and worthy of fair justice, cannot be called genocide unless the intention of the murderers is to wipe out the entire enemy race. That is the defining, distinctive part of a genocide: it must carry the intent of destroying, in whole, a specific group of people or the culture of a group of people.<sup>18</sup> However, the use of the word “genocide” since its inception has not been at all simple, particularly regarding the element of intent. This portion of the definition has, at times, been the epicenter of campaigns by governments that have wanted to prove that no genocide was committed because of a lack of intention to destroy other groups.

### **Historical Debate and Political Contention** <sup>17</sup>

Since the creation of the definition of genocide, one of the main points of contention that often comes up is the existence of intention. Because intent is what determines whether an event was genocide or a massacre, it is the point that allows politicians most leeway to argue against the culpability of their regime (or a past regime) in committing genocide. Generally, there is an international consensus about whether

<sup>17</sup> United Nations, “Convention on the Prevention ...”

<sup>18</sup> Steven Katz, “The uniqueness of the Holocaust: The historical dimension,” In *Is the Holocaust Unique? Perspectives on Comparative Genocide*, ed. Alan S. Rosenbaum, (Boulder, Westview Press: 1996), 23.

a genocide took place or not; it is usually the state in which the debated event took place that might fight the accusation of genocide by saying that there is no evidence of intent. This viewpoint is often then passed to schools by the government that creates a centrally mandated history curriculum, rendering the issue of intent sometimes the only thing that prevents students from learning about genocide.

The difficulty to prove the intent and the possibility for it to be hidden is often what creates the discrepancy in opinions about whether or not a genocide happened. Because the 1948 Genocide Convention only defines the need for intention, rather than defining what qualifies as intent, states such as Turkey have been able to argue that what may have appeared as a genocide was actually only a civil war or an indiscriminate massacre because there was no intent to kill a specific group of people. As mentioned above, genocide as defined by Lemkin and the 1948 Convention is the intentional eradication of a specific group of people. However, as specific as the definition may seem at first glance, the room left for interpretation is astounding. For example, how many people need to be killed in order for it to be a genocide? If ten people are killed because they are of a certain ethnicity, yet the perpetrator is stopped before it can escalate, can it really be called a genocidal regime? What if there is an obvious intent, yet there is nothing in writing? How can a state be compelled to teach about genocide if no one can prove that massacres in the past were intentional? Additionally, if a regime is, in fact, determined to be genocidal, should that create a requirement for intervention? After all, is passively watching an entire ethnicity being killed not as bad as doing the actual killing (although it is formally listed a separate crime, *complicity*)? And thus, does

complicity imply that the government should be held as genocide perpetrators and thus should include that in history curricula? Although some of these questions have been determined by various rulings and protocols, they remain a dangerous point of contention in making sure that genocides cannot happen in the future. The 1948 Convention allows for a “partial” rather than a “whole” extermination to be defined as a genocide,<sup>19</sup> yet this still does not provide us with cut-off point to determine what can be called genocide. Although this is a tricky point of debate, it remains secondary to the problem of what can be considered “intent,” and thus creates a loophole by which governments prevent the spread of genocide education in schools.

According to Ben Kiernan, a “general intent,” defined as the purposeful act committed by the perpetrator, is not enough to ensure that the act is genocide.<sup>20</sup> What is necessary is “...that the persecutor, by one of the prohibited acts, ... seeks to achieve the destruction, in whole or in part, of a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.”<sup>21</sup> Adolf Hitler, though he could not be convicted of actual genocide for several reasons, made it easy by openly stating his goal of ridding Europe of all Jews. But in most cases, because there is nothing that requires explicit proof of intent, there is left a lot of room for argument in either direction. Kiernan says that “the crime requires the perpetrator’s conscious desire.”<sup>22</sup> And even though the desire may appear quite obvious, Turkish and Serbian authorities have used the idea of intent to argue that the massacres that occurred were “necessary killings,”

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<sup>19</sup> Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 15.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

<sup>21</sup> ICTY Appeals Chamber judgment as cited in Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 17.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*

rather than genocide.

The above stated points do not argue that this is the only way for genocide to be ignored in education. On the contrary, some governments, such as that of Rwanda, choose to simply ignore the periods in history during which the state was engulfed in war, a method of ignorance that serves no better purpose than does outright denial. However, the outright denial of genocide on the basis of a lack of intent provides the government with an actual argument, whether factual or not, to convey to students as a vehicle of propaganda.

### **Why focus on Genocide?**

As mentioned above, it is crucial that schools focus on ensuring that students of all ethnicities understand exactly what happened that led to a genocide. They need to understand how leaders come to power, how entire nations are sometimes convinced of the ideas that are part of the genocidal propaganda, and how the history of a land and myths can be twisted to create the rage between ethnicities that can fuel violence. But, most importantly, students should understand that the killings that happened in the past were intentional. They should understand that genocide is committed through conscious decisions by politicians and group leaders, and they should understand that it is up to them to demand from the government that genocide should be prevented in the future. If the government tries to cover up the past and prevent it from being taught in school, there runs the risk that students will not be able to prevent future conflict and discrimination. A lack of genocide education also risks creating more tensions between ethnic groups who feel that their group identity, as defined by the historical experience of victimhood, is being

ignored.<sup>23</sup>

Along with the prevention of future occurrences, genocide education is vital for recovering states so that students understand how to commemorate such a tragedy. Commemoration, often shown by monuments, museums, and reparations, are a crucial part of reconciliation between formerly warring groups, especially in the case of genocide. History education, when done effectively, can be both a sign of commemoration and can help to propagate commemoration.<sup>24</sup> Because history curricula often reflect the beliefs of the government,<sup>25</sup> genocide education can reflect a form of commemoration by ensuring that the event, the victims, and their identity have not been forgotten. Commemoration hopefully also encourages students to examine their own society to seek out and get rid of racism and to promote tolerance and acceptance. By remembering the past and recognizing the victims as a part of a group that was purposely pursued by the government, students are likely to be able to recognize the same thing in their own community and prevent it from happening.

### Conclusion

Since its inception, genocide has been defined as the intentional destruction, both physical and cultural, of a specific group of people. Its definition places a high level

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<sup>23</sup> Marian Hodgkins. "Reconciliation in Rwanda: Education, History, and the State." *Journal of International Affairs* 60, no. 1 (2006): 199-210.

<sup>24</sup> Wolfgang Meseth and Matthias Proske. "Mind the Gap: Holocaust Education in German, between Pedagogical Intentions and Classroom Interactions." *Prospects* 40, no. 2 (2010).

<sup>25</sup> Jennifer M. Dixon, "Education and National Narratives: Changing Representation of the Armenian Genocide in History Textbooks in Turkey," *International Journal for Education Law and Policy*, Special Issue on "Legitimation and Stability of Political Systems: The Contribution of National Narratives" (2010): 109; Kenan Çayır, "Preparing Turkey for the European Union: Nationalism, National Identity, and 'Otherness' in Turkey's New Textbooks," *Journal of Intercultural Studies* 30, no. 1 (2009): 40

of emphasis on the “intention” of the actions so as to distinguish it from other mass atrocities or crimes against humanity. It is imperative that children be taught about genocide, focusing on intention so as to make clear to students that the killing was not a “necessary action” or the government’s “last option.” Students should understand how the government’s past operations led to an intentional genocidal regime so that they can learn what needs to be prevented in the future.

Additionally, students need to learn and take part in commemoration so that the crimes will not be repeated. Learning inter-ethnic or interracial tolerance and acceptance is both good and necessary for the continuation of a peaceful society, and when combined with the lesson of genocide, or what happens when tolerance and acceptance is not promoted, students will likely have a deeper understanding of the potential of the future. When the government and teachers prepare to educate children on a genocide that occurred in their own country, they are taking on the responsibility of honoring those lost to the past and ensuring a peaceful and tolerant future. That responsibility requires total and complete honesty, and teaching about a genocide is the perfect place to start.

## Social Theory and Educational Psychology

“Education can be used or abused to prepare children well or badly for life.”<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the relationship between the quality of genocide education and the level of remaining racism and intolerance in the society after the conflict has ended. But before coming to a conclusion one way or the other, we must look to experts on the matter who have done similar analyses about the level of influence education holds on children’s moral values. In order to draw a relationship between values taught in the classroom and how ethnicities interact after a conflict, the strength of the influence of teachers on children must be confirmed. Teachers must be identified as one of the main influences on students’ social views in order for this study to hold ground in its findings. For example, the socio-cultural theory of psychologist Lev Semenovich Vygotsky states that children learn the most based on their interactions with elders in their vicinity in combination with their pre-held notions, creating a constructed reality based on both their education and their surroundings. Based on this broad idea, we can infer that teachers are, in fact, one of the main sources of influence when it comes to children’s and adolescents’ ideas of racism and intolerance. This section will first examine why this study focuses on lessons learned in school, rather than lessons learned from the media or from family. Following that, we will look at the opinions of several social psychologists and sociologists regarding the matter of moral authority in classrooms in order to come to a

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<sup>1</sup> Coomans, “Education and Work,” 285.

conclusion about how influential teachers are on their social development of children and how strongly it relates to the level of racism remaining in a state after the end of a conflict. In addition, it will examine the articles of several other authors who also explore how history education affects and is affected by reconciliation.

### **Social Influence**

Although students are undoubtedly influenced by many factors, such as social interactions, family, and media, this study focuses on the influence exerted by educators. Before examining the arguments of several theorists and researchers about the influence that teachers wield in classrooms, we will look at a more general overview about the choice to examine classroom studies rather than other influential aspects of life.

### **In the Classroom**

Children in Germany spend roughly five and a half hours per day, five days per week, and approximately thirty-eight weeks per year in school,<sup>2</sup> and thus over one thousand hours per year in the classroom.<sup>3</sup> Based on this information, one could infer that students are highly influenced by their teachers, even without referencing social psychologists. Ideally, teachers are supposed to impart information to their students that will enrich their current and future lives through the acquisition of knowledge. Teachers should be positive influences on students, teaching them not only math and science and literature, but also social mannerisms and values that will help them to succeed in life even after they have completed their formal studies. According to John Merrow, a former educator, “teachers

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<sup>2</sup> These numbers are based on Berlin Public Schools in Germany. Numbers may differ by country and region. Schools in the United States are usually in session for almost seven hours per day, 180 days per year, with a total of over 1,200 hours of classroom time (United States Department of Education, 2002).

<sup>3</sup> Angloinfo, "German School Holidays in Berlin," <http://berlin.angloinfo.com/information/32/schoolhols.asp>

are uniquely positioned, as I have learned recently, to make a lasting impression on hundreds of children.”<sup>4</sup> They wield two levels of power: both the magical, or horrible, red pen that puts what was learned in the classroom into numerical values, and the lasting impression that is left after students transition into the real world, where their elementary and high school grades do not make a difference anymore. It is this area in which the topic of the lasting effects of genocide education exists.

According to Aristotle, “... men must be able to engage in business and go to war, but leisure and peace are better; they must do what is necessary and indeed what is useful, but what is honorable is better. On such principles children and persons of every age which requires education should be trained.”<sup>5</sup> He believes that one of the main goals of state education should be to promote peace as much as possible. From this we can deduce that educators themselves should promote peace in the classroom, since teachers are the most direct link between students and the government. Additionally, Samford and Cottle believe that “in the social studies the importance of [teaching] assumes unusual proportions. First, the teachers of these subjects actually face a grave responsibility in shaping attitudes and formulating ideals of the part of tomorrow’s adult citizens.”<sup>6</sup> Teachers need to keep in mind that what they impart in the classroom has a lasting effect, and should “[use] their classrooms [as] laboratories in demonstrating excellent group relationships.”<sup>7</sup> Acceptance should be promoted in classrooms, not dissolved, and it is the responsibility of both the state and the educators to make sure that this can happen.

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<sup>4</sup> Merrow, John. "The Influence of Teachers on Rewriting, Character Education, and the Future of America." National Association of Independent Schools, <http://www.nais.org/publications/ismagazinearticle.cfm?ItemNumber=150505>

<sup>5</sup> Aristotle. *Politics*. Translated by J. Warrington. London: Dent & Son, 1959.

<sup>6</sup> Clarence D. Samford and Eugene Cottle, *Social Studies in the Secondary School*, (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1952), 93.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

## Outside of the Classroom

It is, of course, impossible to say that children acquire all of their knowledge from schools. No one lives in a vacuum, and we must make an assumption that students are influenced by outside source, such as their families and the media. There is no reason that these would not be legitimate sources of information from which a similar study could be conducted; however they lack many of the elements that are inherent in education. Primarily, when analyzing the content of lessons and textbooks, we are provided with ease of access and an assurance that this is the information that all students face in classrooms. It would be particularly difficult to determine how parents portray other ethnicities behind closed doors; it would be equally difficult to find out the type of media to which students have access when they are at home. For example, a student may watch a generally conservative news station that, on a particular day, broadcasts an interview with a person of a more liberal mindset. Such a situation would likely prove to be difficult for this type of study. On the other hand, a classroom might contain anywhere from two dozen or more students together, listening to the same lecture and reading the same books as their peers next door. This collective use allows for more of a group analysis, which is the basis of this study.

Secondarily, centrally mandated education typically reflects the view of the state government,<sup>8</sup> which is particularly helpful in determining the overall progress of the state since the end of the conflict. For example, as mentioned above, parents might express discriminatory opinions regarding different races to their children at home. Alternatively, because educators teach based on a curriculum mandated by the state, we might assume that the information taught to students in the classroom directly reflects the opinion of the

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<sup>8</sup> I. L. Kandel, "Education in Nazi Germany," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 182, Education for Social Control (1935): 153.

state.<sup>9</sup> Using this connection, we can also determine how the state as a whole has progressed since the end of the conflict. For example, as we will explore later, Turkish education policy forbids the teaching of the massacres of 1912-1915 as a genocide, which directly reflects the government's general policy of genocide denial. For the purposes of this study, education, rather than other areas of influence, proves to be a more useful area of analysis to determine the possible causes of remaining discrimination and ethnic tensions after the end of a conflict.

### **Educational Theory and Discrimination**

Having determined that state education is a logical area to study the habits of children in a post-conflict situation, we will now look at the educational theory that surrounds the influence that teachers wield in the classroom. This section will examine three levels of theory: how students acquire knowledge, how students learn morality and racism, and the missing elements from classrooms in transitional societies.

#### **Lev Semyonovich<sup>10</sup> Vygotsky**

Lev Semenovich Vygotsky was a Belorussian psychologist born in the end of the nineteenth century who was famous for his socio-cultural theory that combined elements of development and environment by positing that children learn from their interactions with older, more knowledgeable people around them.<sup>11</sup> His theory says that children construct their knowledge and ideas based on the above-mentioned interactions combined with

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<sup>9</sup> Of course, there is a chance that the information that students receive in class differs to some degree from the government-mandate curriculum. Due to the inherent difficulty in determining this discrepancy, this study will use the assumption that students have access to the information mandated by the government, even if

<sup>10</sup> Vygotsky's second name, Semyonovich, has several different spellings in English. In this paper, it will be spelled as it is here

<sup>11</sup> Laura E. Berk, *Child Development Third Edition*, (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1994).

internal processes, which together construct the knowledge that children hold in their minds, a sort of combination of nature and nurture. As he wrote in his book, which remained unpublished until 1978, “humans personally influence their relations with the environment and through that environment personally change their behavior, subjugating it to their control.”<sup>12</sup> Although Vygotsky’s work is very broad in scope and does not focus in on such a specific area as the idea of racism being learned in the classroom, we can gather from his work that there is a high level of influence from the elders that constantly surround children. Despite the broad meaning that Vygotsky’s research and theory, we can apply this idea of socially constructed knowledge to classroom learning by saying that children learn from a combination of the influence of their teachers and what they then make of the information they are given. Therefore, students who are in school learning about history as it relates to genocide will construct their knowledge based on their interactions with adults, such as teachers, and with the rest society. This might also mean that regardless of what the state mandated curriculum is, students will construct their knowledge based on how teachers present the material, which may or may not be in line with official state policy. Additionally, students might add their perception of society and other elements outside of the classroom to their knowledge. This would likely account for political dissidence, such as genocide denial or helping victims, depending on what the state’s official viewpoint is and how students view the reaction of those surrounding them to the policy. Therefore, based on Vygotsky’s theory, we might conclude that it is a combination of both curriculum and presentation that affects children, which could account

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<sup>12</sup> Lev Semyonovich Vygotsky, *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*, ed. Michael Cole, Vera John-Steiner, Sylvia Scribner, and Ellen Souberman, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1978), 51.

both for students who agree with the government and those who do not.

### Harold Fishbein

Although Harold Fishbein's work focuses mainly on prejudice and discrimination in the United States, many of the points that he makes are still relevant to the study of how discrimination can be taught or untaught in the classroom. In his book, "Evolution, Development, and Children's Learning," Fishbein explores psychological developments as a continuous series of physiological modifications from the moment of conception, also considering biological and sociological changes, such as the evolution of man as a hunter-gatherer. His other book "Peer Prejudice and Discrimination: The Origins of Prejudice" describes the various forms of discrimination commonly seen in the United States, such as race-based, sex-based, and ability-based. He also explores how children can both innocently and meaningfully express and show these forms of discrimination through various studies.

In examining the consequences faced by a tribal hunter after stealing his peer's chance to kill an animal, Fishbein determined that "two of the chief tasks for any group are to 'teach' its members the moral rules, and to ensure that its members follow them."<sup>13</sup> This suggests that in order to achieve a high level of morality, there must be a set of guidelines in place and they must be actively enforced. This also suggests that morality is not completely innate in humans and requires a level of education in order for it to be internalized. He also mentions the distinction between "one's ability to act morally and one's ability to explain or evaluate moral action."<sup>14</sup> One of the main theories he uses to

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<sup>13</sup> Fishbein, "Evolution, Development," 267-8.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

discuss the individual's ability to distinguish between and evaluate moral rights and wrongs is the "authority-acceptance,"<sup>15</sup> which Fishbein defines and evaluates as it relates to further psychological maturation:

"Authority-acceptance" refers to a human pre-disposition to accept as morality what ethical authorities tell us is moral ... These systems are initially manifested by obedience, but with further maturation they lead to the acquisition of the moral standards of the group. Authority-acceptance continues to play an important role in moral actions throughout one's lifetime, sometimes conflict with and overriding other factors, e.g., killing innocent people.<sup>16</sup>

In essence, Fishbein says here that morals are actively taught to people, and that they are acquired mostly through obedience of those who are tasked with teaching children how to behave in society. If an educator teaches acceptance and tolerance in the classroom, children will obey their teacher because they know that if they direct intolerance towards a student of another race in the class, they will be punished. Likewise, when children grow up being actively taught intolerance and separation the results can be seen throughout society, through taunting and other forms of racial discrimination.<sup>17</sup>

In his other book, Fishbein examines the work of Kenneth B. Clark who, although referencing segregation and discrimination between black and white Americans in the mid-twentieth century, states that "[children] learn social, racial, and religious prejudices in the course of observing, and being influenced by, the existence of patterns in the culture in

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<sup>15</sup> Conrad Hal Waddington, *The Ethnical Animal*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1960).

<sup>16</sup> Fishbein, "Evolution, Development," 268.

<sup>17</sup> Chris Hedges, "Sarajevo Journal; in Bosnia's Schools, 3 Ways Never to Learn from History," *The New York Times*, November 25, 1997.

which they live.”<sup>18</sup> His experiments show that children exposed to the “patterns of culture” are easily able to differentiate between dolls of different skin colors. They were also able to decide, based on race, which doll they would prefer to play with and which one looks “nice”:<sup>19</sup> “They found that the majority of children of all ages preferred the white doll to the brown one.”<sup>20</sup> Although Clark left what would define these “patterns of culture” very open ended, one could infer that students directly pick up these prejudices from those who influence them, such as teachers. This puts teachers in the position to strong influence racism and intolerance in children positively or negatively. In other words, students could easily pick up on racial or ethnic discriminations expressed by educators, possibly spurred by bitterness or government policy after the end of a conflict, and resulting in continued separation and violence.

Although Fishbein and the sociologists he cites do not directly address the elements of education that lead to racism in society, much of what they say pertains to this study. The level of influence on children from their surroundings is a large factor in how they perceive other races and, presumably, how they proceed to treat those who are racially different from them. The following section will examine several articles that relate more directly to the topic of education in transitional societies.

### Lynn Davies

Lynn Davies, a professor at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom, authored the book “Education and Conflict: Complexity and Chaos,” a study similar to this one that

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<sup>18</sup> Kenneth B. Clark, *Prejudice and Your Child*, (Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1963), 17.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>20</sup> Harold Fishbein, *Peer Prejudice and Discrimination: The Origins of Prejudice*, 2 ed. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2002), 184.

examines education as it relates to the perpetration or cessation of violence. In her words, “this book argues that there are grave omissions – or contradictions – in the curricula of both stable and conflictual societies, omissions which contribute to a continued acceptance of war.”<sup>21</sup> She does not suggest that school is the most direct means to a more peaceful society; rather that the problem is that schools do not properly deal with unpleasant economic or political issues. If the schools did confront these issues, students would be more prepared to improve government policy in the next generation.<sup>22</sup> She suggests that the key to promoting reconciliation through education is to address the topics that do create discomfort, rather than ignoring them.

One key premise in Davies’ book, as mentioned above, is that peace education and reconciliation does not occur in a vacuum. Violence does not occur as a singular event; rather, there is context that affects the nuances of the situation. Again, Davies does not expect that education on its own will create world peace.<sup>23</sup> However, she does specify the idea of “interruptive education,” referring to the idea of creating positive conflict in classrooms. She lists ten ideas that should be the basis of an interruptive school, which emphasize the idea of community, discourse and debate, critical analysis, rights, creativity, action against injustice, risk-taking, and learning about conflict and conflict resolution.<sup>24</sup> All in all, these elements might not necessarily create an immediate peace, but by modeling an ideal society in a school setting, students are more able to learn about what is necessary for them to take charge as they continue growing in order to promote peace in their own societies. As she says in the introduction, many schools “do not tackle the uncomfortable

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<sup>21</sup> Davies, “Education and Conflict,” 5.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 233.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

economic and political issues which might enable the next generation to demand a more ethical foreign policy.”<sup>25</sup> In other words, positive, explorative, and maybe controversial education will not necessarily create immediate peace in times of conflict, but it will create change. This approach towards education will make the current generation of students grow into the idea of productive means for conflict resolution rather than war. As she points out, many of history’s most famous leaders in war were well educated, such as the doctors who performed medical experiments in Nazi Germany.<sup>26</sup> However, education by itself does not necessarily promote peaceful ideals: many people still see war as the only solution to conflict. The purpose of education, she believes, should be to address the topics that explain the circumstances that cause violence. For example, she explains that “that fact that it is in the interest of many economies that other countries live in perpetual tension so that they purchase new arms is not something that appears on the school curriculum.”<sup>27</sup> The politics of war are often hidden from students, and thus war continues to be considered acceptable. Davies believes that with more openness, honesty, and paths for discourse, promotion of peaceful conflict resolution will be more likely.

Although this book does not relate specifically to genocide education, many of the points made are still very valid. For example, genocide is volatile topic, particularly because it represents the apex of hostile relations between ethnicities. Not discussing this openly could create a minority opinion, which would lead to more separation between groups, as discussed below by Marian Hodgkins. Additionally, the “interruptive” style of

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 5.

teaching allows students to think critically of their history, to question official narratives, and to learn how to defend their positions.

### Case Studies

Moving more from broad to specific, this section will examine the work of several other researchers with regard to how education has been treated in two other post-genocidal societies, Rwanda and Israel.

#### ***Marian Hodgkins, *Reconciliation in Rwanda: Education, History, and the State****

The issue that Marian Hodgkins' article examines is directly related to this study, but with regard to a different country. She looks at the government-mandated, public education in Rwanda as of the end of the genocide of 1994 that killed nearly 800,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus in just three months.<sup>28</sup> The government decided to broach the topic of history education by mandating an "official" state version of the genocide that would be taught in classrooms, a strategy which she severely criticizes: "...no matter how honorable the intention, the repression of discussion about divisive and contested moments in Rwandan history; both within and outside the school curriculum, will only serve to create new dynamics of social exclusion."<sup>29</sup>

Hodgkins argues in her paper that reconciliation does not without context: it must deal both with current relations between ethnic groups, but also allow for a discussion forum regarding the past. She believes that the creation of a government-mandated history that highlights the positive elements of the Rwandan history, rather than allowing for a public discourse about what happened in the past two decades. She says that "the

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<sup>28</sup> Hodgkins, "Reconciliation in Rwanda," 200.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 200.

Rwandan government is founding its reconciliation ideology on selective episodes in Rwandan history that are portrayed as moments of idyllic national unity ... unadulterated by colonial or post-colonial dogma.”<sup>30</sup> She adds another dimension to this criticism by saying that the creation of a linear and absolute history by the government paves the way for even more discrimination. In her research, she found that “Rwandans often argue that it was the lack of [critical thinking and independent analysis] that allowed the genocidal ideology to take such strong hold in so many parts of the country.”<sup>31</sup> The concern is that by silencing those who are critical of the government’s historical narrative, a new minority group is being created. With this new separation of groups in society come new possibilities for racism and intolerance to interrupt the progress made in reconciliation. While schools can lead to reconciliation after a genocide, they can also be the starting point of a genocide. In Rwanda before 1994, “many elements of the institutional structure, teacher and pupil behavior, textbooks and curricula promoted ethnic division and hatred.”<sup>32</sup> Similarly, as of 1933 in Nazi Germany, the school system connected the school system with the Hitler Youth program in order to establish a “racial elite by selection and elite education.”<sup>33</sup> Hodgkins’ argument is that by using a government-created history without the nuances of individual perspectives, the Rwandan school systems are setting themselves up for the same sort of disaster that took over the entire country in 1994.

Although Hodgkins’ article does not go into deep detail about the components of the government-mandated history curriculum, she does make it clear that not only is there no

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 204.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 205.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 201.

<sup>33</sup> Arnd Krueger, "Breeding, Rearing, and Preparing the Aryan Body: Creating Supermen the Nazi Way." *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 16, no. 2 (1999): 56.

room for public discourse, but the discussion about the genocide itself is kept to a minimum with a focus only on the positive parts of the past and the seemingly “forced” reconciliation of the future. Although creating a peaceful environment for the future is important, ignoring the past does not create automatic reconciliation. Creating a public discourse is important, and using school years to both build skills and knowledge about how to respectfully debate, in addition to the necessary tolerance and acceptance to take part in such debates, is equally important. “Reconciliation is a process that involves the rebuilding of relations - both individually and collectively ... Long lasting, deep and meaningful reconciliation will not occur in Rwanda without reconciliation with history.”<sup>34</sup> Birgit Brock-Utne agrees with this, saying that the critical task of reconciliation through education is to “politicise young people without cementing an uncritical acceptance of single truths.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, educational discourse about genocide and history should create understanding about general ideas and themes related to the event, while still encouraging critical thinking and individual expression. According to both of these authors, the key to bringing society back together through the same medium in which it was torn apart is to be open to different events, different and conflicting opinions, and to create a level of comfort in society in which people can respectfully argue their beliefs without fearing discrimination.

In Hodgkins’s analysis of Rwandan education, we can see the same issue that Davies addresses in her book: the idea that a lack of important but uncomfortable education prevents reconciliation from truly being achievable. In this way, I must agree with

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<sup>34</sup> Hodgkins, “Reconciliation in Rwanda,” 200.

<sup>35</sup> Birgit Brock-Utne, “Introduction: Education for Reconciliation and Conflict Resolution.” *International Review of Education* 55 (2009): 147-8.

Hodgkins: avoiding the parts of history that led into the conflict of the 1990s leaves students without the ability to recognize such dangers in the future. I think that the danger suggested by Hodgkins, of creating a dangerous minority by only addressing the streamlined version of history, is a real possibility, and not just in Rwanda: even countries like Germany, which has maintained a comprehensive Holocaust curriculum, should take care to foster analytical discourse within the classrooms with regard to history. This way, rather than simply understanding a timeline of the war period, students learn to debate and argue for what they consider to be true by addressing such issues in the classroom.

*Zvi Bekerman, The Complexities of Teaching Historical Conflictual Narratives in Integrated Palestinian-Jewish Schools in Israel*

In his article, Zvi Bekerman looks at an innovative attempt at reconciliation in the Middle East in the past three decades. He examines the first interethnic (i.e. both Israeli and Palestinian students) schools to open in Israel after, and during, an infamously violent history with no less than seven major wars fought. He examines the methods used to encourage discussion in class in response to political events that have different effects on different students and how these styles of discussion both help bring the communities together but can also create some tensions.

Bekerman starts his study by talking about the discussions that took place in two classes at CBE (Center for Bilingual Education), where all lessons are taught in both Hebrew and Arabic, and there is always one Israeli and one Palestinian teacher per class. The purpose of creating such a school was to facilitate “the inclusion of diversity and the possibility of mutual recognition ... [and] to negotiate between interdependent and

conflicting historical narratives ...”<sup>36</sup> Students start open discussions of history from a young age,<sup>37</sup> which is seen as a way to ensure the continuation of recognition and inclusion. The two main class sessions that are examined in the study are one from the day Yassir Arafat died, and the other regarding a military curfew set in place on the 1948 border between Jordan and Israel. In the first case, when first grade students were asked how they felt about Arafat’s death, they gave a variety of answers, from relating it to personal family life to disrespectful comments about his death. After being reminded to be respectful, the conversation continued freely, with all students having the chance to talk and to express their own opinions. In the second class, third grade students were presented with the massacre on Kafur Kassem in October of 1956. Rather than facilitating a discussion, the teachers seemed more involved with a “hidden, contesting dialogue”<sup>38</sup> that placed the Israeli view in direct opposition of the Palestinian view.

After viewing these two settings, Bekerman provides an analysis of the situation that focuses in on showing that integrated schools can create a haven for students in which they can freely and safely discuss political situations. This creates the necessity for respect in the classroom. If students do not feel that they are respected, they probably will be more unwilling to talk publicly. This is one of the key elements emphasized by the teachers in the first setting. Students were told that respect applied not only in the classroom, but also in everyday life. As the conversation continued, the students seemed happy to agree to disagree: “For some [Arafat] is a ‘terrorist’ and for others a ‘respected president’ but all seemed to agree that these characteristics can be interpreted differently by the two groups

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<sup>36</sup> Zvi Bekerman, "The Complexities of Teaching Historical Conflictual Narratives in Integrated Palestinian-Jewish Schools in Israel," *International Review of Education* 55 (2008): 237.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, 238.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 245.

...<sup>39</sup> As such, all emotions expressed by students were determined to be normal and legitimate allowing for a sense of comfort in the classroom.<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, the second dialogue in the third grade classroom did not provide for as much hope and comfort as the first one did. In the second setting, two instructors, one Israeli and one Palestinian, become embroiled in a lecture to students about the massacre of 1956 with undertones of conflict and disagreement of the two teachers. Instead of allowing the students to participate in the discussion, the teachers seem to be taking sides on the issue, each defending their own identity. This, of course, does not provide for a safe place for students to make comments, particularly because they are not given the chance to do so. This situation does, however, beg a question, which is whether it is okay for teachers to “safeguard the emotional well-being of the children, who will soon be confronted with some hard ‘facts.’”<sup>41</sup> It is, admittedly difficult to imagine being a child, not even having reached double-digits yet, and having to discuss such serious topics as massacres and enforced curfews. Although this is a difficult topic, it seems that the best way to address it would be to slowly introduce newer and more serious concepts in the classroom as students progress in their years in school.

In a final note, Bekerman suggests that textbooks are not actually as useful in teaching the history of conflict as they might be in other subjects for a variety of reasons. First, textbooks are specifically linear and lack the ability to provide the nuanced story that can be told personally. Second, a written book is able to hide the author and thus the potential biases that might be carried into the writings. He suggests that because textbooks are written for the masses, they often include only the “official” version of the story and pay

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 241.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 242

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 244.

little regard to the marginalized voices. His final argument, however, counters this by saying that in response to this, students might be even more willing to debate their thoughts and ideas, thereby creating a more productive learning environment.<sup>42</sup>

Falk Pingel comes at this from another similar perspective, talking about the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) project, which created a textbook that literally has two parallel stories on the same page. On one side of the page is the story of twentieth century history from the Israeli perspective, and on the other side is that of the Palestinian perspective. The key part of this project is the space in the middle where students and teachers may come up with their own history that combines the two. The basis of the project is that: "... Each side has its own narrative that is firmly anchored in a long history and strongly linked to a set of national feelings, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions that cannot be neglected. On the other hand, each side tries to understand the other's narrative, to discuss both narratives, and to subject both versions to scrutiny."<sup>43</sup> Essentially, the goal is that two sides can bring their ideas together and thus move towards reconciliation through mutual understanding without actually merging the narratives. However, Pingel does admit that transnational textbook writing as a form of reconciliation seems to have more of an impact on the writers than it does on the students. These books usually take time filtering through advocacy groups, politicians, NGOs, and scholars before they actually make their way into the classrooms.<sup>44</sup> Even before they reach the classroom they serve prove that nationalistic and historical narratives can be changed through cooperation.

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 246-7.

<sup>43</sup> Falk Pingel, "Can Truth be Negotiated? History Textbooks Revisions as a Means to Reconciliation," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 617 (2008): 198.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 197.

Bekerman's analysis of mixed Israeli-Palestinian classrooms shows a possibility for societies that are still in the midst of reconciliation and have deep ethnic schism still visible after the end of a conflict. This method would allow for an obvious, explicit attempt at narrowing the gap between ethnic groups while teaching tolerance and acceptance at the same time. However, as Bekerman noticed, this method must be handled carefully. The lessons must be truly based on discussion between students and students must feel safe in the classroom so that they can express themselves in a manner conducive towards discussion.

### **Conclusion**

The various ideas in this section, ranging from broad to very specific, all give some insight into how classroom education can affect reconciliation efforts in post-conflict societies. Primarily, we can determine that authorities do have a level of influence over students and should therefore be considered an important part of reconciliation. Secondly, we learn that students usually learn from their surroundings and that morals can be taught to students as absolutes through the "authority-acceptance" theory. And finally, from the case studies, it appears that in post-conflict societies, the acceptance and respect that is promoted in the classroom is more important than the values lectured by teachers to students. Reconciliation education is a delicate topic that can cause students to feel more comfortable and unified with one another, or more alienated and dismissed from their peers. In the following sections, we will look at a comparative analysis of the history, education, and current social cohesion of the main three countries of this study: Germany, Turkey, and Bosnia and Herzegovina.

## Germany

“Students must learn about the extraordinary historical responsibility that the Federal Republic of Germany must accept as the successor state to the Third Reich. The memory of Holocaust victims must be kept alive. And a framework must be developed in order to derive lessons for the future from the NS past.”<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

Germany’s genocide of the early-mid twentieth century, or the Holocaust, could be regarded as one of the most commonly known genocides in the world. Its occurrence led to the creation of the word “genocide” and a new set of standards for dealing with conflict and crimes against humanity. This section will examine Germany’s history, from before the Holocaust until the present, by looking at the scope and content of German education. Germany’s education system has undergone drastic changes with overhauls in political ideology in the several decades before and after World War II, and examining these elements will help to develop an idea of how German society has changed from tyrannical extremism to the modern-day Western European standard of racial acceptance and tolerance.

### Historical Background

Although the rise of the Nazi Party can be attributed mostly to a complex societal

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<sup>1</sup> Meseth and Proske, “Mind the gap,” 202.

change due to a number of factors, two are absolutely vital to the understanding of Germany's downward spiral: the economic downfall of Germany after World War I and the use of school and extra-curricular activities a main vehicle for Nazi propaganda. Germany found itself in a permanent and irreversible debt after the implementation of the Dawes Plan, creating a deep depression in Germany and a void in the government. This allowed for the takeover by the Nazi regime, and the Nazi ideology continued to spread by infiltrating various parts of society, most importantly the educational system.

### **Germany After World War I**

After Germany defaulted on the loans provided from the United States Dawes Plan, the Nazi party was able to rise to power by taking advantage of the downtrodden society and creating a scapegoat for Germany's economic problems.<sup>2</sup> By allowing for society to blame the depression on a certain group, the Jewish population, the Nazi party gained quick popularity among a nation that desperately needed a strong leadership. After several failed attempts to gain popularity from the nation, Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party (NSDAP) finally succeeded, with one route being the infiltration of anti-Semitic, pro-Aryan propaganda in German schools, with the intent of building up the state army through extracurricular programs.

### **Education and Propaganda during the Holocaust**

According to I. L. Kandel of Columbia University, "the importance of education as an instrument of social control has been recognized throughout the history of

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<sup>2</sup> Gerald D. Feldman, "Inflation and Depression as Hitler's Pace Makers: Comments on the Papers of Fritz K. Ringer, Eckhard G. Wandel, and Donald L. Niewyk," *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook* 28, no. 1 (1983): 39.

mankind.”<sup>3</sup> This was not by any means lost on Hitler’s regime. When Hitler came to power, his party transferred propaganda and party support to schools and he implemented what could be described as a “brainwashing” curriculum.<sup>4</sup> Jewish teachers were expelled from German public schools and eventually the students were as well in what became known as the “April Laws.”<sup>5</sup> Additionally, Jewish students faced racism and anti-Semitism in school even before they were expelled from teachers and classmates who had been a part of their community for years before. The rise of Nazism created a schism in society both in the political world and the social world by penetrating all aspects of life of the German nation, including education.

I. L. Kandel was a professor of education at Columbia University in the early twentieth century and wrote about the use of education by the NSDAP in Germany to change the political climate of the country in accordance with the standards of the pro-Aryan, anti-Semitic ideals of Hitler’s regime. He says that in totalitarian states that result from revolution, “education [is] seized upon as the most important instrument for the promotion of their stability.”<sup>6</sup> That is to say, totalitarian regimes see the value in captivating the population from the ground up, instilling beliefs in children from a young age. The Nazi regime concerned itself primarily with the reorganization of the educational system and created a focus on educating teachers and scholars to be “agents of the state.”<sup>7</sup> In September of 1933, the government

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<sup>3</sup> Kandel, “Education in Nazi Germany,” 153.

<sup>4</sup> Coomans, “Education and Work,” 285.

<sup>5</sup> Marion A. Kaplan. “Jewish Women in Nazi Germany: Daily Life, Daily Struggles, 1933-1939.” *Feminist Studies* 16, no. 3 (1990).

<sup>6</sup> Kandel, “Education in Nazi Germany,” 153.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 158.

issued a decree that mandated teaching of *Vererbungstheorie und Rassenkunde*, or heredity and race knowledge,<sup>8</sup> which was the basis of the discrimination that defined the Nazi regime. The aim of this type of education was to generate a renewal of the attitudes of the German people and to create a high level of nationalism and strong racial ties. In order to create this type of curriculum, “history was so falsified in the new textbooks and by the teachers in their lectures that it became ludicrous.”<sup>9</sup> In May of 1933 the “Suggestions for History Textbooks” was issued, which stated that the history education in the state would focus on “the superiority of the Nordic race as the creator of culture and civilization ... [and] on the development of national pride...”<sup>10</sup> The government made an effort to conceive a classroom education which would “place the emphasis on those subjects which are more emotional than intellectual in their influence.”<sup>11</sup> The Nazi regime did so by rewriting school textbooks to build the idea of a superior race into the minds of children.<sup>12</sup> The success of this method could be explained by the authority-acceptance model mentioned in Fishbein’s book by providing context and approval for the racism and discrimination. Additionally, the Nazi Party created schools which would enlist those students who seemed particularly “promising” in order to further train them to become supporting members of the National Army and the NSDAP.<sup>13</sup> In particular, the Order Castle, which was the most elite school a Hitler Youth could go to, specialized in training students in racial studies, physical training,

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 159.

<sup>9</sup> William L. Shirer, *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1990), 250.

<sup>10</sup> Kandel, “Education in Nazi Germany,” 159.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 161.

<sup>12</sup> Arye Carmon, “Teaching the Holocaust as a Means of Fostering Values,” *Curriculum Inquiry* 9, no. 3 (1979): 222.

<sup>13</sup> Shirer, *The Rise and Fall*, 255.

and the application of their studies.<sup>14</sup>

In Nazi Germany, however, learning also extended beyond the classroom. According to Kandel, totalitarian education “takes within its purview all influences that may in any form, whether intellectual or emotional, affect the thoughts and behaviors of the individual.”<sup>15</sup> This meant that the NSDAP introduced programs, such as the youth organizations, that clouded students with a constant wave of Nazi propaganda. While Nazi ideals penetrated schools from all sides, Hitler counted mainly on the Hitler Youth political group to encourage German youth to propagate and fulfill his political ideals.<sup>16</sup> Education in Nazi Germany became a system, both inside and outside of school, meant to propel youth towards becoming true members of the National Socialist Party, and attempts made by parents to keep their children out of the cycle were subject to heavy consequences.<sup>17</sup>

When looked at through Fishbein’s “authority-acceptance” model, German children saw their teachers acting in one way, making racist comments against Jewish children still in the classroom (before the April Laws) or decreeing the superiority of the pure Germans, and would therefore act similarly outside of the classroom. In this case, a more appropriate method of examination might be Vygotsky’s social theory. Based on numerous stories from the 1930s and 1940s, we can say with certainty that not all Germans believed in, or acted in accordance with, the anti-Semitic ideals of the Nazi party. For example, there are stories of *Schutzstaffel* (S.S.) members not shooting Jews after they found them, even though

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Kandel, “Education in Nazi Germany,” 154.

<sup>16</sup> Shirer, “The Rise and Fall,” 252.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 253.

that was part of their orders.<sup>18</sup> Therefore, there must have been some students who, after listening to their teachers in class, constructed their beliefs based on other societal interactions that allowed them to ignore the lessons of the NSDAP. For example, a student may have been taught that because Jews were not Aryans, they must be killed. But if this student also believed that ideas such as a dominant race were based on no more than myths, this student may have constructed an idea that would, in fact, oppose the Nazi ideology by declaring that Jews were equal. Generally, based on the result of this combination of thoughts, they decided that despite the decrees of their government, they would either passively or actively disobey the German government, even at their own risk.

One might argue that despite typical depictions of genocides that display one entire group as the perpetrator and one entire group as the victim, there exist discrepancies of individuals on both sides. True of most genocides in history, one can usually find numerous individual stories which tell of a person who should have been a perpetrator who actually chose to help victims instead of persecute them or to ignore orders that would have meant killing a person, such as the example above. Therefore, we could say that in the case of German public education of the 1930s, both Fishbein's and Vygotsky's ideas apply. There were certainly students, who may have been the exceptions, who chose to ignore what they were taught and constructed an idea in which Jews and other minority groups were not to be persecuted, like the S.S. who, despite going through the system intended to train Nazis, chose not to kill Jews. However, the remainder of the students chose to

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<sup>18</sup> Nahshon, Gad. ""Treason or Honor" - the Story of Germans Who Saved Jews." *Jewish Post*.

accept as moral ideals what they were taught in classrooms, which either created prejudices or reinforced prejudices against Jews that allowed a genocide to happen.

Based on this analysis, it can be concluded that the education imposed by the Nazi regime starting in the 1930s played a considerable role in the takeover of nationalist and racist ideals in German citizens. Although Fishbein's and Vygotsky's theories, in addition to stories from the Holocaust, show that education alone does not necessarily compel the actions of an entire nation, it plays a significant role in either propagating or disallowing actions that either create or destroy the social peace of a country.

### **Genocide Education**

Since the end of World War II, Germany has been recognized for its reconciliatory efforts by almost immediately dealing with the consequences of the totalitarian regime, both domestically and internationally.<sup>19</sup> For example, German law grants German Jews who lost their citizenship because of the Nazi regime the right to have their citizenship reinstated. Additionally, the German government pays out yearly reparations to Holocaust survivors worldwide. However, a large portion of the efforts by the German government for remembrance and reconciliation goes towards making sure that German students learn from the past and do not forget what happened in their history. This section will first look at the development of government-mandated history curricula in German schools, starting from the

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<sup>19</sup> Although German education took about two decades to fully address the Holocaust, Germany started making monetary reparations to Israel only a few years after the end of the war.

middle of the twentieth century, and then look at how the government-mandated<sup>20</sup> curriculum has changed into the twenty-first century.

### After The War through the Eighties

In the years following the end of World War II, Germany<sup>21</sup> experienced a large number of reforms,<sup>22</sup> such as a central government, anti-racism laws, and reparations to victims of the Holocaust who managed to survive and escape to other countries. However, because Germany lacked a government immediately after the war, the Allied powers took charge of making sure that the education system that existed under the Nazis would change.<sup>23</sup> But due to a lack of personnel that had not been members of the NSDAP, the Allies found difficulties in implementing these measures in the schools.<sup>24</sup> Additionally, many educators themselves felt victims of the Allies, and the 1953 “Fundamental Aspects of History Teaching,” agreed upon by the Ministers of Education and Cultural Affairs, simply referred to the “dictators” of World War II.<sup>25</sup> In the late fifties and sixties, the need for a more thorough

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<sup>20</sup> It is important to note that public education in Germany is determined by state, not federal government. However, the subject of the Holocaust is so much valued in German education that there is little to no variance in themes or methods between states, and states are required to include it in curricula (Task Force, 2006). Therefore, this paper will refer to general German public education, with little to no regard to individual states.

<sup>21</sup> This section generally refers to West Germany, but for the sake of consistency, it will be referred to as just Germany.

<sup>22</sup> Lars Rensmann, "Holocaust Education in Germany: An Interview," PBS, <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/germans/germans/education.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Davies, "Education and Conflict," 168.

<sup>24</sup> Matthias Heyl, "Holocaust Education in (West-)Germany - Now and Then." In *Never Again! The Holocaust's Challenge for Educators*, ed. Helmut Schreier and Matthias Heyl, (Hamburg: Kramer Verlag, 1997).

<sup>25</sup> Falk Pingel. "National Socialism and the Holocaust in West German school books." *International Textbook Research* 22, no. 1. (2000).

Holocaust education became apparent with a rising of anti-Semitism and neo-Nazism:<sup>26</sup>

These anti-Semitic acts demonstrated the continued need for dealing with religious prejudice as a modern social problem. Critics of the German educational system claim that German school children are not gaining a proper knowledge of Hitler's Germany.<sup>27</sup>

These events, in addition to a specialized name given, the *Holocaust*, and a change in the emotional perception of World War II by German citizens,<sup>28</sup> spurred a change in the German approach to Holocaust education. Additionally, the Eichmann trials of 1961 provided full media coverage of the past and the progress of the trials, making it more difficult to avoid. Starting in the sixties, laws were created that required German textbooks to evolve, and they were subject to analysis by a joint Israeli-German textbook commission.<sup>29</sup> These laws may have been due to the tendency of teachers to use the chronological approach to history education to "avoid" talking about the Holocaust.<sup>30</sup> Additionally, up until the mid-seventies, these textbooks were still only teaching about fascist theory and National Socialism as general subject matter, and glancing over the actual deaths of Jews, Sinti, Roma, and other minority group in Germany and Eastern Europe. Interestingly, however, a study done in the late fifties and early sixties shows that students were more

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

<sup>27</sup> Michael J. Reische, "World History Textbook Coverage of Genocide," (Adelphi University, 1963), 3.

<sup>28</sup> Stern, Frank. "The Holocaust: Representing Lasting Images in Film and Literature." In *Contemporary Responses to the Holocaust*, edited by Konrad Kwiet and Jürgen Matthäus. Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004.

<sup>29</sup> Heyl, "Holocaust Education."

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

interested than their teachers in learning about the industrialized deaths of Jews.<sup>31</sup> Students expressed a generally critical opinion of Hitler, possibly explained by the generation that was removed by that point: teachers had been alive, and possibly involved in the war, whereas the students of this period had been, at most, toddlers. Unfortunately, like Davies' criticism of modern textbooks, the best of the German books at the time "[remained] weak in, what is admittedly, the most difficult part - attempts at explanation."<sup>32</sup> The particular book examined by Pingel, which he described as the best of them, in particular explained *what* happened during the Second World War, but did not delve into *how* it happened, allowing for gaps in the education. As of the seventies students were required to go through several weeks of lessons about the Holocaust, but the curriculum did not always have the desired effect on students as studies found that many students did not have a well founded knowledge of the Holocaust.<sup>33</sup>

Although Holocaust education in Germany improved throughout the next several decades, dissatisfaction has always been an issue for a piece of history that some people believe can never be emphasized enough. Even as of 1997, Matthias Heyl, author of "Holocaust Education in (West-)Germany – Now and Then," was unsatisfied with the attention given to individual stories in the Holocaust. He wrote that the key to enhancing the Holocaust education in Germany would be to connect the word "Jew" on a personal level by providing an identity, such as stories of individuals who were in the war. He believed that the picture which schoolchildren

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<sup>31</sup> Pingel, "National Socialism."

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

obtained was too vague and the common identity of Judaism too biblical for students to be able to grasp the personalization of what they were being exposed to. Citing Freud, he states that the lack of identity and personalization prevented the process of mourning which is linked to the recognition of the death of an individual. The issue was, he believed, that for students who were one or two generations removed from experiencing the war viewed the characters of the history as abstract elements due to a combination of not knowing anyone who was involved and a drastic change in German society. However, it would be safe to say that these minor setbacks have not changed since the middle to late twentieth century, and the German government has continued evolving the history education with regard to the Holocaust.

More generally, we can see through this timeline of German education that it took about twenty years before any real progress was made for providing comprehensive genocide education. As we will explore later, this twenty-year marker might be a determinate time to expect the recreation of history in the classroom as something that can be discussed and explored, rather than brushed away in guilt, embarrassment, and confusion.

### **Current Education**

Since the nineties, Germany's fascist era typically appears in the classroom numerous times throughout a student's time in public school, and is addressed from different viewpoints. Students learn the more basic elements as younger children, and teachers start to incorporate more advanced elements as they make their way through secondary and high school. Holocaust education in Germany typically

includes classroom lectures, discussions, trips to museums and concentration camps, and other elements that comprise a comprehensive education. However, despite how it is lauded internationally, Germany's Holocaust education approach is not without its faults, which have created some tensions between disagreeing parties.

Germany's current Holocaust education method is, in one word, comprehensive. Students are taught about the dangers of Nationalist Socialism from a young age, first dealing with simple topics and moving on to more complicated, abstract, and controversial topics. One student who was interviewed for this study remembered facing the Holocaust in the classroom several times throughout his adolescence, each time with a different approach.<sup>34</sup> The German school system generally has, for each class, a group of students who "drop out" at grade ten. Addressing this issue, the German government teaches about the Holocaust and World War II several times, ensuring that each student will have to face the topic in the classroom. Students are taken on trips to concentration camps and museums; in fact, "more or less all of [the states] recommend a visit to a memorial museum"<sup>35</sup> as part of the Holocaust curricula. One student who was interviewed recalled that a survivor came into a history class to talk to students,<sup>36</sup> which addresses one of the issues mentioned by Heyl, the lack of personality given to the victims. But this

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<sup>34</sup> Dennis Redeker, interviewed by the author, Maastricht, The Netherlands, March 14, 2012.

<sup>35</sup> Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, "Germany - Holocaust Education Report," Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, <http://www.holocausttaskforce.org/education/holocaust-education-reports/germany-holocaust-education-report.html>.

<sup>36</sup> Salomon, interview.

cannot be considered a permanent solution, as many of the last generation of survivors are now dying almost seventy years after the end of World War II.

As one student put it, the Holocaust is “deeply engrained in the German psyche.”<sup>37</sup> In all sixteen states, learning about the Holocaust is mandatory for all students and can be included in subject areas such as literature, religious studies, and social studies.<sup>38</sup> In Germany, Holocaust education can also make an appearance in biology classes,<sup>39</sup> an interesting juxtaposition to the race studies that were such a vital part of the Nazified education of the thirties and forties. Several students who were interviewed remember being involved in discussion in class rather than just lecture;<sup>40</sup> however they also mentioned that oppositional ideas rarely made an appearance, and if they did, they were quickly silenced by peers and teachers. This is something that Wolfgang Meseth and Matthias Proske witnessed as well. Sitting in on several Holocaust lessons in German schools, they saw that when students made negative comments towards any part of the lesson, they were either reprimanded or ignored by their teachers. Generally, there is an agreement in the state that the Holocaust is an important part of national education, that students must learn about the inherited responsibility that they, as Germans, carry after the collapse of the Third Reich, and that vital lessons must be derived from the past.<sup>41</sup>

The Holocaust being arguably one of the most agreed-upon events of its kind in history, there is still a small danger of creating backlash from the oppositional

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance, and Research, “Germany - Holocaust Education Report.”

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Tobias Bündler, interviewed by the author, Maastricht, The Netherlands, March 15, 2012; Redeker, interview; Salomon, interview.

<sup>41</sup> Meseth and Proske, “Mind the Gap.”

minority, similar to what Marian Hodgkins witnessed in Rwandan schools. Learning about the NSDAP is obviously highly valued in German classrooms, but a study done by a German university has shown that some students are starting to believe that it is simply too much, a phenomenon referred to as “Holocaust fatigue.”<sup>42</sup> Perceived over-studying of the topic has created bitterness among some German students who believe that they are still being blamed for what their grandparents and great-grandparents did over seven decades ago. Although they did not share the sentiment, several students who were interviewed for this study admitted to seeing the same phenomena in their own classrooms.<sup>43</sup> There is a fine line between teaching about genocide enough and focusing on it too much, a balance that admittedly might be impossible to achieve completely. Anetta Kahane, who works with a group that operates against neo-Nazism and anti-Semitism, shows the same thing that Marian Hodgkins warned would be possible in Rwanda. Instead of students accepting the knowledge that they are presented, they experience a level of frustration resulting from a stigma and inability to question the “facts” of the Holocaust.<sup>44</sup> This, instead of providing students with the tools to challenge future racism and participate democratically, creates tensions when young Germans believe that “Jews who control the world media are not letting them talk about it,”<sup>45</sup> which creates the exact hostilities that should be avoided for the future.

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<sup>42</sup> Fleshler, “Does Education Fuel Anti-Semitism?”

<sup>43</sup> Bündler, interview; Redeker, interview; Salomon, interview.

<sup>44</sup> Fleshler, “Does Education Fuel Anti-Semitism?”

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

## Current Racism and Social Conflict

The very thorough German approach towards Holocaust education is arguably a source of the success the country has experienced in becoming a democratized heterogeneous state and economic leader since the end of World War II. Germany, though still not perfect, has become a safer place for minorities to live in, both those who were targets of the Nazi regime and more contemporary immigrant groups. Unfortunately, discrimination and violence still exists, while arguably played up by the media. This section will use NGO reports and other articles to examine the situation of ethnic minorities in Germany, while analyzing how this is affected by education using the theories discussed in an earlier section.

### Groups Persecuted in the Holocaust

Legally, all groups that were persecuted during the Holocaust, particularly Jews, are granted the same rights as ethnic Germans, provided that they are German citizens. In this respect, some Jews are given particularly lenient options, as Article 116(2) of the German Basic Law provides naturalization to German Jews who were forcefully deprived of their citizenship and their descendants upon request. Based on the policies created by the government in the past several decades, we could determine that the basic tenet of history education, which is to create a demand for better policies,<sup>46</sup> has been successful. But political discrimination is not the only risk faced by Jews living in Germany. Social discrimination against Jews is still an unfortunate reality in Germany. But with that said, it might also be argued that the

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<sup>46</sup> Davies, "Education and Conflict."

discrimination faced by Jews in Germany is no different than what Jews in other western countries also face.

Politically, all legal citizens in Germany have the same rights.<sup>47</sup> In fact, the government created the General Equal Treatment Act (AGG) in 2006 which aims to prevent all discrimination “on the grounds of race or ethnic origin, gender, religion or belief, disability, age, or sexual orientation.”<sup>48</sup> Racism in Germany in the political sector is limited to the still-existing right wing parties that still operate, mostly from Bavaria. One student mentioned that no one actually takes them seriously and that they simply get a lot of attention from the media,<sup>49</sup> but the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has encouraged German authorities to ban these parties.<sup>50</sup> Despite the German law called *Volksverhetzung*, which bans all forms of Nazi activity, racism, or National Socialism, minor neo-Nazi political groups have continued to exist and one in particular has grown in recent years,<sup>51</sup> but for the purposes of this study, we disregard this intolerance in political discourse. Many other states, including most of Western Europe and the United States, are home to white supremacy political groups, which are generally considered worrisome, but not capable of conceiving a genocide. Germany’s history, of course, creates a special stigma for neo-Nazi groups; however, from an objective perspective, Germany’s case is not any different than that of other states, and government resources are therefore better directed elsewhere.

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<sup>47</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Germany*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>49</sup> Salomon, interview.

<sup>50</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Germany*, 24.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

Instead, the German government should focus on societal racism. According to students interviewed, Jews are still a “distinct ethnic group” in Germany,<sup>52</sup> but are integrated in society and face minimal racism among their peers. There have been reported attacks by neo-Nazis or skinheads against Jews, but these are not terribly common and receive a lot of attention from the media. Additionally, as mentioned above, there exists a backlash from students who believe that the current education system puts too much of an emphasis on Holocaust curricula. These students then feel culpability for actions committed by the German society two to three generations prior.<sup>53</sup> This may constitute the biggest threat to the peace in German society. Racist attacks need to be prevented and prosecuted, but one might argue that this level of violence is beyond the reaches of public education. Therefore, the focus of the German government should be on ensuring a balance in the approach towards teaching the Holocaust to students. While education about Germany’s past is a vital part of ensuring a socially and politically responsible country in the future, there should be efforts to achieve a balance that will ensure that students are not made to think that they hold culpability for the actions of their grandparents and great-grandparents. Of course, a perfect balance does not exist; all three German students interviewed for this study said that they either found it to be a perfect amount of time dedicated to the subject,<sup>54</sup> or that they believed that more time should be allotted.<sup>55</sup> They acknowledged the sentiment among German students that there is already too much time spent on Holocaust education, although they

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<sup>52</sup> Salomon, interview.

<sup>53</sup> Fleshler, “Does Education Fuel Anti-Semitism?”

<sup>54</sup> Redeker, interview.

<sup>55</sup> Bündler, interview; Salomon, interview.

seemed more concerned with dealing with the racism that they considered to be apparent in society. Based on Hodgkin's study of Rwanda, a change in approach, rather than time, would likely help curb these sentiments by creating a more open forum in which students could discuss their ideas, rather than simply listen to the state narrative.

These issues being faced by the German Holocaust curriculum could be explained in several ways. According to Vygotsky's theory of socially constructed knowledge, students may be combining the information they are given in the classroom with what they hear in mass media in order to construct a sentiment of culpability that is not theirs. For example, according to an interview with one German student, parts of Germany's support for Israel comes from Jewish lobby groups that use the Holocaust as an element of guilt, even when the German population believes that it is not relevant.<sup>56</sup> This, in combination with the emphasis on Holocaust education and the collective guilt<sup>57</sup> felt by German society, might cause German students to construct for themselves the idea that they hold part of the culpability of the actions of their grandparents and great-grandparents' generation. On the other hand, according to Marian Hodgkins, these issues could be explained by the creation of a minority group in society by suppressing oppositional opinions, a group that diverges from the masses by challenging or questioning the state narrative. Keeping students who disagree with the "official" account from sharing their opinion could create more tensions between these small groups and the remaining Jews in Germany. According to one student, one of the discussions he

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<sup>56</sup> Salomon, interview.

<sup>57</sup> Meseth and Proske, "Mind the Gap," 214.

remembers having in class had to do with whether Germans at large were the perpetrators of the Holocaust or if it was just the higher-up levels of the Nazi Party.<sup>58</sup> A larger range of discussions like these, which allow for a variety of opinions, might help to relieve some of the tensions of students who feel that they cannot express an oppositional opinion.

### Contemporary Minority Groups

In the past few decades, Germany has become a popular location for refugees, particularly those who came from the former Yugoslavia during the war of the nineties. Although many refugees were sent home after the war, some were naturalized as German citizens.<sup>59</sup> Under German law, immigrants have full rights as naturalized citizens. However, like with racism against Jews, much of the problem that exists is social, not political.

Like the still-existent anti-Semitism in Germany, immigrants and asylum seekers face political discrimination from far-right wing parties that still exist in the country.<sup>60</sup> The situation of immigrants is similar to that of Jews in Germany, as related to the neo-Nazi parties that exist in the state. The government should ban the political parties that condone white supremacy and racism, but because the focus of this study is on education, we will focus on the social racism faced by contemporary minorities in Germany.

Being an immigrant in Germany, as with many other countries, has a stigma attached to it. One interviewed student mentioned that people believe that the

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<sup>58</sup> Bündler, interview.

<sup>59</sup> Amir Crnkic, interviewed by the author, Maastricht, The Netherlands, March 14, 2012.

<sup>60</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Germany*,

immigrants in German society take away from the economic prosperity of other citizens;<sup>61</sup> however, this has been proven to be untrue.<sup>62</sup> Although the implicit purpose of German Holocaust education is to teach students how to deal with racism in the past and the future, there is an apparent lack of what Lynn Davies refers to as “uncomfortable economic and political issues,”<sup>63</sup> which would presumably help to create an understanding among young Germans about how immigrants truly affect society. Additionally, according to the ECRI of 2009, the children of immigrants continue to have more difficulties in the German school system than do ethnic German children. Additionally, the ECRI reports that “some teachers are reported to display discriminatory attitudes in the classroom, particularly towards Turkish and Muslim children.”<sup>64</sup> According to Fishbein’s authority-acceptance model, this creates a situation in which children come away from lessons understanding that it is morally acceptable to treat Turkish and Muslim students as second-class citizens (or other forms of discrimination). If we are to assume Fishbein’s model correct, this will create continuing societal discrimination, and without reason: according to the ECRI, “some [teachers] may have a tendency to direct [Turkish and Muslim] students more often towards the lower streams of secondary education, even ... where the students have the skills to complete *Gymnasium*.”<sup>65</sup> According to a study done in 1997, educated Germans are often more tolerant of immigrants than uneducated Germans, possibly because of

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<sup>61</sup> Salomon, interview.

<sup>62</sup> Finn, Peter. “Germany Needs New Immigrants for Economy, Berlin Panel Says.” *Nonviolent Radical Party*, <http://www.radicalparty.org/en/content/germany-needs-new-immigrants-economy-berlin-panel-says>.

<sup>63</sup> Davies, “Education and Conflict,” 5.

<sup>64</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Germany*, 8.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 21.

their inherent job security.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, two of the German students who were interviewed mentioned that although they recognize that immigrants do face racism in society, they both agreed that they had not personally witnessed any racist against, particularly from students in schools.<sup>67</sup> One mentioned that the main issue being dealt with in Germany currently has more to do with migrants from Islamic countries, and the ECRI mentions that in 2003, the government decided that it was to be decided by each state whether Muslim women would be allowed to wear headscarves in school or not. As a result, several states banned teachers from wearing the headscarves, therefore creating a situation in which students are not entirely exposed to the differences between people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds.

### Conclusion

Germany has, without a doubt, come a long way since its days under the Nazi regime. Minorities are protected under law, each year refugees flee to the state, and Germany is still a safe place for Jews and other minorities to live in. Additionally, the German government must be commended for creating such a thorough education system that so extensively addresses the Holocaust. However, while the Holocaust is an important part of the German curriculum, there should be an effort to encourage discussion among students, including voicing minority opinions. Not only is this important in preventing those with minority opinions from feeling intellectually persecuted, but when people are simply presented with the truth and

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<sup>66</sup> John A. Clark and Jerome S. Legge, Jr., "Economics, Racism, and Attitudes toward Immigration in the New Germany," *Political Research Quarterly* 50, no. 4 (1997): 909.

<sup>67</sup> Bündler, interview; Salomon, interview.

do not have to defend it, the truth becomes dogma. One of the most important ways that the government can create a future generation capable of dealing with possible political and social threats is by ensuring that they can defend their position against those who disagree with them. With that said, considering the past century of German history, the government must be commended for their efforts to promote peace in society through education, among other measures. The success, though not without some drawbacks, has been fairly successful and has promoted remembrance for one of the most tragic events in history.

## Turkey

“Turks are taught, and most believe, that their country is under continual external and internal threat, both from other countries plotting to divide or acquire Turkish territory and from internal forces seeking to change the status quo. The result is often a virtual siege mentality, riddled with impossibly intricate conspiracy theories.”<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The Turkish massacre of the Ottoman Armenians, one of the first genocides of the twentieth century, was a result of previous ethnic conflict and animosity, in addition to a desire to turn Turkey into an ethnically pure Turkish country. However, despite how long ago this genocide took place, reconciliatory efforts have stayed almost at a standstill due, in part, to stubbornness by the government. The Turkish government does not admit that a genocide took place, preferring to refer to it as a bloody “civil war” or a “[relocation] from a vulnerable border with Russia.”<sup>2</sup> Most western countries, on the other hand, have adopted the view of Armenia: the Turkish government committed genocide in the year 1915. This discrepancy in public historical views has been part of the reason that relations between Turkey and Armenia have not, to this day, improved much, despite the several generations that have passed since the 1915 massacres.<sup>3</sup> This section will briefly examine the history of ethnic conflict in Turkey, followed by an analysis of the Turkish approach towards genocide education and contemporary inter-ethnic relations in Turkey.

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<sup>1</sup> Gareth Jenkins, “The Military and Turkish Society,” *Adelphi series* 41, no. 337 (2001): 16.

<sup>2</sup> Both from Cooper and Akcam, “Turks, Armenians, and the G-Word,” 84.

<sup>3</sup> International Crisis Group. “Turkey and Armenia.”

## Historical Background and Contemporary Disputes

The massacre of the Ottoman Armenians in 1915 is one of the most disputed events in history. According to Turkish officials, Armenians were simply being relocated from a volatile border with Russia, which had been attempting to claim Turkish territory for some time.<sup>4</sup> Alternatively, the government of Armenia holds the viewpoint that the mass killings of Armenians in Turkey did, in fact, constitute one of the first genocides of the twentieth century. While the Turkish government does not deny the killings per se, they say that these events lacked the intent necessary for it to be called genocide. Unfortunately, the lack of literature on Turkish education of the 1900s does not allow for a glimpse into racist education in the classroom; however, it does show a significant emphasis on military education, similar to that of Nazi Germany.<sup>5</sup> This section will divide the history of the Armenian Genocide into two parts: a general timeline of the events leading up to the genocide, and debate of the different perspectives of the genocide.

During the end of the nineteenth century and leading into the twentieth century, the Ottoman Empire faced a fairly constant level of conflict with Russia, who fought for control of the territories surrounding the shared border between the countries. Under Ottoman law, the non-Muslim population was not granted the same rights as the Muslims, meaning that Armenians were to be treated as second-class citizens, although they were not forced to leave the country.<sup>6</sup> Although Russia was initially given the responsibility of ensuring that the Armenians would be treated decently in the Empire, this plan was scratched by the

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<sup>4</sup> Sara Cohan, "A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide," *Social Education* 69, no. 6 (2005).

<sup>5</sup> Andrew Mango, *Atatürk: The Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey*, (Woodstock, New York: The Overlook Press, Peter Mayer Publishers, Inc., 1999).

<sup>6</sup> This should be noted as the main difference between Ottoman rule (discriminatory, but not genocidal) and following Turkish rule (genocidal through cultural genocide, forced migration, and massacres).

British in favor of one that would allow for a high number of Russian soldiers in Turkey. Unfortunately, this led to the Sultan making sure Armenians would not have equal rights, meaning that they would continue to be treated unfairly, including being subject to the Hamidian massacres that wiped out at least 8,000 Armenians.<sup>7</sup> Eventually, a coalition group, usually known as the “Young Turks” formed with the purpose of creating a multi-ethnic (Turkish, Armenian, Greek, Arab, and Kurdish) challenge to the Sultan’s leadership.<sup>8</sup> The coalition succeeded in overthrowing the former regime and creating a multi-ethnic leadership to properly represent the Empire’s diverse population. Unfortunately, these efforts did not last long, and only a year after the overthrow of the Sultan’s government, a party that emphasized the idea of “a Turkish national policy based on the Turkish race.”<sup>9</sup> This contradicted with the previous idea of nationalism, which embraced all ethnicities that resided in the Ottoman Empire. Personal diplomatic relations with Germany made Russia an obvious enemy to the Ottoman Empire,<sup>10</sup> even though Russia had been supporters for Armenian rights in Turkey. This, combined with the revolts from the Armenian population for tax cuts and the consequential Hamidian Massacre, led to the controversy that still inhibits Turkish and Armenian relations.

According to the government of Turkey, the Armenian relocation had more to do with “a small correction of [the] eastern border which shall place Turkey into direct contact with the Moslems of Russia.”<sup>11</sup> In other words, the Turkish government said that the ethnic cleansing was only in order to move the population away from the border with Russia in

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<sup>7</sup> Cohan, “A brief history.”; Kiernan, “Blood and Soil,” 400.

<sup>8</sup> Cohan, “A brief history.”

<sup>9</sup> Kiernan, “Blood and Soil,” 400.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 407.

order to support the war with Germany and to reclaim lands considered to be Turkish, but occupied by Russia.<sup>12</sup> According to the government of Armenia, however, the relocation consisted of:

Massacres, deportations, and death marches made up of women, children, and the elderly into the Syrian deserts. During those marches hundreds of thousands were killed by Turkish soldiers, gendarmes, and Kurdish mobs. Others died because of famine, epidemic diseases, and exposure to the elements.<sup>13</sup>

The Armenians, and generally most non-Turks, see an obvious intent in the actions of the Turkish government. One of the leaders at the time of the relocation, Dr. Mehmet Resit, gave his reason for the movement as: "Either the Armenians will clean up the Turks and become masters of this country or the Turks will clean them up."<sup>14</sup> This statement shows the general Turkish sentiment about the mass deportations, which is that they had no choice: either the Armenians needed to be forcibly moved or destroyed, or Turkey as a state would suffer greatly.

In general, there is less denial about the actual deaths of Armenians than there is about the intention of the Turkish government, which is the element that separates a genocide from a mass killing or a war crime. According to Armenia, Armenians in the diaspora, and most scholars, in addition to the official opinion of several nations, the Turkish government had the intent of creating an Islamic country; therefore their intent included the forcible removal of non-Muslims.<sup>15</sup> On the other hand, in an International Crisis Group interview, the retired General Haldun Solmaztürk said that the relocation was

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 401-407.

<sup>13</sup> Armenian Foreign Ministry website, as cited in International Crisis Group, "Turkey and Armenia," 9.

<sup>14</sup> Mango "Atatürk, 579.

<sup>15</sup> Cohan, "A Brief History of the Armenian Genocide."

“only to move them away from where they could assist the Russians.”<sup>16</sup> But genocide in wartime is more easily concealed, and according to the report of Count Max Erwin von Scheubner-Richer, who was the German vice-Consul to Turkey at the time:

A large segment of the Ittihadist [Young Turk] party maintains the viewpoint that the Turkish Empire should be based only on the principle of Islam and Pan-Turkism. Its non-Muslim and non-Turkish inhabitants should either be forcibly islamized, or otherwise they ought to be destroyed. These gentlemen believe that the time is propitious for the realization of this plan. The first item on this agenda concerns the liquidation of the Armenians. Ittihad will dangle before the eyes of the allies the specter of an alleged revolution prepared by the Armenian Dashnak party. Moreover local incidents of social unrest and acts of Armenian self-defense will deliberately be provoked and inflated and will be used as pretexts to effect the deportations. Once en route however, the convoys will be attacked and exterminated by Kurdish and Turkish brigands, and in part by gendarmes, who will be instigated for that purpose by Ittihad.<sup>17</sup>

With few exceptions, most countries officially believe that the Turkish government committed genocide. The argument between intent and no intent has gotten so strong that in several countries there exists legislation about what the Armenian massacres can be referred to as, usually falling in one of four categories: (a) prosecution is possible if the genocide is denied (i.e. Switzerland), (b) the government supports the Armenian view of 1915 (i.e. the U.S.), (c) the government believes that there is not enough information to

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<sup>16</sup> International Crisis Group, “Turkey and Armenia,” 9.

<sup>17</sup> Center for Armenian Research, “Armenian Genocide: The Plan for Armenian Genocide,” University of Michigan, <http://www.umd.umich.edu/685097/>.

determine either way or that it should be left out of politics (i.e. Sweden), or (d) it is illegal to refer to it as a genocide (i.e. Turkey).<sup>18</sup> According to a legal analysis by the International Center for Transitional Justice:

... The most reasonable conclusion to draw from the various accounts of the Events is that at least some of the perpetrators of the Events knew that the consequence of their actions would be the destruction, in whole or in part, of the Armenians of eastern Anatolia, as such, or acted purposively towards this goal, and, therefore, possessed the requisite genocidal intent. Because the other three elements identified above have been definitively established, the Events, viewed collectively, can thus be said to include all of the elements of the crime of genocide as defined in the Convention, and legal scholars as well as historians, politicians, journalists and other people would be justified in continuing to so describe them.<sup>19</sup>

Based on this statement, we might understand that if governments, international scholars, media, and other sources started to emphatically refer to the “Armenian question” as a genocide, the Turkish government might start to feel more pressure to reconsider their policies regarding the past. The political use of the word “genocide,” particularly due to its ability to change the relations between Turkey and other states, has unfortunately inhibited its use in areas such as academic debate, leaving a potentially rich area of history education closed off from use.

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<sup>18</sup> International Crisis Group, “Turkey and Armenian”; Cooper and Akcam, “Turks, Armenians, and the G-Word.”

<sup>19</sup> The International Center for Transitional Justice. “The Applicability of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide to Events Which Occurred During the Early Twentieth Century.” The International Center for Transitional Justice, 2012.

## Genocide Education

In the past several decades, Turkey has politicized the use of the word “genocide” by both banning its use in its own public school system and decreasing diplomatic relations with other countries that do use it to describe the events of 1915. Turkey has offered reparations to Armenia, such as recognizing it as a state and opening borders after they had been closed for over a decade.<sup>20</sup> But these reparations only offer Turkish appreciation for Armenians lost during the mass population transfers during the conflict with Russia, rather than for victims of genocide. More helpful in a lasting peace between the two states would be a higher level of willingness by the Turkish government to discuss the mass deportations and killings in terms of genocide. If the Turkish government were willing to de-politicize the word and allow for its use in contemporary research and analysis, racism in Turkey and Turkish relations with Armenia would likely improve.<sup>21</sup> Given Turkey’s progress with state education since the end of World War II, one would hope that, with time, the state will allow for the use of the word “genocide” in classrooms. This is a necessary measure so that students do not continue learning and growing without heeding the possibility of a retrospective violation of international law.

### During and Post-World War II Education

In the short period following the events of 1915, the Turkish government secularized the state education. This was due to the desire to create a national, unified identity while the state contained several religious and ethnic groups within its borders. Schools taught secular subjects in Turkish (as opposed to Greek or Armenian), and religious schools, or

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<sup>20</sup> International Crisis Group, “Turkey and Armenia,” 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

*madrasas*, were closed.<sup>22</sup> But then, in the midst of World War I, Woodrow Wilson proclaimed that self-determination does not necessarily have predominance over the ethnographical history of a region. Because the history of the region of Turkey was historically home to several ethnic groups, this suggested the idea that the Turkish did not necessarily “own” the land even if they had declared it to be theirs.<sup>23</sup> The Turkish government therefore implemented a history curriculum that emphasized the idea of Turks being the original people in the land of Turkey. This new curriculum “posited that all of the people who had lived in and around Turkey were of Turkish origin,” suggesting an attempt at cultural genocide by the government.<sup>24</sup> Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, the founder of the Republic of Turkey, was in charge of the creation of this Turkish history using only historical facts that shed a positive light on the Turkish people.<sup>25</sup> However, the Armenian people, among others, have lived in the area of Armenia and Turkey for close to two thousand years.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, despite the lack of literature on racism in Turkish education in the first half of the twentieth century, we must assume that nationalistic and semi-racist ideals were conveyed in the classroom by teachers who were telling their students that anyone who inhabited Turkey was of Turkish origin, despite their actual ethnic roots.

It is difficult to interpret how this system of education would have had an effect on racist tendencies in Turkish society because of a lack of specific information about exactly how this information was conveyed and individual stories of racism that followed. But given the above situation in which schools taught that all other ethnicities in the area were

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<sup>22</sup> Lütfullah Türkmen, “The History of Development of Turkish Elementary Teacher Education and the Place of Science Courses in the Curriculum,” *Eurasia Journal of Mathematics, Science, & Technology Education* 3, no. 4 (2007).

<sup>23</sup> Kiernan, “Blood and Soil.”

<sup>24</sup> Mango, “Atatürk,” 493.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>26</sup> Cohan, “A Brief History,” 333.

actually Turkish, one might imagine an undertone of ethnic supremacy in the curriculum. Based on Vygotsky's social theory, we might imagine that students who learned of this idea, in addition to the desire for an Islamic state of the decade prior, might construct for themselves an idea of Turkish supremacy among their ethnically mixed peers. According to Ilker Aytürk, "even if Kemalism was not essentially racist, its approach to the question of ethnic and religious minorities was not in harmony with the theoretically egalitarian Turkish constitutions."<sup>27</sup> Additionally, he says that contemporary scholarship shows that the treatment of ethnic and racial minorities was not ideal. Ethnic minorities in Turkey, such as Jews, Greeks, and Kurds, had to undergo "Turkification," or adoption of Turkish traditions and customs, in order to be able to enjoy the same rights as the ethnic Turks.<sup>28</sup> Again, due to a lack of individual stories of racism, particularly from the classroom, it is difficult to cite examples of how this education really affected students. However, based on Vygotsky's theory and Aytürk's analysis, we will assume that this method of conveying the Turkish as the original ethnicity of the region created some racism between students and civilians.

### Late Twentieth Century Education

According to the comparative study by Jennifer M. Dixon, who analyzed Turkish history textbooks throughout six decades, "the national education system has been an important vehicle by which official ideologies, national identity, and values have been taught to the

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<sup>27</sup> Ilker Aytürk, "The Racist Critics of Atatürk and Kemalism, from the 1930s to the 1960s," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 2 (2011): 310.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 311. Although the concept of "Turkification" does not qualify as genocide under the original Genocide Convention, it does represent the concept of cultural genocide. Cultural genocide is widely recognized by many scholars, among them Lemkin, who referenced it in his original writings about genocide.

nation.”<sup>29</sup> The central government, which unlike in Germany is the creator of the curriculum, uses education in public classrooms as a propaganda center to emphasize the official Turkish perspective of historical events. According to her study, Turkish education about Armenians from 1950 through the year 2001 has gone through three stages, and then a fourth stage that will be discussed in the next section. These stages have taken Turkish education from blatant ignorance to reluctant admittance of some violence, but with an emphasis on Turkish suffering. Regardless of how the violence towards the Armenians was qualified, the public education curriculum has consistently blatantly denied that the Turkish government ever committed genocide.

In Dixon’s study, the first stage takes place from 1950 to 1980. In her analysis of eleven Turkish history textbooks, the only thing that stands out about the government approach is the noticeable absence of anything related to Armenians in the lesson.<sup>30</sup> In all places where there should have been mention of the Armenians, even in contexts not directly related to the genocide or to any other war, there is simply no reference to them.<sup>31</sup> The government decided, at least for several decades, that the best way to address an issue with undesirable connotations would be to simply ignore its existence.

During the second stage, which lasted for approximately a decade between 1981 and the early nineties, the government decided to reform the official narrative of the “Armenian question” in order to respond to international criticism from the United Nations and the United States.<sup>32</sup> Additionally, Turkish officials had been the subjects of Armenian terrorists who intended to force the Turkish government to recognize the genocide. These

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<sup>29</sup> Dixon, “Education and National Narratives,” 40.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 109; Cooper and Akcam, “Turks, Armenians, and the G-Word,” 86.

<sup>31</sup> Dixon, “Education and National Narratives,” 110.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 118.

“unofficial” acts were bolstered by attempts by the Armenian government to convince outside states to recognize the genocide.<sup>33</sup> These changes meant that textbooks did mention the Armenians and the decisions taken by the Turkish government. However, emphasis was placed on the idea that the government did not have a choice, and that “deportation was incomparable to the violence of Armenians before, during, and after the war.”<sup>34</sup> In essence, the violence against the Armenians was significantly downplayed in order to make the Turks seem like victims rather than perpetrators:

In contrast to the limited amount that was written about the deportation itself, these textbooks dwelt on the nationalist activities and desires of Armenians, the uprising of Armenians during the war, and the violent and ‘inhuman’ attacks of Armenians on innocent Turks and Turkish villages.<sup>35</sup>

The only positive change in the textbooks of this second period is that they actually mentioned the Armenians living in Turkey. Aside from that, the books give the impression that the Armenians were treated well in society, and that any violence they experienced was brought upon themselves by displaying nationalism.<sup>36</sup>

The third phase of Turkish textbooks, which lasted from 1994 to 2001, came as a result of both the collapse of the Soviet Union and the newly declared independence of the Republic of Armenia. Because Turkey no longer held a position as a strategic location with the changes in Eastern Europe, it did not hold as much power and needed the alliance of the United States. The United States recognizes a genocide; changes in the national narrative were therefore an attempt by the Turkish government to strengthen an alliance

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., 111.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 112.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

with the United States. Additionally, Turkey's relations with the Republic of Armenia only survived for two years before borders were closed due to conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The Turkish government therefore used the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan to support its narrative of the "Armenian question."<sup>37</sup> Another factor that made the government decide to alter education policies was the individual scholars and sources of media that started to challenge the official narrative.<sup>38</sup> The changes in Turkish education did not change much in terms of approach towards the subject of Armenians; rather, it simply strengthened the previous argument that the government did not have a choice other than to deport the Armenian population due to their violence and territorial ambitions.<sup>39</sup> Additionally, Armenians were portrayed as traitors to the state rather than simply causing uprisings, as the earlier books had argued. The major change in this time frame of Turkish education was that the state started to characterize the accusations by other states of genocide as "propaganda used to weaken Turkey and undermine its sovereignty."<sup>40</sup> According to textbook writers, the accusations came from biased states that did not take into consideration the true situation of the Turks and the Armenians in the beginning of the twentieth century. In Germany the phases of Holocaust education improved little by little to arrive at a history curriculum that addresses the past. On the other hand, changes to state-mandated history education in Turkey up until the twenty-first century have relayed the same message of genocide denial while changing the content only to provide for the political situation in each period.

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 118.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 119.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 114.

## Current Education

The past decade of Turkish history education has only seen minor changes, mostly due to the growing international recognition of the Armenian genocide. Unlike German education, which emphasizes and over-emphasizes the disastrous result of tyrannical leadership and discrimination, the Turkish education ministry has continued to actively deny that a genocide took place and to characterize the Turkish nation as a victim of similar violence. Although, an important element that was previously missing is slowly being address in Turkish education, which is teaching what constitutes a genocide. With this information becoming available, there is more opportunity for students to decide for themselves what really happened in 1915.

In 2001, the Turkish government developed a group called the “Committee to Coordinate the Struggle with Baseless Genocide Claims” (ASIMKK), which led to the creation of a curriculum by the Ministry of Education with the goal of addressing why the events of 1915 were not genocide and why the Armenians and the rest of the world feel a need to describe it as such.<sup>41</sup> According to Dixon’s study, again, this generation of textbooks rationalized the government’s decision to create the Deportation Law due to Armenian violence, with the goal of protecting the Turkish army and state.<sup>42</sup> Additionally, one textbook she examined mentioned the Return Decree, similar to the law issued by Germany with regard to exiled Jews, as if to make amends for the deportation. However, it is important to note that these descriptions did not mention the violence perpetrated or the Armenian deaths that resulted from the deportation. The textbooks continued to

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<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 115; “Turkey Protests EP Resolution on ‘Armenian Genocide.’” *Turkish Daily News*, March 2, 2002, <http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/default.aspx?pageid=438&n=turkey-protests-ep--resolution-on-armenian-genocide-2002-03-02>.

<sup>42</sup> Dixon, “Education and National Narratives,” 116.

emphasize on Armenian violence against the Turks, but in 2005 the National Security Council made a decision to use “more moderate language when referring to neighboring countries” in order to avoid creating animosity between populations.<sup>43</sup> This meant that although the textbooks continued to portray a high level of disloyalty among Armenians towards the Turkish, it was done with less graphic terms, with the intent of not offending next-door Armenia as much. However, although graphic terms may have been avoided in textbooks, that does not mean that all forms of history education were spared. In 2009, a father living in Turkey was looking to file a lawsuit against the Ministry of Education because his young daughter was forced to watch a graphic movie in class that portrayed the accusations of the Armenian genocide as a lie.<sup>44</sup> Unfortunately, because the Turkish government has spent the past decades relying on the public school systems as a propaganda machine,<sup>45</sup> children of a young age are exposed to confusing and scary ideas that should not be introduced until they reach an appropriate age to deal with such a topic.

Another difference made to Turkish education was based on the actual idea of genocide. Starting a few years after the creation of the ASIMKK, the government incorporated into the history textbooks the definition of genocide as explained by the 1948 Genocide Convention. But this decision was only made in order to have a base upon which to refute the fact that the Turks committed genocide. Following that definition, the government denied both the genocide against the Armenians and another one against the Pontic Greeks. Instead, again, emphasis was placed on the “genocide committed by the

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Sarah Rainsford, "Turkish Children Drawn into Armenian Row," BBC, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7956056.stm>.

<sup>45</sup> Dixon, "Education and National Narratives," 104.

Armenians in Eastern Anatolia.”<sup>46</sup> The Turkish government attempted to reverse the roles in order to remove culpability and to turn the focus of attention on the victimhood of the Turkish. The lack of evolution seen in this area is unfortunate, particularly because the government chose not to take advantage of the situation it was in. By teaching students about the meaning of a genocide, as was introduced into the curriculum, a possible route would be to create an academic discourse about whether or not the events of 1915 were a genocide or not, based on facts rather than government-created dogma. Consideration must be given to the obligatory anti-discrimination course that was introduced in Turkish schools in 2009.<sup>47</sup> But addressing only racial tolerance in the present and future does not automatically create reconciliation. With this idea, we must also consider why it is that Turkey refuses to admit that a genocide took place.

One possible reason that the government has chosen a route of denial for the past century could have to do with the belief that recognizing the genocide would require significant reparations from the Turkish government. Although the 1948 Genocide Convention cannot be applied retrospectively, the Turkish government would likely be pressured by other nations to make reparations to Armenian families, similar to the reparations still being made by the German government to Jews worldwide.<sup>48</sup> Another possible reason for Turkish denial is the belief that recognizing the genocide would allow for such strong criticism of the deliberately distorted Turkish history, that “the very foundations of Modern Turkey” would be called into question.<sup>49</sup> The fear of this possibility

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>47</sup> Council of Europe. European Commission against Racism and Intolerance. *ECRI Report on Turkey (fourth monitoring cycle)*. 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Cooper and Akcam, “Turks, Armenians, and the G-Word,” 91-2.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 85.

is bolstered by the bitter memory of losing the majority of the territory of the Ottoman Empire after its collapse.<sup>50</sup> These are all things that Germany has dealt with after recognizing the Holocaust, and given Turkey's recent and still unsteady economic emergence, this could be a moderately understandable source of caution and discomfort. But these possible pitfalls would likely be made up for by the improvement in diplomatic relations and the higher possibility for European Union admittance that recognizing the genocide would allow. Almost a full century later, the Turkish government needs to face its past in order to improve relations with Armenia and Armenians in the diaspora, particularly those still residing in Turkey. Ignoring the past will simply allow the problems between both the government and the people of Turkey and Armenia to continue growing worse, and with them the violence that still exists today.

### **Current Racism and Social Conflict**

Although it has been close to a century since the worst of the Turkish violence against the Armenians took place, relations between Turkey and Armenia are hardly improved. The insistence by the Turkish government that no genocide took place has caused strained relations between the two states, in addition to causing diplomatic trouble between Turkey and other states that do choose to publicly recognize the genocide. The denial has also arguably been a factor in several terrorist attacks by Armenians and the general animosity between the two groups, who coexist in Istanbul. Additionally, Turkey has a history of discrimination against its Kurdish population, a possible side effect of denying racial integration and equality for such a long time.

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<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

## Armenians

Despite being one of the first nations to recognize Armenia's independence after the collapse of the Soviet Union,<sup>51</sup> relations between the two nations and the two ethnic groups in the past century have been tense at best. In the seventies and eighties, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) attacked forty-five Turkish targets. Mass demonstrations in which Turkish citizens carried signs calling Armenians "bastards" have been explained as simply a way of inciting racism against Armenians.<sup>52</sup> Additionally, despite being recently reopened, the Turkish-Armenian border was closed for the better part of two decades, partially due to the difference in opinion regarding the classification of the events of 1915.<sup>53</sup>

More importantly, as of 2010 there was no law preventing racial discrimination in Turkey. This has led to the prosecution of minorities expressing oppositional opinions through peaceful means.<sup>54</sup> Additionally, the lack of recognition of the genocide by Turkey has created difficulties for children at schools whose ethnic group is portrayed in textbooks as traitorous and murderous.<sup>55</sup> Although Turkish schools are technically not religious, Islam-based religion classes are mandatory, and students who wish to go to a non-Muslim minority school must be Turkish citizens, a law that prevents many minority students from immigrant families from attending school. As a result, the attendance records for heavily populated minority areas tend to be lower than they theoretically should be.<sup>56</sup> However,

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<sup>51</sup> International Crisis Group, "Turkey and Armenia," 1.

<sup>52</sup> Michael Santo, "Anti-Armenian Demonstrations in Turkey: 'You Are Armenians; You Are Bastards,'" *Huliq*, February 27, 2012.

<sup>53</sup> International Crisis Group, "Turkey and Armenian," 1.

<sup>54</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Turkey*.

<sup>55</sup> Gönde Nur Donat, "Armenian Students Take on Discrimination in Turkish Textbooks," *Today's Zaman*, January 19, 2012.

<sup>56</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Turkey*, 26.

even minority students who are able to attend their respective schools must take the same daily oath as do students at public schools, finishing with “how happy is a person who calls himself/herself Turkish.”<sup>57</sup> Such forced nationalistic statements are the source of discomfort among the parents of many minority schoolchildren who dislike the idea of pledging to the Turkish government, regardless of the innocence of the statement that the government claims.<sup>58</sup>

Part of this nationalism and the discomfort it causes is explained by Fishbein’s authority-acceptance model. The national education of Turkey does not recognize the Armenian genocide, and in fact turns the accusation around to blame Armenians for committing genocide against the Turks themselves. Very young students, even eleven year olds, are learning about the early twentieth century in this manner.<sup>59</sup> According to Fishbein’s theory, hearing these lessons from teachers would lead students to believe that hostility against Armenians is morally acceptable because of what “they did” in the past. Countering this is the violence and dissatisfaction from Armenians, which can be explained by what Marian Hodgkins witnessed in Rwanda. Because the Armenian opinion is marginalized and denied in Turkey, the minority opinion creates a group of people who feel ignored by the government and society, and thus lash out. According to Ronald Grigor Suny, “most diaspora Armenians [revile] Turks for what they had done and for the continued denial ... [which] had caused pathological responses by both Armenians and Turks (including Armenian terrorism in the past)”.<sup>60</sup> If the Turkish government has any

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Rainsford, “Turkish Children”; Dixon, “Education and National Narratives,” 115.

<sup>60</sup> Ronald Grigor Suny, “Truth in Telling: Reconciling Realities in the Genocide of the Ottoman Armenians,” *The American Historical Review* 114, no. 4 (2009): 937.

hopes of improving relations with Armenia, Armenians in Turkey, and Armenians in the diaspora, the government needs to seriously reconsider their staunch denial of past atrocities.

One approach towards the hotly-contested topic of the “Armenian Question” would be a transnational textbook commission, similar to the approach in Israeli and Palestinian schools mentioned by Falk Pingel. Ideally the Turkish government should recognize the genocide of the early twentieth century. But considering the unlikelihood of that happening, the Turkish government may consider a two options: (a) the use of an transnational textbook commission, with a textbook produced that would provide both the Turkish and Armenian views of the events surrounding the massacres and would provide additional space for students to write their own ideas based on what they read or (b) a continuation of the present education system, but lacking the blatant denial that is presently so characteristic. As mentioned previously, Turkish schools have started teaching about the definition of a genocide. If this continues, in addition to access to primary resources such as cables and letters between politicians from the early twentieth century, students might be able to determine for themselves what really happened, and thus arrive at a conclusion that could truly change Turkey’s political outlook.

### **Other minorities**

Home to several minority groups, including Greek, Jews, Roma, Sinti, and Kurds, inter-ethnic and discriminatory violence in Turkey is at an unfortunately high level. Much of the violence that has taken place in the past decade has been based on religion, particularly Christianity, which is the religion Turkish officials were purportedly cleansing the nation of during the 1915-17 deportations. This points to the possibility that there is a lingering

sentiment of faith-based discrimination in Turkey. Although Turkey is a state with no official religion, the political party presently in power is based on the Islamic faith, and much of the religion-based violence that has taken place has not been prosecuted.<sup>61</sup>

The Kurdish population also continues to be a target of discriminatory laws. According to the 2010 European Commission against Racism and Intolerance report, the use of the Kurdish language in public is enough to subject a person to prosecution, as is the public defense of a Kurdish person.<sup>62</sup> Many people in Turkey perceive Kurds as a threat to the Turkish state,<sup>63</sup> possibly a lasting result of the nationalist curriculum that has on and off been in place in public schools since Atatürk's compilation of "positive" Turkish history. Additionally, anti-terrorism laws have been abused in the hunt for Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) members, creating even more tensions between the groups.<sup>64</sup>

The violence and discrimination against not only the Armenian population, but also the other minorities in Turkey can be attributed to both Fishbein's and Davies' work in social theory. The Turkish government displayed nationalistic attitudes in everyday life, but particularly in schools, such as the previously mentioned example of the oath that students must take at the beginning of each day. Additionally, Turkish students are subject to the heavy dose of nationalism that comes with learning only about the crimes committed against the Turks in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Applying the authority-acceptance theory to this situation would show that students learn from their teachers that the Turkish nationality is "supreme" in Turkey. Lynn Davies would likely mention that, in

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<sup>61</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Turkey*; Ayca Cubukcu, "Turkey: The 'Progressive' Land of Repression," *The Guardian*, December 11, 2011.

<sup>62</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Turkey*, 8.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*, 37.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

the Armenian context as well, the Turkish history curriculum suffers from an extreme lack of details and “uncomfortable” topics that, if taught, would likely provide more understanding and less violence in society. As mentioned above, if the Turkish government were to remove its strong nationalist sentiments from the government-mandated history curriculum, inter-ethnic relations would likely improve, and Turkey would truly be able to call itself a secular state in the Islamic region.

### **Conclusion**

This case study shows a stark difference from the German approach to history education. Turkey has notoriously denied genocide in its past for almost a century, and this denial has become a given part of classroom history curricula. This has led to a situation in which one of the most liberal countries in the Islamic world, with a desire to join the European Union, remains an unsafe place for many minorities to live in. The nationalist sentiment that accompanies the genocide denial of the Turkish government does not allow for peaceful coexistence of minorities in Turkey. Additionally, genocide denial has placed strains on otherwise normal relationships between the government of Turkey and those of several other countries, such as the United States, France, and Switzerland. Most importantly, however, diplomatic relations between Turkey and its next-door neighbor have been tremendously strained and acts of violence from all sides have occurred. A full century after a genocide, with few to no survivors or perpetrators remaining should be sufficient time for a nation to come clean about its history. If Turkey is able to do so, its diplomatic relations worldwide will improve and it will be a safer place in which minorities can live. But first Turkey must start opening up to teaching about past violence in schools. If the

next generation of politicians is going to be able to promote diplomatic and peaceful relations between ethnicities, they need to start learning how to do so from a young age.

## Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Surveys from [Bosnia and Herzegovina] ... show that pupils want to know about war and genocide; they want proof of the stories they are confronted with in their families and in the media; but these stories are not permitted within the classroom, and students cannot examine them in a rational environment ... The majority of people interviewed, be it parents, teachers, or students, in principle are in favor of teaching history to better understand the roots of the conflict – although they wish to avoid tackling the conflict itself.”<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

The genocide in the former Yugoslavia was a result of an outbreak of ethnicity-based nationalist sentiments that had been suppressed for the decades prior, joined by a shift that led to more conservative political rule. The construct of identity based on ethnicity holds a high level of value in the Balkans,<sup>2</sup> and for years this idea was disregarded in favor of a form of nationalism based on the state that encompassed all of the ethnicities that made up Yugoslavia.<sup>3</sup> After the collapse of the communist era, all of the nationalism that had been forbidden during the regime of Franz Josep Tito flooded to the forefront of society and led to the genocide of the Bosnian Muslims by Serbian nationalists. As one of the last genocides of the twentieth century, the area, now split into at least five countries (Serbia,

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<sup>1</sup> Pingel, “Can Truth be Negotiated?” 187-188.

<sup>2</sup> One Bosnian student who was interviewed for this study mentioned that his being born in Croatia was simply a “point in his life” that happened to occur because his parents were living there, but he identifies fully as a Bosnian Muslim. Crnkic, interview.

<sup>3</sup> It is important to note the difference between the types of nationalism: one based on the state of Yugoslavia, and one based on the individual ethnicities that comprised the state.

Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, and Slovenia), has not had the ample time to recover like Germany and Turkey. This has been amplified by the nationalism still rampant among ethnicities, possibly aided by the Dayton Accords that were signed in 1995 marking the end of the war.<sup>4</sup> This separatism is still evident in the schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina, many of which are still segregated by ethnicity, where students of different ethnicities are taught different versions and perspectives of events during and leading up to the war. This section will briefly examine the history of the conflict in the Balkans, along with the public education until the collapse of Yugoslavia. This will be followed by an analysis of Bosnian approach towards genocide and history education and contemporary inter-ethnic relations in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

### **Historical Background**

Although the war in the Balkans in the early nineties was the result of centuries of ethnic rivalries in the region, two things in particular led to the rise of the violence: the collapse of communism and the rise of nationalist politicians and their propaganda. After the death of Tito, the nationalism that had been hidden during the communist years came to the forefront of politics and began to create schisms in society. Slobodan Milosevic, the effective new leader of Yugoslavia, and Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Republika Srpska, began to adopt as policies the anti-Muslim sentiments that had been a part of Serbian culture since the Ottoman conquest. With this began a bloody genocidal campaign to create a Serbian nation that left over seven thousand boys and men dead in only the most well known of the massacres, Srebrenica.<sup>5</sup> During this period, the content of history

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<sup>4</sup> Pingel, "Can Truth be Negotiated?" 186.

<sup>5</sup> Kiernan, "Blood and Soil," 594.

textbooks began to change, fairly consistently with the changes in socialist and nationalist attitudes. In this section, we will look at the changes in books as described by Tamara Pavasovic Trost, who analyzes yearly changes in Yugoslav, Serbian, and Croatian textbooks.<sup>6</sup>

### Historic Conquests and the Collapse of Communism

Located at the intersection of Islam and Christianity, Bosnia and Herzegovina contained a fairly integrated mix of Muslims, Christian, and Eastern Orthodox. Nationalist sentiment had always existed in small amounts among individuals within ethnic groups,<sup>7</sup> which was particularly seen during the World War II genocide of Serbs by Germans, aided by the Croat Ustashe.<sup>8</sup> Additionally, the Bosnian population in Yugoslavia was viewed by the Serbs as a constant, painful reminder of the Ottoman conquest several centuries prior.<sup>9</sup> During the communist era of Eastern Europe, Tito served as the ruler of Yugoslavia. Determined to keep his country united, he kept nationalism at bay, suppressing the tensions that already existed between ethnicities. However, after Tito's death, the unity that had been so closely associated with his regime disappeared. Without Tito, there was no force keeping the nationalism from being expressed, and the leaders that were elected into power in Croatia, Slovenia, Macedonia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina all declared independence for their

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<sup>6</sup> Trost's analysis is broken down by year within three categories, spanning pre-war socialism, nationalism of the eighties and nineties, and textbooks of the past decade. This study will use that format as an approximate guide for education analysis.

<sup>7</sup> It is important to note here that there is a debate regarding the cause of the conflict: if it had more to do with pre-existing tensions that had been suppressed or if it was a result of Milosevic's politics. This study will not take a side to this debate; rather it assumes that any pre-existing ethnic tensions were on an individual, rather than societal, level.

<sup>8</sup> Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 588.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

respective states, igniting a battle for the creation of “a great Serbian state from Montenegro to the left bank of the Neretva with Dubrovnik as the capital.”<sup>10</sup>

During this time, Yugoslav schoolbooks largely reflected the national unity that Tito commanded during his regime. Although historical events were largely laid out, they made no specific reference to internal nationalities: “Both Ustashes and Chetniks are described negatively, however they are not straightforwardly associated with the Croat or Serb people, and are instead referred to as general enemies, unconnected to a particular ethnic group.”<sup>11</sup> Anything that happened to the Yugoslav people was determined to be because of the “fascists” or the “enemy”; and references to the land were in the collective possessive, almost always with positive connotations.<sup>12</sup> These messages in schoolbooks clearly served the purpose of promoting the unity that Tito preached; a method of “transmitting ideology”<sup>13</sup> meant to reach the entire nation through the most consistent literature available: textbooks. Thus, we witness the same attempt to change societal relations through textbooks as is used by the Rwandan government in Marian Hodgkin’s study. Instead of facing the intricate ethnic conflicts that all but defined the history of Yugoslavia, the communist government chose to convey a message of state-based nationalism through textbooks. All unpleasant or uncomfortable elements of the past were either ignored or blamed on a third party in order to bolster unity and brotherhood between ethnicities. According to Hodgkins and Davies, this approach towards teaching only leads to bitterness between ethnicities due a lack of public discourse about difficult matters. Indeed, after

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<sup>10</sup> Mihailj Kertes, as cited in Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 590.

<sup>11</sup> Tamara Pavasovic Trost, “A Personality Cult Transformed: The Evolution of Tito's Image in the Former Yugoslavia 1974-2009,” (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2010), 5.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

Tito's death, as the formerly repressed nationalism came to the forefront, strife between ethnicities built up and the message in history textbooks changed accordingly.

### **The Rise of Nationalism and Propaganda**

The death of Tito and the communist era left the Balkans in a state of chaos. After the loss of the mechanism that had for so long suppressed ethnic nationalism, nationalist politicians from all ethnicities were starting to come forward and make their cases for independence. New Croat, Bosnian, Macedonian, and Slovenian leaders started to declare independence for their respective states in the beginning of the nineties. These plans were interrupted when, starting with the "Serbian Memorandum" of 1986, Serb nationalist leaders began to call for the creation of a "Greater Serbia," a desire that had existed since the massacres by Chetniks during World War II.<sup>14</sup> This desire, combined with the myths of ethnic strife that were as much a part of the Bosnian genocide as they were of the Holocaust, led to a policy of "ethnic cleansing" carried out by Serb nationalists. The genocide took place against both Muslim and Croat groups; however, it was mostly Muslim towns of Srebrenica, Zepa, and Gorazde that blocked Karadzic's and Milosevic's vision.<sup>15</sup> Because of the way in which part of the genocide was carried out, it is important to mention the attitude of the Serbs towards city-dwellers. Serbs, who lived predominantly in the countryside, dislike the Muslims even more because of their tendency to live in cities. Serb customs and traditions were based in nature, not in cities such as Belgrade and Sarajevo, and this difference in lifestyle was part of the animosity and bitterness that existed between Serbs and Bosnians.<sup>16</sup> One of the most famous massacres of Muslim Bosnian by Serbs thus took place in a city. In 1995, as troops

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<sup>14</sup> Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 588-9.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 593.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 592.

drew closer into Srebrenica, which was under the protection of French and Dutch peacekeeping troops, Bosnian refugees flooded into the Dutch compound within the city. What followed has led to debates about the utility of peacekeeping troops: Bosnians were tricked into believing that it was safe for them to leave the compound. Instead, as they were leaving, boys and men were separated from the women and taken to their deaths, leading to an approximate total of at least 7,000 victims.<sup>17</sup>

During this period, schoolbooks reflected the lack of unity apparent in the region. Instead of the “our people” and “Yugoslav” references to the collective population of the communist country, there is more mention of individual ethnicities and the nationalist tendencies of some groups; although some general socialist ideals are still apparent in these books.<sup>18</sup> In 1993, the ethnic-nationalist message in Serbian textbooks became significantly stronger, with an emphasis on criticism towards the states that declared independence. Additionally, Serbian textbooks displayed a message of Serbian innocence, similar to the Turkish approach towards displacing culpability: “The idea is proposed that the international community, and particularly Europe, the United States, and Germany, actively pursued policies intended to destroy the Yugoslavia federation, and brought unprovoked suffering to the guiltless Serbian people.”<sup>19</sup> This display of Serbian victimhood portrays the backlash resulting from the contained sentiments of the previous era, in addition to a reference to the German support for Bosnian and Croat independence. Similar to Hodgkin’s fear of what the Rwandan school systems face, conflicting and messy

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<sup>17</sup> Kiernan, “Blood and Soil,” 594.

<sup>18</sup> Trost, “A Personality Cult Transformed,” 6-7. Textbook writing in the former Yugoslavia was an activity of the government of each Republic; however, because the central government was socialist, the textbooks, for the most part, agreed between Republics during this time.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

versions of history started to appear in textbooks, influencing students and institutionalizing the ethnicity-based discrimination that, until then, had been forbidden under the communist regime.

### **Genocide Education**

In the twenty or so years since the signing of the Dayton Peace Accords, the mass-violence in the former Yugoslavia has stopped, although in many places, ethnic tensions have not completely ceased. Part of this, of course, can be attributed to the lack of time since the war ended. Unlike the genocides in Turkey and in Germany, the generation of survivors that were a part of the genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina are, for the most part, still alive. There is still a strong sense of first-hand bitterness that is almost entirely gone from the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust, as the last survivors of those conflicts are dying. However, these ethnic tensions are also related to several other areas. This section will look at the education in the Balkans, focusing on Bosnia and Herzegovina, since the end of the war, including the Dayton Peace Accords, textbooks and lesson content, and school system.

### **Dayton Peace Accords**

In November of 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords were signed in Ohio, after negotiations led by the chief envoy of the United States to the Balkans.<sup>20</sup> Although the Accords had a promising sound for a region that had just been devastated by war, the arrangements made by the treaty created holes in society that emphasized the split between ethnicities rather than mending it. Instead of restoring state boundaries to where they had been at the 1992

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<sup>20</sup> Laura Silber, "Dayton, 10 Years After," *The New York Times*, November 21, 2005.

Bosnian declaration of independence, an enclave was created within Bosnia and Herzegovina which would be the Republika Srpska, or the Serbian Republic. This area would contain Srebrenica, the location of the massacre from ten years before. More importantly, the Accords created a “weak central government”<sup>21</sup> for the two new sections of the country. Education had, in Yugoslavia, been a matter of each Republic,<sup>22</sup> and remained that way after the Accords. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, this translated to each canton, of which there are ten, plus the centrally organized Republika Srpska. In other words, after the Dayton Accords, there was potential for eleven different schools systems.<sup>23</sup> This freedom, particularly between the two republics in Bosnia and Herzegovina, means that while the state as a whole has been able to function, “the development of a democratic political culture [may have also been stunted]”<sup>24</sup> because the government allowed severe disparities in social and political history lessons. Because the peace agreement was drafted with a goal of convincing all representatives to sign, rather than focusing on the actual reconciliation, the drafters had to leave the agreement in broad terms that would appeal to all parties. This meant that the ethnic groups were able to continue living as they had before. Admittedly, forcing the ethnic groups that had just come out of a war to function together in one powerful and centralized government may have been counterproductive as well. But the political degeneration that resulted from the provisions of the agreement was apparent in classrooms, where the curriculum continued to be subject to the viewpoints of each ethnicity, as had been the case before and during the war. Although the Dayton Peace

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<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Trost, “A Personality Cult Transformed,” 4.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Low-Beer, “Politics, School Textbooks and Cultural Identity: The Struggle in Bosnia and Herzegovina,” *International Textbook Research* 23, no. 2 (2001).

<sup>24</sup> Silber, “Dayton, 10 Years After.”

Accords created a state that was capable of functioning on paper, the compromises made prevented any actual peace from reaching students, who would be the first generation after the war, a critical point of reconciliation.

### **Nationalist Education in Segregated Classrooms**

Since the end of the war in end of 1995, Bosnian schools have adopted a new method of teaching history: segregation. The same policy that was overthrown in the United States, South Africa, and many other places around the world is still a current norm in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Schools between the two portions of the state, the Republika Srpska and the Bosnia-Croat Federation, have become largely divided by ethnicity. Students of Bosnian, Serb, and Croat backgrounds go to either different schools or different classrooms within the same schools.<sup>25</sup> This has caused a continuation of the previously observed phenomenon: students from different ethnicities, namely the three mentioned above, learn about history from three different perspectives that drastically change the way in which information is presented.

### *Segregation in Classrooms*

According to New York Times articles written in both 1997 and in 2011, Bosnian students are still often separated by ethnicity into different classes or schools to learn history, art, and language.<sup>26</sup> The students are separated, presumably, so that they can be taught versions of history that agree with their respective ethnicities. Rather than heal the schisms between groups, this has only taught citizens to believe that this is a better system. Although this system of educational segregation was originally put in place to provide

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew Brunwasser, "Bosniak and Croats, Divided in Class and at Play," *The New York Times*, July 1 2011.

<sup>26</sup> Hedges, "Sarajevo Journal."

schools for minority returnee students who had been refugees during the war, it has since evolved into the standard of schooling that is abused to serve ethnicity-based purposes.<sup>27</sup> In some places, rather than being in a separate class within the same building for some studies, students are sent to different parts of the city or town to attend a school that teaches for their ethnicity.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, an important element of the separate classes is the language in which lessons are taught. Although the three languages, Bosnian, Serbian, and Croatian, are all similar, it is their small, nuanced differences that constitute how they are politicized by ethnicity. In particular, Serbian was for centuries written in the Cyrillic script, while Croatian and Bosnian were written in the Latin script. After, with the changes of the twentieth century and the rise of communism, the Cyrillic script was slowly losing to the Latin script of the other two languages.<sup>29</sup> This is particularly visible on street signs: in Belgrade, signs are still written in the Cyrillic script, sometimes accompanied by Latin script underneath. On the other hand, in Sarajevo, street signs are primarily written in the Latin script. This discrepancy in language still exists and is part of the difference between classes that are separated by ethnicity, as explained by a middle-school aged student: “It’s better that we’re separated,’ she said. She said she was more comfortable around the Croats because Muslims “... use different words.”<sup>30</sup> Being separated from classmates of different ethnicities creates a sense of comfort in ethnic homogeneity, similar to the race-based segregation in the United States prior to the Civil Rights Movement. However, more

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<sup>27</sup> Council of Europe, European Commission against Racism and Intolerance, *ECRI Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina (fourth monitoring cycle)*, 2011, 26.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Kiernan, *Blood and Soil*, 591; Low-Beer, “Politics, School Textbooks, and Cultural Identity.”

<sup>30</sup> Brunwasser, “Bosniaks and Croats.”

important to this study are the differences between the ways in which students are taught about history, particularly the events from the early nineties.

### *Discrepancies in Textbooks and Historical Interpretations*

Part of the separation of ethnicities in schools in Bosnia and Herzegovina today has to do with being able to teach different “versions” of history, similar to the differences in textbooks that occurred in 1993. One of the most noticeable differences between books is, like classrooms and street signs, each is written in a different dialect of the same language, with Serbian books written in Cyrillic script.<sup>31</sup> However, differences in language can be written off as simply a form of identity, particularly when compared to the discrepancies regarding the past century of history. Like the way Serbian textbooks removed culpability from World War I by making Serbs the victims rather than perpetrators, textbooks after the war were also manipulated to convey a political agenda to students in classrooms. For example, a newspaper report from 1997 shows how singular events were interpreted by different textbook writers to appeal to people of different ethnicities:

On June 28, 1914, Gavrilo Princip shot and killed Archduke Franz Ferdinand of Austria in a Sarajevo street, an act that set off World War I. So what does that make him in Bosnia?

“A hero and a poet,” says a textbook handed to high school students in the Serb-controlled region of this divided country.

An “assassin trained and instructed by the Serbs to commit this act of terrorism,” says a text written for Croatian students.

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<sup>31</sup> Low-Beer, “Politics, School Textbooks, and Cultural Identity.”

“A nationalist whose deed sparked anti-Serbian rioting that was only stopped by the police from all three ethnic groups,” reads the Muslim version of the event.<sup>32</sup>

In this case, it is the interpretation of the event, rather than the facts, that are being skewed.

In broad terms, the textbooks of each ethnicity tend to portray that respective ethnic group as the victim of crimes committed in years before and since World War I, including the use of hateful and racist terms.<sup>33</sup> But even beyond this general picture, each “ethnicity” of

books is nuanced in its own way. The Serbian books, the Serbs are portrayed as the victims of a whole slew of perpetrators, such as Germans, Americans, Turks, and Yugoslavs.<sup>34</sup>

Bosnian books generally focus more on displaying the Bosnian population as victimized without going into great detail about the perpetrators. Croatian books seem to do the best job out of the three at painting a fair, moderate picture of history, though this is still a relative statement.<sup>35</sup>

According to Tamara Pavasovic Trost’s study of the evolution of Serbian and Croatian textbooks, Serbian textbooks have made some progress. Until the year 2005, Serbian textbooks amounted to something similar to the German textbooks at the end of World War II. Textbook writers used the policy of avoidance to barely skim over the collapse of communism, and did not dedicate any space to the wars of the 1990s.<sup>36</sup> After 2005, Serbian books began to dedicate some space to the war. Interestingly, textbooks from this period are critical of Milosevic and his policies, yet Serbs are still portrayed to be

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<sup>32</sup> Hedges, “Sarajevo Journal.”

<sup>33</sup> Low-Beer, “Politics, School Textbooks, and Cultural Identity.”

<sup>34</sup> “Yugoslavs” refers to the socialist era in Yugoslavia when nationalism was suppressed.

<sup>35</sup> Although this statement is not demonstrated by the above excerpt from the New York Times, it is generally representative of the study of textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina by Tamara Pavasovic Trost’s analysis of textbooks in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is used in this study.

<sup>36</sup> Tamara Pavasovic Trost, “History Textbooks as Sites of Construction and Contestation: Croatia and Serbia 1974-2010,” (Cambridge: Harvard University, 2010), 24.

the victims.<sup>37</sup> The criticisms of Milosevic show the Serbs as the victims of his policies rather than as perpetrators of the violence against the Bosnians in an attempt to remove culpability. This is similar to the initial German Holocaust education and the present Turkish education regarding the Armenian genocide. Some Serbs were victims of Milosevic, since political dissidents were punished under Milosevic as the other ethnicities. However, throughout these criticisms and the general talk of the war, there is no mention of any “genocide”; rather, the books call the event an “ethnic cleansing”<sup>38</sup> and refer to the whole period as a “civil war.”<sup>39</sup> The text also makes a point to make clear that the institutions and relics of all three ethnicities were affected by the war.

In contrast, Bosnian textbooks show “a view of history in which Bosniaks are mainly seen as victims of aggression, genocide, ethnic cleansing in past and present, ... and the underlying concepts implicitly define the other nationalities of the country as aggressors...”.<sup>40</sup> The word “genocide” is used explicitly so as to portray to intent of the Serbs to destroy the Bosnians. The Bosnian books generally paint the portrait of a victim in retelling history, using a fairly general idea of the perpetrators. The emphasis is more on the Bosnian history, rather than the culpability and identity of perpetrators.<sup>41</sup>

Croatian textbooks are slightly different than Bosnian and Serbian books for one reason: as of the year 2000, the market for middle school history books opened, while the Bosnian and Serbian industries remained centralized. Thus, Croatian schools have an

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<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 26.

<sup>38</sup> While this is the term that was used to describe the Serbian policy, as described in Kiernan's *Blood and Soil*, and thus cannot be qualified as complete denial, it does fail to address it using the word “genocide,” which includes the intentional murder of ethnic (or other) groups, rather than just their displacement.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Low-Beer, “Politics, School Textbooks, and Cultural Identity,” 217.

<sup>41</sup> Pilvi Torsti, “How to Deal with a Difficult Past? History Textbooks Supporting Enemy Images in Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina” *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 39, no. 1 (2007): 87.

option each year between several books that range from right-wing nationalist to moderate.<sup>42</sup> The more right-wing books take an approach that, rather than victimize the Croats, rationalizes the war. Similar to the Turkish textbooks,<sup>43</sup> one Croat author wrote (in relation to the actions of Croat forces during the “Homeland War”<sup>44</sup>): “The circumstances in which the crimes were committed should not be neglected...With all due respect to any victim and to the suffering of individuals, families, or various groups caused by war operations, the historian is obliged to explain the circumstances that lead to it.”<sup>45</sup> The more liberal of the textbooks<sup>46</sup> describe historical events in context, with room for students to analyze critically. This book also creates a focus of violence, rather than blame, with regard to the Homeland War and adopts a method similar to German Holocaust education when talking about the actions of the Ustasha actions from the early twentieth century.

When compared to the German and Turkish education systems, we can see that there are several similarities and “phases” of post-conflict education that start to become apparent. In the several years following the Balkan war, none of the textbooks addressed what had happened, similar to the German method of glossing over World War II until the textbook revisions of the 1960s. But due to the more clearly distinguished categories of victim and perpetrator in the Holocaust, it is difficult to compare the two events and thus the following history curriculum. Although Germany did not immediately start teaching about the Holocaust after World War II, there was little to no attempt to remove culpability.

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<sup>42</sup> Trost, “History Textbooks,” 34.

<sup>43</sup> Although this is not a fair comparison because this historical description does not involve genocide denial, it is interesting to note the desire on both parts to rationalize violence as a natural manner of reaction to events at the time.

<sup>44</sup> The Croatian name for the war of the 1990s

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 36.

<sup>46</sup> The one in particular being described is the one analyzed in Trost’s “History Textbooks as Sites of Construction and Contestation.”

Additionally, we can see the Turkish method of using victimhood to replace culpability, mostly in the Serbian books. In the Croatian books, we can see the rationalization of violence, also visible in the Turkish books, although we never see the outright denial of genocide that is such a constant in Turkish society and education. Officially, the Serbian policy was called “ethnic cleansing,” however the murderous intent of the Serbian policy to rid the land specifically of Muslims qualifies it as genocide. All together, the lack of public discourse and cohesion in the education system of Bosnia and Herzegovina has prevented reconciliation from moving forward. If we use German education immediately post-Holocaust as a general model, education with a goal of reconciliation should be starting in Bosnia and Herzegovina within the next few years. But until then, the current education system simply serves to increase the distance between ethnic groups and thus increase ethnic discrimination and nationalism.

### **Current Racism and Social Conflict**

Judging present-day discrimination in Bosnia and Herzegovina is difficult, particularly in comparison to the other case studies, because of the lack of time that has elapsed since the treaty was signed and the difference in circumstances surrounding the conflict. For example, the Balkan War of the nineties lacked of a decisive victory that allowed for a winner’s history to be written after the ceasefire. Additionally, the new German society at the end of World War II was under pressure to become a good member of Western Europe, which was part of the motivation for its reforms, whereas Bosnia and Herzegovina is located in Southeastern Europe and lacks similar motivation. As mentioned earlier, it has been under two decades since the massacre at Srebrenica, and still less since the Dayton Peace Accords were signed. Thus, racism in the area must be look at subjectively in order

to judge what discrimination is present simply due to the high number of survivors and veterans still living in the area, an element which is not present anymore in Turkey or Germany. That said, ethnicity-based discrimination is still an unfortunately common presence in Bosnia and Herzegovina, at least partially due to the way in which the government has handled the question of education. Because, in this case, so much of the ethnicity-based racism is based on generation, this section will be divided into discrimination in the “Adult” generation, or those who survived the war, and the “Children” generation, who were born after the war, but have since been a part of the Bosnian school system.

### Adults

Ethnicity-based discrimination is, understandably, still a part of life for the generation of survivors in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is unfortunate, but one might assume that the survivors of a civil war would have difficulties clearing their minds of their preconceived notions about each other, particularly when it was exactly those thoughts that led to a bloody war. The racism between adults in society includes almost anything that can be segregated, including deciding where to send children to school or which fire department to call. Although government policies do not explicitly support and enable the racism between adults, the lack of effort by the government has kept any real progress from being made.

Under twenty years after the end of the war, it is understandable that there still exists animosity between adults who can vividly remember the nineties. Before the state of the war, even though individual villages in Bosnia and Herzegovina were mostly

homogenous, they coexisted peacefully with villages of other ethnicities.<sup>47</sup> According to Damir Masic, the Federal Minister of Education, “for centuries, we have always lived together, not next to each other. This is a problem which has only existed for 20 years.”<sup>48</sup> The war then destroyed any trust that had survived the years of communism and created the present situation. Now, in Bosnia and Herzegovina, towns such as Vitez have gone as far as to have several of the institutions doubled, such as the firehouses and sports clubs, one for Bosniaks and one for Croats.<sup>49</sup> The rift between the ethnic groups is so strong that one Croatian man is reported to have said “I’d let it burn” when asked if he would consider calling the Bosnian fire department to save his home from being destroyed.<sup>50</sup> The same man said that what most people in society consider to be most offensive is when religion, such as the Arabic greeting “*salaam aleikum*,” is brought into the public sphere and used as a reminder of the “Muslim triumphalism” that Croats view.<sup>51</sup> Additionally, a poll done several years ago shows that other than Bosniaks, the ethnic groups living in Bosnia and Herzegovina do not consider that state to be their homeland; rather, they identify with the state tied to their individual ethnicity.<sup>52</sup> All of these small parts of everyday life that were a part of normal society before the war have become contentious and opportunities to display nationalism in the past twenty years.

It is not just in societal life that ethnicity-based discrimination and paranoia exists. According to the 2009 European Commission on Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) Bosnia report, the government is also partially at fault for this continued divide between ethnic

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<sup>47</sup> Hedges, “Sarajevo Journal.”

<sup>48</sup> Brunwasser, “Bosniaks and Croats.”

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid.

<sup>52</sup> Silber, “Dayton, 10 Years After.”

groups. The report states that “political parties continue to exploit nationalist arguments in their discourse, fostering divisions between the various constituent peoples and ethnic groups living in Bosnia and Herzegovina.”<sup>53</sup> Government policies, such as segregated schools and even the division of power in Bosnia and Herzegovina, are a large part of what prevents the ethnic groups from being able to come together. People are allowed to move freely throughout the country,<sup>54</sup> although this was established only in the Dayton Peace Accords and different ethnicities may have otherwise found significant trouble during border crossings. According to the ECRI, even popular mainstream political leaders do not condemn the public discourse that wages ethnicities against one another; rather, they engage it in themselves.<sup>55</sup> It is safe to say that as long as politicians are engaging in this sort of propaganda, it will continue at the civilian level as well. However, as mentioned above, less than twenty years have passed since the end of the war. In Germany, it was at around this time that the topic of discrimination began to receive more attention from the public, we therefore might hope that the upcoming generation in Bosnia and Herzegovina will create some changes in education and reconciliatory politics. At the same time, Germany did not end the war with as strong of a level of nationalist competition for territorial dominance as is found in the former Yugoslavia. Therefore, we move to instead analyze the discrimination experienced by students who have grown up only knowing ethnic separatism.

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<sup>53</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 22.

<sup>54</sup> Office of the Spokesman. "Summary of the Dayton Peace Agreement on Bosnia-Herzegovina." edited by U.S. Department of State, 1995.

<sup>55</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 23.

## Children

According to one student interviewed for this study, who moved to Germany at a young age at the beginning of the war, there was no ethnic segregation in classes when he was a child in Bosnia. The only way to tell people of different ethnicities apart was by hearing their last name.<sup>56</sup> Though as discussed above, this has completely changed since the end of the war. Students now learn different versions of history, in different languages and different classrooms. Some argue that this is to prevent the loss of language and culture that might happen if students study together.<sup>57</sup> But this separatism is also helping to cement the gap between the younger generation, students who are learning to hate each other because of a war they were not even alive for.

One of the biggest problems with the manner in which students are being taught about the histories is the sense of superiority or hostility towards other groups being sown in children's minds.<sup>58</sup> According to students in Vitez, fights occur commonly between students, "usually triggered by differences of religion or language."<sup>59</sup> Students feel more comfortable around their ethnically homogenous peers and some expect that another war will start because of "fighting over words." Even parents are scared to send their children to a school in which they would be a minority or part of a mixed group because of the "big hatred."<sup>60</sup> Students who are in mixed classes are victims of ethnicity-based racist comments and often have to travel outside of their own towns to go to school where they will feel comfortable.<sup>61</sup> This lifestyle in which these children have grown up is poisonous;

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<sup>56</sup> Crnkic, interview.

<sup>57</sup> Brunwasser, "Bosniaks and Croats."

<sup>58</sup> Council of Europe, *ECRI Report on Bosnia and Herzegovina*, 27.

<sup>59</sup> Brunwasser, "Bosniaks and Croats."

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Hedges, "Sarajevo Journal."

one where the fear of the loss of ethnic traditions and languages rules everyday life and where students must live with the societal consequences of a war fought by their parents.

According to the theory mentioned in Fishbein's work, the "authority-acceptance" model, this segregation and fear of other groups is something burned into the minds of students. Students hear their parents talking about the war<sup>62</sup> in addition to the separatist lessons they learn in their mono-ethnic schools and come to the conclusion that these discriminatory ideals are good. This, of course, creates the danger that the next generation in office will not change these policies and that they will become the norm in the state, similar to the education policies in Turkey. If we examine this from the perspective of Marian Hodgkins, we see a situation agreed upon by many scholars: "... the Communist education system helped set the stage for today's ethnic rage by failing to completely tackle the deep ethnic conflicts that figure in Yugoslav history. Instead, it denied that such problems existed – an approach as divisive as the new effort to nurture students solely on the three groups' simultaneous – and contradictory – recollection of grievances."<sup>63</sup> Just as the government in Rwanda chose to ignore the history of the two ethnic tribes in favor of focusing on nationalistic moments, years of communist education in Yugoslavia that purposefully banned nationalism has prepared society for a backlash from the people who were silenced for all of those years. Additionally, schools then and now have failed to address Davies' "uncomfortable issues" in order to draw attention to the issues that cannot be ignored, such as past violence between groups. These things all together have caused

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<sup>62</sup> Crnkic, interview.

<sup>63</sup> Hedges, "Sarajevo Journal."

for an educational “system of apartheid”<sup>64</sup> in which children are taught to hate each other in the classroom rather than on a battlefield.

With all of that said, we must draw our attention to another area of discussion. Despite all of the hatred that is such an inherent part of the current Bosnian school system, there are still students who do not wish to be separated. One student in Sarajevo said about being separated into classrooms by ethnicity: “It’s not what any of us asked for.”<sup>65</sup> Another Croatian student in Vitez did not understand why students were being segregated, although she had a vague idea that it “[had] something to do with the fights.”<sup>66</sup> According to Falk Pingel, who writes about international textbook revisions, more and more students, teachers, and parents are showing that they want to learn more about what they are being told in schools: “... Pupils want to know about war and genocide; they want proof of the stories they are being confronted with in their families and the media, but these stories are not permitted within the classroom ... However, the majority of people interviewed, be it parents, teachers, or students, in principle are in favor of teaching history to better understand the roots of the conflict – although they wish to avoid tackling the conflict itself.”<sup>67</sup> With this information, we can see a variety of Vygotsky’s idea of socially-constructed knowledge: rather than simply accepting information that they are handed in the classroom, students have a desire to use the propaganda being taught in combination with factual history to construct their idea of the past; ideally in an objective manner. But again we are presented with the problem that Davies believes is so present in educational systems all over the world: there is a lack of desire to address difficult topics, such as the

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<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid.

<sup>66</sup> Brunwasser, “Bosniaks and Croats.”

<sup>67</sup> Pingel, “Can Truth Be Negotiated?” 187-8.

war of the nineties. Although these desires expressed by some, youth and adults alike, are an important step towards reconciliation through education, it is important not to avoid such difficult topics for the sake of comfort. Although, taking into consideration the recent nature of the conflict, it is worth applauding any efforts to reconceive the education system in a way that will not teach children to hate each other. Additionally, as was mentioned by one student, as education moves forward in Bosnia and Herzegovina, there must be care taken to ensure that it educates against the future conflicts that seem to be inevitable with the current system.

### Conclusion

Out of the three countries included in this study, Bosnia and Herzegovina proves to be a very particular one. Having occurred in the past two decades, the state has not had ample recovery time like Germany or Turkey. Additionally, it has the added detail of fighting between three ethnic groups, rather than two, though all genocidal action arguably came from only one group. Finally, the history of relations between the ethnic groups in the region has proven to be very influential in this situation: years of coexisting, interspersed with wars and massacres, and with a perpetually strong nationalist sentiment that was forbidden in the years leading up to the war, and an even stronger fear of the loss of ethnic identity. These elements combined have created a situation that differs from that of Germany and Turkey substantially. Unfortunately, this situation is also one in which students are taught to hate their peers and must carry the burden of their parents' generation because of a conflict in which they did not take part. Because of how recently the conflict took place, calling for an educational reform might fall on mostly deaf ears. However, considering the minority opinion, which seems to value the idea of inter-ethnic

education, it might be worth exploring an idea similar to what was done in Israel: the use of a textbook that portrays all sides of the story and then leaves room for students to take of it what they understand and construct for themselves a history that seems appropriate. The histories by themselves are conflicting and burdened enough with strong emotion that combining them officially might not be possible. But if students are given the opportunity to learn about the history of the conflict in its entirety, they might be able to get closer to achieving reconciliation through education. Although this system of educational “apartheid” was once created with reason, it is now creating more problems than it is solving them and its continuation presents the risk of another war based on ethnic hatred. It will be interesting in the coming years to see how the first generation of youth since the end of the war will handle the issue of education and reconciliation once they are the ones in charge of politics and society. Seeing the change in Bosnian schools as it happens, rather than retrospectively analyzing it several decades later, will hopefully provide some insight as to whether education is a reflection of the social situation or if it is a vehicle for change, or both.

## The Dichotomy of Genocide Education

“The context is different, and must be approached differently. We can offer models and suggestions and offer assistance. You have the responsibility of instilling the subject into the curriculum, and not just in a formal sense. It also requires absolute honesty between teacher and students. It is not a normal subject that can be approached simply, academically as a list of facts and figures. Open up, be ready to challenge rigid roles, dialogue, debate, discuss.”<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

As determined up until now, a large part of genocide prevention and reconciliation is providing for education that teaches students about their past, present, and future. If history education disregards any of those pieces, reconciliation remains incomplete and unable to bring people back together who have been separated by violence. Based on the values presented in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration on Human Rights, “education should contribute to avoiding conflicts between nations, groups, and people by promoting understanding, tolerance, and friendship and the maintenance of peace.”<sup>2</sup> History education, particularly with regard to genocide, should introduce students to factual historical events while encouraging critical analysis and morality taken from history. When learning about genocide, students should be introduced to the idea of intent as it relates to the definition: they should understand that the government intentionally

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<sup>1</sup> Helmut Schreier and Matthias Heyl, *Dass Auschwitz Nicht Noch Einmal Sei*, (Hamburg: Kreamer, 1995), 372.

<sup>2</sup> Fons Coomans, "Education and Work," In *International Human Right Law*, eds. Sangeeta Shah Daniel Moeckli, and Sandesh Sivakumaran, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 285.

destroyed (or attempted to destroy) a group of people simply because of their association with the group. A combination of these pieces will hopefully allow students to find reconciliation among themselves, even if animosity and discrimination has not yet disappeared among the adult generations.

Unfortunately, as we have discussed in the past several sections, this is not a reality in many places. In fact, with few exceptions such as Germany, most genocides are, in some way or another, not taught in a whole and complete manner as discussed above. Often times, these are the cases in which reconciliation has never been fully achieved, leaving deep cracks visible between the ethnic groups residing within state borders. Sometimes it is an issue of denial by the government of crucial elements of the genocide, other times it is a difference of opinion between groups who believe that they are equally victims. Some of the governments that choose to deny genocide have political motives for doing so, even decades after the end of a conflict; in other places students of rival ethnicities learn different versions of history because the conflict is still fresh and the generation that was part of the war is still in charge of the country. It may be increasingly difficult to change the minds of adults and have a victim face his former perpetrator. But if children are not taught to deal with and accept history, then the cycle of violence and tension will continue. This section will discuss the dichotomy of genocide education, looking first at a possible model of the “ideal” genocide education, based on the information from scholars and the case studies. This will be followed by an overview of the actual situation of genocide education based on the case studies in this paper.

### **The Ideal Genocide Education**

According to Randolph L. Braham, “the effectiveness with which [the elimination of anti-

Semitism and racism] might be achieved depends to a large extent on the textbooks teachers use at all levels of education.”<sup>3</sup> Based on this, it is vital that the information that children receive in a classroom, both from educators and from textbooks, be as efficient as possible in promoting peaceful relations that children will then be able use later in life to continue peaceful relations. This section will give an overview of my opinion of what constitutes a constructive, helpful genocide education based on the theory and case studies examined in this paper.

### **Human Rights, Genocide, and Intent**

In terms of teaching the history of a conflict, one might assume that students should have a basis of theory that they can use to apply to history lessons. Specifically, students should learn three things: human rights, the definition of genocide, and the idea of intent. Between these three areas exists quite a bit of overlap, but they are categorically necessary in order to teach students the scope and importance of such a crime.

It is my belief that the basis of any form of social studies should be an understanding of human rights.<sup>4</sup> Students should understand all of the rights given to them by virtue of being alive, but they should also understand the inherent rights to live and associate in order to understand what it is that makes genocide so terrible. They should understand that all of their rights, but these three in particular, cannot be violated by anyone regardless of their level of power. With this basis, students might be more prepared to understand the scope of the crime of genocide and why it is so vital that it be prevented in

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<sup>3</sup> Randolph L. Braham, "Introduction," *The Treatment of the Holocaust in Textbooks*, ed. Randolph L. Braham, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), vii.

<sup>4</sup> Due to the sometimes controversial nature of human rights versus cultural relativism, the references to Human Rights in this section will be in a universal sense with a focus on the idea of choice. That is, the concept of Human Rights is considered to be universal, but with consideration given to individuals who choose to deprive themselves of certain rights based on their cultural beliefs.

the future.

From this, students should learn about the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. They should learn about the ideas that go with it, such as “ethnic cleansing” and “cultural genocide.” It should be made clear that the actions described in this Convention are a blatant violation of the basic human rights afforded to all people by virtue of being humans. I believe that addressing genocide education in a ground-up manner will create a basis for students upon which they can defend their beliefs in order to promote reconciliation in the future.

The final part of this basis for genocide education should be a specific study of the idea of intent, as defined by the Convention. As we saw in several of our case studies, intent is often the element of genocide denied by governments that choose not to recognize the past. Even states like Turkey that completely deny the genocide do not deny the masses of people killed; they simply deny that there was any intention on the part of the state in doing so. By teaching students to recognize the idea of intentional destruction as opposed to collateral damage, they can hopefully be better equipped to recognize genocide as it happens, something that has been starkly absent from the history of genocide. Additionally, by understanding the idea of intent, students should be more able to understand events in history as crimes against specific groups of people rather than accidental civilian deaths.

### **Historical Neutrality, Critical Analysis, and the National Narrative**

Before delving into the concept of actually teaching a historical timeline, it is important to note one thing. The study of history is an art based on the idea of multiple levels of reality, different perspectives as mentioned above, and, by definition, a lack of the kind of certainty

often found in hard sciences. It involves considering many different facets of the same event and using each of those to build a timeline that is usually not uni-dimensional. As outsiders looking at a historical event that does not directly affect us, we might recognize these layers of truth. However, the tensions created during a conflict might prevent former opponents from seeing each other's perspectives of history, thus creating a need for a simpler version of recounting the past.

In this version of history, students simply learn a timeline of events as they occurred, with no form of interpretation or other information given. I believe that this presentation of history as a continual string of events, with the concept of connection between events but without information given regarding the connection, will foster the questions and discussion from students that will allow them to come to their own conclusions about what happened in the past. It will also provide them with the opportunity to ask questions based on what they have heard at home or through the media that might affect their perception of social cohesion. A similar option would be the use of a joint textbook commission, as studied by Falk Pingel, in order to create a textbook that would provide students with the interpretive histories of both sides of a conflict and would allow them to then analyze critically and come to their own conclusions.<sup>5</sup>

Imperative in both of these options is the idea of critical analysis. Students should learn history, but they should also be open to analyzing the motive and intention behind actions in order to understand their context in a conflict. By being able to analyze history and determine for themselves what constitutes a moral offence in the context of the past, they will be more likely to be able to defend it against those who challenge their ideas. This

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<sup>5</sup> Pingel, "Can Truth be Negotiated?"

would be consistent with Davis' idea of "interruptive education," or education that fosters constructive discussion and debate between students while also addressing topics considered to be "uncomfortable" in the classroom.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, critical analysis might allow for some empathy with the enemy (whether the enemy is the victim or the perpetrator), that the state's official narrative does not include. I believe that this empathy would create a higher level of understanding between groups that would encourage reconciliation.

Another method of teaching history is the national narrative like that of Germany. Many scholars believe that this is the ideal way to teach students of crimes committed in the past, complete with lessons on morality and why the actions committed by the government were so wrong.<sup>7</sup> However, states should proceed with caution when using this method. As described by Hodgkin's study of Rwandan education, a national narrative that does not allow for students to think analytically and challenge opinion runs the risk of creating a new minority that will experience a sentiment of bitterness and frustration against the "official" victims because the new minority feels ignored. This also does not inherently provide students with the critical analysis skills that would help them in other areas of study as well.

### **Commemoration**

As mentioned in an earlier section, education serves two purposes in terms of commemoration: education can be an example of how the state commemorates a genocide, and it also teaches the coming generation about commemoration so that they can continue

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<sup>6</sup> Davies, "Education and Conflict"

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 182.

doing so. Teaching students about a genocide means that not only does the state recognize the event, an obviously important element of reconciliation, but that the state also wants to make sure that the victims of the genocide are not forgotten. As the Interior Minister in one of the German states said in 1959: “We may not allow our conscience to rest comfortably in relation to this gruesome history. We owe it to the victims of the past, to the survivors, and to ourselves to confront the unmastered past.”<sup>8</sup> Addressing commemoration in education does intrude a bit on the idea of critical analysis because it tells students to recognize the genocide, rather than allowing them to come to that conclusion on their own. However, given the limits faced by education in terms of content and scope, I believe that it is more important for states to teach students the idea of reconciliation for crimes committed in the past, rather than to risk the possibility of a future generation that chooses to ignore honoring victims of genocide.

### **Tolerance and Acceptance**

As discussed in this study, education in the social sciences must address crimes committed in the past. But just as important is the idea of deterrence, or the prevention of future crimes. As seen in the case studies, particularly those of Turkey and Bosnia and Herzegovina, it might be difficult to teach students the idea of accepting those who are different if the state does not address historical redresses. For states that do address genocide in a constructive manner, tolerance and acceptance should constitute an important part of the education, both implicitly and explicitly. It is my hope that with a comprehensive history curriculum that addresses genocide, students will be able to conclude for themselves the need for ethnic coexistence in the future. Although it is also

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<sup>8</sup> Charles Forcey and Ronald A. Posner, *A Strong and Free Nation*, (New York: Macmillan Co., 1971), 587.

important that this message is expressed explicitly. Students should come to understand that the discrimination faced by contemporary minorities might be the same type of discrimination that was faced in the past by a group that was intentionally destroyed.

### **The Reality of Genocide Education**

In a perfect world, genocide does not happen. As can be seen even by looking only at the past several decades, we do not live in this utopia. Beyond that, we might hope even if genocide must happen, it is fully addressed in society in order to prevent its reoccurrence. Unfortunately, as we have discovered in this study, genocide not only exists but also is often mishandled in education and society. This section will give an overview of how historical education is often misused by governments, even unintentionally.

### **Human Rights, Genocide, and Intent**

Ideally, students of all nations should understand the rights inherently given to them as living human beings. Unfortunately, many students are not afforded with such an education. Although finding specific statistics on the matter is difficult, we can draw several conclusions based on logic. The first conclusion is that societies under tyrannical rule, such as North Korea, Afghanistan under the Taliban, and communist China, do not teach students about human rights (at least as defined by the Universal Declaration on Human Rights) simply because of their vast violations of these rights. However, a second and more interesting conclusion might be drawn, partially based on personal experience, which is that some countries that would be otherwise considered democratic and “western” do not teach human rights. For example, an article shows that teachers in Scotland are actually scared of teaching human rights in the classroom because they fear

causing upset among students.<sup>9</sup> Based on the general assumption that there are at least *some* students in the world who do not learn about human rights, we can conclude that there are students who do not necessary realize their inherent right to life and to associate freely with any group.

Moving forward, as we have discovered in this study, it is apparent that some states do not teach students about genocide, or they do so with an agenda. Of course, we find states like Germany that teach about genocide with a passion lit by the sentiment of regret and responsibility. On the other hand, states such as Turkey and the Serbian education in Bosnia and Herzegovina teach about the idea of genocide, but only in order to fulfill an agenda. These states use genocide in order to reverse the roles of victimhood and switch the culpability to the group of people normally considered to be victims. In this sense, students never learn the idea of intent as the politics that the government directed towards a certain group of people. In Turkey, the fact that students learn that the Turkish government did not commit a genocide means that they do not learn about the ethnic intolerance displayed by the government at the time, which led to an intentionally destructive policy towards those groups. Turkish students are taught that the government was simply trying to protect the Armenian population by removing them from the Russian border. Without learning that the government actually intended to destroy that group, it would be difficult for students to understand why reconciliation and commemoration are so necessary in order to promote peaceful relations between groups.

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<sup>9</sup> The European Wergeland Centre. "Teachers Afraid to Broach Human Rights in Class." The European Wergeland Centre, <http://www.theewc.org/news/view/teachers.afraid.to.broach.human.rights.in.class/>.

### Historical Neutrality, Critical Analysis, and the National Narrative

As discussed by authors such as Falk Pingel, the need for historical neutrality can be a vital part of bringing students together after a conflict. Neutrality or combined history can be used as a way to prevent students from feeling marginalized by a majority opinion or “official narrative” that does not necessarily represent one hundred percent of the population. This does not mean, though, that all states abide by this; in fact, I would argue that this is the area in which states most often create problems for themselves. For example, the German state prides itself on its response to the Holocaust: the state has made reparations to survivors and to the state of Israel, the state commemorates the victims lost, and the Holocaust is deeply engrained in the psyche of every German.<sup>10</sup> However, as can be seen from the case study, it is apparent that the attitude of young Germans towards the Holocaust is not necessarily consistent with that of the government. The government has pushed Holocaust commemoration with such force into the minds of German citizens that there is actually a sentiment of bitterness felt towards Jews and Israel. I believe that if the government were to allow for more of a critical analysis by students, this problem might disappear. For example, one student interviewed for this study mentioned that any time an oppositional opinion appears in the classroom, the teacher usually shoots it down immediately.<sup>11</sup> If students were able to debate these ideas, rather than to keep ignoring them, not only would the students who agree with the state be able to sharpen their argumentation skills, but they would also be more able to form their opinions based on the conclusions they create on their own.

Another issue that we have seen in this study is the idea of conflicting narratives.

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<sup>10</sup> Salomon, personal interview.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

Unfortunately, it seems that in many places in the world in which rival groups coexist, there is a large discrepancy in the way history is taught. This is the case in Israel and Palestine, as shown by Bekerman and Pingel, and is the case in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It is in Bosnia and Herzegovina where a dual textbook, like the one used in Israel, might be most useful; unfortunately, it appears as though, at least for the present, this is not an option. By not creating a lesson out of historical neutrality or combined narratives, the government misses out on a chance to foster reconciliation between groups by allowing for empathy between groups.

### **Commemoration**

As shown by the German government, commemoration is an important element of post-genocide state action. Additionally, as mentioned above, education displays both commemoration as it takes place and its future potential as students learn their responsibility to remember the past. Unfortunately, the majority of the states examined in this study do not value commemoration. Because the Turkish government does not recognize that a genocide took place, commemoration for the actual crime is impossible. The government does recognize the number of people that were killed by the army, but the denial of the intention means that the Turkish government does not commemorate the people killed as members of a group that was destroyed; rather they are remembered as individuals who did not survive a perilous journey. Bosnia and Herzegovina shows us a special case. Because it occurred only in the past two decades, commemoration might be considered difficult for the generation of adults who survived the war. It is my hope, therefore, that the present education system of Bosnia and Herzegovina can evolve enough

in the coming years to allow for students to understand what happened and thus commemorate those lost in the war.

### **Tolerance and Acceptance**

Finally, history education should promote tolerance and acceptance among students by using the past as an example. This is important so that future violence, discrimination, and racist policy can be avoided. Even given the idea that racism is an inherent part of any society, in small amounts, it is unfortunate to see that some states actually promote discrimination. As seen in this study, segregation is a significant part of society in Bosnia and Herzegovina. This has allowed students to grow up with the idea of ethnic separation, and thus become comfortable with it, allowing for a continued cycle of intolerance between groups. Even Germany, the nation that boasts a comprehensive history curriculum in which students are faced with the climax of intolerance, still faces contemporary discrimination against its ethnic minorities, such as Arab immigrants. Admittedly, racism and intolerance is an unfortunate part of any society. However, it should still be addressed by history education, particularly when it is the cause of continued tensions in society after the end of a conflict.

### **Conclusion**

The categories listed above as areas of education are clearly elements that contain overlap, but that does not mean that they are all addressed in equivalent qualities or quantities in schools worldwide. Based on the above overviews, we can conclude that not only is genocide a volatile and delicate area of education, but even the most well meaning states can create tensions by not deeply analyzing their actions with regard to history education.

It is my hope that this section has given a complete overview as to how states might improve their approaches towards history education in order to improve the situation of social cohesion, ethnic based discrimination, and violence after the end of a conflict.

## Conclusion

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”<sup>1</sup>

Education is, for many states, an important and sensitive area of policymaking. Many politicians recognize the value of a quality state education system that provides basic knowledge for students. However, its hidden value as a form of peacekeeping or peacemaking also deserves a level of attention, as can be seen by our three case studies. Education can make or break the democratic values in a nation, and its abuse by politicians to serve as a method of displaying propaganda can incite hatred among children and young adults who were not even a part of the original conflict. Particularly in the case of genocide, a crime whose definition is based almost purely on intent and thus particularly subject to criticism and controversy, education is a valuable tool, if used correctly, to ensure that ethnic hatred never again reaches a point where people are murdered simply because of their association with a certain group. According to Falk Pingel, “there is an ongoing, almost worldwide debate on whether the history curriculum should define a body of knowledge, unquestioned values, and moral judgments that represent the shared historical memory of a given society or whether students should be trained in skills that allow them to compare different interpretations, to develop critical thinking, and to form their own judgments.”<sup>2</sup> The purpose of this paper is not necessarily to judge which of these forms of history education is better in the absolute sense, though while researching this study, I have acquired some insight into the conditions required to make either option more useful.

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<sup>1</sup> George Santayana, *The Life of Reason*, (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1998).

<sup>2</sup> Pingel, “Can Truth be Negotiated?” 182.

For example, although Germany already has an exemplary system for educating students about the vast array of crimes committed in the past century, the government or individual schools might take care to incorporate programs that allow for a more critical analysis of World War II. By doing this, the state might find that there is less bitterness from German students for feeling culpable for acts committed by their grandparents and great-grandparents. Based on Hodgkin's work in Rwanda, such a program might prevent students from feeling shunned by the majority opinion and thus lashing out against the Jewish population in response. In Turkey, a good place to start would simply be admitting that a genocide happened. Close to a century after the massacres, the state would benefit more from the diplomatic relations that would improve as a result of admitting that genocide was committed than to continue denying it. In society, the idea of "genocide" has become such a taboo that introducing the idea in schools would likely be difficult and met with resistance; therefore, using an transnational textbook commission to come up with a book that could be used in both Turkish and Armenian classrooms might be helpful, similar to the book created for Israeli and Palestinian schools, with a focus on the creation by the students of a combined history. This solution might also prove useful in Bosnia and Herzegovina, where an important lesson in classrooms might be an understanding of nationality as a fluid concept that does not require a history of only successes. Especially in this region, where presently students are segregated in classrooms so that they can learn about history according to their ethnicity, an emphasis on ethnic coexistence and learning from the past would be likely to benefit the country greatly.

As mentioned above, the main purpose of this paper is to analyze the value of education in nations that have experienced a genocide. Based on the analysis of scholars

and case studies, I find that education, when used in a responsible manner, is greatly useful in helping reconciliation progress in societies torn by war. Education not only displays the viewpoints of the government,<sup>3</sup> but also influences the next generation of citizens, providing insurance and security that peace will continue. However, I believe that in order for this education to be successful, it must contain several elements. It must present students with factual pieces of history that describe an event as it happened, not as it was interpreted by a group at a later date. Additionally, history must teach students to think critically of the information they are presented with in the classroom. As we can see from the case in Germany, even the best, most accurate genocide education can still be met with hostilities when it does not allow students to analyze and question information. Although each case is unique and genocide education as a whole cannot be addressed uniformly, it is important that states realize the value in presenting students with the information and tools necessary to allow them to build a country that recognizes the inherent right of groups to exist peacefully in society.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 182.

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