

Rewriting History

CAN NATIONS COME TO TERMS WITH THEIR OWN LEGACIES?

Every nation argues about its own history, seeking to find glory and a sense of identity by celebrating its heroes while downplaying the dark side of the past. Nations also argue with each other about the past, with one side's glorious victory still rankling as the other's ignominious defeat. And, frequently, a neighboring country that has been harmed by another's actions complains that the guilty nation is white-washing the worst incidents. Currently, an attempt to normalize relations between Turkey and Armenia is proving a tough sell due to arguments about a mass slaughter that occurred more than 90 years ago. And Russia and its neighbors are engaged in heated debates about revealing the crimes of the Stalinist era. Like individuals, nations need to confront their own ghosts, but finding the balance between acknowledging past wrongdoing and learning to get along in the present can be a difficult feat. Such conflicts raise a fundamental philosophical question: Is historical accountability a human right?

A former South Korean "comfort woman" — one of tens of thousands of women forced to serve as sex slaves for Japanese soldiers during World War II — protests at the Japanese Embassy in Seoul over the publication of Japanese textbooks that soft-pedal Japan's atrocities during the war.



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Rewriting History

BY ALAN GREENBLATT

THE ISSUES

In a move hailed as a diplomatic breakthrough, Turkey and Armenia on Oct. 10 agreed to establish diplomatic relations and reopen their borders, sealed by the Turks in 1993. But the new protocols have been highly controversial, particularly among members of the Armenian diaspora.

The protocols call for the two nations to set up a joint historical commission to look into the deaths of hundreds of thousands of Armenians — more than 90 years ago. Lingered questions about the deaths are a testament to the lasting passion and anger generated by disagreements over interpretations of historical events.

“History is written by the victors,” former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously said. Perhaps nowhere is that more true than in the long-festering debate over what the Ottoman Turks, who were Muslims, did or did not do to the Christian ethnic Armenians during World War I. The Armenians, along with smaller numbers of Assyrians and Greeks, say they were killed by Ottoman Turks through massacres and forced marches through deserts, without food or water — marches the Armenians say were designed to kill the marchers.

Armenians insist it was the first genocide of the 20th century, but the Turkish Republic, which was established after the postwar collapse of the Ottoman Empire, has always denied that it was genocide, and in fact has outlawed such discussions as treasonous insults to the nation of Turkey.



AFP/Getty Images/Jack Guez

Armenian demonstrators in Tel Aviv, Israel, mark the 94th anniversary last April of what historians say was genocide by the Ottoman Empire, Turkey's predecessor, during World War I. Armenians say Turkish soldiers killed hundreds of thousands of Armenians; Turkey, which outlaws calling the deaths “genocide,” claims Armenians killed thousands of Turks. The two countries recently agreed to set up a joint historical commission to look into the deaths.

For Armenians, the denial is an open wound. Imagine, they say, if the Germans denied the Holocaust. “This denial of the genocide has become the central organizing principle among Armenians in the diaspora,” says Ronald Grigor Suny, a professor of Armenian and Russian history at the University of Michigan.

The Turks insist the Armenians were not targeted for extermination and that ethnic massacres were committed by both sides. They also say the Ottomans feared that Armenians in their midst might form a fifth column in support of invading Russians. Most scholars dis-

miss this argument, but Turkey is adamant that the killings did not amount to genocide. It has funded academic positions, research and publications to make its point and has lobbied hard against resolutions that would condemn the killings as genocide. (See “At Issue,” p. 329.)

Turkish President Abdullah Gul said in April that Turkey was willing to open its archives. “It is not a political but an historic issue,” he said. “That’s why we should let historians discuss the matter.”¹

But Armenian protesters in France, Lebanon and the United States have shown up by the thousands in recent months when Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan has visited their countries and tried, unsuccessfully, to get diaspora leaders to support the new accord with Turkey.

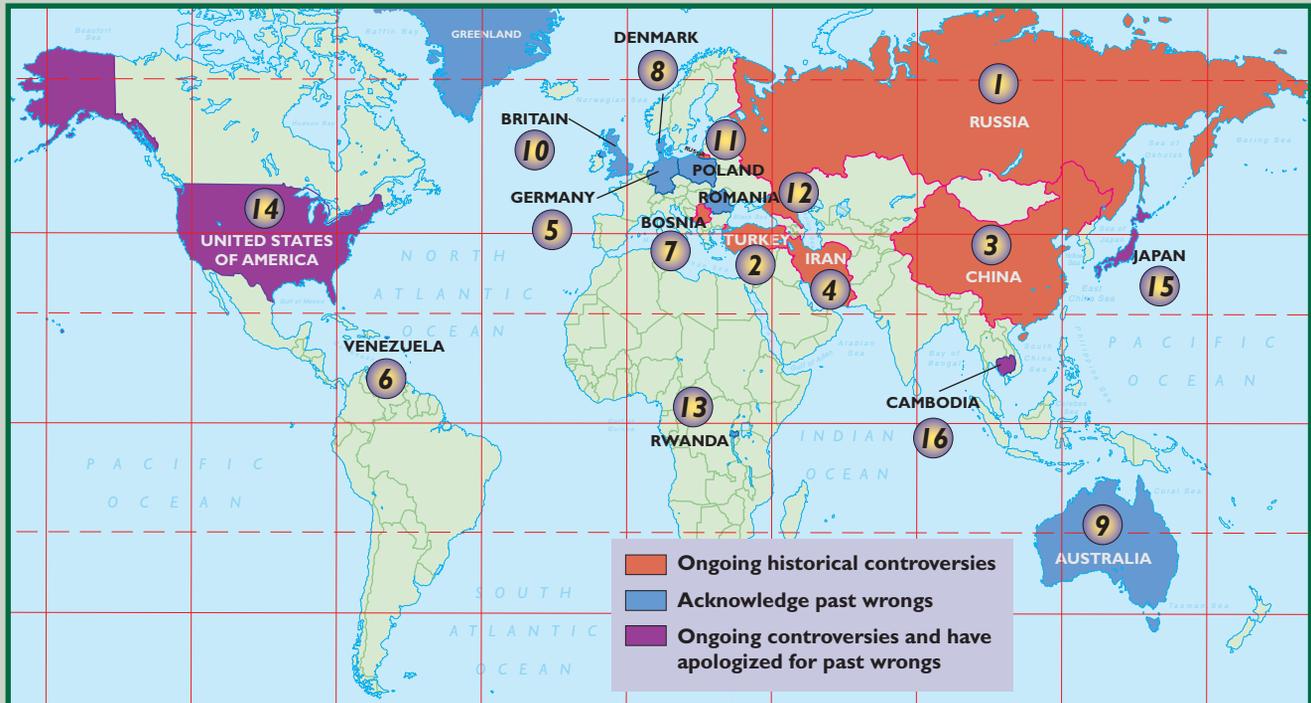
Author and historian Peter Balakian, who had many ancestors killed by the Turks, says the commission idea itself is a “political gimmick.” Scholars ask, he points out, “how can a society that has criminalized for 90 years reporting of a genocide be part of its scholarship?”

But the Turks and Armenians are not the only ones arguing about the past. International historical debates remain very much part of the politics of the present. Despite Japan’s numerous apologies for its aggression and atrocities in World War II, its neighbors continue to criticize Japan’s portrayals of that period in textbooks. International tribunals and truth and reconciliation commissions are unearthing secrets and seeking to create a consensus about what happened in bloody periods in recent

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Some Countries Deny Past Wrongs, Others Apologize

Nations around the world are embroiled in controversies over interpretations of historical events. In several nations, influential interest groups or the government itself either deny certain events occurred or limit access to information about them. Some countries have tried to address painful past events by apologizing to affected parties.



How Selected Countries Have Dealt With Historical Controversies

- 1 Russia** — Soviet leader Joseph Stalin had certain events such as his own mass murders and executions of political opposition figures erased from Soviet history books, a policy many say has been continued by Russian President Dmitri A. Medvedev, who recently authorized the prosecution of anyone equating Stalin and Hitler.
- 2 Turkey** — Referring to Armenian deaths in World War I as genocide is a crime (treason) in Turkey that can be punishable by death.
- 3 China** — Media discussion of the 1989 Tiananmen Square massacre is prohibited, resulting in a generation of students who don't know about the incident; "Great Firewall" limits Internet access.
- 4 Iran** — Government blocks Internet and cell phone access to prevent people from discussing fraud that occurred during the June 2009 elections. President Mahmoud Amadinejad denies the Holocaust occurred.
- 5 Germany** — Beginning in the 1950s, Germany began apologizing for the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, building memorials and requiring that the Holocaust be included in school curricula.
- 6 Venezuela** — President Hugo Chávez has appointed a special commission to investigate whether the Latin American revolutionary leader Simón Bolívar was poisoned by Colombian oligarchs.

How Selected Countries Have Dealt With Historical Controversies (Cont.)

- 7 Bosnia** — International courts have found that a 1995 massacre in Srebrenica constituted genocide in the former Yugoslavia but that the broader Serb campaign of ethnic cleansing in Bosnia did not. Bosnian Muslims and Bosnian Serbs continue to debate whether the conflict as a whole amounted to genocide.
- 8 Denmark** — Denmark apologized to Ireland in 2007 for rape and pillage committed by the Vikings.
- 9 Australia** — In February 2008, Australia apologized for forcibly removing Aboriginal children from their families as part of a state-sanctioned assimilation program during the 20th century. In November 2009, Australia apologized for emotional, physical and sexual abuse of children transported from Britain to Australia to populate the colony.
- 10 Britain** — In November 2009, Britain apologized for transporting poor children from the U.K. to Australia and other colonies.
- 11 Poland** — In July 2001, Poland formally apologized for the suffering and deaths of Jews during World War II.
- 12 Romania** — In June 2008, the government apologized for deporting the Roma, or Gypsies, to Nazi death camps during World War II.
- 13 Rwanda** — The government has acknowledged the genocidal rampage that occurred over a three-month period in 1994, when Hutus murdered nearly 900,000 Tutsis and moderate Hutus.
- 14 United States** — Controversies periodically erupt, especially in the South, over textbook descriptions of historical events and trends. Recent controversies have involved attempts to deny the effectiveness of New Deal programs in lifting the country out of the Great Depression and the extent of the negative impact of slavery. In 1988 the government formally apologized — and paid \$1.6 billion in reparations — to Japanese-Americans interned during WWII. The U.S. House of Representatives has approved legislation to formally apologize for slavery, and the Senate has approved a resolution apologizing for mistreatment of Native Americans.
- 15 Japan** — Some textbooks have downplayed Japan's aggression during WWII and the scope of Japanese atrocities during the so-called Rape of Nanking in China. Japan has, however, apologized repeatedly for its aggression against neighbors, including China and Korea, leading up to and during World War II, for the sexual enslavement of "comfort women" during that war and for its treatment of British prisoners of war.
- 16 Cambodia** — After years of silence about atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot from 1975 to 1979, Cambodia is coming to terms with its bloody past. The first U.N.-backed trial of a leading figure in the torture and killings of nearly 2 million people concluded on Nov. 27, with a verdict expected in early 2010; four other Khmer officials will be tried later. A new textbook describing the regime's excesses is also being released.

Source: Research by CQ Global Researcher

Continued from p. 313

years in countries such as Liberia, Sudan, Yugoslavia and Sierra Leone.

Russia and its neighbors are engaged in a heated debate about whether the Soviets rescued the Eastern bloc countries from Hitler or invaded and occupied those countries. And Russia is having its own internal argument about the historical legacy left by Stalin's atrocities. (See sidebar, p. 324.)

Being aware that a shared sense of the past is a powerful force, leaders seek to curate the national history with nearly the same care they give to their present-day image management. Sometimes the effort is overt, as in Stalinist Russia, when "history was not what the archives said but what the (Communist) Party decreed," as Stalin biographer Simon Sebag Montefiore writes.²

There's an old adage that history is written by the winners. But all political leaders seek to show themselves as emblematic of the national character and to suggest that they embody its best characteristics. Nations also seek to find glory in their own pasts and to trumpet their founding fathers. This is why so many 19th-century American homes displayed a portrait of George Washington and why nearly every Turkish shopkeeper sits in front of a picture of Atatürk.

All nations seek to identify the core values and traditions that help to unify them as a culture. And the process of creating a sense of what the Germans call *Wir-Gefühl*, or unity or "us-ness," leads to exclusion, a sense that others are not like "us."

"One nation's defining victories — the defeat of the Armada, Trafalgar — may be defeats that another would prefer to forget," writes Geoffrey Cubitt, a senior lecturer in history at the University of York. Conversely, "two nations may compete for 'ownership' of the same heroic ancestors (Greece and Macedonia for Alexander the Great, France and Germany for Charlemagne)." ³

In "What Is a Nation?" — his famous 1882 lecture — French philosopher

Ernst Renan put shared memory at the core of nationality, positing that a given people are animated by virtue of "possession in common of a rich legacy of memories" and their determination to develop that legacy in the present.⁴

The idea that a sense of history — or at least a mythology constructed out of historical events and figures — is central to national identity has become increasingly influential among historians, particularly since the 1983 publication of Cornell University historian Benedict Anderson's book *Imagined Communities*. "Nations are created in people's minds," says Charles W. Ingrao, a specialist in German and Eastern European history at Purdue University. "When nations are created, they have to construct a history that justifies the separate existence of this state. It's not genetic. It's not based on anything but the choice individuals make to be part of a given group, which means that there are others who aren't part of this group."

"Nation-making is never a fixed process," the University of Michigan's Suny says. Groups of people come together to form nations because they have some idea about themselves, he adds. A century ago, nations were thought to be defined by ethnicity, language or culture. But in more recent years, many historians have become convinced that what truly binds a people together is a shared sense of the past.

"Scholars and historians would say that we live in the era of remembrance," says Alon Confino, a historian at the University of Virginia, "in the sense that societies attribute great importance to the past, the construction of the past and struggles over who defines the past."

"What we're talking about here is not academic history but public history and the way that forms a sense of who we are," says Peter Catterall, a lecturer in history at the University of London and founding editor of the journal *National Identities*.

"The nation shouldn't be confused with the state," says M. Lane Bruner, a communications professor at Georgia State University. "The state and its institutions are concrete things, while the nation is something that's more of a fantasy. Not complete fantasy, but a politically consequential fiction. Once people believe it, it becomes real."

Many nations engage in heated arguments over how history — or even what history — is included in school textbooks. German and Polish scholars have negotiated questions for 30 years about what to include about World War II in a set of joint textbooks.

Traditionally, states have shirked from owning up to their own atrocities. There are countless stories of unflattering documentaries being blocked from airing on television or playing at film festivals. Short of outright censorship, most national leaders simply prefer not to dwell on past disgraces.

"Countries try to protect the narrative that justified their creation and avoid the criticism that would lower their national self-esteem," Ingrao says.

Turkey's denial of the Armenian genocide does not sit well with many Europeans, especially the French, where the parliament in 2006 passed a law making it a crime to deny that Armenians suffered "genocide" at the hands of the Turks, infuriating Turkey.⁵

Although it took a generation for Germany to reconcile with its Nazi past, in today's world countries are expected to formally apologize for their most embarrassing historic sins. Australia, for example, has apologized recently for both its treatment of its Aboriginal population and its role in the forced migration of children, while Britain has apologized for its part in the Irish potato famine.

Apologies and other official acknowledgements of past wrongdoing are important because they "draw a line between how we acted in the past and how we'll act in the future," says Laura Hein, who teaches Japanese history at

Northwestern University. “No, we will not lynch you any more. No, we will not massacre any more.”

Truth and reconciliation commissions, such as the one set up a decade ago in post-apartheid South Africa, have become almost the expected end to internal conflicts.⁶ An accord signed on Oct. 30 between the deposed and current presidents of Honduras, for instance, calls for a truth commission to investigate the June coup that ousted President Manuel Zelaya.⁷

Often, it takes a regime change for the historical record to be fully explored. As has happened often in the past, ongoing — and potential — war-crimes trials involving figures such as Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, former Liberian President Charles Taylor and Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir will shed important light on recent atrocities in their countries.

“I don’t know about history being written by the winners,” says Eric Gordy, a senior lecturer at University College London, “but the winners never put one another on trial.”

As scholars and citizens ponder how nations construct — or reconstruct — their own pasts, here are some of the questions they’re debating:

Can nations cover up atrocities?

The identity of the Chinese man who stopped a column of tanks during the Tiananmen Square protests of 1989 remains unknown, but a photograph of his act has become iconic. In 1998, *Time* named the “unknown rebel” one of the 100 most important people of the 20th century.⁸

In the 2006 “Frontline” documentary “The Tank Man,” four students from Beijing University are shown the famous photograph. Although an earlier generation of students from their own university had been at the forefront of the protests — which resulted in the massacre of at least hundreds and possibly thousands of people — the four well-educated young peo-

ple were baffled by the image, complaining it had “no context.”⁹

This kind of amnesia “was the effect of a complete ban that the government slapped on discussion of the events, one that exists to this day,” *The Globe and Mail of Toronto* reported in May. “The events of 1989 are never mentioned on state-controlled media, and those who try and speak out about the crackdown usually find themselves in prison or under house arrest.”¹⁰

China’s so-called Great Firewall, which blocks Chinese Internet users from visiting Web sites critical of the government, has been the subject of interna-

picture the magnitude of the genocidal killings that had occurred.¹¹

But it seems incredible, in this age of instant access to global sources of information, that any regime can still block its citizens — and the world — from learning about important events and decisions, no matter how horrific.

“It’s nearly impossible for a regime or a country to cover up an atrocity outside of its own borders,” says Balakian, the poet and historian at Colgate University. But, he adds, “Regimes that are genuinely authoritarian can brainwash a good segment of their population for a good period of time.”



AP Photo/Jeff Widener

A Chinese protester blocks tanks in Beijing’s Tiananmen Square in June 1989 during the government’s violent crackdown on pro-democracy demonstrations. But few Chinese students today have read about the protests, in which hundreds of unarmed protesters were killed, because Chinese textbooks are not allowed to discuss the event. Some historians say that China — which wants Japan to acknowledge its wartime atrocities, particularly in Nanjing — should admit its own human rights violations, including those during the 1989 protests.

ple were baffled by the image, complaining it had “no context.”⁹

And there have been many past examples of nations destroying documents and shuttering archives to try to “delete” memory of embarrassing or politically damaging incidents. It took at least a couple of years, for example, for the first photographs of the harsh conditions under the Khmer Rouge regime to emerge out of Cambodia back in 1977, and even those did not yet de-

“Clearly, in closed societies where you don’t have a history of free inquiry and freedom of expression and thought, it’s much easier just to try to deny something and try to erase it,” says Stephen Vaughn, a communications professor at the University of Wisconsin.

In the aftermath of the Iranian presidential election in June, the regime sought to block Internet and cell phone

'Genocide' Label Has Little Impact on Public

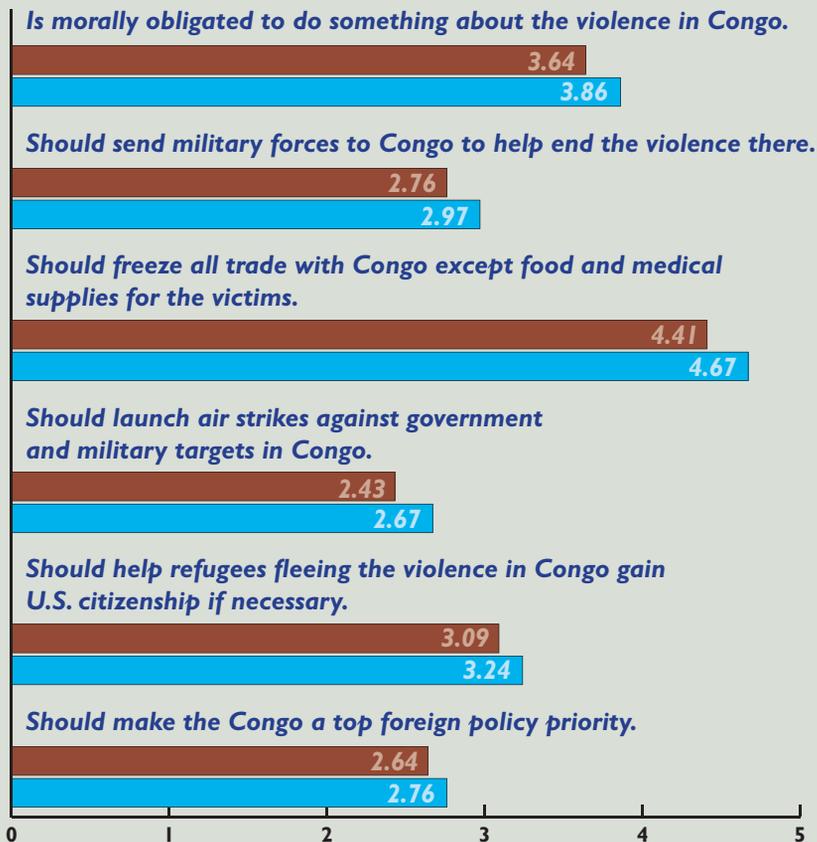
Governments often go to great lengths to avoid being labeled as having committed "genocide." But if a U.S. study is an indication, the distinction is lost on the average citizen. Researchers presented readers with two mock news stories — one using the word "genocide" to describe the ongoing violence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and one (the "control" story) that only referred to "the intentional killing of civilians" in Congo. Readers who read the "genocide" story were only slightly more likely to call for intervention in Congo than those who read the story that didn't use the term.

How Readers Responded

On a scale of 1-6, where "1" means strongly disapprove and "6" means strongly approve, how much do you agree or disagree that the United States:

Version Read by Respondents:

Control Story Genocide Story



Source: Benjamin A. Valentino, "More than a word? 'Genocide' and Public Opinion in the United States," Dartmouth College, October 2009

access — both to cut off information to the outside world and to take away protesters' organizing tools. For a time, protesters were able to upload accounts

and photographs of the government's violent crackdown through Twitter. The U.S. State Department even asked the Web site to delay a scheduled upgrade

that would have temporarily blocked Iranians from posting.¹²

During a Nov. 16 town hall meeting with Chinese students in Shanghai, U.S. President Barack Obama was asked about the nation's Internet firewall and about whether Twitter use should be unrestricted. "I'm a big supporter of not restricting Internet use, Internet access, other information technologies like Twitter," Obama said. "The more open we are, the more we can communicate. And it also helps to draw the world together."¹³ Chinese television, however, did not show the exchange, and accounts of it were quickly deleted from news Web sites.¹⁴

William A. Schabas, director of the Irish Centre for Human Rights at the National University of Ireland, Galway, says while it's still possible for nations to hide their dirtiest laundry, it has become increasingly difficult — and not just because of the Internet. "Today, you have people monitoring human rights, you have a very sophisticated NGO [non-governmental organization] culture, you have the U.N. structure," he says. "It's a lot harder today to keep anything secret."

"Basically, it's impossible," says Confino, the University of Virginia historian. "There will always be someone with some connections to some electronic device that will tell other people about an event."

The important question, he and others argue, is not whether nations can cover up or completely censor terrible events, which they say is a relatively rare occurrence. The key question is how people respond to information that they do have.

"The cases where there is active censorship is a subset of a larger issue," says Hein, the co-editor of *Censoring History*, a collection that examines how history is presented in Japan, Germany and the United States. The larger issue, she says, is where atrocities are not secret, but reaction remains muted.

"You can certainly talk about a large number of atrocities in the world that

are not well-known by most people," says Catterall, the British historian. "The fact that you've got 24-hour news coverage does not of course mean that things get picked up."

"Most of the time somebody knows, and a lot of the time everybody knows," Hein says. "But we don't do anything about it, for a variety of reasons."

Both Hein and Confino cite the case of Congo during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Under the reign of King Leopold II of Belgium, the Congolese were forced into labor, slow workers were maimed and millions died — an atrocity that took decades to emerge into European consciousness due in part to the remoteness of the African colony.

In recent years, more people have died in a series of wars in the Democratic Republic of the Congo than in any war since World War II. The deaths have not been a secret, and the United Nations has called Congo the rape capital of the world. U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton addressed the issue during her visit to the country in August, announcing a \$17 million plan to help address the "rape epidemic," which often involves the military and which Clinton called "evil in its basest form."¹⁵

"In Congo, millions of innocent civilians have died in civil wars and in wars with neighbors. We know about it, it's not a secret, but to people in the West, has it become an important place of remembrance? No," says Confino. "The important thing is not whether we know about an event but whether we choose to remember and make it an example and care about it."

Daqing Yang, a George Washington University historian, argues that the very tools that make it easier for information to travel, including Web sites such as YouTube, may make it more difficult for bad news to penetrate deeply into a national or international consciousness. With so much information hurled at us on a minute-by-minute basis, it becomes challenging

to gather a sense of the importance of events that may seem remote.

"The market mechanism may work against focusing on events in parts of the world that otherwise do not hold the huge interest of people living in the advanced part of the world," Yang says.

And a kind of mass awareness may be as important in formulating a response as whether information is available to begin with. "If a determined citizen in China wants to get the information, he or she can circumvent the firewalls set up by government," Yang says, "but not at levels significant enough to make a difference."

Is historical accountability a human right?

After a broad-scale atrocity, societies demand some kind of reckoning for several reasons, most importantly to recognize the suffering that the survivors and the dead experienced.

"It has been said that denial is the final phase of genocide," writes Richard G. Hovannisian, an Armenian history expert at the University of California-Los Angeles. "Following the physical destruction of a people and their material culture, memory is all that's left and is targeted as the last victim."¹⁶

"If you talk to survivors, and I've talked to survivors of many genocides and assaults, they all say the same thing: They want the truth to be known," says Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, author of a new book on genocide called *Worse Than War*. "A wound that is denied and sometimes turned against them is a source of ongoing pain for them."

The second reason for pursuing the truth, as with any crime, is to bring the perpetrators to justice, rather than offering them easy rehabilitation. "Nothing encourages lawlessness more than the sight of villains getting away with it, living off their spoils and laughing in the public's face," writes *Washington Post* columnist Anne Applebaum in her history of the Soviet gulag.¹⁷

The third is the hope that, by owning up to past sins through a thorough airing of the facts and their meanings, the affected society can move forward without leaving these wounds open to fester. "Some countries simply forget the past and attempt to induce a national amnesia in its people," writes South African Judge Richard J. Goldstone, who served as a prosecutor at the international tribunals on genocides in Rwanda and Yugoslavia and recently issued a controversial report on allegations of excessive violence during last winter's Israeli-Hamas conflict in Gaza.

"Wiser leaders recognized that in order to lay a foundation for an enduring peace, measures had to be taken to manage the past," Goldstone continues. "It was acknowledged that history has to be recorded, calls for justice have to be heeded and perpetrators have to be called to account."¹⁸

The import of this line of thinking is that we live in an "era of remembrance," as the University of Virginia's Confino says. Governments and other official institutions such as the Catholic Church apologize for historical wrongdoings with some regularity, there are occasional arguments about cash reparations for victims of past crimes and there are now nearly continual truth and reconciliation commissions meant to help an injured society sort through, understand and begin to move past recent conflicts.

Borrowing from religious traditions, the belief that truth can set nations free — or at least on a path toward repentance and reconciliation — has become a major new norm in international relations. "Perpetrators and victims can come to some kind of peaceful accommodation only when the past is explored openly and honestly, with full participation of survivors and scholars alike," writes Stanford University historian Norman M. Naimark.¹⁹

But since so many modern conflicts have been fought within states, rather than between them, getting countries

to cope with a difficult past has become seemingly more imperative. If a nation can't find peace with itself until owning up to its dark past, has the need for historic accountability become akin to a human right?

"For me, it is a human rights matter," Colgate's Balakian says. "It's a continuation of the process. The denial of genocide is the final stage of genocide because it seeks to demonize the victims and rehabilitate the offenders."

Schabas — at the Irish Centre for Human Rights, who served on the international tribunal for war crimes in Sierra Leone — agrees. "I can't point

you to an article in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that says there's a right to have history clarified, but there's a growing feeling that it is a part of human rights," Schabas says. "There's considerable authority in the human rights literature for what's known as the right to truth, the right to know the truth."

But even if the United Nations adopts a right to historical truth, as Schabas predicts it will, guaranteeing the truth will be deeply problematic. Historians are already wary of laws demanding fealty to certain versions of events — from the Turkish law that makes it an insult against the

state to describe the deaths of Armenians during World War I as genocide, to the French law that makes Holocaust denial a crime.

Aside from criminalizing accounts of history, historians are also wary of the inevitable politicization of the past that an official, sanctioned version necessarily would create. "With most of these events, there's actually pretty much agreement on the facts. The fight is then over what symbolic meaning it has for the society as a whole," says Hein of Northwestern. "When governments create commissions to look into things, they're often quite politicized — there's an agenda."

When Is Mass Murder 'Genocide'?

Using the G-word can stymie action and reconciliation.

The term genocide was coined during World War II to denote a crime so terrible that it must not be confused with any other. But some people are wondering whether, in this sense, the word has worked too well.

Numerous mass killings of particular populations have occurred throughout history — from the destruction of Carthage during the Third Punic War in 146 BC to the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879. But, until World War II, genocide was a "crime without a name," as British Prime Minister Winston Churchill, put it.¹

The term was coined by Raphael Lemkin, a Polish Jew who had evaded capture by the Germans and eventually resettled in the United States, in his 1944 book *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*. Lemkin combined the Greek word *genos*, meaning race or tribe, with the Latin suffix *-cide*, derived from *caedere*, which means killing. Genocide was distinguished from mass murder — wrote Lemkin, who served as an advisor to the prosecutor at the Nuremberg trials — in that it is "directed against the national group as an entity, and the actions involved are directed against individuals, not in their individual capacity, but as members of the national group."²

Lemkin's neologism quickly found its way into international law with the 1948 adoption of the United Nations Convention on Genocide.³ The convention defines genocide as the attempt to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group by killing its members or creating other disruptive and destructive acts such as attempting to prevent births within the targeted group or separating children from it. Member states can call on the United Nations to try to prevent genocide and are bound by the treaty to stop genocide from taking place within their own borders.

To Lemkin's dismay, however, the document did not define mass murder for political reasons as genocide. That has turned out to be an enormous loophole. In Indonesia, for example, an anti-communist purge in 1965-1966 by the army resulted in the deaths of an estimated 500,000 people. Yet, because of their political nature, the massacres have not been considered genocide. In other cases — to get around the political loophole when outside observers have considered large-scale killings to be genocide — the perpetrator regimes have argued that their intent was based on self-defense or military necessity, not to target members of a particular ethnic or religious group.

The word's association with Nazi Germany and the Holocaust has, in fact, presented a barrier to defining mass killings as genocide because it "set the bar for concern so high" that people assumed contemporary genocides "were not measuring up," writes Samantha Power, a public policy professor at Harvard University and author of *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide*.

"Lemkin's hybrid term would cause endless confusion for policy makers and ordinary people who assumed that genocide occurred only where the perpetrator of atrocity could be shown, like Hitler, to possess an intent to exterminate every last member of an ethnic, national or religious group."⁴

In some contemporary cases, the debate among wealthy nations has seemed to turn more on the semantic question of whether events technically qualify as "genocide" than on formulating any response. "As in Rwanda, discussions about the dreaded 'G-word' dominate policy discussions about Darfur rather than the initiation of concrete measures to stop the . . .

murderous excesses,” writes Stanford University historian Norman M. Naimark.⁵

Such linguistic debates and the ramifications imposed by the international convention once an atrocity is called a genocide have made use of the term “deleterious to understanding, analysis and ultimately doing anything” about mass killings, says Daniel Jonah Goldhagen, author of a new book about genocide, *Worse Than War*.

“There’s a legal structure out there that makes the word very powerful. It can trigger certain actions. That’s why there’s so much debate about whether something is genocide or isn’t,” Goldhagen says. “The reality is that the term is a great hindrance, because fixating on the term hinders our understanding of what both happens and should happen.”

Although policy makers may be hung up on the ramifications of using the word, the public apparently is not. Dartmouth College historian Benjamin Valentino concocted two fake news stories about a Darfur-like slaughter in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in order to gauge Americans’ reaction to the word genocide. The responses were essentially the same whether the article had labeled the events as genocide or not. “The bottom line is that people are not fixated on the term genocide,” he says. “Instead, they care about what is actually happening.”

Purdue University historian Charles W. Ingrao notes that former combatants can sometimes agree on the facts — including mass murder and mass rape — but the aggressor will still not accept the opprobrium of the genocide label. “The use of the term genocide throws a monkey wrench into what could be the smoothly working machinery of inter-ethnic reconciliation,” he says. “It has a political dimension that makes it counterproductive.”

Because the word has such power — both in deciding whether to intervene in present conflicts and in determining whether past slaughters should be considered genocide — some genocide scholars, including Goldhagen, have proposed alternative terms. They argue that fixating on the label is less productive than addressing mass killings or their underlying politics.

The relatively narrow legal definition of genocide remains important, however. “In order to prosecute people . . . , it’s important to have a legal description,” says Alon Confino, a University of Virginia historian. “You can prosecute people only if there’s a law. It’s not enough to have some kind of description.”

But the political and public arguments about whether to embrace or deny the term have become largely symbolic. Calling something genocide rather than “murder between foreigners” may make citizens more likely to lobby Congress or the European Union. It may not make it any more likely, however, that political leaders will choose to intervene.

“Quite obviously, the system is broken,” Goldhagen says. “The central term has not been helpful in doing much of anything to save people’s lives. The simple fact is that since the Holocaust, it has never once been invoked to save people’s lives.”

— Alan Greenblatt

¹ Adam Jones, *Genocide: A Comprehensive Introduction* (2006), p. 8.

² “Coining a Word and Championing a Cause,” *Holocaust Encyclopedia*, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, www.ushmm.org/wlc/article.php?lang=en&ModuleId=10007050.

³ For background, see Sarah Glazer, “Stopping Genocide,” *CQ Researcher*, Aug. 27, 2004, pp. 685-708.

⁴ Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (2003), p. 43.

⁵ Norman M. Naimark, “Srebrenica in the History of Genocide,” in Nanci Adler, et al., eds., *Memories of Mass Repression* (2009), p. 11.

“One cannot be certain that official historians . . . will always serve the best interests of the public,” writes the University of Wisconsin’s Vaughn. “When historians are in the service of the government, and the public policy of that government rests on a certain set of historical precedents, it is difficult for men to place truth above public advantage, when public advantage might mean the winning of a war, the covering of a reputation or even an improvement in general welfare.”²⁰

Vaughn cites regimes seeking to use history to justify their present policies. But the claims on truth that survivors of atrocities make can also, it

should be remembered, be subject to their own kinds of distortion, from vengeance-seeking to engaging in identity politics as victims.

While insisting that acknowledgement of the Holocaust has become central to European identity, historian Tony Judt of New York University, the author of a standard history of post-war Europe, notes that the extermination of the Jews was not the central project of the European nations involved in the war — even Germany. “In retrospect, ‘Auschwitz’ is the most important thing to know about World War II,” he writes. “But that is not how things seemed at the time.”²¹

Capturing “the totality of the truth” is difficult, suggests British historian Catterall, because such debates typically take place after there has been a change in regime. “While it’s very important to acknowledge the faults of the past, I think it’s also important to put them in perspective, not to try to use them to serve as political grievances for the present,” he says. “There’s always a risk that you end up creating a binary division in which there are many white hats and many black hats,” he says.

Japanese history expert Yang suggests that historians “at least establish a perimeter around what is commonly accepted and acceptable. As historians,

the best we can do is establish what happened and how it happened, and let others pass judgment.”

Are national identities defined by shared history?

At a Nov. 12 ceremony honoring victims of the German occupation, French President Nicolas Sarkozy harkened back to the values of France’s past. “National identity concerns us all,” he said. “What is at stake . . . is not only economic. It is also the disappearance of a form of civilization, of a heritage of values, of a culture of work.”²²

Sarkozy’s remarks were in keeping with a months-long “grand debate” he has begun about France’s national identity. Sarkozy — whose father was a Hungarian immigrant and whose mother was of mixed Catholic and Jewish descent — launched a Web site on Nov. 2 to solicit ideas from citizens about what it means, exactly, to be French.²³

Government officials described the effort as a chance to restore a sense of national pride and celebrate France’s unifying values. “We must reaffirm the values of national identity and pride in being French,” said Éric Besson, France’s minister of Immigration and National Identity. “This debate doesn’t scare me. I even find it passionate.”²⁴

But as the public and the popular press debate the relative virtues and importance of cheeses, proper French grammar and the national anthem — “*La Marseillaise*” — many see the effort as a political distraction and worry that it will lead to an attack on immigrants leading up to national elections next year. Traditionally white and Catholic France is home to more than 6 million Muslims and rapidly increasing populations of immigrants from Africa and Eastern Europe.

French national culture, based on the revolutionary ideals of *liberté, égalité, fraternité*, offers no official recognition of ethnicity. Yet the country has engaged in heated debates in recent years

about the performance of immigrants in schools and economically. The French public school ban on religious symbols, notably the *hijab*, or Muslim headscarf, has also caused considerable tension.

“It is an important debate,” said Karim Emile Bitar, an associate fellow at the International Institute of Strategic Relations in Paris. “France needs to find a way to preserve its universalist model, which is remarkable on philosophical grounds, with new realities that make the model seem hypocritical because of the giant gap between . . . proclamations of equality . . . [and] the reality on the ground . . . discrimination and unequal opportunities.”²⁵

Rosamond McKitterick, a medieval historian at Cambridge University, argues that “an idea can hold a people together and sustain it.”²⁶ The creation of historical memory, she says, is a collective act; that is, as nations construct their histories, they’re simultaneously constructing a national identity by coming to agreement about what is fundamental from their past.

“It’s not just one individual’s conception,” she says. “To have some kind of impact, it has to have some resonance with memories of people whose identities it’s shaping.”

Clearly, a shared sense of the past is a major binding agent in holding a nation together, says Colgate’s Balakian. “The historical discourse that any culture embraces is certainly part of its national identity,” he says.

U.S. nation-building exercises in Iraq and Afghanistan have been frustrated in part because ethnic and tribal loyalties in both countries are stronger than a sense of national identity and a shared past.

“In Iraq, you had a strong sense of Islamic identity and Arabic identity, but there really wasn’t a national identity because it was carved out artificially” from the Ottoman Empire after World War I, says Prasenjit Duara, a humanities professor at the National University of Singapore. “Someone like Saddam Hus-

sein kept them all together by force, rather than by creating a sense of national identity.”

By contrast, consider Switzerland. “The Swiss may speak four different languages and still act as one people,” wrote the late Czech historian Karl W. Deutsch, “for each of them has enough learned habits, preferences, symbols, memories, patterns of landholding and social stratification, events in history and personal associations, all of which together permit [him] to communicate more effectively with other Swiss than with the speakers of his own language who belong to other peoples.”²⁷

But national identity consists of more than simply history. Even historians concede that there’s more going on within a nation’s sense of itself than just memories of the past. Language, ethnicity and culture are all inextricably linked with history in defining a nation. “You can’t really separate them, particularly history and ethnicity — and language is often seen as expressive of ethnicity,” says Donald Bloxham, a professor of modern history at the University of Edinburgh.

“History is culture, language and ethnicity,” says Hein at Northwestern. “These are all narratives of belonging to a group and don’t really exist separately from each other. The issue is: What is interpreted as being central, rather than peripheral?”

“In some places language is at the center of identity,” she continues. “But all societies have people who speak more than one language. It’s how you think about it that matters, and religion is the same way. It’s how you define which aspects of the culture are the most important ones.”

George Washington University’s Yang, a Japanese history expert, agrees that while history is “definitely one of the building blocks” of national identity, it may not be the most important one.

History can help construct national identities, Yang argues, precisely be-

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Chronology

1940s-1980s

Many countries begin reexamining their roles in World War II.

1948

United Nations adopts Convention on Genocide, outlawing mass killings motivated by race, religion or other factors.

1958

In a secret speech, Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev denounces the atrocities of his predecessor, Joseph Stalin.

1965

Saburo Ienaga, a prominent Japanese historian whose textbook had been rejected for containing “too many illustrations of the ‘dark side’ of the war,” challenges the nation’s textbook-screening process in court.

1986

U.S. Senate ratifies the genocide convention after years of near-daily floor speeches — 3,211 in all — by Sen. William Proxmire, R-Wis., calling for passage.

1989

China massacres several hundred pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square and imposes a blackout on discussion of the incident.

1990s *Most countries have atoned for their World War II-era sins, but some continue to deny them.*

1991

A Korean “comfort woman” testifies in court that the Japanese government forced her and thousands of others to provide sex to Japanese soldiers in World War II.

1994

A Smithsonian Institution exhibit about the *Enola Gay*, the plane that dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima in 1945, stirs controversy as U.S. veterans’ groups complain it focuses too much attention on Japanese casualties.

1995

South Africa establishes a Truth and Reconciliation Commission charged with exploring and determining the effects of the nation’s former apartheid policy.

1998

U.N. adopts Rome Statute establishing International Criminal Court to prosecute genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. . . . British Prime Minister Tony Blair establishes a parliamentary inquiry into Bloody Sunday, the 1972 shooting by a British parachute regiment of 27 civil protesters in Northern Ireland; the report is scheduled for publication in March 2010.

2000-Present

Arguments about history continue to rage across the globe, but a clear trend toward repentance leads to numerous official apologies and truth and reconciliation commissions.

2000

Pope John Paul II apologizes for past sins committed by the “children” of the Roman Catholic Church during the Counter-Reformation and World War II.

2004

Poland officially recognizes the suffering of Polish Jews during World War II; Romania soon follows suit.

2005

Turkish authorities arrest Nobel Prize-winning Turkish novelist Orhan Pamuk for discussing the genocide of Armenians by the Turks under the Ottoman Empire. . . . Germany opens Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe near Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. . . . Publication of a revisionist textbook in Japan downplaying the country’s war crimes triggers rioting across China, notably in Shanghai, where protesters damaged the Japanese consulate, broke windows of Japanese restaurants and businesses and overturned Japanese model vehicles.

2008

U.S. House of Representatives adopts resolution apologizing for slavery.

2009

Russian president Dmitri Medvedev creates historical commission to counter “anti-Russian propaganda” in former Soviet republics; Russian Duma criminalizes the rehabilitation of Nazism (May 19). . . . U.S. Senate approves measure apologizing to American Indians for misdeeds by the federal government and “many instances of violence, maltreatment and neglect” by U.S. citizens (Oct. 8). . . . Turkey and Armenia begin normalizing relations by opening their border and calling for a joint commission to examine Turkey’s slaughter of Armenians during World War I, triggering protests in the Armenian diaspora (Oct. 10). . . . France launches Web site soliciting citizens’ ideas for a “grand debate” on what constitutes national identity. . . . India’s parliament tables a report on the 1992 demolition of the Babri Masjid mosque by Hindu fundamentalists, concluding senior members of the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party fueled the anti-Muslim violence (Nov. 24).

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cause it is the element that is most subject to change. “It’s the most malleable, compared to purely ethnic or linguistic boundaries, which are somewhat more fixed. Whoever is intent on building the identity can reshape historical memory or discourse in the ways that they prefer, by including certain people and ethnic groups (as central) or excluding them.” ■

BACKGROUND

History and Nationhood

Throughout much of the 19th century, historians concerned themselves largely with recording facts as presented in official documents. But

the “cult of facts” — parodied by Charles Dickens with the character of Gradgrind in *Hard Times*, who was “a veritable idiot for Facts” — gave way early in the 20th century.

The old notion that history was about “kings and battles” began to merge with studies of everyday life, in part because war had come to involve the entirety of society, not just mercenaries and other soldiers.²⁸ Soon

Stalin Left Behind a Distorted History

Russia and its neighbors are taking a new look at the past.

Joseph Stalin loved history. He often fell asleep on the couch with a history book in his hand. But the man who ruled the Soviet Union from 1922 until his death in 1953 was also, ironically, one of the greatest revisionists of Soviet history.

Stalin insisted on versions of the past that bore little resemblance to what had actually happened, literally erasing the names and images of his political opponents — and his own mass murders and executions — from the pages of Soviet history books.

Stalin’s historical dissembling has helped make his legacy enormously complicated for Russia and its neighbors, including the former Soviet republics. In the West, Stalin is largely remembered as one of the bloodiest despots in modern history, responsible for the deaths of millions through arrests, executions and a famine in Ukraine caused by Stalin’s agricultural policies that killed up to 8 million people. But in Russia, his reign is remembered as well for its glory and sacrifice, given the nation’s central role — and losses of an estimated 20 million soldiers and civilians — in defeating Adolf Hitler during what Russians call the Great Patriotic War. And in recent years, state-sponsored accounts have portrayed Stalin as an effective manager.

Russia is now actively arguing with its neighbors about Stalin’s legacy. Ukraine wants the international community to acknowledge that the famine of 1932-1933 was genocide because it was deliberate — the result of Stalin’s forced collectivization of agriculture. Ukraine became “a vast death camp,” according to Ukrainian President Viktor Yushenko, when millions of landed peasants known as *kulaks* — who had rebelled against Stalin’s agricultural policies — died. Last year, however, the lower house of the Russian parliament, the Duma, passed a resolution saying that “there is no historical proof that the famine was organized along ethnic lines.”¹

In Poland, contemporary Poles have met only resistance to their requests for Russian declassification of documents relating to the infamous Katyn massacre, in which as many as 22,000 Poles — largely military officers — were slaughtered by Soviet soldiers during World War II. And Poland and the Baltic states want Russia to denounce the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact Stalin made with Hitler, which led to the Soviet and German

invasions of their neighbors before World War II. The Russians say they were “liberating” the countries from Hitler.

In response, Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin published an article in August calling the pact immoral, but Russian ministers and state-sponsored media have suggested that Poland was complicit in causing the war by provoking Hitler.

“The rows Russia is having with its neighbors are like scenes from a divorce. Everyone is throwing dishes and breaking furniture,” said Mikhail Margelov, chairman of the Committee for Foreign Affairs in the Federation Council of Russia, parliament’s upper house.²

The current Russian regime, while widely criticized in the international press for its rehabilitation of Stalinist symbols, such as the restoration of a prominent quote from Stalin himself at the Kremlin metro station, is still not as shuttered about its past as the Soviets were.

“Stalin was not the first leader to enforce a myth of history, only the most successful,” writes *New Yorker* editor David Remnick, a former *Washington Post* Moscow correspondent and author of the best-selling *Lenin’s Tomb: The Last Days of the Soviet Empire*.³

For decades after his death, Stalin was barely mentioned in the Soviet Union, with public discussion of his rule strictly forbidden. His successor, Nikita Khrushchev, denounced Stalin’s crimes in a 1956 “secret speech” that was meant only for the ears of top officials in the Soviet bloc. But the text was leaked to the West almost immediately.

Remarkably, however, the Russian Education Ministry announced in September that excerpts from Aleksandr Solzhenitzyn’s *The Gulag Archipelago* would be required reading in schools. The 1973 history of the Stalinist system of prisons and slave labor camps had been banned and the author exiled during Soviet times. In October, Russian President Dmitri A. Medvedev called for construction of museums and memorial centers devoted to Stalin’s atrocities.

“If the Russian people and the Russian elite remembered — viscerally, emotionally remembered — what Stalin did to the Chechens, they could not have invaded Chechnya in the 1990s,



Soviet leader Joseph Stalin routinely altered historical photographs and documents to suit his political aims. In the photo at left, a former ally, Nikolai Yezhov, stands at Stalin's left. After Stalin had the man executed, his image was removed from the official photo, at right.

not once and not twice," writes *Washington Post* columnist Anne Applebaum in her history of the Stalinist gulags. "To do so was the moral equivalent of postwar Germany invading Poland."⁴

Ironically, Medvedev earlier had established an historical commission to put an official stamp on the Russian version of the early days of World War II. In it the Soviet Union "liberated" some of its neighbors from Hitler — rather than invaded them. Russia now needs to "liberate" historians in Ukraine, Latvia, Estonia, Georgia and Poland — as one commissioner put it — "from the pressure of state dictatorship applied upon them."⁵

The law creating the commission also stated that "anyone who 'falsifies' the Kremlin's version of history, for example by equating Hitler and Stalin . . . may be prosecuted. Suggesting that 1945 brought not liberation but new occupation for Eastern Europe is also banned."⁶

Russians today are aware of Stalin's political crimes, but current leaders clearly find more value in restoring patriotism and selectively celebrating the glories of the past than in talking about war crimes and mass killings.

The nation's near-neighbors, meanwhile, are seeking to reestablish their own national identities following the transna-

tional ideology and imperialism of the Soviet regime. The breakup of the Soviet Union has led to a "surge of attempts at national identity construction," says M. Lane Bruner, a communications professor at Georgia State University.

"This is all being rehabilitated because this is now a very lively issue for Russia," said Moscow-based military analyst Pavel Felgenhauer. "This is not about history at all."⁷

— Alan Greenblatt

¹ Peter Finn, "Aftermath of a Soviet Famine," *The Washington Post*, April 27, 2008, p. A14, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/26/AR2008042602039.html.

² Owen Matthews and Anna Nemtsova, "The World According to Russia," *Newsweek International*, Sept. 7, 2009, www.newsweek.com/id/214243.

³ David Remnick, *Lenin's Tomb* (1993), p. 37.

⁴ Anne Applebaum, *Gulag: A History* (2003), p. 572.

⁵ Masha Lipman, "Russia, Again Evading History," *The Washington Post*, June 20, 2009, p. A17, www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/06/19/AR2009061902062.html.

⁶ "The Unhistory Man," *The Economist*, Sept. 5, 2009, www.economist.com/opinion/displaystory.cfm?story_id=14363315.

⁷ "Russia Defends Pact With Hitler 70 Years Later," *The Associated Press*, Aug. 21, 2009; www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,541602,00.html?test=latestnews.

after World War I, the noted British biographer Lytton Strachey wrote that history is "not an accumulation of facts but a relation of them."²⁹

By 1925, the French philosopher and sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was writing about history as a collective social project, arguing that groups construct their own images of the world by establishing an agreed-upon version of the past.³⁰ As the age of small principalities and enormous empires gave way to nation-states and the global economic competition between them, a new type of nationalism emerged.

The creation of symbols of national identity, including flags and anthems, became more important, while religious and linguistic cleavages were minimized. "Modern nationalism, especially, hinges on the presentation of the nation as a community whose members are bound together by powerful ties of common interest, common background and common destiny," writes British historian Cubitt.³¹

"For a variety of political, economic and social reasons, nations needed much more identification with the nation itself, rather than kinship, communities and other groups," says Duara,

the National University of Singapore historian. "At the same time, they're claiming it's for the people itself, that the people are the basis of the nation."

The question of what makes a people a people — and how that is shaped by history and memory — has become a central preoccupation in historical studies in recent years. "The treatment of the past through remembering and forgetting crucially shapes the present and future for individuals and entire societies," writes Martha Minow, dean of Harvard Law School and a noted human rights scholar.³²

And, just as war and other great events began to involve more of the populace, the study of those events came to rely on a wider variety of sources, including eyewitness accounts. Written records were insufficient for reconstructing mass events — particularly genocide and other atrocities — so survivor testimonies that might once have been avoided as overly emotional or subjective have become paramount. “After years of extensive academic debate, there is consensus among most researchers that accounts of survivors form an important basis for the study of genocide and mass violence,” write the editors of a recent book.³³

In recent decades, arguing about history and its meanings has become a central project among nations, prompted in large part by the enduring resonance of atrocities committed during World War II. “Historical remembrance is not some abstract issue that historians conceived,” says Confino, of the University of Virginia. “This is an issue with political, economic, moral and legal implications.”

The German Model

Remembrance of the Holocaust — the extermination of millions of people, including 6 million Jews, for their perceived “racial inferiority” by Nazi Germany during World War II — has become the defining event in both historical studies and contemporary European identity.

Confino points out that the debates about the Holocaust and its dynamics are shaping the thinking and work of historians writing about entirely different events dating well before the 20th century. And New York University’s Judt points out that “Holocaust recognition is our contemporary European entry ticket,” noting that in 2004 Poland’s president officially recognized the suffering of Polish Jews during the war, “seeking to close a painful chapter in his nation’s

past and bring Poland into line with its EU partners.” The following year, Romania’s president made a similar concession for similar reasons.³⁴

Germany is widely hailed as a model of a “guilty” nation grappling with the sins of its past, offering official apologies, constructing a massive memorial to Holocaust victims at the center of its capital and making school instruction about the atrocities mandatory. Even during last month’s 20th-anniversary celebrations of the fall of the Berlin Wall, German Chancellor Angela Merkel went out of her way to point out that Nov. 9 is also the anniversary of *Kristallnacht*, the 1938 pogrom against the Jews that was an early indication of the coming terror.³⁵

But the Holocaust was not always at the center of German consciousness. It took a generation or more for the country to begin to own up to its past. The German preoccupation with the Holocaust was much broader and deeper in 1990 than in 1945, points out Cynthia Miller-Idriss, a professor of international education and sociology at New York University, in her 2009 book about contemporary German identity, *Blood and Culture*.³⁶ West German schools after the war had even stopped teaching history beyond the empire of Kaiser Wilhelm II, which ended with World War I.

“Germans rejected the Nuremberg trials” — the immediate postwar trials of top Nazi officials for crimes against humanity, says Bloxham, the Edinburgh historian. “They claimed that it only involved a small number of people, that Germans were killed in the war, too, and that most Germans knew nothing about the Holocaust.”

A later series of trials in Germany and Israel began bringing the Holocaust to the forefront of German consciousness. The trials, held between 1958 and 1965, presented an opportunity for Holocaust survivors to publicly testify about their experiences. After a wave of anti-Semitic violence and a growing recognition that young Germans knew

next to nothing about their nation’s fascist past, 10 West German states began requiring that schools teach about the nation’s policies during 1933 to 1945, including the extermination of the Jews, Gypsies, homosexuals and others.³⁷

German young people rebelled against authority and their parents’ generation during the 1960s. For them, “the Holocaust becomes a useful weapon,” as Bloxham says. They were able to portray themselves as untainted by the sins of their fathers and mothers. “Faced with the silence of their parents’ generation about their actions during the war and well aware of the Nazis’ manipulation of national sentiments, the 68ers simultaneously called their parents’ generation to account for their actions and rejected the nation and anything national,” writes Miller-Idriss.³⁸

Further events, including German Chancellor Willy Brandt famously dropping to his knees at the Warsaw Ghetto memorial in 1970, the murder of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Munich Olympic Games and the West German telecast of the American miniseries “Holocaust” in 1979 — watched by more than half the nation’s adult population — “combined to place Jews and their sufferings at the head of the German public agenda,” Judt writes.³⁹ In 1968 only 471 German school groups visited Dachau, the Nazi concentration camp just outside Munich; by the end of the 1970s more than 5,000 such groups were visiting annually, he points out.

Germany dealt with its *Schuldfrage*, or guilt issue, in a much more systematic way than other countries that had collaborated with or were implicated in Nazi crimes. “The Germans should be the model,” says genocide scholar Goldhagen. “They’ve said, ‘Yes, our country, our government at the time committed a terrible genocide, and we look back on it with horror.’ It only brings credit and honor to them. It’s how they actually say we’re not like [our predecessors.] As long as you deny that something happened or try to deny

that something happened, you make yourself suspect.”

The Germans, in fact, engaged in “a kind of righteous self-hate,” as the German novelist Peter Schneider once put it. In 1988, Philipp Jenninger, president of Germany’s national parliament, the Bundestag, gave an address on the 50th anniversary of *Kristallnacht* that attempted to explain why the German people were drawn to Nazism. Although he stressed the notion of responsibility, he was heckled and accused of attempting to “justify” Hitler. Jenninger had to resign the following day.⁴⁰ Even as late as 2001, German President Johannes Rau publicly stated that German pride was impossible. But by 2006, when Germany hosted the World Cup, Merkel said the waving of German flags in the states was a display of a relaxed pride in the nation.

“In a short span of years, it seemed,” Miller-Idriss writes, “Germans had set aside the automatic association of flag-waving with negative associations of nationalism and displayed what one newspaper reporter called ‘a sort of unembarrassed patriotism.’ ”⁴¹

Asian Arguments

If Germany is now hailed as a model of a national remembrance and reconciliation with a horrific past, Japan — Germany’s fellow Axis power in World War II — has had a more contentious relationship with its history of that period. Even though the Japanese government has adopted a strict pacifist stance in foreign affairs and repeatedly apologized to neighboring countries for the suffering it caused them during the war, it has also argued about the war — both internally and with its neighbors.

Since new textbooks could not be printed immediately after Japan’s surrender to the United States, Japanese students were instructed to ink out all passages considered nationalistic, militaristic or undemocratic.⁴²

‘History Is Written by the Victors’

Through the ages, politicians, philosophers and writers from Plato to Mark Twain to Winston Churchill have commented on the validity of historical facts — some with more skepticism than others.

“What is history but a fable agreed upon?”

— Napoleon Bonaparte, 19th-century French emperor

“History will be kind to me, for I intend to write it.”

— Winston Churchill, former British prime minister

“The very ink with which history is written is merely fluid prejudice.”

— Mark Twain, American author and humorist

“Poetry is nearer to vital truth than history.” — Plato, Greek philosopher

“History is a pack of lies about events that never happened told by people who weren’t there.”

— George Santayana, Spanish philosopher

“History is an account, mostly false, of events, mostly unimportant, which are brought about by rulers, mostly knaves, and soldiers, mostly fools.”

— Ambrose Bierce, American writer and satirist

“The past is malleable and flexible, changing as our recollection interprets and re-explains what has happened.”

— Peter Berger, Austrian-born American sociologist

“History is written by the victors.”

— Winston Churchill, former British prime minister

“So very difficult a matter it is to trace and find out the truth of anything by history.”

— Plutarch, Greek historian and essayist

“Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.”

— George Santayana, Spanish philosopher

“I have issued the command — and I’ll have anybody who utters but one word of criticism executed by a firing squad — that our war aim does not consist in reaching certain lines, but in the physical destruction of the enemy . . . with orders . . . to send to death mercilessly and without compassion, men, women and children of Polish derivation and language. . . Who, after all, speaks today of the annihilation of the Armenians?”

— Adolf Hitler, former fuhrer of Germany and leader of the Nazi party

“You speak about history. But one must sometimes correct history.”

— Joseph Stalin, former leader of the Soviet Union

“He who controls the present controls the past. He who controls the past controls the future.”

— George Orwell, British satirical novelist

“For governments, patriotic history is the only legitimate kind of history.”

— Keith Wilson, Australian politician

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AP Photo/U.S. Army Signal Corp

American soldiers survey rows of corpses at the Nazi concentration camp at Nordhausen, Germany, on April 17, 1945. More than 3,000 unburied bodies were found when the camp was liberated. Hailed as a model of a “guilty” nation grappling with the sins of its past, Germany has constructed in Berlin a massive memorial to the millions of people killed during the Holocaust and makes school instruction about the atrocities mandatory.

But while later Japanese history textbooks abandoned the doctrines of the defeated imperial regime, they also did not contain detailed accounts of Japanese wartime atrocities.⁴³ In fact, a textbook written by prominent historian Saburo Ienaga was rejected for containing “too many illustrations of the ‘dark side’ of the war.” Beginning in 1965, he began filing a series of lawsuits challenging the Ministry of Education’s book-screening process, and in 1997 Japan’s Supreme Court ordered that he be paid modest damages, but it upheld the ministry’s right to screen textbooks.⁴⁴

By that time, Ienaga and thousands of his supporters had won a de facto if not de jure victory. The most widely used Japanese textbooks by then contained references to the Rape of Nanking — the six-week-long massacre and rape of tens of thousands of Chinese soldiers and civilians in 1937 by members of Japan’s imperial army. The books also described Unit 731, which conducted gruesome medical experiments on prisoners of war, and the plight of the “comfort women” — the

more than 100,000 women and girls, mostly from Korea, forced to have sex with Japanese soldiers.

But debate surrounding all these issues has remained contentious. In 2007, the ministry instructed publishers to delete a passage stating that the Japanese military “forced” residents of Okinawa to commit mass suicide in 1945. More than 100,000 Okinawans staged a protest to complain that Japan’s role in the suicides should not be forgotten. The government then allowed publishers to correct their texts.⁴⁵

Japanese nationalists continued to chafe at the attention given to war crimes. In 2001, a group called the Japanese Society for History Textbook Reform published a revisionist textbook that whitewashed war crimes during World War II and earlier conflicts. Although it was adopted by fewer than 20 schools, the book sold widely to the general public. The Ministry of Education’s continuing approval of the work has triggered protests overseas, notably widespread anti-Japanese rioting in China in 2005.

The Japanese parliament also launched an inquiry into the training given to military officers to determine whether it subverts official policy expressing regret for the nation’s wartime aggression. Toshio Tamogami was removed from his post as air force chief last year after winning an essay contest in which he said that Japan had been trapped into bombing Pearl Harbor and that “many Asian countries take a positive view” of Japan’s wartime role. “I was fired after saying Japan is a good country,” Tamogami told parliament. “It seems a bit strange.”⁴⁶

Despite Japan’s official contrition, its version of the past continues to stir up anger among its neighbors. The Chinese have protested repeatedly in recent years whenever Japanese prime ministers visit the Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo, which honors convicted war criminals among millions of the nation’s war dead. “As seen by the Japanese themselves, there’s a lack of perspective about whether Japan was an aggressor or a victimized nation,” says Yang, the professor of modern Japanese history at George Washington University. Japan suffered not just from the two atomic bombs but fire-bombing and the period of U.S. occupation.

“Within Japan, there’s a yearning for recognition of Japanese suffering, although many leaders and ordinary people recognize that Japan has done a great deal of harm,” he says.

And some historians note that China’s government has used anti-Japanese feelings to stir Chinese nationalism, particularly after China’s isolationist period during the Maoist era. Japan, at the same moment, was feeling insecure due to the long recession that dogged the country in the 1990s and was particularly concerned about criticism coming from a neighbor that was a rising economic and military power.

“The idea was if you teach the younger generation these negative legacies, it’s masochistic,” Yang says. “It will make it even more difficult for the younger generation to be proud

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Should a Turkish-Armenian historical commission be established?



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WRITTEN FOR *CQ GLOBAL RESEARCHER*,
NOVEMBER 2009

the question of whether there was an Armenian Genocide is not debatable for the majority of scholars in the field. They maintain it was a genocide. Case closed.

Those who reject the term genocide to describe the slaughter of innocent human beings in eastern Anatolia in 1915 are pilloried in academic circles and elsewhere. To disagree with the narrative of the event is to be labeled the equivalent of a Holocaust denier. The fact that Raphael Lemkin — who coined the term — labeled the Armenian massacres as genocide effectively closes the book on the subject for most scholars.

This is precisely why the subject must be revisited and resolved by a joint commission of Armenian, Turkish and international scholars. Unlike the pronouncements of those who have never set foot in the Turkish archives or gone through Armenian archives, a mutually agreed upon commission starting with no preconditions or conclusions would have the best chance of getting to the bottom of the destruction of Armenian civilization in eastern Anatolia during the First World War. Removing this process from the realm of political lobbies can only serve to set the stage for reconciliation and resolution.

Sadly, this has not been the case to date. Instead, the environment has been toxic, marked by violence and vitriol. It has also been almost entirely one-sided in Western Europe and the United States. The late Ottoman historian Stanford Shaw even had his house bombed by some with whom he disagreed.

Fortunately, the current environment is slightly better. Turkish-Armenian relations are showing some early signs of a thaw. Contrary to what many scholars believe, the Turkish archives are largely accessible, and there is a growing movement within Turkey itself to examine the tragedies of the past. There is also a growing body of scholarship about the social, political and economic situation in eastern Anatolia during the late 19th and early 20th centuries that provides a better backdrop to the events of 1915.

Lastly, there is growing confidence in Turkey that, whatever an Armenian-Turkish historical commission finds, Turkey will emerge with a better understanding of the past and a more confident sense of the future.

It is hoped that the same would apply to the citizens of Armenia. For scholars, it should raise the question of why this process of real debate did not take place decades ago.



HELEN FEIN, BOARD CHAIRMAN
INSTITUTE FOR THE STUDY OF GENOCIDE,
JOHN JAY COLLEGE OF CRIMINAL JUSTICE,
AND SIX OTHER FORMER PRESIDENTS OF
THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF
GENOCIDE SCHOLARS

FROM AN OPEN LETTER TO TURKISH PRIME MINISTER RECEP
TAYYIP ERDOGAN, NOV. 3, 2009

the recent signing of protocols by the governments of Armenia and Turkey . . . marks the beginning of a process that would lead to establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries. Constituencies in both countries find some or all of the protocols problematic. We, the former presidents of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, write to you to express our concern about one of them: the establishment of a historical commission to study the fate of the Armenian people in the Ottoman Empire in 1915.

We reiterate our objection to your insistence that there be a historical commission in which Turkey would be involved. Because Turkey has denied the Armenian Genocide for the past nine decades — and currently under Article 301 of the Turkish penal code public affirmation of the genocide is a crime — it would seem impossible for Turkey to be part of a process that would assess whether or not Turkey committed genocide against the Armenians.

[It] is not just Armenians who are affirming the Armenian Genocide, but it is the overwhelming conclusion of scholars who study genocide: hundreds of independent scholars, who have no affiliations with governments, and whose work spans many countries and nationalities and the course of decades. Outside of your government, there is no doubt about the facts of the Armenian Genocide; therefore our concern is that your demand for a historical commission is political sleight of hand designed to deny those facts.

Turkey has, in fact, shown no willingness to accept impartial judgments made by outside commissions. Five years ago, the Turkish members of the Turkish Armenian Reconciliation Commission pulled out of the commission after the arbitrator, the International Center for Transitional Justice, rendered an assessment that the events of 1915 were genocide. And, Prime Minister Erdogan, you have repeatedly stated that even if a historical commission found that the Armenian case is genocide, Turkey would ignore the finding. As William Schabas, the current president of the International Association of Genocide Scholars, said in his letter to you and [Armenian] President [Sargsyan], “acknowledgment of the Armenian Genocide must be the starting point of any ‘impartial historical commission,’ not one of its possible conclusions.”

We believe the integrity of scholarship and the ethics of historical memory are at stake.

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to be Japanese at a time when we need them to rebuild the economy and build a sense of confidence.”

These conflicts have emerged so late, suggests Northwestern historian Hein, because in Japan, “the benefits for self-criticism were not as clear” as in Germany. “There was no future for Germany if it did not develop a better relationship with Europe, and the only way they could get there was to repudiate the past,” she says. “The U.S., for its own Cold War reasons, protected Japan from Asian criticism very deliberately.”

Yasuo Fukuda, Japan’s prime minister in 2007 and 2008, wanting better relations with the country’s neighbors, did not visit Yasukuni and distanced himself from the efforts of his predecessor, Shinzo Abe, to downplay the role of the Japanese military in the recruitment and rape of “comfort women.” Fukuda’s efforts paid off with a “warm spring” in relations between the countries, as Chinese President Hu Jintao said during a visit to Japan last year that played down such disputes.

“This unfortunate history not only caused tremendous suffering to the Chinese people but also gravely hurt the Japanese people,” Hu said. “It’s important for us to remember history, but this does not mean we should hold grudges.”⁴⁷ ■

CURRENT SITUATION

Endless Debates

Debates about the past remain a constant in contemporary politics. The dispute between Armenians and Turks about the mass slaughter of the former during World War I is a prominent example.

Author and historian Balakian argues that genocide must be seen not as a national issue but a universal issue that leaves scars across the globe. “This should not be framed as an Armenian-Turkish issue,” he says. “It’s an international human rights issue.”

That may be, but both the Turks and Armenians — particularly the Armenian diaspora — have been willing at times to put their insistence on their version of the past ahead of their present self-interest. Turkey has talked of scuttling defense deals — such as the use of NATO bases in Turkey for the war in Iraq — if the United States were to condemn the deaths of the Armenians as genocide. A resolution to do just that nearly passed Congress in 2007 but was blocked by leaders concerned about the foreign-policy fallout. Armenians have been disappointed that President Obama has not kept a campaign promise to term the genocide as such.

Armenians living outside of Armenia seem to take a harder line on these issues than those still living in the country. “The government of Armenia is not going to push this issue as much as they might have,” says Suny, of the University of Michigan. “They want to make some realistic state-to-state agreements with the Turks.”

For the Armenian diaspora — like expatriate Cubans in South Florida and American Jews regarding Israel — their sense of national identity is inextricably tied to a vision of their home country that does not change as much as it must for those still living there. “People who see themselves as slightly dissipated from the homeland want some point of identity,” says Bloxham, the genocide scholar at Edinburgh. “This negotiation is about what’s good for the people living in the region, here and now. . . . The Armenian diaspora has other priorities.”

“The diaspora is relatively shielded and protected” from the effects of growing or continuing hostility with Turkey, says Duara, the Singapore

scholar. “Their identity, what their home was when they left, is something that freezes, and they cannot afford to let go.”

Official Regrets

Of course, Armenians have a hard time letting go of the need for international recognition of the Armenian killings, precisely because the Turks have never admitted their culpability. Armenians argue it would be better for the Turks, not just for them, if Turkey were to concede its wrongdoing and apologize for it. This almost psychoanalytical reading of nations — that they have cannot move forward until they have admitted past mistakes and reconciled with their guilt — has become a powerful idea in recent years.

Setting up truth and reconciliation commissions has become almost an automatic and predictable end to contemporary conflicts. And many nations have issued formal apologies for atrocities deeper into their pasts. In November, both British Prime Minister Gordon Brown and Australian Prime Minister Kevin Rudd apologized for the forced migration and institutionalization of 150,000 British children from the 1930s to the 1970s.

Rudd apologized to Australia’s mistreated Aborigines as soon as he took office in 2008, while Brown’s predecessor, Tony Blair, apologized in 2006 for his nation’s part in slavery and the slave trade. Blair also apologized in 1997 for Britain’s role in the Irish potato famine.

Pope John Paul II in 2000 issued an apology for sins committed by the “children” of the Catholic Church over the previous two millennia, including violence that occurred during the Counter-Reformation and a partial apology for the church’s role in World War II. Since the 1950s, Japanese leaders have issued dozens of apologies for its aggression and atrocities it committed during World War II.

“When people commit injustices and do bad things, they ought to apologize and ask for forgiveness,” said Rep. Steve Cohen, D-Tenn., who sponsored a U.S. House resolution apologizing for slavery, which passed in 2008. “Countries should operate in the same manner. Slavery is abhorrent.”⁴⁸

The House action followed apologies from half a dozen states in the old Confederacy for their role in slavery. Three years earlier the Senate apologized for not passing an anti-lynching law decades earlier, marking the first time that chamber had apologized for the nation’s treatment of African-Americans.

“At the end of the day, we said three words: ‘I am sorry,’ said state Sen. Anthony C. Hill Sr., a Florida Democrat, after the state legislature formally apologized in March 2008 for the state’s “shameful” history of slavery. “I think now we can begin the healing process of reconciliation.”⁴⁹

Some have criticized such resolutions and statements as being politically motivated — a way for political leaders to distance themselves conveniently from the actions of past leaders. “Trading apologies and forgiveness on behalf of dead people sounds phony,” editorialized *The Economist* in 2008, “especially when the issue is centuries old (such as Viking rape and pillage in Ireland, which Denmark’s culture minister Brian Mikkelsen bemoaned in 2007).”⁵⁰

Even Adam Hochschild, the liberal author of a widely praised book about the abolition of the slave trade, *Bury the Chains*, is concerned that focusing too much on atoning for past sins ignores “clear, glaring injustices of the present.”

“To feel outrage at a dreadful crime in history is natural and right,” Hochschild wrote in 2006. “But does it make sense to extend the principle of guilt and responsibility backward in time over generations? Two centuries ago, scholars estimate, about three-quarters of the people on Earth were slaves, indentured servants, laborers in debt bondage, serfs

or in servitude of one sort or another. Add to that grim tally the wars, colonial conquests, genocides, concentration camps and other barbarities human beings have inflicted on each other since then. If we were to take responsibility

ty. “Globalization erases a little more of every nation’s characteristics every day,” said Frédéric Lefebvre, spokesman for Sarkozy’s ruling Union for a Popular Majority Party, calling for a defense of France’s “cultural model.”⁵²



AFP/Getty Images/Chhin Sothy

The grisly Choeung Ek memorial in Phnom Penh is dedicated to the nearly 2 million Cambodians murdered by the Khmer Rouge regime of Pol Pot between 1975 and 1979. After decades of relative silence, Cambodia is engaging in public discourse about its genocidal past. Meanwhile, the first U.N.-backed trial of a Khmer official who oversaw the torture and killings concluded on Nov. 27; a verdict is expected in 2010, with other trials to follow. A new textbook about the regime’s excesses is also being released.

for everything done by our ancestors, few of us — anywhere in the world — would have clean hands. Few of us, also, would be without victims among our forebears. The entire world would be awash in apologies.”⁵¹ ■

OUTLOOK

Globalizing Forces

All declining cultures cling to rituals and traditions that can provide a sense of place and belonging in a rapidly changing world.

That appears to be a major motivation behind French President Sarkozy’s project in search of a national identity.

Some historians predict that similar outbreaks of nationalistic feeling are likely to pop up elsewhere as the world economy continues to globalize. “Memory is, in a globalizing world, if anything more important to people,” says Catterall of the University of London. “It’s something to hold onto, it becomes a more crucial part of identity.”

Bruner, the Georgia State communications professor, suggests there will be continuing tension between the transnational cosmopolitan culture and local traditions. “In most major cities in the world, whether Hong Kong or London, they could care less about whether they’re dancing the local dance. They want to know how their stock portfolios look,” he says. But there is a countervailing force in the “desire for community and belonging. There’s a point where people say they need to hold onto their

culture in order to have meaning in life.”

Many scholars agree the recent trends toward greater historical accountability through formal apologies and truth commissions will continue. “As the world becomes more and more aware of the horrors of eliminationist genocide, and regimes talk about what they’ve done, there’s likely to be more openness,” predicts author Goldhagen.

And the University of Virginia’s Confino notes that, in contrast to earlier eras when people may have been ashamed to talk about their suffering, “the idea of victimhood has become very important.

“There is a phenomenon we can call ‘Holocaust envy.’ The Holocaust has given us the language to talk about mass killing, witnessing, trauma and survivors,” he continues. “People want to have the legitimacy that comes with being identified as being like Holocaust [victims] — it means you really suffered a lot.”

The generation that witnessed atrocities may never feel comfortable. That’s why certain disputes — between the Israelis and the Palestinians, between India and Pakistan — never seem to get resolved. The cycle of conflict continues with such limited interruption that the wounds are always afflicted anew,” says Duara, the historian at the National University of Singapore. “You don’t get a generation that passes without wounds.”

“You get into this game, who did the first bad thing,” says Bloxham, the

Edinburgh historian. “The thing is that it’s impossible to get a neutral history that everyone can buy into. There’s inevitable self-serving, with people picking into the past for the purposes that suit them.”

As Catterall points out, historical disputes are frequently based upon differences in memory that don’t necessarily produce reconciliation. But some nations may be getting closer to putting difficult pasts behind them. It’s a tough trick for national leaders to pull off, balancing the need to honor even the difficult parts of the past while not becoming unduly burdened by them.

Yang of George Washington University, while agreeing that historical commemoration will remain a potent force, says there’s a growing “awareness that bilateral relations have many facets. The past is important, but it’s only one of them.”

In his area of expertise — Japan and China — Yang notes that in the last three years there’s been a decline in official animosity. “Leaders in Japan and China are putting greater emphasis on areas of cooperation, education and economic management,” he says. “They are not ignoring the contentious issues of the past, but leaders can shift the tone of their rhetoric.”

“It’s very important not only to remember the past but also to remember it responsibly and to reject any claim of the past over our life’s present,” says Confino. “If you become a slave of the past, it’s as bad as forgetting the past.” ■

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About the Author



Alan Greenblatt is a staff writer at *Governing* magazine. He previously covered elections, agriculture and military spending for *CQ Weekly*, where he won the National Press Club’s Sandy Hume Award for political journalism. He graduated from San Francisco State University in 1986 and received a master’s degree in English literature from the University of Virginia in 1988. His recent *CQ Global Researcher* reports include “Attacking Piracy.”

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Eva and Marc Besen Institute for the Study of Historical Consciousness, School of Historical Studies, Tel Aviv University, Tel Aviv, Israel 69978; +972-3-6409326; www.tau.ac.il/humanities/besen/. Publishes *History and Memory*, a twice-yearly journal devoted to the formulation of historical consciousness.

Facing History and Ourselves, 16 Hurd Rd., Brookline, MA 02445; (617) 232-1595; www.facinghistory.org. Utilizes the Internet and school systems worldwide to educate children about taking responsibility for their world.

The Georg Eckert Institute for International Textbook Research, Celler Strasse 3, Braunschweig, Germany D-38114; +49 (0) 531-590-99-0; www.gei.de/. Accredited and internationally connected reference center, primarily for social studies research; also studies how textbooks interpret history.

International Association of Genocide Scholars, www.genocidescholars.org/. A global, interdisciplinary organization that seeks to further research and teaching about the nature, causes and consequences of genocide.

International Coalition of Sites of Conscience, 333 7th Ave., 14th Floor, New York, NY 10001; (646) 755-6180; www.sitesofconscience.org/about-us/contact/en/. A global network of historic sites dedicated to past struggles for justice.

Memory and Reconciliation in the Asia-Pacific, Sigur Center for Asian Studies, 1957 E St., N.W., Suite 503, Washington, DC 20052; www.gwu.edu/~memory/. A research program dedicated to lasting reconciliation between China, Japan and Korea, specifically with regard to past wrongs related to colonialism and World War II.

United Nations, 760 United Nations Plaza, New York, NY 10017; (212) 963-1234; www.un.org/en/. An international organization committed to global peace.

U.S. Institute of Peace, 1200 17th St., N.W., Washington, DC 20036; (202) 457-1700; www.usip.org. Provides analysis, training and tools aimed at helping to end and prevent conflicts, promote stability and build peace.

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Harden, Blaine, "Japanese General Defends Revised Version of WWII," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 12, 2008, p. A12.

A Japanese air force chief was removed from his post for writing a revisionist essay about Pearl Harbor and Asian views toward Japan's role in World War II.

Harden, Blaine, "On Visit to Japan, China's Hu Has No Time for Old Grudges," *The Washington Post*, May 10, 2008; www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/05/09/AR2008050902724.html.

A state visit from Chinese President Hu Jintao has leaders of both China and Japan hoping they can begin to put painful World War II memories behind them.

Levy, Clifford J., "At Turkish Border, Armenians Are Wary of a Thaw," *The New York Times*, May 22, 2009, p. A8; www.nytimes.com/2009/05/22/world/europe/22armenia.html.

Armenians who live near the Turkish border welcome a thaw in relations but still want Turkey to admit that it committed genocide during World War I.

Marquand, Robert, "France's Sarkozy Launches Controversial National Identity Debate," *The Christian Science Monitor*, Nov. 2, 2009, p. 6; www.csmonitor.com/2009/1103/p06s04-woeu.html.

The French president believes his country can recapture its former glory by examining its own past and rediscovering its own best values.

Masalski, Kathleen Woods, "Examining the Japanese History Textbook Controversies," *Japan Digest*, November 2001; <http://iis-db.stanford.edu/docs/134/textbook.pdf>.

The author examines controversies surrounding Japan's view of its wartime past as seen through its textbook-adoption process.

Matthews, Owen, "The History Wars," *Newsweek International*, July 20, 2009; www.newsweek.com/id/205373.

Russia is coming closer to criminalizing alternative versions of history as President Dmitri Medvedev sets up an historical commission to put forward the Russian version of the Stalinist era to counter the more negative accounts of its neighbors.

McKinnon, Mark, "The Tiananmen Dream: Lost in One Generation," *The Globe and Mail*, May 30, 2009, p. A14; www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/tiananmen-dream-dead-in-one-generation/article1160927/.

Twenty years after the Tiananmen Square protests, students in Beijing are much more interested in economic questions than political debates.

Reports and Studies

Cole, Elizabeth A., and Judy Barsalou, "Unite or Divide? The Challenge of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict," *Special Report 163*, United States Institute of Peace, June 2006; www.usip.org/files/re_sources/sr163.pdf.

The authors look at how nations begin to construct or reconstruct their histories following traumatic events, noting how pedagogy is complicated by disagreements about how to frame what happened.

The Next Step:

Additional Articles from Current Periodicals

Armenian Genocide

Butler, Desmond, and Ben Fuller, "Obama Opts for Restraint, Avoids the Term 'Genocide,'" *The Star-Ledger* (Newark, N.J.), April 25, 2009, p. 3.

President Obama faces scrutiny for refraining from calling the massacre of Armenians in Turkey a "genocide."

Doyle, Michael, "'Genocide' at Center of Confirmation," *Fresno (California) Bee*, June 19, 2008, p. A5.

The Bush administration shied away from calling the killings in Armenia in 1915 genocide in an attempt to avoid angering Turkey.

Fisk, Robert, "Genocide Forgotten: Armenians Horrified By Treaty With Turkey," *The Independent* (England), Oct. 8, 2009.

Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan plans to sign a controversial protocol that reopens trade and diplomatic relations with Turkey but does not insist that Turkey admit to genocide.

Government Cover-ups

"Beijing Should Face Up to Tiananmen History," *China Post* (Taiwan), June 5, 2009.

A Taiwanese paper says China should acknowledge the events that occurred during pro-democracy rallies in Tiananmen Square in 1989, which have remained off-limits in China's state-controlled mass media and history books.

Bay, Austin, "Darfur's J'Accuse!" *The Lowell* (Massachusetts) *Sun*, July 19, 2008.

Sudan's leader, Omar Hassan al-Bashir, has attempted to cover up alleged genocide in Darfur, and while many people are aware of the atrocities efforts to stop them have had limited success.

Hundley, Tom, "Film Documents Brutal Story of Stalin's Atrocities in Poland," *Chicago Tribune*, May 28, 2008, p. C2.

British Prime Minister Winston Churchill and President Franklin D. Roosevelt allowed Russian Premier Joseph Stalin to cover up the murder of thousands of Poles because they feared losing their alliance with Moscow.

Historical Accountability

"ACLU Says Actions Stifle Transparency and Accountability," *States News Service*, Nov. 14, 2009.

The American Civil Liberties Union says the release of photos depicting the torture of detainees in U.S. custody overseas is crucial in the continuing debate about accountability for the abuse of prisoners.

Adams, David, "Inching Toward Justice in Colombian Killings," *St. Petersburg (Florida) Times*, Nov. 10, 2008, p. 1A.

In Colombia, the military must accept accountability for the murders of left-wing sympathizers in order for the country to heal from ongoing human rights abuses.

Balkin, Jack, "A Body of Inquiries," *The New York Times*, Jan. 11, 2009, p. 11.

A professor details how a lack of accountability for human rights abuses stifles the democratic process.

National Identity

Berry, Carol, "Finding a Sense of Identity," *Indian Country Today* (Oneida, N.Y.), July 9, 2008, p. 9.

Professor and author Jennifer Nez Denetdale says Navajo perspectives on the past create a distinct group identity for contemporary Navajo people.

Cody, Edward, "French Town Cannot Let Bookstore Die; In a Nation Tasked with Rethinking its Identity, Citizenry Seldom Fails to Embrace Past," *The Washington Post*, Nov. 16, 2009, p. A13.

The French population's focus on history serves as a way to create a national identity around life in the past, instead of life in the present.

Matoshi, Halil, "Nation Born Out of Conflict," *Koha Ditore* (Kosovo), May 27, 2009, p. 11.

Establishing a cohesive national identity for Kosovo is difficult amid a history of Serbian occupation dating back to 1913.

CITING CQ GLOBAL RESEARCHER

Sample formats for citing these reports in a bibliography include the ones listed below. Preferred styles and formats vary, so please check with your instructor or professor.

MLA STYLE

Flamini, Roland. "Nuclear Proliferation." *CQ Global Researcher* 1 Apr. 2007: 1-24.

APA STYLE

Flamini, R. (2007, April 1). Nuclear proliferation. *CQ Global Researcher*, 1, 1-24.

CHICAGO STYLE

Flamini, Roland. "Nuclear Proliferation." *CQ Global Researcher*, April 1, 2007, 1-24.

Voices From Abroad:

STJEPAN MESIC
President, Croatia

Defending the truth

"We must be ready to fend off increasingly frequent attempts by history revisionists and anti-Communists who have confused the notions of Communism as an idea, Bolshevism as practice and anti-Fascism on the soil of Yugoslavia as the struggle led by Communists. We must defend the historical truth."

HINA news agency (Croatia), June 2009

ELIZABETH CHOULDIAN
Communications Director
Armenian National
Committee of America

The voices of truth

"Only by formally recognizing the Armenian genocide can the United States and democratic countries around the world send a clear message that they stand with the voices of truth in Turkey."

Turkish Daily News, December 2008

CHEON HEUI-WAN
Spokesman, Korean
Teachers and Education
Workers' Union
South Korea

Changing government, changing history

"It is unprecedented in Korean history to switch textbooks in such a hurried way. It's obvious to anybody

that this is happening because the government has changed."

Yonhap news agency (South Korea), December 2008

SERGEY MARKOV
Director, Institute for
Political Studies
Russia

'Russophobia' persists

"It is known that the organizers of the campaign to mark the Holodomor anniversary in Ukraine are actively using a lot of falsified sources. The desire to flare up Russophobia and anti-Semitism is the root of attempts to falsify history because without falsifying history it would be impossible to do this."

Rossiya (Russia), March 2009

ORLANDO FIGES
Professor of Russian
History, University of
London

Communism isn't Nazism

"It is infuriating to have my views misrepresented on such a sensitive issue and at a time when the Russian government has made legal threats against historians who do not share its views on the history of the Second World War. For the record, I have never equated communism with Nazism."

The Guardian (England), September 2009

MANOHAR PARRIKAR
Former Chief Minister,
Goa, India

Why change books?

"History doesn't change so there is no need to change history books again and again. Why do you change history books?"

Times of India, August 2009

ALEKSANDR ALEKSEYEV
Former ambassador for
Russia, Serbia

History matters

"We [Serbia and Russia] have a shining shared history. Not only were we on the same side [during World War II], we jointly liberated . . . the former Yugoslavia. . . . Many researcher-historians are trying to alter the historical truth, which is why our joint assertions about our own role in the victory against Hitler and fascism will have great political significance."

Vecernje Novosti (Serbia), October 2009

HAYK DEMOYAN
Director, Armenian
Genocide Museum-Institute
Armenia

Turkey fears historical reality

"Fear of rewriting history is the main fear of modern Turkey. It is a fear of facing historical reality and causing a total collapse of the ideological axis that modern republican Turkey was formed around."

The Guardian (England), September 2008

KIM DO-YEON
Education Minister,
South Korea

Leaning leftward

"It is not right to disparage our triumphant modern history. It seems the current history textbooks and education are turned somewhat leftward."

Korea Times (South Korea), May 2008

