Introduction

The deliberate and systematic destruction of an entire people or ethnic group has been called the crime of all crimes. We are unable to comprehend rampant mass violence against a group of defenceless civilians solely aimed at annihilating them. Yet mass violence has always been a part of the history of mankind. The 20th and 21st centuries have even seen the worst episodes of mass violence, despite all pretensions of civilisation.

Conflict between and against ethnic groups has become a major part of political violence in the 20th century. Repeatedly, ethnic cleansing was used by states as a means to achieve national statehood and unity. Throughout history, religion has been an important motive in the killing of civilians. But the 19th century saw other factors, such as the merges of nations and class. Ideology turned out to be the force behind genocide. Bureaucratic efficiency, coupled with technological progress, shows us that violence can have disastrous, large-scale and irrevocable consequences.

1. The Holocaust paradigm

The genocide of the Jews in Europe, known as the Holocaust, is a terrifying example of how mass violence can be used to exterminate an entire population. That, in effect, was the objective of the Holocaust: the mass murder of the Jews of Europe and the destruction of the Jewish people as a whole. The Holocaust provided the background to the Genocide Convention that was adopted by the member states of the United Nations on 9 December 1948. The term genocide was formulated by the Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin, and his definition of genocide is used to this day.[1]

Research into other cases of genocide uses the Holocaust as a benchmark, whether consciously or subconsciously. This becomes evident in the methodology and the use of related terms such as ‘victims’, ‘perpetrators’ and ‘bystanders’. When cases of mass violence and genocide are analysed or discussed, the Holocaust is often used as an example. This is known as the Holocaust paradigm.

2. Comparative research

This guidebook examines the Holocaust alongside a number of other genocides. Its primary aim is not to make a comparison in itself. However, analysing the similarities and differences can be a starting point for discussing how various cases of mass violence come about; about the fate of the victims, the background of the perpetrators and the involvement of witnesses to the mass murder. This analysis may reveal shared characteristics, such as ideology, a regime with revolutionary and utopian ambitions, internal division and circumstances of war.[2] At the same time, comparisons may reveal aspects of genocide that indicate significant differences. Differences might occur in the general context, the ideology and the political consequences, the international context and the nature of the conditions of war. Studying the Holocaust alongside other cases of genocide can help to clarify questions and suggest answers.

Every genocide has its own character and context. There are good reasons for being conscientious when comparing the Holocaust to other genocides. Generally speaking, processes of mass violence involve various phenomena in different contexts. The mass murders in Cambodia, those in Rwanda and the Holocaust were carried out under very different circumstances. Some researchers oppose to using the term genocide, as the general definition of genocide does not encompass all the complexities and differences. The definition does not, for example, include political killings of groups. Comparing cases of genocide can lead to simplification and can invoke unrealistic expectations.

Some researchers argue that other genocides cannot stand the comparison with the Holocaust. Firstly, because of the aforementioned differing circumstances of each of the genocides. Some scholars, such as historian Yehuda Bauer, accept the comparison but acknowledge the fact that the Holocaust was unparalleled in many ways. The Genocide Convention of 1948 mentions the intent to destroy a group in whole or in part. Bauer feels that here lies an essential difference. If the intention is to destroy every member of a group without exception, then that group ultimately has no chance of survival. Bauer and others consider this to be one of the decisive differences between the Holocaust and other cases of genocide. According to Bauer, it was the intention of the Nazis to wipe out all Jews, without exception. This is what made the Holocaust the most extreme form of genocide as well as a paradigm for every genocide, whenever and wherever it may occur.[3]

Bauer mentions some other aspects that are unique to the Holocaust, naming four of them in addition to the intent of destroying every single Jew. On the basis of these aspects Bauer refers to the Holocaust as a genocide ‘without precedent’:

1. The Germans killed Jews wherever they could: it was a universal genocide;
2. The core of National Socialist ideology was anti-Semitism, which was solely aimed against Jews;

3. The aim of National Socialism was a society based on a racial hierarchy in which there was no place for the Jews;
4. The National Socialists wanted to destroy the roots of European civilisation. The Jews were perceived as a remnant of this, which is why they had to be destroyed.

Thus argued, some historians consider that treating the Holocaust within the general historical context of mass violence is 'diverting attention from what was unique about the annihilation of the Jews'. Others point to the danger that non-exclusive attention to the Holocaust may open the door to diminishment and possible denial. In some countries this could serve political goals. Diminishment of such severe crimes could stand in the way of people, perpetrators and bystanders alike, being held accountable for aiding and abetting in the persecution of the Jews.[4]

Yet there are important reasons for comparing the Holocaust to other genocides. For example, the term 'genocide' itself was conceived against the backdrop of the destruction of the Jews in Europe. Holocaust studies can be seen as the starting point for research into other genocides. Comparative studies allow us to make a distinction between the specific characteristics of the Holocaust and those of other cases of genocides. They also demonstrate how studying the Holocaust can help to provide insight into processes of genocide. Historian Ian Kershaw considers knowledge about the Third Reich to have taught an important lesson about the dark side of civilised society; how genocide can seem justifiable given the 'right' circumstances.

Simultaneously, knowledge about other genocides can provide new insights into aspects of the Holocaust. Historian Christopher Browning, for example, feels that the genocide in Rwanda sheds new light on perpetrator motives for genocide in general.[5]

3. Lessons from the past?

The Holocaust has become the paradigm in genocide studies. Historian Donald Bloxham argues that we can learn lessons from the past by comparing the Holocaust to other genocides. He is also keen to avoid creating a 'hierarchy' in which one genocide is seen as being 'worse' than another.

The millions of victims of genocidal violence in the 20th century are testimony to the ever present danger of genocide. There is good reason for taking the threat of genocide and mass violence seriously. Genocide prevention is an important issue. Great effort is being put into analysing cases of genocide and identifying common characteristics. These may be circumstances or events which, if detected at an early stage, could act as a warning of impending mass violence. Legal scholar Gregory Stanton identifies eight stages in the genocidal process: classification, symbolisation, dehumanisation, organisation, polarisation, preparation, extermination and denial. This supposition has given rise to research aimed at preventing genocide in the future, despite the awareness that any chances of successful prevention are small.[6]

4. Teaching about the Holocaust and other genocides

The Holocaust is vastly documented and knowledge is widely available — about the victims, the perpetrators and the bystanders; about the Third Reich and the ideology behind the mass destruction of the Jews; and also about the war that gave way to the genocidal process. Yet knowledge about other cases of mass violence and genocide especially tailored to secondary school education is far less easy to come by. News reports on ethnic violence or genocide denial give rise to questions among students and teachers. Those who are involved in secondary school education concerning the Holocaust will also want to refer to other cases of genocide.

Discussing the Holocaust might provoke many questions. How much did the victims know about what was going to happen to them? What led the perpetrators to their murderous behaviour? Would it have been possible to help the victims? How could a system come about that spawned such crimes? Could a catastrophe of this magnitude ever happen again? What are the implications of genocide denial? This book attempts to address these questions to their fullest extent.

A committee of international specialists in the field of Holocaust education compiled a report in which comparative studies between the Holocaust and other genocides are encouraged. At the same time, knowledge of modern genocides is often limited.[7] This book intends to provide basic, but fundamental, knowledge on genocide. Moreover, each of the articles refers to relevant and often in-depth literature on the subject. Teachers can use the conveniently arranged material in this textbook to answer questions along with their students and thus make an attempt to interpret both historical and present-day cases of genocide and mass violence.

All authors were asked to address certain issues and questions when asked which aspects of genocide should be covered when teaching the subject:

- What caused the genocide and what were the specific circumstances?
- How does a genocidal process develop once it has started? What factors play a role? What, for instance, is the role of ideology and propaganda in mobilising mass violence?
- How are genocides ended? What is the role of external powers and military intervention?
- What happens in a society in the aftermath of genocide? Is the genocide acknowledged? Is there any accountability? How are the victims treated? Is remembrance an important topic?
- Could genocide be prevented?[8]

The editors of this guidebook made a selection from various cases of genocide and mass violence. The first chapter provides a brief overview of the Holocaust which, in addition to providing an introduction to the subject, also serves as a benchmark for other genocides. The

following chapter addresses the mass murder of the Armenians, on which the formulation of the concept of genocide was largely based. The subsequent chapters cover a number of cases of modern genocide: the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and Cambodia. The chapter on the concept of genocide and developments in international law establishes a link between the various subjects. Additionally, a website has been developed to encourage further reading. On this website (www.holocaustandgenocide.nl) relevant articles are published, and all images are downloadable.

5. Task Force for Holocaust education

This guidebook was initiated during the 2011 Dutch chairmanship of the Task Force for International Cooperation on Holocaust Education, Remembrance and Research (ITF). The ITF, an intergovernmental body with the purpose of strengthening the memory of the Holocaust, now has 31 member states. The ITF — and this book — are anchored in the so-called Stockholm Declaration of 2000, in particular the following words:

'We must strengthen the moral commitment of our peoples, and the political commitment of our governments, to ensure that future generations can understand the causes of the Holocaust and reflect upon its consequences.' The declaration also speaks of the solemn responsibility to fight the evils of 'genocide, ethnic cleansing, racism, anti-Semitism and xenophobia'.[9]

In this spirit the Dutch chair added that 'the ITF should speak out on subjects such as the significance of the Holocaust and its relationship to other, more recent, genocides, as well as the different historical interpretations, and the mandate of the ITF regarding other groups of victims'.[10]

Under the auspices of the Dutch chair, both organisational and academic ambitions were addressed. On 27 and 28 November 2011, the Dutch delegation, operating on behalf of the Anne Frank Foundation, Herinneringscentrum Kamp Westerbork, the Hollandsche Schouwburg and the NIOD Institute for War, Holocaust and Genocide Studies, hosted the conference *The Holocaust and Other Genocides: Uses, Abuses and Misuses of the Holocaust Paradigm* in the Peace Palace in The Hague. Earlier that year, from 10 to 12 April, the expert meeting *Education on the Holocaust and Other Genocides* was held. The recommendations that were formulated during this meeting were used as the basis for this guidebook.[11]

The editorial board and several other advisors also made important contributions to this book. After establishing the authors' guidelines, the editorial board made invaluable comments on each chapter and on the book in general. Karen Polak of the Anne Frank Foundation and Annemiek Gringold of the Jewish Historical Museum applied themselves to this task with great enthusiasm. The suggestions made by Maurice Kramer (Gymnasium Haganum), Dienke Hondius (VU University Amsterdam) and Maria van Haperen (NIOD) — always referring to class-room practice — were invaluable. We are very grateful for the academic advice of

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This textbook is made available to secondary school teachers in 31 countries, mostly within Europe. We hope that it will stimulate inspired teaching and well-grounded discussions on the Holocaust and other genocides.

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