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# The Historiography of Genocide

Edited by

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## The Armenian Genocide

*Donald Bloxham and Fatma Müge Göçek*

### Introduction

In September 2005, Turkish scholars and intellectuals critical of the Turkish official historiography on the Armenian deportations and massacres of 1915 convened a conference in Istanbul to analyze and discuss the fate of the Armenians at the end of the Ottoman Empire. Among the many discussions held, one in particular was noteworthy in that it focused on those individuals who produce the Turkish official historiography. It had so transpired that immediately before the conference, the nationalist opponents to the conference had employed the Social Science Citation Index, a measure indicating one's degree of influence in the international scholarly community, to criticize – albeit unsuccessfully – the international intellectual standing of the conference conveners. As one of the conveners, the historian Halil Berktaş, discussed and criticized this tactic during the conference, he noted that he himself had conducted a similar citation check on the individuals who produced the Turkish official historiography only to find out that in opposition to the dozens and even hundreds of citations of conference conveners, there was not a single citation of the works of any of the major proponents of the official Turkish historiography such as Yusuf Halacoglu and Hikmet Özdemir. Yet, even though these official proponents never get cited in the international scholarly community, they are extremely influential within Turkey where the Turkish official historiography still reigns triumphant.

Indeed, there are at the moment two totally mutually exclusive historiographies on the Armenian deportations and deaths of 1915, one that is constructed by the international scholarly community and approved by the Armenian survivors and the other assembled by the proponents of the Turkish state. It is necessary at this juncture to outline the main arguments of each historiography. According to the historiography of the Western scholarly community and the Armenian diaspora (which we will refer to in shorthand as the

'Western' historiography), the Armenian deportations and deaths of 1915 comprise one of the first genocides of the twentieth century, a crime against humanity that occurred during 1915–23 with the intent by the Ottoman state to annihilate its Armenian subjects, causing the systematic destruction of between 800,000 and 1.5 million Armenians. The Turkish official historiography contends instead that the same events did not comprise a genocide but were actually reciprocal massacres that occurred between the Turks and the Armenians with unintentional destruction due to sickness and travel of Armenian subjects deported from the warfront, resulting in about 400,000 Armenian deaths as opposed to at least 1.5 million Turkish wartime deaths during the same time period.

In terms of the historical sources each historiography employs to support its argument, the Western scholarly community refers to comparable empirical cases across time and space and employs the eyewitness accounts of mostly Western missionaries, travellers, merchants and other foreign professionals as well as the diplomatic correspondence of mostly Western European and/or American states, and oral histories and accounts of the Armenian survivors. Instead, those who support the Turkish official historiography refer primarily to the archival documents of the Ottoman state, the confiscated documents of the Armenian revolutionary committees in the Ottoman archives, and the correspondence of contemporaneous Ottoman government leaders; they also selectively employ Western sources after reformulating the information contained in such a manner that it either appears to support or at least does not challenge the official Turkish position.

It will probably not be surprising to note that the Western scholarly community finds the official Turkish historiography on the Armenian issue to be unscientific, propagandistic and rhetorical and therefore does not at all engage with it, while the proponents of the Turkish official historiography dismiss the discourse of the Western scholarly community as Eurocentric, imperialist and self-serving. Even though this unwillingness of the Western scholarly community to critically engage Turkish official historiography due to the latter's disregard of scientific criteria in research does to a certain degree delegitimize the official Turkish stand internationally in academic circles, it nevertheless fails to fully destabilize, deconstruct and obliterate it both outside and especially within Turkey. Given the hold of the Turkish official historiography especially within Turkish society and the ranks of state and government, there is thus still an urgent need to engage it critically.

The particular theoretical juncture in the humanities and social sciences has highlighted the insights attained from the field of subaltern studies where scholars successfully deconstructed the hegemony of the British colonial presence in the Indian past – and therefore in its present and future – through critical readings of texts against the grain. The historical contextualization of such

texts not only revealed embedded meanings and power relations, but also destabilized the authority of the same texts. This particular theoretical insight could likewise be applied to the Turkish official historiography to historically contextualize it within Ottoman and Turkish history with the intent to eventually destabilize and disempower it. That is the first aim of this chapter. The second aim is to assess the state of the Western historiography, and attempt to thematize its main interpretative debates – some of which are also politicized – with the implicit goal of asking where we go from ‘here’.

### Official Turkish historiography in historical context

The analysis of the texts of approximately 200 works that comprise the Turkish official historiography on the Armenian issue reveals three insights about its construction. The first insight is that the access of both the Turkish state and society to their past centred strictly around the Republican experience so that the official starting point of history was either 1923, namely the year of the official foundation of the Turkish Republic, or 1919, which marked the commencement of the Nationalist War of Independence leading to the formation of the Republic. Both of these dates indirectly caused the previous time period including the crucial year of 1915 to be relegated to the realm of pre-history.

The second insight that also involved periodization was that the famous 36-hour long *Speech* Mustafa Kemal Atatürk gave in 1928, at the annual meeting of the Republican People’s Party (RPP) he had founded, where he narrated his own version of the Turkish War of Independence, provided the blueprint of the Turkish official historiography. His narrative too commenced with the now famous sentence ‘I alighted in Samsun on the 19th of May 1919.’ Indeed, both historical vantage points of Mustafa Kemal, namely 1928 when he delivered his narrative and 1919 which was the latter’s starting point were both after 1915, past the point at which the Armenians were both physically and symbolically out of the Republican vision of both the past and the future. Hence, according to this formulation, anything before 1919–1923 was regarded as pre-history in that the events were not contextualized, and the social actors did not have agency except in predetermined, premeditated ways that led to the establishment of the Republic; what succeeded likewise recognized the agency of only the ethnic Muslim Turks at the expense of all others.

This Republican narrative based on the accounts of Mustafa Kemal asserted, in relation to the Armenians in particular and the minorities in general, that all recognized minorities were to receive equal treatment as citizens. It all disclaimed any continuity of the past violence exercised against them, and when pressed, pointed to the Armenian alliance with other powers against Ottoman state as a reason for their deportation and occasional unintended massacres. The historical contextualization of this Republican narrative also pointed to

two other narratives that preceded and succeeded it, namely the imperial and post-nationalist narratives of the same events.

The Turkish official historiography on the Armenians can thus be contextualized within a broader temporal framework into three distinct narratives, namely: (1) *The Ottoman Investigative Narrative* based on the contemporaneous accounts pertaining to the Ottoman Armenians, including the Armenian deportations and deaths of 1915, published either by the Turkish state or by opposing political groups; (2) *The Republican Defensive Narrative* based on the works written with the intent to justify, document and prove the nationalist master narrative of the Turkish state that explicitly denies the allegation that an Armenian genocide occurred in 1915, often published or kept in circulation by the Turkish state; and (3) *The Post-Nationalist Critical Narrative* found in recent works critical of the nationalist master narrative, but that do not, with some exceptions, focus specifically on 1915; their concern is much more on the silences in contemporary Turkish society pertaining to its history and also its ethnic composition. The main parameters of this critical engagement will be presented next.

### The Ottoman investigative narrative on the events of 1915

The works in this category consist of the memoirs<sup>1</sup> of Ottoman officials such as Said, Kamil and Talat Pashas and Mehmed Asaf and Dr. Mehmed Reşid Beys, the investigation records<sup>2</sup> of the Ottoman military tribunals that tried those accused of perpetrating the massacres, the official reports<sup>3</sup> prepared by the Ottoman state such as the one by Hüseyin Nazım Pasha, the collections<sup>4</sup> of Ottoman documents ostensibly published by the Turkish nation-state from the State and Military Archives to deny the genocide allegations, the report<sup>5</sup> of the Ottoman government of the time, and the reports<sup>6</sup> of the Turkish negotiations of the Lausanne treaty.

The critical reading of these works reveals two distinguishing characteristics of the Ottoman investigative narrative. The first is that none of these works originally penned around the time of the events of 1915 question the occurrence of the Armenian ‘massacres’ (genocide was not a term then employed); they instead focus on the question of what happened and why. The second is the very strong tension revealed between two transforming world views. Some of the authors maintain a more traditional Ottoman imperial view and regard the existing structure of the empire as just and the position of the Armenian subjects within it as reformable: these also blame the events on easily manipulated Armenian subjects and corrupt Muslim officials. Other authors, however, display a more ‘proto-national’ state view and perceive the existing structure of the empire as inadequate, and the position of the Armenian subjects within it as problematic: while they are not quite clear about what to do about these inadequacies and problems, they give priority to the preservation

of the state and its Muslims over all other concerns and justify their actions accordingly.

The central tension in the Ottoman investigative narrative emerges over the attribution of responsibility for the crimes committed against the Armenian subjects. When reviewed chronologically, the memoirs of Ottoman officials reveal a shift in the allocation of responsibility as the later ones who are increasingly imbued with proto-nationalist sentiments view the crimes they committed as a duty in service for the Turkish fatherland. The tension over responsibility mounts especially after World War I with the defeat of the Ottoman Empire when the Ottoman state acknowledges what happened, and prints the proceedings of the Ottoman military tribunals that tried some of the perpetrators as supplements to the official newspaper *Takvim-i Vekayi*. Yet the advent and eventual victory of the Turkish War of Independence destroy the Allied efforts to bring the perpetrators in front of justice; with increased nationalism, the newspaper issues that contain these military tribunal records start to slowly disappear to such a degree that currently no complete sets exist in any Turkish public library.

Soon after the military tribunals, especially with the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish nation-state, the responsibility for the crimes gradually shifts from the perpetrators to the victims. Ottoman official reports first note the seditious activities of the Armenian nationalist committees and the Armenian atrocities against the Turks in the eastern provinces to justify the Armenian deaths and massacres of 1915. Significant in this shift is the strong connection between the stance of the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP; the perpetrators of the deportations and massacres) that justifies the Armenian tragedy as an unfortunate consequence of their attempts to protect the Ottoman state, and the Nationalist movement that gradually adopts this Unionist stance as its own. The Ottoman state documents published by the recent Turkish nation-state also repeat the argument of their predecessors. And this argument in turn still subsists in more essentialized and radicalized form in the subsequent Republican defensive narrative that starts to get articulated in the 1950s.

These two concurrent narratives during the transition from the Ottoman Empire to the Turkish nation-state reconcile to produce the Republican narrative. The emergence of a Turkish 'nation-state' on the ashes of the Ottoman Empire precludes the discussion of any claims on the homeland the Turks had now identified as theirs; it is no accident that Mustafa Kemal states, and the Turkish state constantly continues to reiterate, that there is not 'a hand-span of their fatherland's soil' (*bir karış vatan toprağı*) they would give up without fighting until the last drop of their blood (*kanımızın son damlasına kadar*). The people's willingness to annihilate themselves for a vision demonstrates both the ideological strength of nationalism as well as its incredibly destructive power.

This nationalist tone dominates the Republican defensive narrative that is also coloured by two significant historical occurrences. One is the period of Russian occupation in 1914 and later 1917, as well as that of the Allied occupation after 1918 marked by the massacres of the Muslim Turkish populace by the Armenian committees. The Armenian massacres of the Turks which probably lead to the death of 40,000–60,000 Muslim Turks become central to the Republican narrative and are employed to counter the 1915 massacres. The second historical occasion is provided by the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCOAG) and Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) murders of innocent Turkish diplomats throughout the world in the late 1970s into the 1980s to draw world attention to the Armenian genocide. These murders present Republican Turkey with the opportunity to include, in a nationalist move, the avenging of these deaths in its narrative; the murders only strengthen the Republican resolve to resist the Armenian claims, and further polarize their stand on the issue to a total denial of the Armenian massacres of 1915.

#### The Republican defensive narrative on the events of 1915

The works considered in this category mostly emerge as clusters of analyses within the nationalist paradigm. The first cluster consists of two works<sup>7</sup> published in 1953 which comprehensively cover the previous existing knowledge on the Armenians. The second cluster of works<sup>8</sup> written by direct or indirect state support in the 1970s and 1980s in reaction to the groups JCOAG and ASALA murders draws selectively upon the first cluster. The third cluster<sup>9</sup> comprising the works that emerge in the 1990s until the present either reproduces the same arguments made in the 1970s and 1980s, or attempts to bring in a new perspective while remaining within the nationalist paradigm.

The Republican nationalist narrative traces the origins of the 1915 tragedy to the intervention of the Western powers in the affairs of the Empire, and argues that the subversive acts of the Armenian committee members justify the Armenian relocations and subsequent massacres. This narrative fails to recognize either the significance of the pre-existing Ottoman structural relations between the Muslims and non-Muslim minorities as well as the subsequent naturalized Muslim superiority it produced or the fact that the Turkish nationalism was one of the many nationalisms that emerged during this time period with claims that were no more just than those made any of the other social groups, but that just happened to triumph over the others at their expense.

This non-recognition cloaked by a Turkish nationalism identifying the preservation of the Turkish state at all costs has led the Republican state to assign the entire moral responsibility for the Armenian deaths and massacres to anyone other than the Ottoman Turkish perpetrators. As a consequence of this non-recognition, the Armenian victims themselves have tragically and ironically emerged in the Republican narrative as the main perpetrators of the

crimes alongside the guilty Western powers. Any feeble attempt to assign blame to the Turkish perpetrators is immediately dismissed in this narrative with the defence that what happened was a tragic but necessary act for the preservation of the 'state'.

If one reviews these works chronologically to depict patterns of meaning, no significant studies on the Armenian deaths and massacres appear until the two works in 1953 cited above and, when they do appear, they do so with the declarations of loyalty to the Turkish nation-state at every opportunity. There is then another gap in scholarship until 1976 when the scholarship that appears is even more strongly dominated by Turkish nationalism: its authors not only give their pledge of allegiance to the Turkish nation-state as citizens, but employ historical knowledge selectively to preserve Turkish state interests at all costs, including the cost of critical scholarship.

The first 30-year gap right after the foundation of the Turkish Republic might be due, in addition to the general trauma and devastation of the war years which at least everyone in Turkey must have wanted to put aside, to the close link between the Unionist leadership perpetrating the Armenian massacres that not only funded the War of Independence but also staffed it<sup>10</sup> and the leadership of the Turkish nation-state. Another reason was that by 1926, Mustafa Kemal had effectively pacified the Unionist leadership he regarded as a potential threat to his rule. The series of the traumatic social reforms the young Turkish Republic underwent during Mustafa Kemal's reign within the format of single-party rule also precluded the public discussion of significant social and historical issues. The subsequent promulgation of the laws of treason against the Turkish state and against the person of Mustafa Kemal rendered any mention and interpretation of the events that countered the official version subversive as well. After Mustafa Kemal's death, the same political framework dominated during the rule of his successor and close friend İsmet İnönü. During this period, Turkey also had to come to terms with the trauma of the Second World War that occurred around it. The 1948 transition to the multi-party system and the subsequent sweeping electoral defeat of the reigning RPP of Kemal and İnönü initially liberalized the censorship over the media, leading to the emergence of the works of the two authors Esat Uras and Çark.

The second gap of 23 years until 1976 was due to the 1960 military purge of the popularly elected Democrat Party from power and the reintroduction of censorship and state control over scholarship and the knowledge it produced. Yet this state of affairs changed once again in the late 1970s because of an external development, that of the assassination of Turkish diplomats by the radical Armenian group ASALA in an attempt to draw international attention to the Armenian genocide. The defensive Republican narrative became even more polarized during this period as it selectively drew on the previous Ottoman

documents and the two early-Republican strands of scholarship to sustain its ascendance to this day.

In short, the official state scholars who started to research the Armenian deportations and massacres of 1915 naturalized the inherent nationalism because of their inability to historicize the pre-1919–1923 period. As a consequence they could only identify as the culprits of the Armenian tragedy the two 'others' of Turkish nationalism, namely the Western powers and the Ottoman Armenians themselves. Their interpretations of the actions of these two 'others' were so coloured by Turkish nationalism that they failed to see the actions of the Ottoman Turks had been just as destructive. As a consequence, they defended their view of the events, and not only dismissed the claims of the massacres, but argued instead that the Turks themselves had been not the perpetrators, but the victims. It was only within the current post-nationalist era that a more critical and self-reflective reading of the Turkish historiography placing the blame equally on all social groups including the Turks has become possible.

#### **The post-nationalist critical narrative on the events of 1915**

The works considered in this category again emerge in three disparate clusters in terms of the knowledge they provide on both the Ottoman and Turkish Armenians. The first cluster<sup>11</sup> comprises of works either written specifically on the events of 1915 with the intent to both understand the historical context within which the events occur and therefore critically analyze the contemporary Turkish denial of these events, or works with the intent to inform the contemporary Turkish reader about the historical transformation of the Armenians from the past to the immediate present.

The second cluster<sup>12</sup> contains studies on recent Turkish history on topics that do not directly focus on the Armenians, but which provide ample new information on the historical background of the events of 1915 because they do not silence the role of the Ottoman minorities in their accounts in the way that the Republican defensive narrative does. And the third cluster<sup>13</sup> includes literary works that reveal the worlds of meaning the Armenians created within both the Ottoman and the Republican periods where the Armenians emerge as cultural actors. It is important to note that none of these works are written to defend a particular thesis or are supported in their publication, in one capacity or another, by the Turkish state. They are also not coloured by Turkish nationalism, but assume instead a post-nationalist stance which leads to their characterization as the knowledge products of the emerging civil society in contemporary Turkey.

The most significant dimension of this post-nationalist critical narrative is its willingness to recognize Turkish society not as an imagined community of nationalist compatriots of Turks, but rather as a cultural mosaic that at present

includes many diverse social groups such as the Kurds and Alevis, and also the much atrophied former minority groups such as the Armenians, Assyrians, Greeks and the Jews. At this particular moment, Turkish society at large is involved in an exploration of these social groups through their literature and historical narrative. If this exploration gradually transforms into a larger social and political movement around the recognition of human rights, and is then able to overcome the resistance of the nationalist elements embedded in society and especially in the military, one can conjecture that the Armenians deportations and massacres of 1915 would then be recognized in contemporary Turkey as the genocide that they were. This chapter hopes to contribute to that effort by historicizing and thereby disempowering the current hegemony of the Turkish official historiography.

### Trends and dilemmas in 'Western' historiography

One result of disempowering the official Turkish historiography will hopefully be to create space for depoliticized discussion of some of the issues that that historiography has traditionally used in support of its blame and denial narratives. The Armenian genocide is certainly in need of full subjection to the range of legitimate if frequently competing historical perspectives and contextualizations, uninhibited by overtly political considerations. Thus, though in the very most important sense – regarding the approximate scale and systematization of the murders of 1915–16 – the Western historiography is on safe ground, areas of the whole have been shaped by Armenian nationalist concerns, and others have been rather marginalized because of their potential to upset smooth narratives of persecution and Armenian suffering. Despite their mutual exclusivity, the 'Western' historiography has been shaped – perhaps distorted – by its very rejection of the official Turkish historiography, just as the machinery of denial has proven itself sensitive to developments in Western scholarship and Armenian memory politics, as the peaks of political and scholarly activity on both 'sides' from the late 1970s and from the late 1990s show.

In a recent overview of the historiography of the genocide as broadly defined – historiography, that is, including more popular accounts and public debates – Hans-Lukas Kieser identified five phases. The first phase covered the period of contemporary accounts at the time of the genocide, the First World War and the Greco-Turkish war; the second phase is the period from 1923–45, involving the production of some Armenian memorial literature; the third phase is the period from the UN Genocide Convention of 1948 to the first significant commemorative activism in Armenian communities in the 1960s; the fourth phase is the awakening of more specifically scholarly interest in the subject in the light of various factors including burgeoning interest in the Holocaust and genocide more generally, but also the Justice Commandos of the Armenian

Genocide (JCOAG) and ASALA assassinations; and the fifth phase is what Kieser called the 'transnational, post-nationalist period in history writing', which had its roots in a combination of the new geopolitical circumstances of the post-Cold War period and the new moral context after ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia further discredited ethno-nationalism.<sup>14</sup>

The final phase clearly corresponds with the aforementioned production within Turkey of the 'post-nationalist critical narrative' on 1915. It is the first time when in any substantial measure there has been cooperation between scholars of late Ottoman history and Armenologists as well as Holocaust and genocide scholars. The second half of this chapter is concerned approximately with the fourth and fifth phases of Kieser's schema – the periods of developing professional scholarship in the West and the Armenian diaspora. It does not seek to distinguish sharply between those final two phases since some of the most abidingly influential interpretations of the genocide were written during, or have been strongly influenced by, ideas current in the earlier of the two periods. In other words, more overtly nationalist interpretations, which tend to be more essentialist in their assessment of the origins and course of the events of 1915, continue to co-exist with post-nationalist interpretations.

### History and politics

Perhaps the most obvious way in which politics has intruded into history-writing is in the matter of the post-World War I territorial settlement. This is particularly so in the issue of Armenian irredentist goals in eastern Anatolia, though the spectre of genocide has also been invoked (by both sides) in the Armenian-Azeri conflict over the contested region of Karabakh. There is certainly no uniform position on the issue of border revision either in the Republic of Armenia or the diaspora,<sup>15</sup> but the main political party of that diaspora, the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, for instance, still cites as its twin prime goals recognition of the Armenian genocide and a return to the terms of the Sèvres treaty of 1920 gifting a 'greater Armenia' in the Caucasus and the eastern provinces of present-day Turkey. The territorial question was fore-grounded in Peter Balakian's 2003 best-seller *The Burning Tigris*,<sup>16</sup> which is extensively concerned with the question of the abortive American sponsorship of an independent Armenian state in formerly Ottoman and Tsarist territory in the interwar period, and implicitly endorses the justness of the Sèvres terms. Neither ethical nor historical distinctions are clearly made between discussion of America's relationship to the genocide and its relationship to Sèvres, but it should be underlined that there is no necessary relationship between the two. One is a matter of historical truth and morality, the other a more overtly political question with ongoing ramifications for the huge non-Armenian groups living in Anatolia.

The question of other ethnic groups in the Ottoman Empire leads us on to a much more complicated, nuanced matter that has still to be fully addressed in



the western historiography: the relationship between the Armenian genocide and other coercive state demographic policies both in and beyond the Ottoman Empire. The comparative scholarship emerging on the genocide has tended to focus above all on the Holocaust, for reasons that surely spring in part from the desire for political recognition.<sup>17</sup> Yet there may be at least as many similarities between the Armenian genocide and Tsarist assaults on Circassians from the mid-nineteenth century, or on the Kyrgyz of central Asia during the First World War, or in recent decades the Serbian attacks on particular inhabitants of Bosnia and Kosovo, where the perpetrators in each case were Christian, the victims were Muslim. Even if the scope is limited to the crimes of ethnic nationalism in the near east and the Balkans in the first half of the twentieth century, a full, comparative examination of crimes related to genocide would have to take into account the ethnic cleansing of Muslims from the new south-eastern European states from the 'eastern crisis' of 1875–8 through the Balkan Wars of 1912–13 and beyond.

Within the Ottoman Empire, insofar as it is possible to judge from the available scholarship, the Armenian genocide was perhaps somewhat more systematic and complete than the assaults on the Syriac-speaking Christian communities, very extensive and genocidal though these attacks were.<sup>18</sup> Collectively, Armenian suffering was more intense, and state intent more explicitly murderous, than was to be the case in either the post-war purge of members of the Greek Orthodox religion from Anatolia and the reciprocal purge of Muslims from Greek territory, or the prolonged Kemalist assault on the Kurds. Though these episodes are testament to the gathering strength of ethnic nationalism in the region, in the Greek case, inter-migration was the ultimate end; in the Kurdish case, assimilation, if Turkish policies frequently shaded into mass slaughter, as during the mid-1920s and late-1930s. Indeed, within the wider history of inter-group massacre and forced displacement in the chain from central Asia through the Caucasus, Anatolia, the Balkans and eastern and central Europe from the mid-nineteenth century during the crisis and collapse of the Ottoman, Qing, Romanov and Habsburg empires, the Armenian genocide constitutes an unusually complete instance of communal obliteration.<sup>19</sup> This is something that the even greater extremity of the Holocaust has tended to obscure, and it is why even within this broader history of dislocation and suffering there are strong justifications for examining the Armenian case in its specificity. Bearing that specificity in mind should not, however, be at the cost of losing sight of other victim groups, for reasons both ethical and historical.

If the ethical reasons should be self-evident, it is worth underlining how undesirable it would be for the scholarship of the Armenian genocide to go down the same road as so much of the historiography of the Holocaust in marginalizing the experience of non-Jewish victims, particularly the hundreds of

thousands of Romanies and the many millions of Slavs who perished as a result of Nazi occupation and extermination policies. On the historical level, the fate of other groups provides a vital hermeneutical context for the murder of both Armenians and Jews in each of the World Wars. Recent scholarship based on Ottoman sources has revealed the extent to which Muslim as well as non-Muslim groups, including Laz, Circassians, Albanian, Bosnian and Georgian Muslims; 'Gypsies'; and some Arabs and Jews, were also moved around the empire during the war for purposes of assimilation and/or punishment.<sup>20</sup> The CUP clearly had a broader demographic rearrangement in mind, influenced, in part, by the campaigns of ethnic homogenization then underway in the Balkan states. Indeed, though there was no definite causal relationship between the ethnic cleansing of Balkan Muslims and the coming Armenian genocide, Muslim suffering on this scale did provide a model for the 'solution' of population 'problems' and exacerbated an already brutalized ethos of state demographic policy in the region.

As to the genocide itself, the major debates revolve around the precise evolution of Ottoman policy during the First World War, and the issue of state-Armenian relations and inter-ethnic relations prior to that conflict. Three sections of the second half of this essay deal in turn, therefore, with the matters of immediate causation; change and continuity in state ideology in the late Ottoman Empire; and changes in the Ottoman social structure over approximately its final century. Prior to that, however, is a brief consideration of the organization of the genocide.

### **The machinery of destruction**

A number of studies of the regional unfolding of the destruction process are in existence, and they amply illustrate the systematization of the deportation and killing.<sup>21</sup> Analysis of the development and dynamics of the deportations at an empire-wide level is limited, however, as are detailed studies of the central processes of decision-making.<sup>22</sup> Relatedly, there is still scope for debate about the precise extent of involvement across the regular government structure.

Though the breadth of participation in the destruction (with the Justice, Interior and War Ministries heavily involved) means that the Armenian genocide was ultimately a state project, its implementation was closely policed by the CUP. Indeed some cabinet ministers were in the first instance kept in the dark about the true course of Armenian policy.<sup>23</sup> In the lead-up to and during the war there was an attempt at fuller penetration of the state machinery by party representatives, as CUP emissaries were sent to the provinces and CUP members appointed to the state posts of provincial governorships. Yet this 'coordination' had reached nowhere near the levels achieved in the later 'totalitarian' states, and had to be pressed forward even during the genocide. Thus when general deportation had become policy it was rigidly enforced from

the power centre, with provincial governors shadowed by watchful 'responsible secretaries' – *kâtib-i mesul* – of the CUP to ensure appropriate execution of their instructions.<sup>24</sup> Reluctant officials were replaced by more enthusiastic ones, and sometimes even killed;<sup>25</sup> while the most enthusiastic killers in the provinces, men like Dr. Mehmed Reşid Bey in Diyarbakır and Cevdet Bey in Van, who set the pace for mass murder even before the fully fledged policy of genocide was in place, combined senior party posts and state posts.<sup>26</sup>

The deportation orders themselves contain no explicit sanction of mass murder. Doubtless the CUP leaders did not want to leave incriminating documentary evidence, but – presumably – nor did they wish to risk potential opposition from anyone in the larger governing structure with any qualms.<sup>27</sup> Yet testimony from various executors of the genocide at the few post-war trials conducted under the auspices of the new Ottoman government exposes the deliberate use of euphemism and camouflage in the instructions for 'care' of the deportees. It reveals that the onus was on outright killing, and the existence of oral and secret telegraph orders from Istanbul and local CUP functionaries to this effect,<sup>28</sup> though regional differences in the death-tolls exacted from the deportation convoys suggests that there was not complete uniformity in this 'second track' of orders. Further to the issue of concealment, the fact that much of the killing was done by irregulars does not alleviate the responsibility of the power centre, since the deployment of irregulars for 'dirty work' was an Ottoman (and Balkan) tradition. While it played a role in the Armenian genocide,<sup>29</sup> the regular Ottoman army had traditionally not been used regularly in attacks on internal communities. Such work had long been the preserve of better-qualified irregular specialists, which were an integral part of the state's arsenal. Their actions had traditionally had the acceptance and tacit compliance of the Ottoman authorities and provided the latter with plausible deniability. Unlike the regular army, irregulars were expected to live off plunder.<sup>30</sup>

#### Opportunities and catalysts: debates on proximate causation

Given the above factors, it should be no surprise that, as with the historiography of the 'final solution of the Jewish question', the central question of when, and therefore under what circumstances, the chief perpetrators decided on mass murder remains open. Such matters are particularly charged in the historiography of the fate of the Armenians, given the attempts by the CUP and later nationalist historians to portray the deportations as a militarily necessary response to Armenian insurgency. In the determination to undermine what Robert Melson has called the 'provocation thesis', the precise character of and stimuli for any armed Armenian action have become matters of great sensitivity, while a premium has been put upon finding a clear indication of genocidal intent emerging independent of any Armenian insurgent behaviour. These tendencies have dovetailed with the problem, generic to the writing of

any reconstructive history, of imposing a unified narrative from the perspective of posterity on complex events – the search, as it were, for a moment of origin at which it is later possible to say that an episode 'began'.

There is a point in 1915 by which traditional consensus suggested that a policy of general killing had definitely been arrived at. 'The Van uprising', which took place in the second half of April, writes Vahakn N. Dadrian, 'was a desperate and last-ditch effort to thwart the Turkish design to proceed with their matured plan of genocide by launching the massacre of that province's Armenian population as an initial step.'<sup>31</sup> This famous act, which ended in May with the establishment of Armenian rule in a major eastern Anatolian city, was according to this interpretation the pretext the CUP wanted to begin their pre-determined, empire-wide anti-Armenian programme. The first measure in the proper enactment of this plan, so the argument goes, was the decapitation of the Armenian nation with the mass arrests of political and social elites that began on 23–4 April.

The pretext theory is intuitively appealing. One can then retrospectively identify as preparations for genocide previous discriminatory measures, such as the disarming of Armenian soldiers in the Turkish armies – in February 1915 – and their assignment to labour battalions. Other historians opt for an earlier 'decisive' moment, as for instance with the intensification of anti-Armenian sentiment after the Ottoman defeat at the battle of Sarikamış in the Caucasus at the turn of 1914–15 by a Russian army aided by Armenian volunteer battalions comprised of Russian subjects and some Ottoman subjects.<sup>32</sup> Elsewhere, Dadrian has put greater emphasis on the pre-war years in the quest for genocidal intent, emphasizing variously the activation of the 'Special Organization' (Teşkilat-ı Mahsusa) – which murdered many of the deportees in 1915 – for irregular tasks during the earlier Balkan wars and even the CUP's congress of 1910 (others have focused on the 1911 congress<sup>33</sup>) pursuant to which measures of enforced cultural Turkification were introduced, revolving particularly around language use.<sup>34</sup> Taner Akçam, while emphasizing the meetings of the CUP's central committee in mid-March 1915 as the time when concrete decisions about deportation were taken, has also stressed the significance of pre-war CUP thinking (in the light of the Balkan wars of secession and, thereafter, the resurrection of the Armenian reform question on the international stage) about the ethnic homogenization of Anatolia.<sup>35</sup>

None of these interpretations is necessarily incompatible with the others. Everything depends upon how one interprets the idea of 'planning' and the relationship between aspiration to a 'purified' Anatolia, latent intent to act on that aspiration, and trigger moments crystallizing such intent, and, further, how one envisages the translation into state policy of ideas circulating among a relatively small elite. Any argument that the extirpation of the Armenians was *determined* before the war, however, needs to address the fact that the

deportations were not enacted immediately on the outbreak of war, nor immediately after the Sarikamış defeat, nor, indeed, immediately after the beginning of the Van rising. The idea that the CUP was simply waiting for an *opportunity* for genocide is further vulnerable given that when the major deportations from Eastern Anatolia did start, from the end of May, they did so at a distinctly awkward time in terms of orchestrating major population movements, as Russian forces were advancing into the region. This suggests that rather than thinking of moments of opportunity, the more accurate term might be a *catalyst*, in the proper sense of an element that by its introduction changes the nature of a situation.

Accordingly, there are other ways to interpret aspects of the escalation of anti-Armenian measures. One interpretation might involve putting greater stress on the paranoia that the CUP had inherited about the disruptive potential of even small revolutionary groups, in as much as they themselves had overturned the pre-1908 order of Sultan Abdülhamid II with a comparatively small number of insurgents.<sup>36</sup> This paranoia would only have been accentuated in World War I by the links, of which Istanbul was well aware, between the Russian Caucasus authorities and Armenian political parties with a cross-border constituency, and by the famous Armenian volunteer battalions attached to the Russian Caucasus army.<sup>37</sup> As for the disarmament and enslavement of Armenian soldiers in the Ottoman army, while this was certainly motivated by distrust of Armenians, it fed into a tradition of discrimination against non-Muslim soldiers in the allocation of military functions, through which Greeks also suffered, and, moreover, also initially served a practical purpose in terms of labour required for the war effort.<sup>38</sup> Contrary to popular belief, the Armenian military conscripts were not systematically murdered immediately upon their assignment to labour battalions but rather during the course of the general Armenian deportations themselves. Finally, the 23–4 April arrests could be seen as a reaction to the anticipated Anglo-French landings at Gallipoli on 25 April<sup>39</sup> and the news of the Van rising from 20 April.

Ottoman sources actually reveal uncertainty as to precise policy even at the beginning of May, more than a week after the 23–4 April arrests. On 2 May the military leadership requested of the Interior Ministry that Armenians in ‘rebellious’ parts of Van province either be forced over the Russian border or dispersed in Anatolia. As well as addressing the problem of insurgency, it was argued, this would provide a form of revenge for the Russian treatment of Caucasian Muslims during the war while vacating homes for those very refugees who had fled the Tsarist domains.<sup>40</sup> A week later the Interior Ministry issued corresponding orders for Van and parts of Erzurum and Bitlis provinces in the face of the Russian advance, formalizing a policy that had already begun with the settlement of Muslim refugees in the Mush district of Bitlis.<sup>41</sup> These deportations were still of a much smaller scale and a much more specific nature

than those that would occur after the general deportation order of 26–7 May, however, so it seems that the combination of the events in Van and the Russian advance provided a trigger for the escalation of CUP policy.

This does not mean that contingency plans for deportations from particular areas did not exist in advance of the decision for general deportation: they did, but the very tension in the expression ‘contingency plan’ perfectly encapsulates the difficulty of establishing what A. Dirk Moses has called ‘radical voluntarism’ among elites responsible for genocide.<sup>42</sup> Nor does it mean that there were not agents of the CUP who were seeking an excuse to target the Armenians – in fact, substantial massacres by the Special Organization and military units in the regions bordering Russia and Persia from the end of 1914 probably created the environment in which the Van Armenians were driven to take up arms in self-preservation. The point of emphasizing contingency is not the issue of precise ‘timing’ *per se*. Its weight lies in suggesting that the perpetrators’ conception of the Armenians as a collective, and of what to do with them, was still being shaped until quite late in the day – and in the truth that there is still a distance to travel between persecution and even localized murder and outright genocide. Uncomfortable though it may be, some – indefinable – part of the dynamic shaping this construction was the activity of some Armenian nationalists both within and beyond Ottoman territory. More importantly, however, talking about an ongoing process of construction of ‘the Armenians’ during a crisis moment helps to de-essentialize the debate in that it undermines any notion of inevitability based on readings of pre-existing inter-communal relations.

It should be underlined that any claim that the murder of the Armenians when it unfolded was not a genocide, simply because there might not be unequivocal evidence of genocidal intent prior to May 1915, is as absurd as the suggestion that the Nazi ‘final solution’ was not a genocide because it was not inscribed before the invasion of Poland or the USSR that every Jew was to be murdered. Since the historiography of the Shoah today is more mature and less politicized than that of the Armenian genocide, the question does not now really obtain, but it would be equally controversial for a scholar of the former as one of the latter to pinpoint exactly when that genocide began (just as it would to identify precisely when the French revolution ‘began’). Part of the interpretative problem is that ‘genocide’ is more a legal term than an historical one, designed for the *ex post facto* judgements of the courtroom rather than the historian’s attempt to understand events as they develop, that is, out of non-genocidal or latently murderous situations. In this sense, the use of ‘genocide’ by a historian is a classic example of the past examined teleologically. As the epithet genocide perpetrator has become the major stigma under international law, the politico-legal battle between, crudely speaking, representatives of Turk and Armenians has raged around the applicability of the term, and specifically

the key notion of intent. It may be said categorically that the killing did constitute genocide – every aspect of the United Nations' definition of the crime is applicable, and the inventor of the very term was strongly influenced in his thinking by the murder of the Armenians – but recognizing that fact should be a by-product of the historian's work, not its ultimate aim or underpinning.

If Turkish nationalist historiography cynically disregards the whole history of anti-Armenian ideology and action in the late Ottoman Empire, including CUP policy, up to, say, the Van rising, much of the western historiography simplistically ignores the complexities and contingencies of state policy-making in a crisis situation, and falls into the trap of determinism based on the final outcome of state policy. Finding the balance between intention and contingency – between ideology and circumstance, as it were – is the key to explaining not only the development of state policy in 1914–15, but also the longer process by which the Ottoman state came to target the Armenian community so murderously. Discussion of the broader Armenian Question in the late Ottoman state has divided analogously between, on one hand, those generally western scholars who focus more on the development of a specific anti-Armenianism among the Ottoman elites and on the negative aspects of Armenian-Muslim interethnic relations; and, on the other hand, between those generally Turkish nationalist scholars who pay little attention to the increasingly exclusivist ideologies of the elites or the suffering of Armenians and who instead focus their energies on detailing the tribulations of the embattled state and the grounds it had for mistrusting non-Muslim populations.

#### **State ideology in the late Ottoman Empire: change and continuity**

If a model of wartime radicalization towards genocide is accepted, then it logically becomes difficult to postulate a progressive continuity in state policy in the long or medium term that logically culminated in genocide. Nevertheless, at particular moments before 1914–15 the late Ottoman state could tolerate the mass murder of Armenians, as shown by the 1909 Adana massacres of around 20,000 in the CUP era and the massacres of 80,000–100,000 in 1894–6, perpetrated under the regime of the last significant sultan, Abdülhamid II (1876–1909). Given the different constitutional regime prior to 1908, the 1894–6 killings, in particular, demand explanation, assuming that we disregard as essentialist and therefore untenable explanations for repeat massacre rooted in Islamic culture.<sup>43</sup>

The guiding state ideology at the time of the 1894–6 killings was 'pan-Islamism', or more precisely pan-Sunniism. The doctrine sought to mobilize the empire's Muslims into a more robust political unit in the face of challenges facing the polity from outside in the form of great power encroachments and from within in the form of developing national consciousnesses among, and often therefore separatist demands from, the non-Muslim communities of

Ottomania. The sultan also appealed to Muslims beyond the empire, playing on the symbols of the Caliphate held by the Ottoman dynasty.<sup>44</sup>

The massacres themselves were actually comprised of three more-or-less distinct phases, each with different chronologies and proximate causes ranging in character from local to international. Quantitatively by far the most significant phase, and that which was most widespread geographically and temporally, occurred in autumn and winter 1895.<sup>45</sup> In this phase, many ordinary Muslims came to the fore as perpetrators, particularly Kurds, as well, notably, as Muslim religious leaders, students and brotherhoods. In terms of their function for the state, the massacres combined political elements of a 'cull' of a proto-national element, including terrorization and expropriation, with a neo-conservative religious backlash against an 'inferior', upstart religious group.

Debate is ongoing about the extent of the central direction of the massacres. Most western scholars would now agree the following as a minimum, however. Abdülhamid may not always have been precisely informed about the extent and proximate cause of the massacres in the provinces, himself believing, and frequently being told, that Armenian nationalist insurrection was responsible, while rejecting reports by European diplomats as self-interested propaganda. Yet this is not to absolve the sultan of guilt, since he bore the primary responsibility of inculcating the atmosphere of anti-Christian chauvinism in which the massacres took place. The most important factor in encouraging the actions of private citizens and communal leaders outside the state hierarchy was the sense that they were acting in accordance with the true interests of the state and with the support of its ruler.<sup>46</sup>

An important function of the massacres was as a warning to Armenian nationalists, and also potential great power sponsors of the Armenians, not to press the issue of reforms for the Christians. Transgressions against supposedly religiously protected dhimmis (non-Muslim monotheists) could be justified on the basis that, by appeals to the powers for reforms both before and during the massacres, Armenian leaders had rejected Ottoman rule and therefore broken their contract with the state. Jelle Verheij argues convincingly that this factor explains why the victims were predominantly Armenian males: males occupied the public sphere, and therefore were more overtly 'political', while women, huge numbers of whom were raped, kidnapped, enslaved and forcibly converted, were not. Though by no means all western scholars would agree, this factor also suggests that the killings were not strictly genocidal in the sense of attempting to destroy or cripple the group, since it implies that the Islamic religious imperative, even in its rather perverted and overtly politicized pan-Islamic form, did leave some space for the existence of a 'protected' Armenian community as long as it remained in its politically prescribed place. What cannot be debated is that any residual element of political-religious obligation would diminish to invisibility under the CUP during the World War.

The CUP coup of 1908 began when Salonika-based revolutionaries heard of Anglo-Russian moves to solve the Macedonian Question by the time-honoured method of imposing foreign control under nominal Ottoman sovereignty.<sup>47</sup> The latest solution to Ottoman decline, the 'second constitutional period', began theoretically as an attempt to reintroduce pre-Hamidian notions of a shared Ottomanism. But though some less ethno-centric groupings existed within Turkish revolutionary circles, formed around some of the leaders who had previously operated largely outside the empire, in Paris and Geneva, the revolution was conducted in Muslim and, increasingly, specifically Turkish interests. The real power-holders clearly did not desire reform for reform's sake for the non-Muslim groups, and had explicitly rejected the quasi-federalism of the dissident 'Society for Private Initiative and Decentralization', aligning themselves in opposition with centralizers and nationalists.<sup>48</sup>

As E. E. Ramsaur puts it, if the CUP movement was 'liberal up to a point', 'the nationalistic elements far outweighed the liberal.'<sup>49</sup> This in itself is not singular, since from the latter part of the nineteenth century onwards, the basis of nationalistic ideologies everywhere shifted from liberalism to authoritarianism, statism and ethnocentrism. Full agreement has still to be established about the precise relationship in CUP ideology between Islamism, Turkish nationalism and other elements, including pan-Turkism and even pan-Turanianism (a doctrine seeking to unite all 'Turkic' races as far across the Eurasian landmass as 'Chinese Turkestan'), though recent work by Michael A. Reynolds has argued powerfully for the very limited practical relevance of the final two strands.<sup>50</sup> The growing, exclusive Turkish nationalism identified by M. Şükrü Hanioglu among the Young Turks still seems to have been informed by the notion of the Muslim community as the *millet-i hâkime*, the dominant religious community, and as such foresaw, at least in some Young Turk rhetoric, the coexistence of Muslims under a modernizing Turkish hegemony. In the comparative context again, it should be noted that blends of religious and 'racial' identity were common to almost all of the nationalisms developing in eastern and southeastern Europe at the time. As Erik Jan Zürcher has argued, the transition to a purely secular sense of Turkishness was not completed until into the lifetime of the later Republic of Turkey. At the same time, as Kieser has also pointed out, a number of key CUP leaders were personally strong secularists and social Darwinists, and for them bonds of religious obligation towards non-Muslims were an irrelevance.<sup>51</sup>

Contrary to common perception, the alliance-of-convenience between 'Young Turks' in opposition and the nationalism Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) had been an uneasy one from the beginning. The Balkan secessions of the nineteenth century meant that the CUP suspected non-Muslim revolutionaries of having anti-state rather than anti-regime goals.<sup>52</sup> The CUP had not shown any real sympathy during the massacres of the 1890s,

and indeed would go on to incorporate in its regional committees local notables who had actually been instrumental in organizing those massacres.<sup>53</sup>

The 1909 Adana massacres and their aftermath illustrated at least a chronic lack of governmental concern as both local and immigrant Muslims attacked Armenians. The CUP centre in Istanbul may not be held directly responsible since its authority for much of the time had been compromised by a counter-coup as reactionaries in the military called for the restoration of Islamic law. Moreover, many CUP members and Armenians worked together to protect the constitution. Nevertheless, the orders emanating from the ministry of the interior to Adana at the beginning of the massacres were more concerned with restoring order for the purposes of preventing external intervention than of protecting Armenians. Local CUP leaders in Cilicia were also involved in instigating and ordering massacres; after all, many had been drawn from the ranks of pre-revolutionary regional elites and had past records in attacking or condoning attacks on Armenians. Finally, many of the soldiers loyal to the CUP who were sent to Cilicia after 24 April also took part in the massacres, though there is no proof that this was on senior orders.<sup>54</sup>

As far as longer-term developments were concerned, the quashing of the counter-coup in 1909 saw further distancing of the CUP from the liberals. A law on political associations now prohibited the formation of organizations with non-Turkish national aims,<sup>55</sup> and the aforementioned measures of cultural Turkification were introduced. Yet consensus suggests that it was the Balkan wars of 1912–13 that sounded the death-knell for any vestiges of CUP pluralism.<sup>56</sup> Muslim-Christian relations were cast into the sharpest of relief in these vicious ethnic conflicts, with widespread Christian draft evasion and Ottoman Bulgarian and Greek soldiers swapping sides to fight alongside their ethno-religious brethren.<sup>57</sup> Even Muslim Albania was torn away, and the loss of this constituency accelerated the shift in CUP ranks from a general Muslim consciousness to a specifically Turkish one.

If state ideologies differed on either side of the 1908 coup, the Balkan wars also highlight some vital continuities in terms of the problems confronting the successive regimes. These problems, already hinted at, included the relative decline of the empire in the face of other great powers, as manifested in territorial loss and the diminution of internal sovereignty in the face of western economic penetration, and in the threat posed to the remaining lands by the developing consciousness of subject and primarily Christian nationalities. Both Hamidian 'pan-Islamism' and CUP 'nationalism' can, in fact, be identified as differing particularist 'remedies' to these problems, and can thus be juxtaposed with the more universalist pre-Hamidian Tanzimat reform period that sought to solve the selfsame problems by recourse to greater inter-religious equality. That the 'solutions' became increasingly vicious should not obscure the fact that the problems they sought to address were very real from the perspective of

the normative state, and, indeed, recurred with increasing intensity across the lifespan of the late Ottoman Empire.

### The Armenian Question and the changing Ottoman social structure

Historians differ as to precisely what factors to emphasize most strongly in the emergence and exacerbation of the 'Armenian Question' in the nineteenth century. Stephan Astourian has focused on the question of contested land-ownership in Anatolia as a spur to anti-Armenian prejudice in the light of the Tanzimat reforms that changed the traditional prescriptions on the issue, and in light of the sedentarization of Kurdish tribes and the settlement of Muslim refugees to the empire – the *muhacir* – from persecution in the Tsarist domains and in the Balkans. Kieser has emphasized the destabilization inherent to the attempt to import, force-paced, a modernity *à la française* to an empire run on entirely different principles. Other interpretations place the emphasis more on the international politics of the eastern question in exacerbating Ottoman sensitivities towards subject minorities.<sup>58</sup>

Where there is general agreement is on the significance of the changes in the physical and political constitution of the empire in its declining decades as Ottoman geography and demography were fundamentally altered.<sup>59</sup> Many aspects of this immensely complex, society-wide process did not primarily concern Ottoman–Armenian relations *per se* until around the second half of the nineteenth century, and they were as much as anything else a function of the changing nature of Ottomania from early modern empire to centralizing, modernizing state and, finally, to a supposedly homogeneous republican nation-state.

One of the many pieces of evidence supporting interpretations of the origins of genocide in changing state socio-economic structure is the comparative stability of Ottoman–Armenian relations before the mid-nineteenth century. Armenians, as *dhimmis*, like other Christian groups and Jews, occupied a position in the Islamic theocracy that, if definitively subordinated and even despised, was still legally assured. Communal life, as orchestrated through the confessional order known as the *millet* system, was therefore stable, if at the individual level, particularly for Armenian peasants in eastern Anatolia, sundry exploitations and oppressions were part of everyday life.<sup>60</sup> This system of stability through institutionalized prejudice worked on condition that the *dhimmis* continued to accept the hierarchical *status quo* and that the state continued to enforce it.<sup>61</sup> Ottoman reforms (however well-intentioned) and the rise of nationalism proved fatal to it, for both affected the aspirations of the minorities and the attitudes of the Muslim elite and majority.

Pressure – from outside and from within, in whatever proportions – to reform to survive irreversibly changed the constitutional fabric of the Ottoman Empire. The Ottoman rulers sought to prevent Christian secessionism by trying to tie in

the loyalties of their Christian subjects with the fortunes of the state. Reform programmes upset many Muslims with their rhetoric of inter-religious equality, while failing to safeguard significant changes on the ground for groups such as the Armenian rural population of Anatolia, or to protect them from the Muslim backlash against their 'inappropriate' aspirational behaviour. The Armenian peasantry also suffered greatly at the hands of nomadic Kurds and the *muhacir*, many of whom had themselves been brutalized at the hands of Russia or the Balkan Christian regimes. Meanwhile, Armenians and others were encouraged by spasmodic European pressure on the Porte to believe that they had reliable defenders to which to appeal in their plight: they did not. Christian separatism and great power sequestration of Ottoman lands also meant that the ethnic composition of the empire was markedly changing, and along with it the political orientation of the Ottoman elite, which came to focus increasingly, and against the trend of the mid-century reforms, on the increasingly preponderant Muslim majority in the remaining Anatolian lands of the empire – the very lands on which Armenians dwelt among many others.

If many Armenians began to experience a sense of what Astourian calls 'relative deprivation' as their hopes and aspirations were raised above the reality of the reforms, the same was true for Ottoman Muslims who saw some Christians benefiting from the changes.<sup>62</sup> This was particularly true for Kurdish tribal leaders and provincial notables whose only personal power bases had been challenged by the Tanzimat reforms. A powerful stereotype of Armenians began to emerge based on relative Armenian socioeconomic success in certain quarters, as Armenian social visibility increased. This stereotype was founded on urban professionals, merchants, moneylenders, middlemen and the rural traders, as well as on certain regions and elements of the agricultural economy, notably in Cilicia.<sup>63</sup> Furthermore, Armenian success was associated with foreign influences, based, in part, on the Armenian importation of Western technologies.<sup>64</sup> Finally, the prominence of Armenians as agents and brokers for European interests and the extension to individual Armenians of the extraterritorial privileges (the 'capitulations') enjoyed by citizens of the great powers living in Turkey seemed to confirm a picture of Christians not pulling together with the Muslim population in the interests of the state on whose territory they dwelled.<sup>65</sup>

From the perspective of the state, this association with external, Christian powers was taken to another level by the 'internationalization' of the Armenian Question at the end of the 'eastern crisis' of 1875–8. The Berlin Treaty of 1878 supplanted the victor's peace in the Russian-dictated treaty of San Stefano, and saw British lip-service paid to the future wellbeing of the Armenians in the eastern provinces as a counter to earlier Russian rhetoric about suffering Christianity. This was the first time that Armenians had been singled-out from Ottoman Christians generally in an international treaty, and

at the end of a crisis period in which the Ottomans had lost much territory in Europe and in the Russian border region, it was a vital moment in hardening Ottoman suspicion about Armenian loyalty. The failure of the European powers to enforce the reform clauses of the treaty in turn led to the formation of Armenian revolutionary parties from the 1880s onwards.

The parties owed much to radical Russian Armenian influences and pursued their interpretation of Ottoman Armenian 'national' interest without much recourse to the security of ordinary Armenians.<sup>66</sup> Their actions undoubtedly served the state as one of the proximate 'justifications' for the 1894–6 massacres. More important on the broad functional level, however, was that the Hamidian ideology legitimating the massacres had developed in reaction to the failure of the earlier Tanzimat reforms to keep Christian populations within the state, and in light of a suspicion of the developing Armenian national consciousness given the loss of so much Bulgarian and other territory in the eastern crisis. Further, since the empire was simultaneously haemorrhaging millions of Christians and gaining millions of Muslim refugees, the demographics of Anatolia were also changing such that there was a real functional 'sense' in Ottoman elites both in the Hamidian and CUP periods returning their attention more exclusively to the aspirations of Muslims after the Tanzimat, particularly as many of the constituency had felt an increasing alienation from the state in the course of the mid-century reforms. In circular fashion, this in turn meant that the ongoing grievances of rural Armenians would remain substantially unaddressed both up to and after the CUP coup.

The first Balkan War accentuated all of these concerns from the perspective of the state. Millions more desperate Muslim refugees flooded into Anatolia as the vast majority of the last Ottoman lands in Europe were torn away, leaving the Christian populations of Anatolia more starkly exposed as ethno-religious 'anomalies' than ever before. Further, at the close of the Balkan Wars, as in 1878, a reform plan was promoted with Russian support by the Catholicos of all Armenians. In the revised form in which it was finally foisted onto the Ottoman Empire in early 1914, the plan entailed the creation of two zones out of the six 'Armenian' provinces of eastern Anatolia, plus Trabzon/Trebizond on the Black Sea coast, to be administered by neutral European inspectors approved by the Porte. The CUP viewed Russian sponsorship of the plan as preparation of the ground for subsequent annexation of the 'Armenian' provinces, against a recent backdrop of increased Russian agitation against Armenians and Kurds, and increased control over the adjoining regions of Persia.<sup>67</sup>

A strong case can be made that the Ottoman Armenians had nothing more to hope for from the CUP upon the recall of the European inspectors provided for in the reform plan. On the Turkish entrance into the First World War in 1914, the plan was annulled alongside the European-run Ottoman Public Debt Administration and the capitulations. The attempt to reshape internally what

was left of the Ottoman Empire by these measures of consolidation and by population policy was the other side of the coin of protecting the frontiers against further external incursion, and even re-expanding the empire at the expense of Russia. These considerations were at once ideological and functionally 'practical' in some sense of *raison d'état*, given the changing social structure of the state. Accordingly, whether or not genocide was planned prior to the conflict, the future of the Armenians as a political community in the Ottoman Empire was very bleak.

## Conclusion

There is always a danger when detailing structural factors in history of seeming to absolve individual actors of decision-making power and moral responsibility. It is distinctly unsatisfactory, particularly for victims of genocidal regimes, to have massive suffering attributed to anything other than a discrete, objectively repulsive and preferably overtly *ideological* hatred. The scale of the crime is directly proportionate to the strength of the human need for unequivocal accountability. As genocide is one of the ultimate crimes, so the logic goes, a monstrous and preferably personalizable perpetrator and a monstrous, indisputable motive are required to link cause and effect by a thick, straight line. Reference to general historical forces and socio-political structures cannot satisfy this need, and nor should it, for genocide is always the result of political choices, albeit at very particular, generally crisis, moments. What the foregoing may illustrate, however, is that the dichotomy of intentionality and contingency is a false one, not just in 1915 but across the span of the bloody decline of the Ottoman Empire. Recognizing this fact is not some wrong-headed attempt to find a spurious middle ground in a sharply bifurcated historiography, but instead to endorse the ongoing move away from any simplistic narratives steeped in nationalist interpretations of Ottoman anti-Armenianism or Armenian treachery.

## Notes

1. See, for instance, M. Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olayları ve Anılarım* [1909 Adana Armenian Incidents and My Memoirs] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1982); G. Çağal-Güven, *Kamil Paşa ve Said Paşaların Anıları: polemikler* [Memoirs of Kamil Pasha and Said Pasha: the polemics] (Istanbul: Arba Press, 1991); M. Kasım, *Talat Paşa'nın Anıları* [Memoirs of Talat Pasha] (Istanbul: Say Press, 1986); A. Mehmedefendioğlu, *Sürgünden İntihara: Dr. Reşid Bey'in Hatıraları* [From Exile to Suicide: Memoirs of Dr Reşid Bey] (İzmir: Belge Press, 1982); S. Sait Paşa *Anılar* [Memoirs of the Grand Vezir Sait Pasha] (Istanbul: Hür Press, 1977).
2. See, for instance, *8 Mart sene 335 tarihinde irade-i seniye-i hazret-i padişahiye iktiran eden kararname ile müteşekkil divan-ı harb-i örfi muhakematı zabıt ceridesi* [Turkish military tribunal records], (Istanbul: Takvim-i Vekayi Press, 1919–1920).

3. See, for instance, H. N. Paşa, *Ermeni Olayları Tarihi* [History of the Armenian Incidents] (Ankara: Prime Minister's Press, 1994); E. Cengiz, ed., *Ermeni Komitelerinin Amal ve Hareket-i İhtilaliyesi* [The Actions and Revolutionary Movements of the Armenian Committees] (Ankara: Prime Minister's Press, 1983).
4. See, for instance, Prime Ministry Directorate General of Press and Information, *Documents* (Ankara: Prime Ministry Press, 1989); Prime Ministry Directorate of State Archives, *Osmanlı Belgelerinde Ermeniler (1915–1920)* [Armenians in Ottoman Documents] (Ankara: Prime Minister's Press, 1994).
5. See National Congress of Turkey, *The Turco-Armenian Question: The Turkish Point of View* (Constantinople: Societé Anonyme de Papeterie et d'Imprimerie, 1919).
6. See, for instance, C. Bırsel, *Lozan* [Lausanne] (Istanbul: Sosyal Press, 1933); B. Şimşir, *Lozan Telgrafları: Türk Diplomatik Belgelerinde Lozan Barış Konferansı* [The Lausanne Telegraphs: Lausanne Peace Conference through Turkish Diplomatic Documents] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1990).
7. Y. G. Çark, *Türk devleti hizmetinde Ermeniler (1453–1953)* [Armenians in the service of the Turkish state] (Istanbul: Yeni Press, 1953); E. Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni meselesi* [Armenians in history and the Armenian question] (Istanbul: Belge Press, 1953).
8. See N. K. Demir, *Bir Şehid Anasına Tarihin Söyledikleri: Türkiye'nin Ermeni Meselesi* [What history told a martyr's mother: the Armenian Question in Turkey] (Ankara: Hülbe Press, 1976); Atatürk Üniversitesi Yirminci Yıl Armağanı, *Ermeniler hakkında makaleler derlemeler* [Articles and selections on the Armenians] (Ankara: Kalite Press, 1978); Jamanak, *Facts from the Turkish Armenians* [Realities exprimees par les armenien turcs/Türk Ermenilerinden gerçekler] (Istanbul: Jamanak Press, 1980); Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi Rektörlüğü, *Türk Tarihinde Ermeniler Sempozyumu* [Symposium on the Armenians in Turkish history] (Manisa: Şafak Press, 1983); N. Göyünc, *Osmalı İdaresinde Ermeniler* [Armenians under Ottoman administration] (Istanbul: Gültepe Press, 1983); N. Gülmez, *Türkiye Büyük Millet Meclisi Zabıtlarından Doğu ve Güneydoğu meselesi* [Eastern and southeastern question from the proceedings of the Turkish grand national assembly] (Istanbul: Hamle Press, 1983); K. Gürün, *Ermeni Dosyası* [The Armenian file] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1983); Ş. Orel and S. Yuca, *Ermenilerce Talat Paşa'ya Atfedilen Telgrafların Gerçek Yüzü* [The truth about the telegrams attributed to Talat Pasha by the Armenians] (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1983); C. Küçük, *Osmanlı Diplomasisinde Ermeni Meselesinin Ortaya Çıkışı (1878–1897)* [The emergence of the Armenian Question in Ottoman diplomacy] (Istanbul: Istanbul University Press, 1984); B. Şimşir, *The Deportees of Malta and the Armenian Question* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1983), *British Documents on the Ottoman Armenians (1856–1880)* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1983), *The Genesis of the Armenian Question* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1983), and *British Documents on the Ottoman Armenians (1880–1890)* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1983); A. B. Birligi, *Katliam Efsanesi* [The massacre myth] (Ankara: Anatolian Press, 1987); K. Kartal, *Van'dan Erivan'a Hatıralarım* [My memoirs from Van to Erivan] (Ankara: Anatolian Press, 1987).
9. See, for instance, B. Eryılmaz, *Osmanlı Devletinde Gayrimüslim Teb'aamn Yönetimi* [The administration of the non-Muslims in the Ottoman state] (Istanbul: Risale Press, 1990); A. Süslü, *Ermeniler ve 1915 Tehcir Olayı* [Armenians and the Population Transfer Incident] (Ankara: Sistem Press, 1990); S. Sonyel, *The Great War and the Tragedy of Anatolia* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 2000), and *Minorities and the Destruction of the Ottoman empire* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 1983); T. Ataöv, *The Armenians in the late Ottoman Period* (Ankara: Turkish Historical Society Press, 2001), and *The 'Armenian Question': Conflict, Trauma and Objectivity* (Ankara: Strategic Research Center Press, 1997).
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13. For examples of this cluster, see for instance, P. Tuğlacı, *Ermeni Edebiyatından Seçkiler* [Selections from Armenian literature] (Istanbul: Cem Press, 1982); H. Mintzuri, *Afina, Tuzun Var mı?* [Athena, have you got some salt?] (Istanbul: Aras Press, 2000); An. Özer, *Yaşamı Beklerken* [While awaiting life] (Istanbul: Aras Press, 1997); Y. Sırmakeşliyan, *Balıkçı Sevdası* [Fisherman's passion] (Istanbul: Aras Press, 2000), and K. Zohrab, *Hayat, Olduğu gibi* [Life, as it is] (Ankara: Ayraç Press, 2000); and İ. Ankan, *Mahalleimizdeki Ermeniler* [Armenians in our neighborhood] (Istanbul: İletişim Press, 2001).
14. H.-L. Kieser, 'Looking for a lost human heritage: Some remarks on recent historiographical developments concerning the Armenian genocide', unpublished manuscript.
15. 'The Struggle for Recognition: The Next Steps', *Armenian News Network/Groong*, 15 April 2001; R. G. Hovannisian, 'The Armenian Case: Toward a Just Solution' (Jerusalem: Hai Tad Committee, 1982), 14.
16. P. Balakian, *The Burning Tigris: The Armenian Genocide and America's Response* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).
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18. The best treatment of this topic is David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (New Jersey: Gorgias Press, 2006).
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22. For a good summary of the routes, see R. H. Kévorkian, ed., *L'Extermination des déportés arméniens ottomans dans les camps de concentration de Syrie-Mésopotamie (1915–1916): la deuxième phase du génocide* (Paris: Bibliothèque Nubar, 1998). J. Lepsius, *Der Todesgang des armenischen Volkes: Bericht über das Schicksal des armenischen Volkes in der Türkei während des Weltkrieges* (Potsdam: Tempelverlag, 1919) and *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire, 1915–1916: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden by Viscount Bryce/James Bryce and Arnold Toynbee, Uncensored Edition*, ed., A. Sarafian (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2000) have yet to be supplanted, though they do not provide explicit and overall links between deportations, rather examining them on a case-by-case and province-by-province basis. On the involvement of the state elites, see V. N. Dadrian, 'The Complicity of the Party, the Government and the Military. Select Parliamentary and Judicial Documents', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 22 (1994), 29–96; idem., 'The Documentation of the World War I Armenian Massacres in the Proceedings of the Turkish Military Tribunal', *Journal of Political and Military Sociology*, 22 (1994), 97–132. For Dadrian's influential overall treatment of the subject, see his *The History of the Armenian Genocide* (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995). The various works of Hilmar Kaiser shed important light on the central decision-making process – see particularly the chapters on the Armenian genocide – for which Kaiser acted as research assistant, in Michael Mann's *The Dark Side of Democracy: Explaining Ethnic Cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005). Fuat Dündar is presently engaged on a study of precisely such central decision-making. Raymond Kévorkian's huge narrative *Le Génocide des Arméniens* (Paris: Odile Jacob, 2006) appeared too late for its findings to be incorporated in this chapter.
  23. Dadrian, 'Documentation', 98.
  24. Ibid.; Dadrian, 'The Complicity of the Party'; Annette Höss, 'Die türkischen Kriegsgerichtsverhandlungen 1919–1921' (PhD: Vienna, 1991).
  25. *Osmanlı Belgeler*, 140, on the dispatch of an inspector to Marash owing to the leniency shown towards Armenians by the district governor; also Kaiser, *Der Zor*, 15–16.
  26. Höss, 'Die türkischen Kriegsgerichtsverhandlungen,' on the postwar trial of these 'responsible secretaries'; also Dadrian, 'Documentation'; on 'coordination', Üngör, '“A Reign of Terror”'.
  27. Dadrian, 'Documentation', 98.
  28. Dadrian, 'The Complicity of the Party', 87; Höss, 'Die türkischen Kriegsgerichtsverhandlungen', 76, 78, 81–3, 96, 130.
  29. See the editor's introduction to *Eberhard Count Wolffskeel Von Reichenberg, Zeitoun, Mousa Dagh, Ourfa: Letters on the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Hilmar Kaiser (Princeton, NJ: Gomidas Institute, 2001).
  30. James J. Reid, 'Militaryism, Partisan War and Destructive Inclinations in Ottoman Military History: 1854–1918', *Armenian Review*, 39, 3 (1986), 1–21, here 6–11; Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilizations* (London: Constable and Co., 1923), pp. 278–80.
  31. V. N. Dadrian, 'The Role of the Special Organisation in the Armenian Genocide during the First World War', in *Minorities in Wartime*, ed. P. Panayi (Oxford: Berg, 1993), pp. 50–82, here p. 64; H. Pasdermajian, *Histoire de l'Arménie* (Paris: Librairie orientale H. Samuelian, 1971), pp. 408–9.
  32. Y. Ternon, *Les Arméniens: histoire d'un génocide* (Paris: Seuil, 1977), pp. 211–12; A. Beylerian, 'L'échec d'une percée internationale: Le mouvement national arménienne (1914–1923)', *Relations internationales*, 31 (1982), 356.
  33. J. H. Tashjian, 'The Truth about the Turkish Act of Genocide', *Armenian Review*, 18, 3 (1965), 41–52, here 44.
  34. T. Akçam, *Armenien und der Völkermord: Die Istanbul Prozesse und die türkische Nationalbewegung* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 1996), p. 37; V. N. Dadrian, *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of Turco-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Books, 1999), Ch. 9.
  35. Akçam, *Armenien*, pp. 39–43; idem., 'Rethinking the Ottoman Archival Material: Debunking Existing Myths/General Overview of the Ottoman Documents', unpublished paper.
  36. Lepsius, *Todesgang*, p. xiv; H. Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1918), p. 347.
  37. D. Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), Ch. 2.
  38. E. J. Zürcher, 'Ottoman Labour Battalions in World War I', in *Die armenische Völkermord*, eds. Kieser and Schaller, pp. 187–98.
  39. Timur, *Türkler ve Ermeniler*, p. 35.
  40. *Osmanlı Belgeler*, pp. 7–8.
  41. Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide*, p. 84.
  42. A. D. Moses, 'Conceptual Blockages and Definitional Dilemmas in the "Racial Century": Genocides of Indigenous Peoples and the Holocaust', *Patterns of Prejudice*, 36, 4 (2002), 21.
  43. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide*, pp. 3–6, 121–7.
  44. S. Deringil, 'Legitimacy Structures in the Ottoman State: The Reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1909)', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 23 (1991), 345–59.
  45. J. Verheij, 'Die armenischen Massaker von 1894–1896: Anatomie und Hintergründe einer Krise', in *Die armenische Frage und die Schweiz (1896–1923)*, ed., H.-L. Kieser (Zurich: Chronos, 1999), pp. 69–129; Dadrian, *History*; R. Melson, 'A Theoretical Enquiry into the Armenian Massacres of 1894–1896', *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 24 (1982), 481–509; cf. S. Duguid, 'The Politics of Unity: Hamidian Politics in Eastern Anatolia', *Middle Eastern Studies*, 9 (1973), 139–55.
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  48. Ibid., pp. 92–4; K. H. Karpat, 'The Transformation of the Ottoman State, 1789–1908', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 3 (1972), 243–81, here 280.
  49. E. E. Ramsaur Jr., *The Young Turks: Prelude to the Revolution of 1908* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 147.
  50. M. A. Reynolds, 'The Ottoman-Russian Struggle for Eastern Anatolia and the Caucasus, 1908–1918', (PhD dissertation, Princeton University, 2003).
  51. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, pp. 40–1, 84; E. J. Zürcher, 'Young Turks, Ottoman Muslims and Turkish Nationalists', in *Ottoman Past and Today's Turkey*, ed., K. Karpat (Leiden: Brill, 2000), pp. 150–79, esp. p. 151; H.-L. Kieser,

- 'Dr Mehmed Reshid (1873–1919): A Political Doctor', in *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah*, eds, Kieser and Schaller, pp. 245–80.
52. Hanioglu, *Preparation for a Revolution*, pp. 40–1, 84.
53. A. Arkun, 'Les relations arméno-turques et les massacres de Cilicie de 1909', in *L'Actualité du génocide des Arméniens*, ed. Comité de Défense de la Cause Arménienne (Paris: Edipol, 1999), pp. 55–74, here 59.
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64. Astourian, 'Genocidal Process', pp. 61, 64.
65. *Ibid.*, p. 65; Ahmad, 'Vanguard', p. 329; Ma'oz, 'Intercommunal Relations', p. 207.
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