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Publisher: Routledge
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Journal of Genocide Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjgr20>

Taner Akçam, The Young Turks' crime against humanity: the Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012)

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Published online: 09 Dec 2013.

To cite this article: Margaret Lavinia Anderson, Michael Reynolds, Hans-Lukas Kieser, Peter Balakian, A. Dirk Moses & Taner Akçam (2013) Taner Akçam, The Young Turks' crime against humanity: the Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), Journal of Genocide Research, 15:4, 463-509, DOI: [10.1080/14623528.2013.856095](https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2013.856095)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2013.856095>

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REVIEW FORUM

Taner Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime against humanity: the Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012)

MARGARET LAVINIA ANDERSON, MICHAEL REYNOLDS,
HANS-LUKAS KIESER, PETER BALAKIAN, A. DIRK MOSES and
TANER AKÇAM

A. DIRK MOSES

Introduction

Turkish-raised, German-trained and American-based, Taner Akçam is the Kaloosdian and Mugar Chair in Armenian Genocide Studies at Clark University. His first book on the Armenian question was published in Turkish more than twenty years ago. Since then, a steady stream of monographs and articles, including *A shameful act: the Armenian genocide and the question of Turkish responsibility* (2006),¹ has made him a pre-eminent authority on late Ottoman history and the Armenian genocide. The subject of this forum, his latest book, *The Young Turks' crime against humanity: the Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire*, appears in Princeton University Press's prestigious Human Rights and Crimes against Humanity series, edited by Eric D. Weitz. Like its predecessors, this book is based on meticulous research, though surpassing them in detail and extent. Not for nothing did the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) give Akçam the Albert Hourani Book Award for 2013 for *Young Turks' crime against humanity*, and *Foreign Affairs* name it as one of the best books on the Middle East in 2012. John Waterbury's citation reads as follows: 'The book's title issues a stark indictment; the text methodically and dispassionately sustains it. The fact that a Turkish historian with access to the Ottoman archives has

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written this book is of immeasurable significance'.² The ease with which I was able to assemble a team of expert commentators attests to Akçam's standing in a growing field. I myself am not an expert on Ottoman history but Taner Akçam asked me to include my remarks from the book launch at Clark University in September 2012 so he could respond to them.

MARGARET LAVINIA ANDERSON

Shooting an elephant

In 2006 a distinguished Ottomanist and past president of the Turkish Studies Association confessed that when he entered graduate school 'there was an elephant in the room of Ottoman studies—the slaughter of the Ottoman Armenians in 1915. [...] No one ever suggested that the so-called "Armenian question" not be studied', he explained. 'Rather, a heavy aura of self-censorship hung over Ottoman history writing.'³ That was the 1960s, but the 'taboo', as he called it, remained in effect for a long time. He did not say that even two decades later, along with sixty-eight other specialists in Ottoman and Turkish studies, he had signed a newspaper advertisement urging the US House of Representatives to reject a resolution recognizing the Armenian genocide because 'the weight of evidence so far uncovered points in the direction of serious inter-communal warfare . . . , complicated by disease, famine, suffering and massacres . . .'.⁴ Although the signatories claimed that 'much more remains to be discovered before historians will be able to sort out precisely responsibility between warring and innocent', for ambitious students of the Middle East to declare an interest in making such discoveries was the road to marginalization. The commanding heights in late Ottoman history—graduate programmes, journals, professional associations—were dominated by those subscribing to a sunnier view of their subject.⁵ The Armenian question—though big as an elephant—was consigned to a niche occupied largely by ethnic Armenians, their publications, usually in small presses, uncited and (one suspects) unread. Licensed Ottomanists left it alone, even while demanding that no one else write about the animal that was so palpably *there* unless he got his evidence from *Ottoman* archives—then closed to scholars with better eyes. The taboo remained powerful even in 2006, as Donald Quataert, the author of those reflections, was quick to discover. Within weeks Quataert had been ousted as chairman of the board of the Institute for Turkish Studies.⁶

Although the blanket of disapproval there was never so general, Britain also produced emphatic sceptics, while in the Federal Republic of Germany, discussion of the genocide faced additional problems. A German colleague once confided to me: 'Of course *we* can't do this research; it would look like we were trying to divert attention from *our* crimes'. (Actually, as scholars had already discovered, there was more than enough blame to go around.) Others were reluctant to dredge up a past that might contribute to Islamophobia in general and prejudice against Germany's Turkish minority in particular—a minority whose organizations have been vociferous in complaining about work they see as defamation of Turkey's

heroes.⁷ Still, it was Germany that awarded Taner Akçam his PhD in 1995, with his *Doktorvater* adding a Turkish-German and an Armenian-American historian, Fikret Adanır and Vahakn Dadrian, to his dissertation committee. Right away, he began publishing on the genocide—in German, in English and in Turkish. (And the rumour began circulating: ‘But Akçam can’t read Ottoman . . .’.)

No one will say that now. Akçam’s mastery of sources in at least five languages is what Germans call *sovereign*. No one, to my knowledge, commands a comparable proficiency in so many archives in so many languages: American, British, Austrian, the huge correspondence of Germany’s Foreign Office, and several Ottoman collections, notably the Prime Ministerial Archives, whose cables from the Interior Ministry’s Departments of General Security and its Cipher Office provide the authority for many of Akçam’s findings. These sources are salted with material from the Jerusalem Patriarchate and enlivened with quotations from the Turkish press and from memoirs of Turks and Armenians. It is startling how much he has found, given the purposeful destruction of many Ottoman documents at the end of the war, the casual treatment of archival troves during the republican era (tonnes were sold for paper) and the likelihood that especially incriminating documents have, even as late as the 1990s, been weeded out. Akçam’s conviction that ‘the redundancy inherent in bureaucratic government’ (p. 26) would provide more than enough from which to reconstruct the actions of those who held the reins of power has been dramatically vindicated. While for forensic purposes he makes a point of constructing his argument ‘entirely on the basis of Ottoman archival records’ (p. xxi), he continually reminds the reader that *all* the eyewitness sources for the period—Ottoman, Armenian, German, Austrian and American—tell the *same* story. Indeed, the contents of one of the telegrams published in 1919 by Aram Andonian, mocked as forgeries by spokesmen for the Turkish Republic, ‘are nearly identical to those of Talat’s [. . .] directive to all provinces of 29 August 1915’, which Akçam found in the Prime Ministerial Ottoman Archives (p. 254n90).⁸

Individually the elements of Akçam’s argument are not all new, but when laid out collectively and systematically, they carry tremendous force. The Armenian genocide was the product of a state in mortal danger: of partition, in Akçam’s view—or, as discontented minorities might have seen it, of secession. (I shall return to this point later.) To save the state, its territorial integrity and freedom of action, not just from this or that new crisis, but permanently, the Ottoman leadership—the Central Committee of the *İttihat ve Terakki Cemiyeti* (Committee of Union and Progress: CUP)—embarked on a two-fold, nearly symmetrical process of *homogenization* (of its multinational Muslims) and *elimination* (of its Christians). The result was the reduction of Anatolia’s native population by almost a third within six years.

Akçam’s 2006 study of the genocide, *A shameful act: the Armenian genocide and the question of Turkish responsibility*, began his story with the Tanzimat and took the long view, giving deep-rooted religious and cultural attitudes an important role. In his new book, his focus narrows, the past takes a back seat and he begins in 1912–13, with the arrival of more than 400,000 Muslim refugees

from the Balkan Wars: Macedonians, Bosnians, Kosovars and others. Having tried and failed to limit immigrants to ethnic Turks, the last thing the CUP wanted was for these assorted newcomers to make themselves at home, Balkanizing Anatolia by reproducing, as chain migrations do, their own languages and cultures in their new quarters, creating Muslim equivalents of Little Italys and Chinatowns. So it decreed that no more than five to ten per cent of a given ethnicity be permitted to reside in a village, town or (in some cases) region. After the Ottoman entry into World War I in November 1914, the same five to ten per cent principle and monitoring techniques were applied to native Muslim refugees—almost a million—fleeing combat zones in the East. The empire's remaining non-Turkic Muslims were slated to disappear—via assimilation into the dominant Turkish nation—through a combination of schooling, forced sedentarization and even, in the case of Kurds, deportation and dispersal to other parts of the country. The pill for displaced Muslims was sweetened by giving them the lion's share of the housing, land and moveable property expropriated from Ottoman Christians.

Beginning in 1913 and continuing until August 1914, roughly 300,000 Ottoman Greeks were violently 'cleansed' from Thrace and the Aegean Coast. Nestorian Christians were deported to the interior in September 1914, before Turkey's formal declaration of war. Then, in 1915–16, the Armenians were systematically uprooted. Akçam terms this ensemble of developments 'demographic restructuring'. The concept is not unique to Akçam. Thanks to the piecemeal opening of Ottoman archives and the new international workshop culture, a number of historians of the late Ottoman Empire have been making the demographic turn, in published and unpublished form. Akçam's 2006 volume also included it, briefly.⁹

Death-by-dislocation was a regrettable but inevitable byproduct of mass evacuations in wartime, when food, shelter and elementary medical attention were in short supply for everyone. Such was the official explanation for Armenian losses, and plausible to those busy with other research and willing to give the Ottomans the benefit of every orientalist doubt. But Armenian deaths were no byproduct; they were positively mandated, given the requirement that Armenian settlers be limited to ten per cent of any community (except in the far west, where their numbers were in any case insignificant), and given their destination, decided as early as 24 April 1915, in thinly populated northern Syria and Iraq. Here the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Armenians would necessarily swamp native Arab populations, making nonsense of any ten per cent ceiling. Thus, implicit in the five to ten per cent plan was the understanding that large numbers of Armenians must never be allowed to arrive.

So the CUP adopted a dual-track 'mechanism'. Resettlement was the policy of the state, openly acknowledged and administered by the Interior Ministry. Murder—from individual executions to wholesale massacre along the roads and encampments of eastern Anatolia—was the policy of the party. It is telling that the Interior Ministry's Cipher Office, though a department of the state, was frequently used by the CUP's Central Committee to communicate with the provinces. In fact, cables monitoring the two tracks were often sent by the same switchman:

the Interior Minister and former telegraph operator Talat Bey (whom Akçam inexplicably refers to as Talat Pasha, although he acquired that title only in February 1917). He worked hard—if need be from his home machine and private line—relentlessly demanding detailed information about all departures, giving continual instructions, as congestions arose, about alternative routes, and often requiring responses by the next evening. For the murder track, his instructions were secret, to be conveyed orally through party emissaries, who had orders to destroy their missives after reading. Those in charge of killing were threatened with punishment if the roads were not cleared of corpses.

Given the pains taken to maintain deniability, Akçam insists that there will never be a ‘smoking gun’ (p. xxv). But he offers guns that seem pretty hot to me, on page after page. Some of his most vivid evidence, admittedly, comes from foreign observers or postwar trials. But the Ottomans themselves have furnished plenty: Reşid Akif Pasha’s speech to the Ottoman chamber of deputies 21 November 1918 (p. 193); Talat’s numerous cables to the provinces reversing orders that he had just sent to spare Catholic or Protestant Armenians; his telegram of 12 July 1915 mentioning 2,000 people ‘slaughtered like sheep’ (pp. 208–209 and n11). The latter seems to have been inadvertently included in one of the Turkish Republic’s own archival publications (we can say ‘inadvertantly’ because the Prime Ministerial Archive’s catalogue skips this document’s number). The hottest of Akçam’s guns may be Enver Pasha’s order that any state employee who allowed aid to reach suffering Armenians be severely punished (pp. 434, 436). Akçam’s source is a published document collection, in this case, a product of the Turkish General Staff’s Directorate of Military History.

After laying out the basic argument, much of *The Young Turks’ crime against humanity* is devoted to hammering it home (sometimes repetitiously), and to anticipating and rebutting objections—especially those derived from cherry-picking Ottoman documents for this or that apparent exception to the general picture. Yes, Ottoman Greeks were spared genocide; but we learn why. Yes, Istanbul Armenians on the whole survived, but their numbers were reduced by numerous small-scale deportations. Yes, Armenian children aged ten to thirteen might be adopted (and Islamicized); those under ten, put in Muslim orphanages; young girls older than thirteen, married or made concubines: the regime was not racist and Anatolia needed population. But they would no longer be Armenians, and children who did not fit those categories would be killed. Adults were allowed to convert, but still deported; then they were not allowed; then both; and sometimes Talat decided individual cases. Akçam tries to bring order into human inconsistency and makes a convincing case that cultural genocide was not an exception, but the natural partner of physical elimination.

As for the most plausible objection to the charge of genocide—that the Ottoman government investigated and severely punished crimes against Armenians—Akçam is adamant. Punishment was indeed levied on those who looted or embezzled confiscated Armenian property, which the state considered its own. One ‘will look in vain’, however, for evidence of investigations of officials accused of murder and other crimes against *Armenians* (pp. 384–385). The

exceptions, Akçam argues, are only apparent. The CUP ‘eventually eliminated members of its own notorious Special Organization’, but that was because it feared these thugs ‘might create problems for the committee in the future’ (pp. 384, 395–397). A ‘fleeting’ sign that Talaat wanted Kurdish tribes to stop attacking Armenians on the road, and threatened them with punishment, appears in a coded telegram, but ‘there is not a single shred of evidence that any investigation, criminal or otherwise, was ever opened against such perpetrators’. And in any case, the telegram was written under the pressure of the German embassy (p. 224n53). More dispositive than the arguments from silence are the documents heaping praise upon officials for their actions against Armenians. Cipher Office files also show that investigations were opened against officials suspected of trying to rescue them (pp. 386, 394, 398).

When did the CUP’s leaders decide on annihilation? Although the book’s first two hundred-odd pages leave the strong impression that they had been committed to eliminating the Armenians, at least as a political threat, from early 1914 at the latest, Akçam claims to be agnostic about whether a ‘demographic policy’ for Armenians existed before the war (p. 228). Of course, Akçam would be foolhardy to say otherwise, for it would make his argument hostage to every scholar for whom contingency is the first article of the historian’s faith. Simple prudence dictates hedging his bets. So the disaster at Sarikamiş in January 1915 is described as a ‘turning point’, and the British assault on Gallipoli, as a source of existential panic, is dutifully given its due. And who could object to a description of the genocide as ‘the cumulative outcome of a series of increasingly radical decisions, each triggering the next in a cascading sequence of events’ (p. 128)?

But it is hard to believe that Akçam’s heart is in it. For one thing, the tremendous logistical feat of settling hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees into Armenian homes and inventorying and apportioning Armenian assets—seeds, tools, clothing, furniture, food—would have been impossible to accomplish so smoothly and swiftly (within days!) without detailed advance planning, to which ‘hundreds of documents’ testify (pp. 191, 344). Not a single cable has been found, however, with instructions for how displaced Armenians were to be similarly accommodated. Nor is there, among all the detailed state-made inventories of Armenian property, a single proposal for procedures to compensate them at their new destination. Can people live on nothing? The liquidation of Armenian property ‘clearly demonstrated’ the intent: ‘to completely deprive the Armenians of all possibility of continued existence’ (p. 341). This looks like premeditation to me.

A *motive* for the the CUP’s destruction of the Armenians, moreover, appears in Akçam’s account no later than six months before the war: it was the ‘existential danger’ (p. 450) posed by the 8 February 1914 Armenian Reforms, signed at Yeniköy by the Ottoman Empire and Russia, and backed by all the Powers. Although as Akçam tells it, it was military losses in World War I that triggered the party’s panic, it is clear that he thinks that the reforms in themselves constituted an ‘existential national security issue for the Ottoman state’ (pp. 125–126). (The term ‘existential’ appears seven times in his text.) Thus ‘all parties

participating in the negotiations of the reform agreement knew that this was the beginning of an Armenian state'. In fact 'their aim', he quotes a French ambassador as saying, 'was to divide up Anatolia not just economically but to partition it politically' (pp. xvii, 129–137). Akçam is certainly not alone in seeing Yeniköy as a predatory precursor to partition.¹⁰ But this is not the picture of the motive and desired outcome of the Armenian Reforms that one gets from Roderic Davison, who concludes: 'In point of fact, there were no losers'. Akçam cites Davison's classic article, but seems to believe it only selectively.¹¹

Akçam supports his view of the Armenian Reforms' sinister purpose and foreseeably lethal result with six quotations from European diplomats, all from a single secondary source (pp. 129–130).¹² He may be right. But it is possible to find quotations that suggest a different set of attitudes among the Great Powers about their desires for the empire's future. Here is an alternative selection: from Whitehall documents, the German Foreign Office (*Auswärtiges Amt*) and Russian files published by the Soviets in the 1920s and translated into German the following decade.

Britain: 'We want Turkey to remain a power in Asia and we want reforms for the Armenians'. And, somewhat later: 'If our object is to secure the adoption of reforms, it will be necessary to carry the Turks with us—as well as the Germans and Austrians. If we do not do this, we shall be inviting defeat. [...] Remind His Excellency of the extent to which we are committed to the maintenance of Turkish integrity and to her regeneration, of our opposition to anything in the nature of a policy which would lead to her further dismemberment [...], which could hardly be carried out without a European war'.¹³

Germany: '[W]ithout reforms the conservation of Turkey is impossible'.¹⁴ Germany wanted 'to see [that] Turkish authority was strengthened in Asia Minor and that the reforms for Armenia were handled with this end in view'.¹⁵ In July 1913, her foreign secretary declared, 'I don't believe that Turkey's last hour has already struck. I want to maintain her. [...] The unfurling of the Armenian question is naturally the last thing I want [*geht mir contre coeur*]. I hope that the Grand Vizier no longer doubts that *our* suggestion was made only in the interests of Turkey. [...] I have said to everyone that one must proceed with the greatest caution in order not to endanger the preservation of Turkey, & I have reason to hope that the latter—namely, the maintenance of Turkey—is also the honest intention of England'.¹⁶

The direction of Russian policy is admittedly harder to reduce to a common denominator. The Romanov empire had conflicting interests in Asia Minor, and competing voices. As an exasperated German statesman once remarked, 'the Russian diplomatic service moves about as independently as the maggots in the cheese'.¹⁷ Still, one would think that a Russia whose Armenian policy was driven by desire for eastern Anatolia would have seized the opportunity offered by the Ottomans' early, traumatic defeats in the Balkan Wars to make its move. And indeed, in early October 1912 the Governor-General of the Caucasus suggested issuing a declaration on behalf of the Ottoman Armenians, in part to counter separatist tendencies among the Armenians in his own territory. But

Russia's Minister-President rejected putting any pressure on the Ottoman Empire, 'given the situation in which it now finds itself, beset by its enemies' victorious armies and its domestic administration completely exhausted [. . .]. A *démarche* on behalf of the Armenians 'would be badly timed [*unzeitgemäß*] and could scarcely reckon on any practical, useful result'—presumably because the Ottomans could not introduce reforms now even if they wanted to.¹⁸ And the French ambassador reported to Grey the Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov's concurrence that now was not the time to raise the issue of Armenian reforms. Rather, when peace had been concluded in the Balkans, 'we should occupy ourself with putting Turkey on her feet as regards her Asiatic positions' and the reform of Asia Minor.¹⁹ Europe's statesmen were not moved by any love for the Ottomans, but they were powerfully aware of the balance of power—and convinced that any change in the empire's Asian territory would set off a scramble and an all-European war.

However, whatever the real intentions of the Powers, Ottoman leaders may well have *construed* the motives behind their pressure for Armenian reforms as predatory. But rich though his documentation is for the CUP's deeds, Akçam offers relatively little on what they *thought*.

Considering the significance Akçam assigns to these reforms, it is surprising how little attention he pays to the reasons the Europeans believed they were needed: the ongoing murders of Armenians, the death threats to their church dignitaries, the widespread belief that massacres would begin as soon as the Ottoman army demobilized, the pressure from public opinion, especially urgent in Russia where Caucasus Armenians sat in the Duma, and the violent land war in eastern Anatolia between Armenians and Muslims, which threatened not only the region's stability, but international peace.²⁰ I consider these fears justified. Akçam gives them short shrift, probably because his Ottoman sources do not take them seriously. The reforms envisioned including Christians in the administrative bodies of seven eastern provinces; they had wanted equal representation, but got it only for two, and only temporarily. After a census was conducted, within a year, the standard for Christians and Muslims would be representation proportionate to their population. The Powers considered themselves lucky to get the Porte to agree that whatever the census revealed, Christians would get at least *one* representative. On the two demands existential for the Armenians—that muhacir not be settled in these seven provinces (which would make nonsense of proportional representation) and that measures be undertaken to return stolen lands to their original Armenian owners—the Porte remained adamant, and they went unmentioned in the Yeniköy accord. European negotiators were left with the hope that the two European inspector-generals stipulated in the accord might be able to adjudicate such problems.²¹ It is not easy to see how a single Dutchman and a single Norwegian (chosen by the Porte, after considerable negotiation) heading two administrative regions covering seven provinces could guarantee order and fairness in a region that the Porte itself had been unable to control, much less how they might pose an 'existential' threat to the Ottoman Empire.²²

Thus, while Akçam has presented a compelling case that the Ottoman state's demographic restructuring involved, sooner rather than later, a commitment to annihilate the Armenians, he has not yet convinced me of its rationale: that the reforms required by the Yeniköy accord turned the Armenians into an existential threat to the empire. That would require attention to the political activities and political culture of the third party to the Yeniköy agreements: Ottoman Armenians, the silent actors in Akçam's story. Compared to our research on the Powers and the perpetrators, it is surprising how little we have (at least in English) on their targets. This may be understandable at this stage of research; no one would accept an explanation of the Shoah that depended on a description of Europe's Jews and thus accorded it some rationality. But Akçam's account, like that of many historians, ties the Armenian genocide (without excusing it) to rational concerns for national security. The bridge between cause (Yeniköy, and Armenian appeals to European opinion more generally) and effect (existential threat) seems built on too-easy analogies with Balkan separatism. Do we know how 'Ottoman' or how 'nationalist' ordinary Armenians felt? Did they 'want' to leave the Ottoman Empire, either to join Russia or to found their own state? How aware were they of the difficulties facing either course? According to Vrontsov-Dashkov, the Catholicos of All Armenians, Kevork V, *asked* Russia to intercede on behalf of Armenia, yet the Russian government's relations with their own Armenians had been terrible and only recently begun to mend. What are we to make of the appeals of Armenian church leaders to their co-religionists abroad to send weapons? Were the realists or the fanatics gaining the upper hand? The alternative futures that *we* might imagine for them—annexation by a soon-to-be Bolshevik Russia or a protectorate under one of the Western powers—hardly seem preferable to living in a Muslim empire that protected their lives, secured their property and allowed space for the survival of their culture. If such an empire were on offer—say, through the implementation of the Yeniköy accords or something similar—then Turkey's Armenian population, while it might predictably remain a source of considerable irritation for the empire's Muslim majority, was not an *existential* threat.

Akçam uses the term 'genocide' with restraint, alternating with 'destruction' and 'annihilation'. The real division on the fate of the Armenians, as he has said elsewhere, is not between some hypostatized 'Turkish' and 'Armenian' perspective, nor is it semantic, between those who want to call these events 'genocide' and those who, while recognizing the criminal reality to which that term points, prefer other terms. Rather, it is between both of the latter and others who, citing factors both true (e.g. widespread famine and disease) and false (e.g. rebellions sufficient to constitute a security threat), see no crime on the part of the state, but at most criminal actions by individuals or groups that the state could not control in the course of implementing policies dictated by self-defence. Since at the heart of this issue stands a moral judgement, one should not expect Akçam's to be the 'dispassionate inquiry' that some historians prefer.²³ Will Akçam's blitz of evidence convince those who start with a different picture? I am reminded of the old adage:

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Those convinced against their will
Are of the same opinion still.

Moral judgements, however, are what impel new acts of will.

Those whom Akçam's work *have* convinced may ask: what now is left to do? Akçam's book is an argument, not a narrative, and certainly not a whole picture of Ottoman society in World War I, nor even of its inter-ethnic politics. Aside from the missing Armenians, Jews get barely a mention (pp. 59, 61), yet the empire was no stranger to outsiders intervening on their behalf,²⁴ and both Morgenthau's diary and historians have noted that Ottoman Jews feared that they might be the next Armenians. What did the CUP think of them—and about the Zionist project?²⁵ The Kurds, scapegoated since the 1890s for any violence against Armenians, also remain shadowy in Akçam's account. And how did the Young Turks' *feeling* about Armenians develop? They began, after all, as allies with Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF). When Talat played tavla with Krikor Zohrab—recounted among Armenians as surety that a new day of safety and progress had dawned²⁶—was his congeniality a mask or did his feelings later change? How did struggles within the CUP affect inter-ethnic relations? Akçam uses memoir literature skilfully to make his own case, but that case is a study of policies, not the subjectivity of the policy-makers. And finally, there is that holy grail of all genocide studies: the feelings of the nation in whose name the crimes were committed. What did 'ordinary Muslims' think about the Armenians and what was being done to them?

The Young Turks' crime against humanity is far more than the first 'snapshot' (p. xxi) that Akçam modestly describes. It is a publishing landmark—a major university press in the United States has put its own prestige behind a work on the Armenian genocide. It marks a 'paradigm shift'. The long-standing 'Ptolemaic' understanding of the late Ottoman Empire—as 'a largely successful experiment in multinationalism that was destroyed by the great powers in WWI'—with all of its attendant anomalies that had become ever harder to fit in, is now past.²⁷ And although Akçam is not our only Copernicus—the participants at the 2005 Istanbul conference and a growing band of others can join him in that claim—we really do have a new paradigm, one that can open up a whole new set of *real* questions. Now that we no longer need to prove *De Revolutionibus orbium coelestium* (aka the *existence* of the Armenian genocide), we can expect to have heated—but genuine!—debates about not only the Armenian question, but a whole raft of aspects of the late Ottoman Empire and the early Republic. In short, we can start having what Thomas Kuhn, after describing such 'scientific revolutions' in the past, has memorably named 'normal science'. Let the arguments begin!

MICHAEL REYNOLDS

Missing context

I would like to thank the editors of the *Journal of Genocide Research* for asking me to read and comment on Taner Akçam's latest book, *The Young Turks' crime*

against humanity: the Armenian genocide and ethnic cleansing in the Ottoman Empire. Akçam is the author or co-author of multiple books on the mass killing of Armenians during World War I. He has garnered fame outside Turkey—and notoriety inside Turkey—as one of the first scholars of Turkish background to assert unequivocally that the mass killing of Armenians by the Ottoman state constituted genocide. When he wrote his first book on the Armenian question just over two decades ago, the issue of the fate of Ottoman Armenians was truly a taboo inside Turkey.²⁸ There was no public debate or discussion of it. Akçam's writings generated considerable controversy and hostility inside Turkish society, including physical threats against him. Akçam, however, refused to be intimidated, and went on to write and publish several more books on the Armenian question. Today, thanks in no small measure to the considerable courage that he has demonstrated, the question of the Armenians' fate is now openly debated and discussed in Turkey. The books of Akçam and others such as Raymond Kévorkian, Vahakn Dadrian and Fuat Dündar are sold in Turkey in Turkish. Newspapers and television channels in Turkey host debates. Akçam deserves tremendous credit for destroying this taboo.

That all who work on the issue of the Armenian genocide owe a debt to Akçam is clear. But it should also be stated that by helping to force open discussion of the fate of the Armenians, Akçam has done a service to all scholars interested in late Ottoman and Turkish Republican history more generally. Among specialists in Ottoman history there existed no consensus as to what happened to the Armenians, let alone how to describe it. The majority of scholars preferred to avoid the topic altogether, finding it both too complex and too controversial. The result has been to subtly warp the historiography of the late Ottoman and early republican periods as a whole. To use a scientifically imperfect metaphor to illustrate, the ignorance surrounding the Armenian question has functioned as something of a black hole in the historiography. It certainly deprived scholars of knowledge of the fate of the Ottoman Armenians, but it also exerted a subtle yet palpable distorting effect on the general understanding of the end of the Ottoman Empire and the creation of the Turkish Republic. In the same way that a black hole bends the pathway of light, that ignorance bent the vectors of research on fundamental topics such as the history of eastern Anatolia, the CUP's electoral politics, the nature of Turkish nationalism and the emergence of a Muslim bourgeoisie to name just a few. Armenians were a critical constituent component of life in the late empire—in its politics, culture and economics. Yet because any research on Armenians in the late imperial period necessarily bumped up against the formerly taboo question of what happened to them at empire's end, that research was stifled and stunted.

At the same time, the existence of the black hole lured scholars with little or no understanding of Ottoman history to attempt to fill the hole. The result at times was more speculation than judicious research. Where Ottomanists sought to ignore or overlook the Armenian question, specialists in Armenian history and genocide scholars alike made the destruction of the Armenians the central event of the late Ottoman period, the pivot around which rotated the policies of the

Ottoman state in the years and even decades leading up to World War I. Denied access to Ottoman sources, these scholars relied overwhelmingly on foreign sources, some of questionable reliability. Possessing a shaky understanding of Ottoman history and applying models derived from substantively different historical contexts, they produced conclusions that too neatly reflected their starting assumptions. The inability of Ottomanists to engage in any real debate created the equivalent of an echo chamber, where ideas and allegations and assumptions were not tested but merely repeated. The result was sterile research. Or, as Akçam puts it, the proclivity of genocide scholars for “cutting and pasting” the [historical] narrative to their [Procrustean] “bed” led ‘the field to the point of methodological suicide’ (Akçam, *The Young Turks’ crime*, p. xxix).

A common claim of those who rejected the genocide thesis was that only Ottoman sources could be considered reliable. It was an intellectually untenable claim. To be sure, European sources demand scrutiny. But all sources, regardless of their origins, require careful evaluation.

Akçam’s mentor and sometimes co-author, Vahakn Dadrian, sought to rebut this charge by producing studies that drew heavily on German and Austrian documents, and published Turkish sources. As wartime allies of the Ottomans, the Germans and Austrians could hardly be considered anti-Ottoman. Likewise, if Turkish sources were self-incriminating, they could hardly be dismissed as propaganda. Dadrian’s research was prodigious and raised important questions, but it was also heavily teleological and wholly prosecutorial. His misrepresentation of sources attracted criticism even from among those who agreed with the genocide thesis.

There was, moreover, a curious wrinkle to the arguments about which sources could be considered reliable to demonstrate a systematic destruction of the Armenians. As Akçam notes, proponents of the genocide thesis prematurely conceded the assertion that the Ottoman archives exculpated the Ottoman state by explaining away the absence of incriminating evidence by emphasizing the Unionists’ destruction of documentation at the end of World War I. This cast further doubt upon claims of genocide: surely if there was an operation as massive as alleged, it would have left behind more than a few traces in the rather rich Ottoman archives?

Indeed, it is largely to respond to this point that Akçam wrote *The Young Turks’ crime*. As he contends in the first chapter of the book, ‘Ottoman sources and the question of their being purged’, ‘a complete purge of all potentially “damaging” archival materials is virtually inconceivable’ (Akçam, *The Young Turks’ crime*, p. 26). *The Young Turks’ crime* thus takes head-on the linked claims that on the issue of the destruction of the Armenians only Ottoman documentation can be authoritative and that such documentation provides no evidence of state intention or complicity in the deaths. It does so by marshalling a truly impressive amount of documentation drawn from the Ottoman archives.

The Young Turks’ crime dynamites the claim that the Ottoman archives exculpate the Ottoman state. There can be no argument that the mass deaths of Armenians were unforeseeable or the consequences of a relocation gone tragically

wrong, as some have argued. In particular, Akçam brings to light a great number of documents demonstrating that Talat Pasha was intimately involved in overseeing the deportations and deaths of Armenians. Talat himself admitted as much. Now, however, we have a far clearer, if still quite incomplete, picture of the central role that Talat played. More, perhaps, remains to be learned about the roles of other key Unionists, such as Cemal Pasha, but this is a task for future research.

The Young Turks' crime likewise dismantles a number of arguments that those seeking to refute the genocide thesis have put forth. Those arguments include the contention that the Ottoman state punished officials who abused or persecuted Armenians. On the face of it, the trial and punishment of officials for maltreatment of Armenians would go a long way towards undermining the thesis that the Ottoman centre was intent on annihilating the Armenians. As Akçam shows, there were indeed instances where Ottoman officials involved in the deportations were tried and punished. But those officials were disciplined not for abuses of deportees but for such violations as embezzling property seized from deportees. At a stroke, Akçam's research reveals the hollowness of the claim that the centre strove to protect Armenians and establishes the fact that the centre was sufficiently apprised of the details of the deportations that it could punish individual officials for petty crimes against the state (Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, p. 384). His wry observation that a former head of the Ottoman archives and strenuous critic of the genocide thesis could never manage to produce documentation of a single instance of Armenians being recompensed for losses is devastating (Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, p. 355).

Similarly, Akçam highlights the contrast the documentation reveals between the interest Ottoman officials showed for the wellbeing of Muslim refugees and the disinterest and hostility they displayed towards non-Muslims. To what extent Muslims actually benefited from state assistance efforts is unclear. Akçam writes of 'the enormous amount of energy, concern, and resources that went into the care and resettlement of Muslim refugees and immigrants' (Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, p. 444). The adjective 'enormous' could apply only in relative terms when comparison is made to the treatment of Christians. Given that the Ottoman state during World War I could not keep its own army adequately fed and was barely able to avert famine in the capital, Istanbul, it is highly unlikely that it could have provided substantial assistance to the hundreds of thousands of Muslim refugees. Moreover, the territories of eastern Anatolia, Iran and the Levant during the war all experienced famine. Mortality rates were extraordinary for Muslims, and there is abundant testimony in all sources about the thoroughly wretched condition of Muslims in these lands during this time. Akçam's general point, nonetheless, still holds: whatever resources the Ottoman state may have had during the war, it did not expend them to ensure the wellbeing of its Muslim and Christian subjects equitably. Disparities in relief efforts in the region, to include European and Russian relief operations as well as Ottoman, might be a topic worthy of further investigation.

This points to a weakness of *The Young Turks' crime*. Whereas the book fulfils its primary task of using Ottoman archival evidence to document official actions to

destroy the Ottoman Armenian community, it is less successful in providing context to the events it discusses. This is not an oversight of the author. Akçam forthrightly acknowledges the need for contextualization. The proper context for understanding the annihilation of the Ottoman Armenian community is not, he suggests, that of communal struggle between Muslims and Christians, but rather that of the partitioning of the Ottoman Empire into nation-states. The 'Armenian Genocide', he writes, 'must be understood and interpreted as a matter between the Ottoman state and its subjects that arose as a result of specific policies pursued by the regime' (Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, p. 449). This is correct, in my view, and it needs to be stated because too much research on the mass killing of Armenians has sought to strip it of any historical context by either emphasizing persistent factors such as religious and ethnic identities or by substituting ahistorical templates derived from other episodes of mass killing, and especially from the Holocaust. This has too often resulted, as noted earlier, in the creation of caricatures, not portraits, of historical actors and in the substitution of programmatic teleology for an understanding of process.

Akçam recognizes these defects in the earlier historiography. As he writes in the preface, the mutually irreconcilable narratives of late Ottoman history as either the tale of the perfidious partitioning of the empire by the Great Powers through the use of Christian minorities or as the story of the oppression of Christians are 'two sides of the same coin'. 'What is needed,' he argues, 'is a history that incorporates both perspectives into a single, unified account. In this way the massacres and genocide can be understood in their full historical significance' (Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, p. xiii). In lieu of imputing to the Unionists a pre-determined impulse for extermination, Akçam instead posits that fear of impending partition spurred the Unionists down a path that led to the annihilation of the Armenian community. This is, in my view, fundamentally correct. Moreover, the fears of the Unionists, and of Muslims more generally, were not byproducts of paranoia or psychological complexes of religious or ethnic inferiority, but were rooted in sound extrapolation from historical precedent in the Caucasus and the Balkans. They had good reason to believe that the end of Muslim sovereignty in eastern Anatolia would conclude in the subjugation of the resident Muslims and quite possibly in the mass expulsion and deaths of Muslims. This reality does not justify or legitimize the acts of the Unionists and their local collaborators, but a comprehensive history of the annihilation of the Armenians will have to include this. Although *The Young Turks' crime* does not engage these issues, it does point the way to them.

Another area wherein greater contextualization is needed is in the book's presentation of Armenians. Armenians are missing as actors. An unfortunate consequence of the desire of many scholars to convey the horrific nature of the Ottoman policies towards Armenians has been to whitewash the latter by leaving Armenian plans, aspirations and actions unexamined. Thus, these treatments prefer a simplistic presentation of the Ottoman Armenians as a single, undifferentiated and passive community. At times, these accounts also gloss over the fact that the conflict between Anatolian Muslims and Armenians both

predated the rise of the Unionists and was rooted, in part, in local dynamics and the simmering struggle for control of land and resources. Akçam alludes to the structural aspects of the standoff when he notes that the outbreak of war between Germany and Russia in the summer of 1914 had divided Muslims and Christians in Anatolia. This is a small but telling indicator of a broader fundamental polarization. Those villagers had nothing directly at stake in a conflict unfolding thousands of kilometres from them, but their understanding of Muslim and Christian interests as antagonistic and the perception of Russia as the Armenians' patron spurred them to align their sympathies in opposing directions.

To his credit, Akçam never disclaims the existence of a fundamental conflict at the local level, and he also avoids the opposite trap of ascribing the conflict to primordial religious or ethnic rivalries. He is also wary of placing too much emphasis on racialist motives among the Unionists (Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, p. 335). The results of the efforts to reconstruct a Unionist ideology of racial superiority and aggression akin to that of the Nazis have been unpersuasive and are a prime example of the phenomenon Akçam identified of the Procrustean Bed. 'Saving the state was their Alpha and Omega', Akçam writes of the Unionists, not notions of ethnic, religious or racial purity (Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, p. 336). The destruction of the Armenians was a means to this end, not an end in itself.

Akçam, in fact, recognizes that dynamics outside the Ottoman Empire were an essential component in the destruction of the Armenians. In their decision-making the Unionists were as often as not reacting to the actions of the Great Powers, who were jockeying for influence over the Ottoman lands. The Armenian question constituted part of a larger 'great game', to borrow the metaphor used by Donald Bloxham to capture the dynamic of inter-state competition.²⁹ *The Young Turks' crime* usefully contrasts the policies the Unionists applied towards another Christian minority, the Greeks, with the ones they pursued against the Armenians to underscore the centrality of security concerns in shaping Unionist actions. At the beginning and end of the book, Akçam emphasizes Russia's imposition of an Armenian reform plan upon the Ottoman Empire in February 1914 as a critical development. The Unionists feared that this plan heralded the empire's final dissolution. 'The threat of Russian occupation and the existence of an international reform agreement,' he writes, 'cast Armenians as an existential danger.'³⁰

Akçam is right to flag the importance of Great Power politics and especially the transformation of the Armenian question into a vehicle through which the powers could pursue their competition. I think, however, that he over-emphasizes the significance of the 1914 reform plan *per se*. The plan was one more step in a larger process of partition. The Unionists did accept the plan. They did so most reluctantly, but accept it they did. There is little or no evidence that the reform plan itself was the central motive to the Ottoman decision to enter the war. Indeed, as Mustafa Aksakal has shown *contra* Akçam, the Ottomans were not eager to enter World War I and sought to delay their entry in the hope that the war would end first.³¹

General readers without a strong background in Ottoman history will likely find *The Young Turks' crimes* at times confusing. One reason is the lack of context just

described. The book assumes a good deal of prior knowledge of both Ottoman history and debates on genocide. Compounding this difficulty is the book's unusual structure. Although the chapters are organized more or less according to chronology, the book lacks a strong narrative thread to link them together, and the chapters each focus on sources at the expense of narrative and analysis. In addition, Akçam's presentation of a 'superabundance of evidential records' leads to considerable repetition. The sacrifice of narrative accessibility was a deliberate choice of Akçam, and is justified perhaps by the need to convey the wealth of archival evidence supporting his thesis, but it does come at a cost.

These criticisms of *The Young Turks' crime* are, however, quibbles. Greater context would have made for a clearer narrative and one more accessible to non-experts. Nonetheless, the book succeeds in its main goal of documenting the Unionists' culpability in the destruction of the Ottoman Armenian community. Given the low quality of the historiography on the Armenian question, to expect a definitive account at this time would be asking too much. The field is rapidly advancing, with young scholars such as Fuat Dündar and Uğur Ümit Üngör also conducting original research in Ottoman archival collections. Akçam's own description of the book as marking 'the end of the beginning' of Armenian genocide research is apt.³² *The Young Turks' crimes* is itself a substantially revised version of a book that Akçam published several years earlier in Turkey.³³ Criticisms have been levelled at that earlier book for its use of individual documents and sources.³⁴ Absent a compelling alternative framework to explain just how it happened that a community that had inhabited eastern Anatolia for centuries and numbered well over a million in 1914 was expunged from that region in the space of a few years, however, such criticisms can hardly be regarded as dispositive. *The Young Turks' crime* must be regarded as the state of the art, and it will likely remain so for some time to come.

HANS-LUKAS KIESER

The Young Turks' crime against humanity—and their (mis)reading of the reform plan

The Young Turks' crime against humanity: the title of the book is a pertinent and, certainly, a very conscious choice. Moving beyond the diplomatic and, in recent decades, sterile discussion that avoids the term *genocide* in describing the Armenian experience of World War I, it questions responsibility and ascertains, in a universal perspective, the fact of a major crime. This is a leading and constant thread of Akçam's approach. Since the late twentieth century, this author has approached late Ottoman and Turkish Republican history with a willingness to include the poignant question of human responsibility in the midst of turbulent historical constraints. In this book, he has grafted on a great deal of additional scholarship to prove his point convincingly.

Today, the opposite to Akçam's approach is no longer a blunt denial of the main historical facts. This is no longer possible in academe and diplomacy, since late Ottoman and Armenian genocide studies have greatly progressed and important

archives, including Ottoman state archives, have been made accessible in the last thirty years. Today, the opposite approach is the view of an Ottoman cataclysm in the 1910s, coupled with and catalysed by a European war in 1914, which brought the Ottoman order to an end in a sea of general violence and multiple tragedies. Tending or intending to level and relativize these events, this approach does not allow, as does Akçam's, fundamental questioning of parties' plans and responsibilities, distinguishing categories of violence and, importantly—only touched on in this study on the 1910s—exploring their meaning for the political culture of subsequent generations. Accurate historiography, the selection of sources and the wording of the narrative all matter in this respect. Akçam's critics reproach him for intentionally distorting sources according to his primary interest.³⁵ Scepticism is a necessary scholarly principle, and historiography needs constantly to be checked and refined. When the critics pick out minor elements, however, without acknowledging indications of an innovative and holistic view, they risk falling into the trap of a meaningless, relativistic approach to history.

Is a scholarship that carries a meaning and message suspicious when judged by criteria of objectivity, dispassion and the historian Tacitus's motto *sine ira et studio*? Tacitus himself, one of the greatest historians of ancient Rome, might well prove the contrary of his motto, if one interprets it in a banal way. Tacitus, however, used the motto to distinguish himself from scribes who wrote history to please those in power and easily changed their positions when circumstances changed. There is no valuable scholarly study (*studium*) in history without a good portion of disciplined zeal (again *studium* in Latin). In Taner Akçam's work culminate a good number of studies that he had published in German, Turkish and English in the two decades after he fled Turkey in 1977 as a refugee and began researches in Germany; he tenaciously continued them after moving to the United States. The present study is his major work, and it is mature and masterful.

The main, constructively critical argument of this review will be that a few relevant macrohistorical considerations together with a closer, critical look at diplomacy may have reinforced Akçam's argument. I will elaborate on this with regard to the reform plan of 1914, a crucial factor on the road to genocide. A history that incorporates both the Muslim Turkish perspective and the perspective of other ethnic religious groups is needed and to be aspired to. Does Akçam's present study succeed in incorporating these different perspectives 'into a single, unified account' (p. xiii)? Akçam's optimism at this and other places is refreshing, but I am in doubt, although I think that his study has made important steps in this direction. I argue that more elaboration on a complex, often paradoxical macrohistorical framework is needed, in order to proceed even more towards not so much a unified but an overarching, well-networked and comprehensive narrative. Although public discussion has dawned in Turkey with regard to crimes against humanity committed by or in the name of the state, there is still not a breakthrough with regard to the main issue dealt with in the present study.

Let me first summarize a few facts and features. For some sensibilities, Akçam's study may not always have given due credit to those who have also

done important research in this field. His study is not the first to assume the complementarity, not contrariness, of Ottoman and non-Ottoman sources for Armenian genocide studies. Serious research has done so since the 1990s, when Ottoman archives became increasingly accessible, and it has ‘restructured the framework of debate’. Akçam, however, uses a new density of sources that feed his narrative and arguments. He systematically includes an important number of Ottoman sources, and he does so in full knowledge of other important, notably German documents. The structure of the narrative is not new, nor is the conceptualization of the relevant decisions and measures as a demographic policy intending to create an indisputable Turkish national home in Asia Minor—politically, demographically, economically and by way of confiscation and assimilation. To all this Akçam contributes with new findings in the present imposing study.

His narrative follows a trajectory from the Balkan Wars of 1912–13, through an initial voluntary population exchange project, a mass expulsion of Ottoman Christians from the Anatolian west coast and the settlement of Muslim refugees from the Balkans, to the reform plan for the provinces in eastern Anatolia and a Young Turk decision for war alliance with Germany, linked to the reform plan and the struggle for sovereignty. The Reform Agreement (often called the Armenian Reforms) was reluctantly signed by the Ottoman government in February 1914 and determined that reform had to be supervised by two European inspectors on the ground. This contradicted two main goals of the Young Turk Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) since 1913: the exclusive sovereignty of an empowered Ottoman state and the safe Turkish national home in Asia Minor—in particular for those who had lost their homes in the Balkans. Talat, the mastermind, planner and communicator of the Committee government, was born in Edirne and, like the whole CUP Central Committee, was a refugee from Saloniki, which was conquered by Greek forces in late 1912. Almost all sources that Akçam quoted come from Talat’s Ministry of the Interior, most of them documents signed by Talat himself. Against the background of the Balkan Wars and their aftermath, Talat implemented from spring 1914 a demographic policy that in 1915–16, as he himself states in his personal notebook, removed more than 1.1 million Armenians. This policy led to the foreseeable death of most of them. Many elements prove that death was not only predictable but designed; the last of these is the slaughter of tens of thousands of survivors of the concentration camps (the term used by contemporaries) in Syria in 1916.

The Reform Agreement holds a central place in Akçam’s argumentation, although he does not elaborate much on it. Therefore, he depends strongly on perspectives and a selection of quotations from contemporary diplomats given by the Kemalist historian Yusuf H. Bayur in his *History of the Turkish revolution* (in Turkish). Demographic policy coupled with concern for national security, Akçam argues, gave the policy towards Armenians its genocidal character. He identifies the concern for security with the fear of the 1914 Reform Agreement. Hence, ‘eliminating the so-called Armenian reform problem’ was a main intent of the CUP’s anti-Armenian policy of 1915, not caused by military constraints. Thus far I agree, although I would replace the phrase ‘concern for national

security' with the broader concept 'concern for national sovereignty', which includes security considerations but emphasizes the priority that the CUP government gave to issues pertaining to national sovereignty. Demographic policy, sovereignty issues and the safeguarding of a Turkish national home in Asia Minor were all closely linked.

Bayur places the agreement of 1914 in a Kemalist narrative of imperialist designs to divide Asia Minor. This was also the contemporary view of the CUP: the spectre of an independent Armenian state to be triggered by the reforms, analogous to the genesis of the Balkan states. Striking features of the CUP interpretation, as far as we can read it in the memoirs, are, however, its emotionality and that it mostly refers to the first Russian draft by the lawyer André Mandelstam, not the final, signed version that was based on an Ottoman proposal of July 1913 and differed considerably from the draft. Even the Grand Vizier Saïd Halim, who signed the plan on 8 February 1914, depicts it in his memoirs as a partition or annexation plot by arguing with elements of the Russian draft and not the version of February 1914 (e.g. he points to the equality of Christians and Muslims instead of proportionality in the regional councils).

Akçam also presents the plan as nothing other than a partition plot, without developing an independent position on it. He writes that the 'intolerable burden of the 1914 Armenian Reform Agreement lent urgency to the Ottoman decision to enter the war'. The latter portion is true—but was the reform plan an intolerable burden? And did all parties participating in the negotiations of the Reform Agreement know, guess or desire 'that this was the beginning of an independent Armenian state', as Akçam writes? (p. xviii). I consider a main question to be the following one: if we accept all these terms, what were the realistic alternatives to 'Armenian removal', which meant genocide, in an Ottoman world involved in total war? The Turkish nationalist narrative says, implicitly or explicitly, that there were no alternatives—and it may appear coherent, though not acceptable or true. It argues that Turkey needed to ally with Germany, to enter the world war and to destroy any collective Armenian future in Asia Minor in order to frustrate the European plot of partition and to safeguard Turkish sovereignty; just as five years later it had again to take arms against the European partition plot of Sèvres in its legendary war of independence under Mustafa Kemal Pasha.

A careful analysis of the reform plan, its dynamic diplomatic context and its timing therefore matters. Let me give a few hints. Most importantly, the reforms were a peace project, though in dangerous times of the late Belle Époque, whereas the course taken by the CUP was a war project. The CUP saw 'war as a savior' and opted in 1914 for an Ottoman 'war of independence', as Mustafa Aksakal has put it.³⁶ It deliberately followed sweeping assessments in favour of its course, because more differentiated assessments would have hindered it. Specialists in diplomatic history of the 1910s agree that Russian foreign policy under Minister Sergei Sazonov did not, until 1916, intend to annexe the eastern provinces, let alone Constantinople, although of course a few Russian newspapers, subaltern functionaries and even ambassadors voiced less prudent opinions; they were not, however, in a position to decide. The close cooperation for the reform

project between Germany and Russia, who were adversaries in terms of alliances, would in any case not have allowed for this. For German diplomats, the finally signed plan meant a relative victory of Turkey and Germany over Russia in February 1914. 'If one compares . . . the Mandelstam draft with the achieved result, one must say that the Porte has won a remarkable diplomatic success', the German chargé d'affaires von Mutius wrote to the Reichskanzler on 9 February 1914, and he emphasized decisive German mediation.³⁷

On the eve of the war, there was a lot of diplomatic talk about partition, but it was concretely about partitioning Asia Minor into spheres of influence, not yet more. Germany did all in order to warrant itself the most influence, at the same time taking a firm stand against partition, as proven by, among other sources, the memoirs of Max K. Lichnowsky, a bright German diplomat who fell into disgrace because he opposed German crisis mismanagement in July 1914.³⁸

In a more detached retrospective, it is therefore plausible to admit that late Belle Époque diplomacy opened for a short time an unexpected window of opportunity for solving the Armenian question, then the foremost piece of the Oriental question; that this resulted in a well-negotiated reform plan, a compromise without losers or triumphant winners that demanded a lot of peaceful work to be implemented in the years to come; but that exactly such a compromise did not fit in with the political mindset of the fresh single-party regime of 1913. For the Young Turks did not, and they did not want to, believe in it. Their fear of partition and of complete loss of state power after the traumatic wars with the young Balkan states suggested itself. Their search for a safe home for Turks in Asia Minor was legitimate, although it coincided with the problematic adoption of a partly radical Turkism. The emotionality and relative inaccuracy in the Young Turks' rendering of the reform project point to a blind spot that has to be taken into account for the genesis of genocide. The blind spot has to do with hyperbole and overstretching. This, in turn, was caused by an imperial self-understanding that still wanted restoration, expansion and dominance and was far from resigning itself to the minimal goal of a moderate Turkism, as emphasized by Dr. Cevdet Nasuhoğlu at the congress of Turkists in Geneva in April 1913: a safe home in Anatolia, together and shared with non-Muslim and non-Turkish residents.³⁹

Similar observations are true for the Young Turks' contemporary interactions with Armenian representatives. For the CUP leaders, these had transgressed a red line in December 1913, because they had disregarded the breaking point of their Young Turk interlocutors by still insisting on international control of the reforms, instead of treating the reforms as a purely interior Ottoman affair, as they had in the years after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908—without achieving satisfying results. It speaks for Krikor Zohrab, a main representative of the Ottoman Armenians, that in his personal journal of January 1914 he seeks a part of the fault for an almost final break then also on the Armenian side. The Turkish national legend of the Armenian stabbing in the back of the Turkish nation begins with this 'betrayal' of 1913 and continues with the 'general rebellion' of spring 1915, as defined by Talat in his telegrams of 24 April, to be then-ceforth canonical. Both arguments evade responsibility for what followed.

In short, the Reform Agreement of February 1914 stood at odds with Young Turks who decided, for reasons they believed to be compelling, to set forth not on peace but on war; not on collaboration with the friends of the 1908 constitution, with measured international monitoring, nor on a *Rechtsstaat*, but on Turkish and Muslim solidarity in an authoritarian framework of cooptation. In contrast, the plan raised a great deal of hope among Armenians and other non-Sunni groups in the eastern provinces, thus anticipating the divide of the years to come. The latter's hope collapsed almost entirely when the Committee government prepared for war and suspended the plan in August/September 1914. When the government abrogated its contracts with the inspectors in January 1915, this meant the de facto burial of the Reform Agreement and a further step towards an entirely contrary policy.

The Young Turks' reception and assessment of the situation in 1913–15 is authentic and momentous but also deliberate and biased. If we do not follow their assessment of the reform project and of contemporary diplomacy, we reinforce Akçam's argument of the Young Turks' crime against humanity and the centrality of the reforms, but we give it more and necessary historical depth. For the sake of the state's sovereignty, but without an informed idea of peace, the CUP deliberately missed reforms and began to victimize non-Turk citizens. Turkey itself had to pay a high price for the lack of reforms and peace in its eastern provinces in the coming hundred years.

It is not surprising, then, that in an atmosphere of reconciliation with the Kurds in this year 2013, elements of the Reform Agreement of 1914 have again become topical. The Turkish parliament has recently adopted a law that allows the use of local languages in the court, as did the agreement. In the same vein, substantially more regionalism, as the agreement had prescribed, will be indispensable if the present peace process is to be given a real chance.

PETER BALAKIAN

The weight of evidence

Taner's Akçam's *The Young Turks' crimes against humanity* breaks new ground and is also an unusual scholarly work in some dimensions of its form. Akçam inaugurates his study with an elaborate presentation and discussion of archival documents. At the centre of Akçam's thesis is his presentation and use of Ottoman state documents for the purpose of disclosing the mechanisms of the Unionist government's planning and implementation of the eradication of the Armenian population of Turkey in 1915, and also, importantly, of the ethnic cleansing of the Greek population of western Turkey in 1913–15.

He opens by putting forth a grid of documentary sources: *Prime Ministerial Ottoman archive*; *Records of the postwar court-martial trials*; *Istanbul press accounts, 1918–22*; *Archive of the Armenian patriarchate of Jerusalem*; *Minutes of the fifth department* and *Minutes of the Ottoman parliament*. Rather than letting the evidentiary sources reside in appendices and footnotes, as is most often the practice, he presents these documentary sources as part of his

narrative. He wants to make clear that the theoretical structure of his argument is inseparable from archival evidence. In large part, he has opted for this structure because of his concern with the Turkish government's continued denialist campaign—one that has resulted in even making inquiry into the fate of the Armenians a taboo often punishable by law in Turkey. His monograph is focused on the fact that the Ottoman government's intent to destroy the Armenian population is evident and codified by documents and cipher telegrams from Minister of the Interior Talat Pasha, the chief architect of the genocide, which are in the Prime Ministerial archives in Istanbul.

Part of his interest in archival documents leads him to give us a brief overview of archival and state document history in Turkey. In doing so, he presents what he calls the 'destroy after reading' syndrome that has come to define a problem both in the late Ottoman Empire and the Turkish Republic. For example, the 1919–20 postwar Court Martial records about the Armenian massacres and other war crimes disappeared; the archives of the Central Committee of the CUP that should be in the Prime Ministerial archives are missing. Various bureaucrats after World War I confessed to having burned documents in their respective bureaus. Akçam gives us one indexical moment in which the Turkish government in 1931 sold fifty tonnes of Ottoman-era records from the Finance Ministry to Bulgaria for about \$100,000. As this mountain of paper was being carted away by trucks, tonnes of these documents were wind-blown all over Gulhane Park in Istanbul and were later collected by garbage men and thrown into the ocean. The 1934 regulation 'On the destruction of papers and documents whose preservation is unnecessary' (which has been dissolved and reborn several times) sums up what Akçam calls Turkey's 'pattern of wholesale disregard for its own posterity [which] is characteristic of an authoritarian institutional culture that tends to evaluate history and historical documents as potential threats' (p. 24).

It is in this context of state-directed historical amnesia that Akçam commences his demographic perspective and approach to the Armenian genocide. He argues that the genocide was the result of population engineering planned by the central government in a two-tiered mechanism in which deportations and mass arrests were ordered by the government and mass killing was ordered in a more clandestine way by an inner bureaucracy of the Unionist Party. While Akçam's depiction of the Unionists' demographic plan is important in disclosing the care of government planning, his claim is also a truism because most genocidal events are the result of population engineering schemes in which the goal is to eliminate a targeted population. In the Armenian case, Akçam shows that one major goal was to reduce the entire Armenian population of Turkey to no more than five to ten per cent in any region of the country. While documents reveal that this was a demographic concept with its origins in earlier Ottoman minority reform plans, in 1915 it is difficult to see how this idea was ever fully implementable. On the ground in the various sections of Turkey, and especially in the east, a five to ten per cent plan seems merely theoretical because in places like Bitlis, Moush, Zeitoun or Urfa, to name a few, total or near annihilation was the result. If the goal of the CUP was the ethnic/religious homogenization of Turkey, why allow

five to ten per cent to survive? An ethnic population can and will regenerate itself. The rationale for this concept is unclear given the ultimate goals of the Unionists. According to Ambassador Morgenthau in his memoir, Talat said: ‘we will not have the Armenians anywhere in Anatolia; we have already disposed of three-quarters of them; there are none at all left in Bitlis, Van, and Erzurum. The hatred between the Turks and the Armenians is now so intense that we have got to finish with them’.⁴⁰ Whether or not the statement is borne out by bureaucratic records, it does represent a high-ranking perspective.

It is important that Akçam calls our attention to the process of eradication as being done through forced conversion of Armenians to Islam. But I find it problematic that Akçam uses the thinking of Raphael Lemkin to affirm an idea that forced Islamic conversion of Armenians represented something that Akçam claims Lemkin referred to as a ‘constructive phase of genocide’. First, I would note that the UN did not give us a definition of genocide as a ‘unitary event’, as Akçam claims. In fact, the UN definition in both Articles 2 and 3 is very broad, can be seen as too general and it is also multi-dimensional in focusing on killing, causing mental harm, removing children, interfering with the birth of children and so on. But, most crucially here, while Lemkin theorized in chapter nine of his book *Axis rule in Europe* that genocide could be more than ‘the immediate destruction of a nation’, and that genocide can have two phases—‘one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor’⁴¹—he never wrote or suggested that genocide ‘constructs as much as it destroys’. The latter are Akçam’s words and not Lemkin’s. Akçam claims that ‘scholarly debates on genocide have neglected the constructive phase of genocide for far too long’ (p. 288). And there is a reason for that: there is no such phase. Lemkin’s brief descriptions in chapter nine of *Axis rule in Europe* that deal with German conquest and subsequent imposition of German rule and culture on various conquered European peoples (Poles, Jews, Slovenes, Dutch etc.) should not be confused with Lemkin’s understanding that the targeted ethnic group or culture is brutalized and destroyed by the perpetrator’s usurpation of its life and identity. Lemkin makes this clear here and elsewhere: the group is destroyed when various things happen and one of those things is the theft of the sectors of the population.

There are three basic phases of life in a human group: physical existence, biological continuity (through procreation) and spiritual or cultural expression. Accordingly the attacks on these three basic phases of the life of a human group can be qualified as physical, biological or cultural genocide. It is considered a criminal act, to cause death to members of the above-mentioned groups directly or indirectly, to sterilize through compulsion, to steal children, to break up families.⁴²

It seems to me that Akçam has confused the perpetrator’s sense of reality with the targeted group’s reality. Forced conversion might augment the perpetrator’s culture but it destroys the victim’s culture. Furthermore, Lemkin’s focus is on abduction and absorption: ‘to steal and break up families’. ‘Assimilation’, the word Akçam uses, is not the same as ‘forced conversion’. Assimilation refers to

an ethical process by which culture groups work their way into and are socialized by a host society. Scholars of US history use the term to describe melting pot dynamics in a pluralistic society. Forced conversion was not assimilation, it was an act of desperation to avoid death; it was coercive and annihilating. While this was not physical killing, it was harshly destructive because the annihilation of ethnic/cultural/religious identity can be another kind of death.

Here, as in other places in his book, the presence of Armenian voices would have been helpful. For example, in the survivor memoir, *Armenian golgotha*, by the priest Grigoris Balakian (I am the co-translator and editor of the English edition and I apologize for using it here but it exemplifies my point), there is an account of recently Islamized Armenians that offers a perspective on this form of identity death. At a certain point in his forced march, Balakian finds himself in the Taurus mountain village of Gazbel, and through a series of serendipitous circumstances, he enters the house of a recently Islamized Armenian family and finds them near breakdown and weeping: 'Revered Father . . . we were forcibly Islamized . . . Grant us pardon for God's sake so that we can at least die in peace'. They beg to be given Holy Communion and the priest recalls: 'How could I ignore such tearful penitence following forced Islamization?'. After giving them communion, he confesses that 'such a collapse had occurred in the deep secret folds of our souls that none of us had any desire to eat. Indeed, we had suffered hours of spiritual torture in which we wished for salvation in death—provided it didn't come from ax blows'.⁴³ The crushing trauma here embodies what Lemkin calls damage to the group by causing 'disintegration of social institutions of culture, language, national feelings, religion . . . and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity'.⁴⁴

I think it is important that Akçam has complicated the too facile and misconstrued intentionalist/functionalist debate. I find the assertions of Ron Suny and others who argue for a functionalist view of the Armenian genocide—claiming that World War I was the key ad hoc element in the plan for genocide—a simplistic way of conceptualizing history. The war is one among many factors that helped to create a final plan for the Armenians, but I think it is more valuable to view the causes of the Armenian genocide in relation to what Ervin Staub calls 'a continuum of destruction' by which events proceed along an evolving course over decades or more, before they explode into an exterminatory programme.⁴⁵

One need not find a genocidal intent in the long history of prejudice towards a particular ethnic group to see how a given society can evolve towards a genocidal plan to solve a perceived problem. Nor does one need to find a smoking gun moment, an event that can be seen as 'this is it'. I think it is important to understand that perpetrator intentionality can be inseparable from a long foreground which contains essential ingredients for the explosion that may happen in a given historical circumstance.

I agree with Akçam's statement that the Armenian genocidal plan was 'a cumulative outcome of a series of increasingly radical decisions, each triggering the next in a cascading sequence of events' (p. 128). However, I would note that those events are not only those of 1913–15, but are also events in the Ottoman

government's long-standing system of governance of its minorities. His argument would have been more layered and comprehensive had he given some representation to this context and history. I do not think it is possible to understand or get to the radical decisions of 1913–15 without this longer perspective of the social and political realities for minorities and in this case Christian Armenians in Ottoman Turkey.

The absence of a longer perspective does not undermine the major work Akçam has done here and in his earlier books in presenting the complexity of an Ottoman Turkish perspective of co-factors that contributed to a final solution for the Armenians: post-Balkan War fall-out; the paranoid style (to use Hofstadter's phrase)⁴⁶ of CUP politics in fearing: the 1914 Reform Agreement, European intrusion, Russian invasion of eastern Anatolia in the war, and Armenians as a potential source of agency for the dissolution of a part of eastern Anatolia. Yet, still, understanding the plan of genocidal killing is hard to imagine without understanding preceding decades of severe mass killings and the long gestation period of Armenian pariah status in the Ottoman Empire.

Some complex understanding of religious and cultural difference as a source of political and social tension is necessary to understand the matrix from which the Armenian genocide emerged. Such analysis should not be seen as Islamophobic or Armenocentric as scholars like Suny have argued. Such understanding is part of necessary historical, anthropological and social-psychological analysis.

The impact of being legally designated as an infidel sector of Ottoman society came with large infrastructural discriminations. Armenians, like other non-Muslim minorities, were disenfranchised from the main power structures of Ottoman life (government, civil service and the military among other exclusions) and had no rights in Islamic courts, which left them prey to extortion in their businesses. This also led to robbery, rape and abduction of women and children. The Ottoman treatment of minorities has been written about by Dadrian, Melson, Walker, Kévorkian, myself and others, as well as by Akçam, even if in a cursory way, in his earlier book *A shameful act*. But scholars have written about this mostly from generic political perspectives: treaties, political movements, domestic policies and so on. How was life for Ottoman Armenians in the various sections of Turkey? What did it mean in the lived sense to be a Christian and an Armenian in the Ottoman Empire, especially in the last part of the nineteenth century? While Armenians could prosper in the Ottoman Empire if they played by the rules (and many tried and did), often the rules were crushing and the results were debilitating, dehumanizing and violent. There remains a glaring absence of social history both in Ottoman Armenian studies and the study of the Armenian genocide; work needs to be done on what survivor testimony reveals about life before 1915. Once this happens, as it has happened in the historiography of the Jews of Europe, there will be a deeper understanding of the Armenian genocide. I realize that that kind of social history is not a priority for Akçam here.

I do not wish to make facile comparisons between the Armenian genocide and the Holocaust (these two events have their own textures and contexts), but I

believe some comparisons with the genocide of the Jews in Europe are essential to understanding the genocide of the Armenians and vice versa, since the Armenian event preceded the Jewish genocide and Germany was Turkey's World War I ally.

What Zygmunt Bauman has noted in *Modernity and the Holocaust*—his study of antisemitism in Europe—is useful for the Armenian case in Turkey.⁴⁷ Bauman notes in assessing complex co-factors leading to the Holocaust that Jews were relegated to a pariah status in Europe for centuries because of their religious and cultural differences, for various reasons, from the charge of deicide to stereotypes as outsiders who were obsessed with controlling money and people who harboured disease, and so on. The applicability of pariah status for Armenians (often stereotyped as hoarders of money, worshippers of a false god, negatively associated with modernity, the West, imperious Protestant missionaries) is a useful concept for understanding how infrastructural marginalization and socially and politically institutionalized prejudice can result in various kinds of violence including mass killing.

In the conclusion of *The Young Turks' crimes against humanity*, Akçam demonstrates with care how the archival evidence he has used further dismantles (because it has been dismantled by various scholars, perhaps none more than Akçam, for several decades now) and exposes the Turkish government's denialism and the denialist writings of people like Guenter Lewy. Indeed this book—an important, groundbreaking work—gives us increasing understanding of the effectiveness of the Ottoman government's central planning and the complex and partially clandestine nature of its bureaucracy in carrying out the Armenian genocide.

In closing, Akçam is not timid about advocating that the Turkish government face its own past with regard to the events of 1915, so it can move forward in its pursuit of democratization. He urges Turkey to take moral accountability for the Armenian genocide regardless of what nomenclature the government chooses to describe the events of 1915 (though Akçam urges that the term 'genocide' be used). He writes:

I believe that the fundamental issue is not legal but moral. And the moral responsibility—to acknowledge the injustice of what was done to the Armenians, and to undo, through indemnification, as much as possible of the damage it created—has no direct connection with the legal term to be used for the 1915 events. Irrespective of which term you might think is appropriate, this great injustice inflicted upon the Armenian people must be rectified. (p. 450)

This comes at the conclusion of a hard-edged work of social science in which the reader has been engaged in a relentless exposition of essential dimensions of the genocidal infrastructure and process disclosed through archival evidence. But in closing this way, Akçam makes it clear that a scholar's ethical voice need not undermine scholarly integrity. He does not erroneously limit scholarship to an ethically neutral, detached act, but rather sees a potentially important relationship between the ethical and the intellectual if the terrain of inquiry warrants it. In this sense, he pushes his work towards a more public intellectual arena.

Finally, I would note that *The Young Turks' crimes against humanity* opens up many arenas for future work on the Armenian and Greek histories in Turkey and on other minority histories of the Ottoman Empire. This leads me to ask why there has not been, at least to my knowledge, any postcolonial theory in Ottoman studies. The British, Russian, French and Austro-Hungarian empires and their colonial histories, for example, have been subjected to this deeper kind of analysis. The Ottoman Empire was a vast operation that colonized dozens of ethnic groups and cultures, most of them of their indigenous lands. My hope is that Akçam's book will open up an arena for this kind of inquiry. This is a groundbreaking work that should accrue a wide readership in Turkey and in the English-speaking curriculum, at least until more translations appear.

A. DIRK MOSES

Genocide vs security: a false opposition

This is a groundbreaking book because it changes the terms of the debate about the Armenian genocide. Rather than summarize its various theses, I want to briefly highlight its virtues before moving to the main burden of my comment: namely, the conceptual problems we face when pinning the label genocide on a complex concatenation of events like those in the Ottoman Empire in World War I. For when we understand how problematic current notions of genocide are, the massive achievement of Taner Akçam's book becomes even more apparent.

Akçam has assembled an incredible record of Ottoman Turkish documents, mainly official cables, that allow him to reconstruct government intentions and concerns during World War I—top secret communications that reveal the inner workings of the state. He has read thousands of these, and about six hundred of them appear in the footnotes of this nearly five hundred-page book. To place the reader in the position to interpret the document to her satisfaction, he often reproduces the cable rather than only summarize its contents. Thus empowered, the reader can check whether she thinks he has plausibly rendered its meaning. In this and other ways, this is an honest book that equips the reader to make up her own mind. For example, Akçam tells the reader that while the central archives hold the cables sent to the provinces, which reveal central government intentions, the replies from the provinces are largely missing.

For all that, Akçam is no naïve positivist who thinks that a single document—the proverbial smoking gun—can prove or disprove a claim of genocide. That is because he knows that states are complex structures whose components interact in often contradictory ways and in a dynamic relationship to current political imperatives, such that it is often difficult to say that a particular policy crystallized at a particular point and was then carried out consistently by all arms of government. More research about implementation needs to be undertaken. What is more, he shows that the key cables came not from government officials or through official channels but from political leaders through private channels. Even so, he can discern a policy pattern in the documents—to which we will return shortly. All the way, he generously acknowledges the assistance he

received from Turkish archivists. Times have changed there since his experiences in the 1970s.

A signal achievement of the book is its transcendence of rival nationalist narratives that characterize the debate about the Armenian genocide. As we know, the official Turkish rejection of the Armenian claim is that the country faced invasion and internal Armenian rebellion at the same time, and during this existential crisis the understandable decision was made to deport Christian civilians from military areas and of course to put down the rebellion. In circumstances of emergency and panic, so the argument goes, it was regrettable that many Armenian civilians perished, but then so did many Muslims. If anything, this narrative tries to trump the Armenian one not only with a claim of symmetry of suffering—the civil war argument in which two equal sides are pitched against one another—but that Turks were the principal victims because the empire faced partition with the help of domestic Armenian treachery. For this reason, the genocide claim today is seen as a continuation of the attempt by Christian powers to partition Turkey, and that is partly why it is resisted with such vehemence: it is experienced as a kind of genocidal attack, the destruction of the Turkish nation-state and the Turkish homeland.

By contrast, an Armenian narrative tries to shoehorn the Armenian experience into the Holocaust paradigm, as Akçam notes. That is, Muslim anti-Armenian sentiments come to resemble antisemitism, and the genocide is seen as the outcome of decades if not centuries of ever-intensifying ethnic hatred in the name of Turkish ethnic purity. Rather than the war and its lead-up being the contexts in which ethnic difference becomes fatally politicized, it is merely a pretext for a long-held intention to kill off the Armenian minority whose aspirations for independent nationhood are naturally legitimate, whatever their implications for independent Turkish nationhood. What is more, the notion of an Armenian rebellion or security threat is played down in order to emphasize the utter agentlessness of Armenians; for the reasoning is that the more passive the victims, the less likely they can be found guilty of treason, as the Turkish side effectively accuses. Akçam observes that these alternatives do not accord with the facts he has found in the archives. Instead, he follows the documentary trail to see where it leads.

Before we go there, however, we need to briefly remind ourselves of how other historians are addressing these issues, because the controversy about the Armenian genocide is as much conceptual as empirical, and this book makes breakthroughs in both domains. Here are the conceptual problems.

1. The attribution of collective guilt. Consider this quotation from Guenter Lewy's book *The Armenian massacres in Ottoman Turkey: a disputed genocide*:

In eastern Anatolia, too . . . Armenian assistance to the Russians had been extensive. None of this can serve to justify what the Turks did to the Armenians, but it provides the indispensable historical context for the tragedy that ensued. Given this context, the Armenians can hardly claim that they suffered for no reason at all. Ignoring warnings from many quarters, large numbers of them had fought the Turks openly or played the role of a fifth column; not surprisingly, with their backs against the wall, the Ottomans reacted resolutely, if not viciously.⁴⁸

This is a telling slip; Lewy is talking about ‘the Armenians’ as if the defenceless women and children who comprised the deportation columns were vicariously responsible for Armenian rebels in other parts of the country. The *collective guilt* accusation is unacceptable in scholarship, let alone in normal discourse and is, I think, one of the key ingredients in genocidal thinking. It fails to distinguish between combatants and non-combatants, on which international humanitarian law has been insisting for over a hundred years now.

2. The second element is the issue of *pre-emption*: attacking a group not for what its members have done but for what some of them might do. Consider this statement by the military historian Edward Erickson:

In fact the actual Armenian attacks on the rear of the Ottoman army and its lines of communications were isolated and sporadic, causing only minor disruptions to the war effort. Moreover, after July 1915 there was little interaction between the Russian army and dissident Ottoman Armenians in the Ottoman-controlled areas of Anatolia. And, although co-ordination with the Allies for an amphibious invasion near Dörtyol supported by ‘25,000 insurgent Armenians’ continued, the expected assault never materialized. So, was it necessary to relocate the entire Armenian population, the majority of whom were elderly, women, and children, because of an actual threat to the national security of the Ottoman state? *The answer to this question will probably never be properly addressed because the Ottoman state did not wait for a regional insurrection to spread to the whole of Anatolia.*⁴⁹

And indeed it did not. Now pre-emptive action is entirely predictable in military emergencies. But does this mean it cannot be related to genocide? To answer this question, we need to consider another element in the equation: the question of evil intentions and the character of military and political leaders.

3. Guenter Lewy again exemplifies the conventional scholarship when he refers to the journalist and historian, Gwynne Dwyer, to make a point about perpetrators. Dwyer, he writes,

does not regard Talaat, Enver and their associates as cruel and savage dictators who ruthlessly exploited a long-sought opportunity for a much-desired genocide. He sees them ‘not so much as evil men but as desperate, frightened, unsophisticated men struggling to keep their nation afloat in a crisis far graver than they had anticipated when they first entered the war . . . reacting to events rather than creating them, and not fully realizing the extent of the horrors they had set in motion in ‘Turkish Armenia’ until they were too deeply committed to withdraw.’⁵⁰

The distinction between evil men on the one hand and desperate, frightened patriots on the other is one that underpins genocide studies more generally. The latter—the patriots—it is thought, cannot be genocidal fanatics.

The problem, though, is that the closer one looks at how the mass violence we often call genocide is instituted and justified, the more it appears that it is committed in the name of security by desperate, frightened patriots. That does not mean they do not hate the group they attacked. They do, being often driven by emotions like revenge at perceived betrayals. It means that fear and paranoia rather than hate drive the genocide along. What the evidence shows, I think, is

that all too often a minority group is held *collectively guilty* and is *collectively punished* for the actions of some of its members. Moreover, the group as a whole is seen as a potential security risk—a potential fifth column—and so it can be interned, deported or otherwise destroyed *in toto* for reasons of state. That is, genocides are generally driven by traumatic interpretations of past events in which, for various reasons, a group is constructed as disloyal and threatening and held collectively guilty and then collectively punished, deported or destroyed *pre-emptively* to prevent the feared annihilation of the state. Despite the threatening activities of some of its members, though, these communities were loyal.

Accordingly, it is largely fruitless to fixate on ‘real’ interactions between victim and perpetrator as many Turkish historians do when claiming the Ottoman state was provoked by Armenian nationalists. The element of pre-emption means that groups are attacked *before* its members can subvert the state. Moreover, pre-emption is based on a temporal slippage, that is, on particular memories of past interactions, however unreasonably interpreted, which essentially entails attacking groups because of what it is feared some or many of its members *might* do. So genocide, I am suggesting, is governed more by fantastical security imperatives than by the aesthetic of racial purity. Paranoid threat assessments leading to pre-emptive strikes against collectives are present in genocides generally.

This distinction was at once constitutive of Holocaust studies and genocide studies. To underline this point, let us recall some examples of how genocide has been defined. According to Israel Charny, genocide is ‘the mass killing of substantial numbers of human beings, when *not* in the course of military action against the military forces of an avowed enemy, under conditions of the essential defenselessness and helplessness of the victims’.⁵¹ More recently, Jacques Semelin was telling the same story when he distinguished between destruction for subjugation, which is political and partial, and genocide for total eradication, like the Holocaust, which is driven by the delusional, paranoid and non-political considerations of ethnic purity and aesthetics.⁵² This is the same distinction we heard before, between well-intentioned patriots on the one hand, and cruel, savage and evil dictators on the other.

What these scholars are suggesting—probably unconsciously—is a hierarchy between types of human destruction. The latter type is worse because it targets innocent victims of paranoid and ultimately inexplicable racial hysteria, while the former type of destruction is an explicable outcome of inter-ethnic conflict, often in civil war, in which the victims are not passive and therefore not completely innocent.

To summarize the conceptual problem: whereas most mass violence is seen as the byproduct of ethnic/national conflict over ‘real’ issues like land, resources and political power, it is not coded as genocide. By contrast, a real genocide needs to resemble the Holocaust of European Jewry, whose victims were passive and agentless objects of the perpetrators’ ‘hallucinatory’ ideology.⁵³ In this way, the Holocaust was a massive hate crime in which agentless, innocent victims were killed purely for who they were and not for anything they had done. They have

been placed beyond the ‘universe of obligation’, to use Helen Fein’s term.⁵⁴ This is the normative view of what a genocide should look like. That is why pro-Turkish historians—like the ones quoted above—like to emphasize all the elements of civil war and provocation, and why pro-Armenian historians try to have the case resemble the Holocaust. This distinction between political non-genocide on the one hand, and racial, ideological, genocide on the other, conceals the combatant/civilian distinction *within* such groups. They are ignoring the fact that both categories of violence contain massacres of civilians who pose no objective threat to perpetrators in actual conflicts. After all, what kind of agency can we ascribe to such victims, like the women and children who were marched into the Mesopotamian desert by Ottoman authorities in April 1915?

What Professor Akçam can show—and this is the breakthrough, I think—is that the Young Turk elites deported the Greeks and Armenians for security reasons, as the pro-Turkish historians also allege, but also that the security rationale was genocidal. How? Because the aim was not just temporary security in a military emergency, but what Nazi elites called *permanent security*. That was what licensed murdering innocent civilians, including children. When asked at one of the Nuremberg Trials about murdering children, one of the Nazi defendants replied with the ‘nits make lice’ argument; the Jewish children will grow up to resist us when they realize we murdered their parents.⁵⁵

In the Ottoman case, Akçam can show that the Young Turk elites were determined to forever prevent the possibility of an Armenian state in Anatolia, which they feared would be carved out of the empire like the Christian states of the Balkans. The documents he reproduces use language like ‘comprehensive and absolute’ for the intention to reduce Armenian population densities to between five and ten per cent, an aim that could only be accomplished in a genocidal way. Just because the Ottoman fear of partition was genuine does not mean that its solution to prevent it cannot be genocidal. The intimate relationship between reasons of state—the justification of self-defence and self-preservation used by any state—and genocide is one of the disturbing lessons we can draw from this episode. You do not need wicked, racist authoritarian leaders for genocide to occur. For reasons of state, leaders of virtually any government can engage in mass violence against civilians to assure the security of their borders and their civilians. We see it happening all the time, whether you call it genocide, crimes against humanity or war crimes.

What distinguishes genocide from regular security emergencies, I would like to underline, is the aspiration for *permanent security*, which entails the end of politics, namely the rupture of negotiation and compromise with different actors. Permanent security means the destruction or crippling of the perceived threatening other.

I am not an expert on the Armenian genocide, so I would like to conclude with a question rather than an answer. If the Young Turk security imperatives seem clear enough, could they have been compatible with the Armenian ones? What were Armenian security imperatives? Could they have been reconciled with the Ottoman Empire? If not, then are we talking about a terrible tragedy of rival

nationalisms in which the partition of one side or destruction of the other was inevitable, unavoidable? That would account for the persisting rancour of the political and even academic discussion, as politicians and scholars sympathize with the existential needs of one side only.

As a human, I sympathize with the civilian victims of genocide. As a scholar, I want to explain how and why these conflicts develop at all. The old genocide studies did not help because it was a moralizing discourse that tried to explain genocide by ascribing evil intentions to political leaders. The new genocide studies tries to explain genocide by accounting for these intentions not from the hateful motivations of specific individuals or political parties but from the structural imperatives in the system of states in which we live. The former is a comforting fairy tale because it allows us to believe that we can end mass violence against civilians so long as we promote ideals of toleration and banish hate crimes. The latter challenges us to think about why this terrible violence recurs in the international system, a system in which people are constituted as cultural nations that must be housed in a state, preferably in an ancestral homeland, and with absolute sovereignty about their destiny.

TANER AKÇAM

Let the arguments begin!

I borrow the title from Margaret Anderson's commentary, since it sums up the situation well. I would like to thank her and the others for their thoughtful and thought-provoking reviews of my book, and the *Journal of Genocide Research* for allowing me to respond to them. Since I cannot address all of their statements here, I will instead touch briefly on some of the more significant points raised.

The Armenian genocide can now be said to have been broadly recognized as such and it has taken its rightful place within the field of genocide studies. Even so, our field is still in its infancy, certainly when compared to Holocaust studies, where profound debates have been going on for decades. Not so, our field.⁵⁶ This journal's present effort is thus all the more significant.

Before going into the details, I should mention one point about my book in order to allay misunderstandings. As I mentioned in the introduction, I have chosen a somewhat unusual method of presentation. Most classic accounts of history analyse a given narrative chronology in light of various archival sources, whereas this study is largely based on a single source, namely the Ottoman archives and the 'view from the Porte', as expressed by the authors of the documents contained therein. Nor does the book attempt to cover all aspects of the genocidal process. Rather, my purpose in writing it was simply to let the Ottoman documents speak for themselves.

I chose this method for one simple reason: in refuting claims of an Armenian genocide, successive Turkish regimes have consistently pointed to an alleged 'lack of evidence' in the Ottoman archives, and have selectively employed the Turkish Prime Minister's Ottoman Archives in Istanbul for this purpose. The difficulties in accessing these documents—above all, because of the language—

present a serious challenge to scholarship, and have thereby allowed many to claim ‘reasonable doubt’ as to whether the events of 1915–17 were actually a planned ‘genocide’. By presenting a large body of Ottoman documents, I have attempted to show that what has been granted as ‘reasonable doubt’ is actually ‘manufactured doubt’.⁵⁷ I did not wish to simply overwhelm the reader with information, but by employing copious documentation I believe I have shown that a pattern can indeed be discerned here. In contrast to the ‘official account’ of the Turkish regime, I have shown that the documentation found in the Ottoman archives *does not* contradict the foreign accounts of the Armenian genocide; rather, it confirms them.

The conscious decision to employ this method has highlighted the problems of context correctly identified by Anderson and Reynolds. I should also point out that the Armenians do not generally appear in this work as actors, or as active subjects, because I have only discussed them here as they appear in the Ottoman documents. This is, admittedly, a shortcoming, but one that I have consciously undertaken for my purpose.

The missing actor: the Armenians and the use of different archival materials

I would like to discuss in more depth the question of why the Armenians do not appear as active agents and its adjunct, the question of why there has been a consistent under-employment of Armenian sources. This touches on the second, more general problem in our field: the reality that no actual consensus has been reached among ‘critical scholars’ in our field regarding the use of existing archival material.

The missing actor: Armenians and Armenian sources

There are two principal reasons that the Armenians do not appear as actors in these accounts. The first of these is that, until today, Armenian genocide research has been and continues to be dominated by the classical and simplistic ‘perpetrator/victim/bystander’ model. In my opinion, this model is overly simplistic, one in which all participants must be classified as either evil-minded, demonic perpetrators, a mass of passive victims waiting to be slaughtered, or heartless or uncaring bystanders. Any explanation of the genocide is forced to conform to this ‘victim–perpetrator/angel–demon’ dichotomy. In this way, it is possible to more easily conceive of the perpetrators’ great hatred and a sort of ‘mutual codependency’ with the victims. The more evil the perpetrator, the more innocent and helpless the victim—and the better for the narrative. If we wish to understand a social phenomenon like mass murder, we must avoid such simplistic and unnecessary moralizing that in most cases makes it difficult to understand the genocidal process.

The second and equally important reason is the psychological pressure of Turkish ‘denialism’. Such psychological pressure can be significant and carry implications far beyond those directly concerned with the subject. For decades,

the founding cadres of the Turkish Republic repeated what would become the regime's 'official line', namely that it was the Armenians who were most responsible for what befell them. According to this version, the Armenians failed to appreciate the centuries of tolerance shown them by the glorious Muslim-Turkish nation, revolted against their Turkish protectors and thereby brought disaster upon themselves.⁵⁸

This denialist rhetoric has produced profound psychological effects in our field and, as a result, especially early scholars who worked on Armenian genocide often felt obliged to devote all of their energies and efforts to proving that the historical experience of 1915–17 (and beyond) did indeed constitute a genocide. But for all the positive results of these efforts, they also produced two unforeseen and unfortunate side-effects. First, they tended to portray the Armenians in opposite terms to those used by 'denialist' Turkish circles; whereas the Turks had done their utmost to identify the Armenians as disloyal, terrorist and secessionist, their defenders had portrayed the Armenian community as homogenous and utterly passive in the face of Turkish genocidal actions, meekly and obediently submitting to their own exile and death.

The result was a tendency to actively avoid (or at least ignore) Armenian sources in attempts to 'prove the genocide'. In one sense, it was as if many scholars had internalized the denialist rhetoric of Armenian 'unreliability', and extended it to Armenian sources.⁵⁹ But it is impossible to present a comprehensive picture of the events of 1915–17 without extensive use of these sources. Raymond Kévorkian, whose revolutionary work has relied heavily on the Armenian sources, has made the invaluable contribution of showing exactly what research in this field has been missing thus far.⁶⁰ In doing so, he paved the way for the new generation of scholars to use Armenian sources without hindrance. I have no doubt that, in the near future, a number of works shall be written in which the Armenians of this period are finally depicted as the full actors that they were, with all of the political, economic and social differentiation that that implies.

The archival sources and their use

There is another, more serious problem in our field regarding the use of the existing archival materials. No consensus has yet appeared among serious scholars regarding their reliability, and this subject extends beyond the Ottoman archives and the Turkish state's use/misuse thereof. For their part, even the circle of what might be termed 'critical-thinking academics' is still unable to look at these and other sources with the same critical detachment. For example, the trial documents of the Ottoman Courts-Martial (*Divan-i Harb-i Örfi*) of 1919–21 against the Union and Progress Party (i.e. the printed indictments, verdicts, testimonies of survivors and high-rank Ottoman bureaucrats and so on, as well as the court minutes and so on) are still viewed as a 'questionable source' by many researchers. They were not seen to be as valuable as the other archival material, so they were either totally ignored or simply discounted because some of their information is considered inaccurate.⁶¹ Unfortunately, the academic and public

discussions surrounding the Armenian genocide are still heavily coloured by ideological and other prejudices, and we are still far from consensus on the value of much of the archival material.

Doubting the five to ten per cent policy

One of my principal arguments is that the Armenian genocide was actually a large-scale social engineering project, whose operational objective was to annihilate or otherwise reduce the Armenian population in central and eastern Anatolia to no more than five to ten per cent of the Muslim population. In his commentary, Peter Balakian expresses doubts about some of my claims, in particular about the five to ten per cent policy. ‘If the goal of the CUP was the ethnic/religious homogenization of Turkey,’ he writes, ‘why allow five to ten per cent to survive?’. Indeed, why stop there? Why not kill them all? The logic is sound, if simplistic. What is interesting here is that this logic is not merely used to explain the genocide; it is also an important and frequent argument used to bolster the case for denial. For example, attention is often directed by the denialists to the number of Armenians still alive in Anatolia after the ‘alleged genocide’ as a sort of claim of *habeus corpus*.

Balakian also mentions then-Interior Minister Talat Bey’s words to the US ambassador to the Porte, Henry Morgenthau: ‘We will not have the Armenians anywhere in Anatolia . . . there are none at all left in Bitlis, Van, and Erzurum . . . we have got to finish with them’. If the CUP planned to annihilate the entire Armenian population down to the last man, he *should* wonder about the origins and authenticity of the five to ten per cent rule!

Before addressing the matter in detail, let me clarify: the policy of forbidding the Armenian population to *exceed* five to ten per cent of the Muslim population was not to ensure that *enough* Armenians survived to make up this much of the population; rather, their concern was only over the Armenian population exceeding it. Zero was as satisfactory a figure as five to ten per cent.

So, where did these figures come from?

Here I should provide those who have not read my book with some basic background information on the origin of these figures. Although there is no talk of specific borders, the CUP divided Ottoman territory into three main areas for the purposes of their deportation and annihilation policies. Let us call the first region western Anatolia; the rule for the deportation here was that only five per cent of the area’s population would be allowed to be Armenian. No single settlement would be allowed to exceed that limit; where they surpassed this figure, the excess population was to be either deported elsewhere or dispersed widely to other places within the same province.

The second region was that of historic Armenia, or the area of eastern Anatolia in which, according to the February 1914 Reform Agreement, two autonomous Armenian provinces were to be established. Not a single Armenian was to remain in this region; all were to be deported without exception. In practice, this

rule was not followed, and the Armenian population was here, too, reduced to approximately five per cent of the total.

The third region comprised the empire's southern, largely Arab provinces that today make up the territory of Syria and Iraq. These areas were designated as areas for Armenian resettlement. Even here, though, it was ordered that the arriving Armenian deportees should not exceed ten per cent of the total Muslim population. This information is taken from telegraphic cables marked as 'secret', 'top secret' and the like, and sent from the Istanbul government to its provincial functionaries in cipher.

These secret cables, which often contained instructions that they were only to be personally deciphered and read by the provincial governor, provide important background information on how the genocide operations were to be carried out. It is clear that these documents were not produced for public consumption. Thus, it is wrong to express any doubt over the authenticity of these documents; we simply must explain the genocidal process on the basis of the information found in them.

My guess is that Peter Balakian's doubt derives from a common understanding in our field. We tend to explain an enormous social phenomenon like genocide through the intentions of the perpetrator-agent, and thereby over-value ideologies or rhetoric that 'explain' these intentions. I would argue, however, that there is a significant gap between such rhetorical descriptions and what is experienced in practice. This gap is an indication that the process of planning and executing a genocide is an extremely complex social affair, and cannot simply be explained through the expressed intention of one of its 'agents'.⁶²

It is no different in our case. The 'intent declaration' of Talat in the above quotation provides us with very little information regarding the genocidal process, something that can easily be proven with the existing archival material. As can be seen in Peter Balakian's quotation, Talat told Ambassador Morgenthau that there were no Armenians left in provinces like Erzurum and Bitlis. This statement is not meant to be an accurate report of the situation on the ground, but hyperbole, or rhetorical flourish, because it simply was not the case. To wit, on 19 April 1916, Talat sent a cable to the provincial governors of Erzurum and Bitlis in which he asks for information on 'what happened to the Armenians who *were not deported and remained* within the province[s] when the army retreated'.⁶³

I offer other documents on the subject in my book. From these we can discern that the Unionists did *not* deport the Armenians from the eastern provinces according to some pre-determined demographic proportionality. Rather, they were often left there. For example, Bahaettin Şakir, the CUP Central Committee member responsible for coordinating the deportation and killing of Armenians in the aforementioned provinces, and who was also the regional head of the Special Organization, wrote in a cable to the Ottoman Fourth Army command in central Syria: 'We are sending 95 percent of the immigrants from Trebizond, Erzurum, Sivas, Mamuretülaziz [Elazığ], [and] Diyarbekir to the south of Mosul'. In another document, coming from the governor of Bitlis Province, it can be understood that in places like Mamuretülaziz and Bitlis a great number of Armenian families whose members engaged in artisanal crafts, as well as many who were

members of the Catholic and Protestant churches, were not in fact deported. For his part, the governor says that there would be no harm in leaving a certain number of Armenians for a period, so long as they did not exceed a set amount.⁶⁴

I would like to offer here an additional bit of information that I found very significant. We can understand from certain telegraphic cables that the Armenians were aware of these ratios and that they asked of the government not to be deported because they did not exceed the foreseen percentage. For example, in a request sent on 5 October 1915 from the provincial district of Karahisar (Konya Province), the Armenians claim to represent '[only] about two percent of the inhabitants within our district, whose population exceeds three hundred thousand [in number]', and goes on to request that 'our just and righteous government show the same sublime compassion and mercy to the innocent [Armenian] population of our region (*memleketimiz*) that it showed to the Armenian population of Burdur and Isparta'.⁶⁵

Briefly put, there is no clear line leading directly from the rhetorical utterances of the 'planning agents' of genocide to its real-life implementation. Such statements are certainly important for understanding the mindset of the perpetrator, but they do nothing to explain how the actual genocidal process unfolds. In order to understand and be able to explain these processes, we need explanations that go far beyond the intentions of those involved.

Question of reforms

Whence the five to ten per cent figure? How did the Unionists arrive at it? This topic is directly related to the 1914 Reform Agreement and its relation to the genocide. Hans-Lukas Kieser has rightly emphasized its importance. The Armenian reform project of 1914 was actually a part of the multi-faceted reform problem occupying a central place in European and Ottoman diplomacy in the late nineteenth century. One of the central aspects of the late-nineteenth-century reforms was the question of how to attain a proportional representation of the various ethno-religious groups within the Ottoman administrative apparatus. The origin of this question goes back to the Lebanese disturbances of 1854–60 and the Cretan crisis of 1868. In both cases, the question of proportional representation for different groups was discussed for the first time, and the principle was adopted that the various groups should have positions in the administration in accordance with their respective percentages of the total population of a given area.⁶⁶

Over much of the nineteenth century, the Ottomans were forced by the Great Powers to allow their Christians to be represented within the administration in proportion to their percentage of the population. Ottomans viewed these reform efforts as but one component of a larger plan by the various restive nationalities and their European patrons to secede from the empire and to establish their own states. They were certain that the Powers' ultimate goal was the empire's partition. They thus did their best to ignore or, when impossible, to deflect the repeated reform demands. Even when they were forced to enact some sort of reform

agreement dictated by the Great Powers, they consistently engaged in foot-dragging and outright sabotage of the effort.

The reform demands of the Christian minorities, the periodic Great Power interventions into the Ottomans' affairs on their behalf, and the Ottoman belief that the intention of all of these draft plans for reform was to partition the empire and their resistance thereto together formed a fatal dynamic that played out between reforms and the massacres of Christians. At the centre of this dynamic lay security concerns. The Ottoman authorities saw such reforms as a fundamental and ever-growing threat to their security, and it was this perception that in many ways paved the way for the genocide. Indeed, this line of thought and the Ottoman responses were the connecting threads between the Armenian massacres of 1894–96 under Abdulhamid II and the events of 1915–17. We can therefore state that the Armenian genocide was less the product of wartime contingencies than of the empire's long-term structural problems.

There are two important aspects regarding the connection between the events of 1894–96 and those of 1915 that bear mention here. The first is that the pressure from the Great Powers to enact reform after the 1878 Treaty of Berlin ultimately bore fruit in the shape of a note to the Porte in May 1895. Although ardently opposed to it, under great pressure from the Great Powers, Sultan Abdulhamid II declared in October 1895 that the plan would be implemented. And it was this declaration that turned out to be the fuse for the large-scale massacre of Armenians throughout Anatolia. There is no scholarly consensus on the figures, but it appears that some 80,000 to 300,000 Armenians were massacred in twenty different settlements throughout Anatolia.

The second significant fact is that the 1913–14 negotiations resulting in the February 1914 Reform Agreement only came about—much like the 1895 Reform Declaration—due to foreign pressure. Moreover, the May 1895 reform plan actually formed the basis for the 1913–14 discussions. This would indicate the need to re-examine the connection between the reform efforts for the Armenian areas and the massacres that often followed such efforts.

Kieser argues that the 1914 Armenian Reforms must be examined separately, in two parts. The first is the actual content of the reforms themselves; the second, the manner in which these efforts were viewed by the Ottoman rulers. In essence, he is saying that we should accept the reform efforts of 1914 at face value; they were not, in fact, fronts for some long-range partition plan. The problem lay rather in the *interpretation* of these efforts by the Ottoman administration. I understand what Kieser is trying to say, but I find it difficult to accept the notion that the main problem with the reforms was their 'misinterpretation'. The prospect of the partition and/or collapse of the Ottoman state was not far from the minds of the parties when they were debating the reforms during 1913–14. As Davide Rodogno has shown in the most detailed fashion, since the 1820s at least, all of the European reform plans for the Ottoman Christians ran parallel with the question of partition.⁶⁷

The importance of a century's accumulated experience on Ottoman reform efforts on the eve of 1914 reform talks also bears mention: earlier reform

efforts, the massacres in reaction and (often successful) attempts of minority groups to break away from the Ottoman Empire. The CUP approached the 1914 reform negotiations with this knowledge, and they tended to view the problem as one directly threatening the security of the state. In dealing with the long-festering Armenian problem, the Unionists' goal, in the words of Dirk Moses, 'was not just temporary security . . . but what Nazi elites called *permanent security*'. They ultimately chose to seek this permanent security through genocide.⁶⁸

To my mind, the Armenian genocide was driven by the traumatic memories of the nineteenth century's reform-massacre dynamic. The Armenians came to be construed as inherently disloyal and held in collective guilt, not only for their own deeds, but also as representatives of all other Christian communities of the nineteenth century and their transgressions against the state. As a consequence, it was preferable to act pre-emptively against the Armenians, to destroy them while it was still possible to do so and thereby prevent yet another repetition of the traumatic independence movements that had rent the empire over the previous century.

What I would call Hans-Lukas Kieser's separation between the 'essence' and 'perception' of reform is unconvincing. In light of the prevailing atmosphere, it could just as easily be argued that these aspects were inseparable not only for the Ottomans but for all parties concerned. While a discussion on the 'true essence' of the reform efforts would thus not advance our knowledge of the genocidal process, the questions he raises here are nevertheless important, and while I am not convinced by his arguments, I remain open to persuasion.

Genocide and its constructive function

Peter Balakian criticizes my interpretation of Raphael Lemkin's statement: 'Genocide has two phases: one, destruction of the national pattern of the oppressed group; the other, the imposition of the national pattern of the oppressor'. I have interpreted Lemkin in a way that sees genocide as possessing both a destructive *and* a constructive function. Regarding the 'constructive phase of genocide', Balakian claims that 'there is no such phase', and argues that I have 'confused the perpetrator's sense of reality with the targeted group's reality'.

He is approaching the adjective 'constructive' with unnecessary value judgement, I believe. I am using the term 'constructive' here in a neutral sense, devoid of value; what I am saying is simply that the genocidal process does not merely destroy, it also 'creates' a new society, a new demographic. I have long argued that the Armenian genocide played a central role in the construction of both the Turkish national identity and the Turkish state. In a recent work, *The spirit of the laws*, I have tried to explain the role of the genocide in the construction of the Republic of Turkey, and I claim that today's Turkey—especially in regard to its legal construction—could in fact be described as a 'genocidal society'.⁶⁹

The argument that genocides destroy far more than they build is not only my claim. In recent years, a number of important works have been (and continue to be) produced in our field on this very issue: as much as they may annihilate one or more groups, genocides also serve to lay the foundations of a new society.

Indeed, I would claim that one of the more momentous subjects in the debate over the connection between genocide and modernity is the question of the ‘constructive’ role that large-scale massacres have played in the formation of ‘modern’ societies.

The essence of the debate revolves around one of the central questions of our discipline: why does genocide occur, and do the social upheavals of the past two to five hundred years constitute a qualitatively different ‘genocidal context’ than earlier periods?⁷⁰ Zygmunt Bauman’s sweeping argument is that ‘the modern era has been founded on genocide, and has proceeded through more genocide’.⁷¹ In his view, ‘modern genocide is different. Modern genocide is genocide with a purpose’, and this purpose is to create ‘a better, and radically different, society’. For Bauman, ‘modern genocide . . . meant to bring about a social order conforming to the design of the perfect society’.⁷²

I cannot go into the details of the subject here, but I might mention the claim that modernity has created a new concept of (bio)power and ‘governmentality’, and that this understanding of demography and of individuals has been markedly different from that of earlier periods.⁷³ I might also mention the debates on how, in this sense, modernity has fundamentally transformed the function of genocide,⁷⁴ or Mark Levene’s works on the constructive role of genocide in the creation of the nation-state.⁷⁵

One of the more recent examples on conceiving genocide not simply as an annihilation but as the creation of a new society is Thomas Kühne’s *Belonging and genocide*. In this work, Kühne explores how the Nazis used the human desire for community to build a genocidal society and argues that the German nation eventually ‘found itself’ through the perpetration of the Holocaust.⁷⁶

Recent studies on colonialism and genocide have helped to illuminate the central role of genocide in the creation of settler societies. Patrick Wolfe, in introducing the concept of ‘the logic of elimination’, has mentioned the ‘positive’ aspects of genocide:

The logic of elimination not only refers to the summary liquidation of indigenousPeople . . . In common with genocide as Raphael Lemkin characterized it, settler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society . . . In its positive aspect, elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence.⁷⁷

I consider my own work to follow this stream of thought.

Does forced assimilation mean genocide?

Peter Balakian takes issue with my statements regarding forced conversion and assimilation, finding incorrect my lumping together the practices of forced conversion and forced assimilation. “‘Assimilation’”, *the word Akçam uses* [my emphasis], is not the same as “forced conversion”, he argues, and claims that,

assimilation refers to an ethical process by which culture groups work their way into and are socialized by a host society. Scholars of US history use the term to describe melting pot

dynamics in a pluralistic society. Forced conversion was not assimilation, it was an act of desperation to avoid death; it was coercive and annihilating.

For those who have not read my book, I would like to offer the following. The telegraphic cables that I reproduce there show that the CUP government considered both religious conversion and assimilation as within the framework of their Armenian policies. In other words, it is not me, but the CUP government, that was using the word ‘assimilation’. When describing the government’s policies towards the Armenians—and towards young girls and women in particular—the words frequently used in the cables are *temsil* and *temessil*, namely the Ottoman terms for ‘assimilation’. It is described as the forcible conversion of Armenian (and other Christian) children to Islam, the raising of them according to Muslim custom and practice, and the marrying off of Christian girls to young Muslims. In short, the term ‘assimilation’ was frequently used, and forced conversion is openly mentioned as one pathway thereto.

While I thank Peter Balakian for raising this important question of forced assimilation and its connection to genocide, I nevertheless have difficulty understanding his explanation of the term’s meaning. If the Ottoman rulers described their policies towards the Armenian population as ‘assimilation’, and implemented ‘forced conversion’ as a type of assimilation, then who are we to claim that they were ‘using the term incorrectly’?

It goes without saying that Peter Balakian’s (or US historians’) definition of the term ‘assimilation’ is quite different from that used by the CUP government in its demographic policy. He speaks of assimilation as a ‘natural process’ that occurs over a lengthy period of time, more in line with what Lemkin defined with the term ‘diffusion’.⁷⁸ But this has no connection with the subject being discussed here, for the actions carried out by the CUP and which they referred to as ‘assimilation’ were a much more sudden, forcible and externally imposed process, something that Lemkin referred to as ‘cultural genocide’.⁷⁹

I see no problem in viewing forced conversion as a component of forced assimilation, especially in the Ottoman context, because the Ottomans described it as such; and these assimilationist policies were clearly a part of the genocidal process. It is important to add that it was not only the Armenians who were subjected to forced assimilation. Throughout the period 1913–18, the Ottoman government followed a policy of assimilation towards its non-Turkish Muslim populations (e.g. Kurdish, Bosnian, Circassian), wishing to dissolve these groups within the Turkish majority. I have devoted some discussion to this subject in my book, while clarifying that in these cases forced assimilation (of non-Turkish Muslims) cannot be considered genocide. For me, forced assimilation can only be considered genocide if it is a practice imposed as a component of what Lemkin calls ‘coordinated plan of different actions’.⁸⁰

The main argument of my book is that the assimilation policies imposed by the Ottoman government on its Armenian citizens, which included forced conversion, must be seen as structural elements of a genocidal process. Likewise, the similar policies that the United States and Australian governments have at various times

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imposed on their respective aboriginal populations (the forcible removal of children for ‘Western’ education, especially by means of boarding schools, and forced or pressured religious conversion) can be considered genocidal. And the similarities between these cases are striking.

Genocide research has long taken the Holocaust as its primary focus and has thus tended to reflexively compare other genocidal instances to that of the Holocaust in its attempt to both define and understand the phenomenon. Because of this, and the fact that there was no element of forcible conversion in the Nazis’ annihilation policies towards European Jewry, this dimension of genocidal practice has largely been either overlooked and ignored or, conversely, used as a pretext for not considering them genocidal in either intent or practice. I hope that my work will be seen as a contribution, however modest, to ending this tendency.

Endnotes

- 1 Taner Akçam, *A shameful act: The Armenian genocide and the question of Turkish responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006).
- 2 John Waters review of Taner Akcam, *The Young Turks’ crime against humanity in Foreign Affairs*, November–December 2012.
- 3 Donald Quataert, ‘The massacres of Ottoman Armenians and the writing of Ottoman history’, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, Vol. 37, No. 2, 2006, p. 249.
- 4 ‘Attention Members of the US House of Representatives’, *New York Times*, 19 May 1985, p. 56; and *Washington Post*, 19 May 1985, p. A4. The advertisement was sponsored by the Assembly of Turkish American Associations.
- 5 Although Akçam’s perception (p. xxv) that it was ‘common practice to shun anyone who tried to open the topic’ of the Armenian genocide at Middle East Studies Association’s annual meetings may not be shared by all Ottomanists, one gets a sense of how MESA meetings looked to Armenians from Richard G. Hovannisian’s restrained ‘Scholarship and Politics’, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, Vol. 2, 1985–86, pp. 169–185, especially if one compares it to Heath Lowry’s MESA paper—‘Richard G. Hovannisian on Lieutenant Robert Steed Dunn: A Review Note’, *Osmanli Arařtırmaları V / The Journal of Ottoman Studies*, Vol. 5, 1986, pp. 209–252, referring (p. 219) to ‘Hovannisian’s brief (and we shall see single) interlude with veracity’—that Hovannisian effectively rebuts.
- 6 Scott Jaschik, ‘Is Turkey muzzling US scholars?’, *Inside Higher Ed*, 1 July 2008, available at: <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2008/07/01/turkey>; Tugrul Keskin, ‘An interview with Prof. Donald Quataert on academic freedom, the Armenian issue and Turkish Studies’, 2010, available at: www.sociologistswithout-borders.org/Interviews/QuataertInterview.doc. The year 2006 may have been an especially active year for policing the boundaries of Ottoman political correctness. The chancellor of my university and the chair of my department each received a five-page letter from the Federation of Turkish-American Associations protesting my ‘unprofessional’ conduct, for which ‘racism’ could be the only explanation. The offence? The syllabus of my graduate seminar on World War I devoted a week to the Armenian genocide (including the URL of Turkey’s own website).
- 7 In 2002, the state of Brandenburg included a voluntary module on the Armenian genocide in its history curriculum. In January 2005, at Turkey’s urging, it took it out; then, after a considerable flap, put it back in.
- 8 For a rigorous examination of the arguments against these documents and a compelling case for their authenticity, see Vahakn N. Dadrian, ‘The Naim-Andonian documents on the World War I destruction of Ottoman Armenians: the anatomy of a genocide’, *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 1986, pp. 311–360.
- 9 Those who have contributed to the picture of Ottoman ‘demographic engineering’ include Fikret Adanır and Hilmar Kaiser, ‘Migration, deportation, and nation-building: the case of the Ottoman Empire’, in René Leboutte (ed.), *Migrations et migrants dans une perspective historique: permanences et innovations* (Brussels and New York: Peter Lang, 2000), pp. 273–292; Fuat Dündar, *İttihat ve Terakki’nin Müslümanları İskân Politikası (1913–1918)* (Cağaloğlu, İstanbul: İletisim, 2001); Dündar, *Crime of numbers: the role of statistics in the Armenian Question (1878–1918)* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 2010); Nesim Şeker, ‘Demographic engineering in the Late Ottoman Empire and the Armenians’, *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 3, 2007, pp. 461–474; Uğur Ümit Üngör, ‘Geographies of nationalism and violence:

- rethinking Young Turk “social engineering”, and Hans-Lukas Kieser, ‘Removal of American Indians, destruction of Ottoman Armenians: American missionaries and demographic engineering’, both in *European Journal of Turkish Studies*, No. 7, 2008; Erik-Jan Zürcher, ‘The late Ottoman Empire as laboratory of demographic engineering’, paper for the conference on Le Regioni Multilingue come Faglia e Motore della Storia Europea nel XIX–XX Secolo, September 2008, available at, http://www.sissco.it/fileadmin/user_upload/Attivita/Convegno/regioni_multilingue/zurcher.pdf. Retrieved 11 November 2013; Stephan Astourian, ‘On the genealogy of the Armenian-Turkish conflict, Sultan Abdülhamid, and the Armenian massacres’, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, Vol. 21, 2012, pp. 169–207; Akçam, *A shameful act*, p. 175.
- 10 Şeker, ‘Demographic engineering’, p. 465. Akçam, *A shameful act*, pp. 95–100, expresses the same view and includes the same quotations.
 - 11 ‘The Armenian crisis, 1912–1914’, *American Historical Review*, Vol. 53, No. 3, 1948, pp. 481–505, quotation on p. 505. For a concurring assessment, also based on diplomatic documents, see William J. van der Dussen, ‘The question of Armenian reforms in 1913–1914’, *Armenian Review*, Vol. 39, Spring 1986, pp. 11–28.
 - 12 He cites Yusuf Hikmet Bayur, *Türk İnkılabı Tahrihi* (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1983), vol. 2, pt. 3, pp. 117, 140, 131, 144, 475, 477. Unfortunately, Berkeley’s library does not own this book, so I was unable to track down Bayur’s own sources.
 - 13 L. Mallet, Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 24 April and 11 June 1913, in G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (eds.), *British documents on the origins of the war, 1898–1914. Vol. X, Part I. The Near and Middle East on the eve of the war* (London, 1936), Docs. 479, 507, pp. 429, 450. Hereafter Gooch and Temperley.
 - 14 H. von Wangenheim, Ambassador to Istanbul, to Secretary of State G. von Jagow, 5 June 1913, *Politische Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes* (hereafter AA) Türkei 183, Bd. 30, summary in Table of Contents.
 - 15 Grey to Goschen, British ambassador to Berlin, 24 June 1913, reporting what the German ambassador to London had told him. Gooch and Temperley, Doc. 523, p. 463.
 - 16 Jagow to Wangenheim, 10 June 1913, AA Nachlass Wangenheim 231, file 4, pp. 14–15.
 - 17 Friedrich von Holstein, diary entry, 26 January 1884, quoted in George F. Kennan, *The decline of Bismarck’s European order: Franco-Russian relations, 1875–1890* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1978), p. 244n.
 - 18 I. I. Vorontsov-Dashkov to Nicholas II (undated; probably mid-October 1912) in *Die Internationale Beziehungen im Zeitalter des Imperialismus; Dokumente aus den Archiven der zarischen und der provisorischen Regierung*, ed. der Kommission beim Zentral Exekutivkomitee der Sowjetregierung unter dem Vorsitz von M. N. Pokrowski (uniform title: *Meždunarodnye otnošenija v epochu imperializma*), German translation ed. by Otto Hoetzsch (Berlin, 1931), Series III, Vol. 4:1, No. 78: pp. 79–83; Minister-President V. N. Kokovtsov to Foreign Minister S.D. Sazonov, 13 November 1912, *Die Internationale Beziehungen*, No. 241, pp. 246–247. Russia’s ambassador to Paris also raised the possibility with R. Poincaré, who rejected it. A.P. Izvolsky to Sazonov, 23 October 1912, *Die Internationale Beziehungen*, No. 40, p. 42. Even Vorontsov-Dashkov stressed that Russia must emphasize that she had no territorial ambitions, not only so as not to alarm the Turks, but also not to raise hopes among Armenians. He too thought Eastern Anatolia was ungovernable.
 - 19 Grey to Ambassador Sir F. Bertie, on Cambon’s parley with Sazonov, 28 January 1913, Gooch and Temperley, Doc. 475, p. 424. See also: Grey to Goschen, 27 June 1913, Gooch and Temperley, Doc. 526, pp. 465–466.
 - 20 Regarding public opinion: I counted twenty-six articles in the London *Times* from January 1913 to August 1914 on violence against Armenians and fifty-five on Armenian reforms.
 - 21 K. M. Gulkevich to Sazonov, 5 February 1914, Telegr. No. 70, *Die Internationale Beziehungen*, Series I, vol. I: 1, No. 186, pp. 174–175.
 - 22 Another of Akçam’s quotations demonstrating the threat posed by the Armenian Reforms is from Cemal Pasha, who—eight years after the fact—listed the need to dismantle them as one of the chief reasons for entering the European war. *Erinnerungen eines Türkischen Staatsmannes* (Munich: Drei Masken Verlag, 1922), pp. 465–466. In fact, the two European inspector-generals had departed in August, as soon as they arrived—almost three months before the Ottomans joined the war in November. L. C. Westenenk, ‘Diary concerning the Armenian mission’, *Armenian Review*, Vol. 39, Nos. 1–153, 1986, pp. 29–89; Anahide Ter Minassian, ‘Van 1915’, in Richard G. Hovannisian (ed.), *Armenian Van/Vasputakan* (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2000), pp. 209–244, at p. 212.
 - 23 Implicitly, by Quataert in ‘The massacres of Ottoman Armenians’, p. 251; explicitly by Üğor Ümit Üngör, in his review of Akçam in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 117, No. 5, 2012, p. 1704.
 - 24 Jonathan Frankel, *The Damascus affair: ‘ritual murder’, politics, and the Jews in 1840* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

- 25 For example, Isaiah Friedman, *Germany, Turkey, and Zionism, 1897–1918* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977); Yair Auron, *The banality of indifference. Zionism and the Armenian genocide* (Tel Aviv: Mikhlalah le-hinukh, Seminar ha-Kibutsim, 1995 / New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 2000).
- 26 Antonia Arslan, *Skylark Farm* (Milan: Rizzoli, 2004 / New York: Knopf, 2008), pp. 20–21, 46.
- 27 The surest sign was Selim Deringil's matter-of-fact reference to 'the Armenian genocide' on the very first page of his "'The Armenian question is finally closed": mass conversions of Armenians in Anatolia during the Hamidian massacres of 1895–97', *Comparative Studies of Society and History*, Vol. 51, No. 2, 2009, pp. 344–371. 'Successful multinational experiment' was Donald Quataert's judgement, speaking for himself 'and many others' in a review of Kemal Karpat, *The politicization of Islam*, in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 107, No. 4, 2002, p. 1328.
- 28 Taner Akçam, *Türk Ulusal Kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu* [Turkish national identity and the Armenian question] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 1992).
- 29 Donald Bloxham, *The great game of genocide: imperialism, nationalism, and the destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).
- 30 Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, pp. xiii, 450.
- 31 Mustafa Aksakal, *The Ottoman road to war in 1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
- 32 Akçam notes that he borrowed these words from Stephen Astourian who in turn took them from Winston Churchill. Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, p. xxxi.
- 33 Taner Akçam, 'Ermeni Meselesi Hallolunmuştur': *Osmanlı Belgelerine Göre Savaş Yıllarında Ermenilere Yönelik Politikalar* [The Armenian problem has been solved': policies towards the Armenians during the war years according to Ottoman documents] (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2008).
- 34 Erman Şahin, 'Review essay: the Armenian question', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 17, No. 1, 2010, pp. 144–157; Fuat Dündar, 'Taner Akçam'ın Son Kitabı Vesilesiyle "%10 Katliam" Sorunu "Ermeni Meselesi Hallolunmuş" Mudur?' [The '10% Massacre' problem in connection with Taner Akçam's latest book: has the Armenian issue been resolved?], *Toplumsal Tarih*, No. 174, 2008, pp. 79–83. See Akçam's response, 'The relationship between historians and archival records: a critique of single source scholarship on the Armenian genocide', *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 2, 2010, pp. 43–92; and Dündar's reply, "'1915 yazıları" üzerine Taner Akçam'a cevap' [An answer to Taner Akçam on his '1915 writings'], *Toplumsal Tarih*, No. 201, 2010, pp. 32–41.
- 35 Among his comparatively serious critics, see, with regard to the Turkish original of Akçam's book, Ermin Sahin, 'Review essay: the Armenian question', *Middle East Policy*, Vol. 28, No. 2, 2010, pp. 144–157.
- 36 Mustafa Aksakal, 'War as the savior? Hopes for war and peace in Ottoman politics before 1914', in Holger Afflerbach and David Stevenson (eds.), *An improbable war: the outbreak of World War I and European political culture before 1914* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2007), pp. 287–302.
- 37 *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Mächte, Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes* (Berlin: Deutsche Verlagsgesellschaft für Politik und Wissenschaft, 1922), vol. 38, p. 180.
- 38 Karl Max von Lichnowsky, *My mission to London 1912–1914* (New York: George H. Doran [German 1916] 1918).
- 39 *Yurdular Yasası. İsviçre'de Cenevre şehrine yakın Petit-Lancy Köyünde Pension Racine'de kurulan İkinci Yurdular Derneği'nin müzakerat ve mukerreratı* (Istanbul: Yeni Turan Matbaası, 1913), p. 19.
- 40 Henry Morgenthau, *Ambassador Morgenthau's story* (New York: Doubleday and Doran, 1918), p. 338.
- 41 Raphael Lemkin, *Axis rule in Europe*, 2nd edn. (Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, 2008), p. 79.
- 42 Raphael Lemkin, 'Genocide as a crime under international law', Raphael Lemkin Collection, Manuscript Collection P-154, American Jewish Historical Society at the Center for Jewish History, New York City, New York (hereafter AJHS), Box 6, Folder 2, undated, p. 2. Available online at: <http://digital.cjh>.
- 43 Grigoris Balakian, *Armenian golgotha: a memoir of the Armenian genocide*, trans. Peter Balakian and Aris Sevag (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2009), pp. 187–188.
- 44 Lemkin, *Axis rule in Europe*, p. 79.
- 45 Ervin Staub, *The roots of evil: the origins of genocide and other group violence* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp. 17–18.
- 46 Richard Hofstadter, *The paranoid style in American politics* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1965).
- 47 Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity, 1989).
- 48 Guenter Lewy, *The Armenian massacres in Ottoman Turkey: a disputed genocide* (Salt Lake City, UT: University of Utah Press, 2005), p. 95.
- 49 Edward J. Erickson, 'The Armenians and Ottoman military policy, 1915', *War in History*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 2008, p. 165. Emphasis added.
- 50 Lewy, *The Armenian massacres in Ottoman Turkey*, p. 221.
- 51 Israel W. Charny, 'Toward a generic definition of genocide', in George Andreopoulos (ed.), *The conceptual and historical dimensions of genocide* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), p. 75.

- 52 Jacques Semelin, *Purify and destroy: the political uses of massacre and genocide* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), pp. 37–42, 332–342.
- 53 Daniel J. Goldhagen, *Hitler's willing executioners: ordinary Germans and the Holocaust* (New York: Knopf, 1996); Leo Kuper, *Genocide: its political use in the twentieth century* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1981), pp. 91–94; Saul Friedländer, 'The historical significance of the Holocaust', *Jerusalem Quarterly*, No. 1, 1976, pp. 36–59; Uriel Tal, 'On the study of the Holocaust and genocide', *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 8, 1979, pp. 24–46. For a symptomatic indication of this widespread belief, see Eric Ehrenreich's review of Donald Bloxham, *The final solution: a genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) in the *American Historical Review*, Vol. 15, No. 4, 2010, pp. 1244–1245.
- 54 Helen Fein, *Accounting for genocide: national responses and Jewish victimization during the Holocaust* (New York: Free Press, 1979), p. 4.
- 55 This point is elaborated in my forthcoming book, *Genocide and the terror of history: the search for permanent security*.
- 56 The only two examples that I know are the debates between V. N. Dadrian and Ronald Suny, *Armenian Forum*, Vol. 1, No. 2, 1998, pp. 17–51, 73–130, and between Dadrian and Hilmar Kaiser, *Journal of the Society for Armenian Studies*, Vol. 8, 1995, pp. 127–150, and Vol. 9, 1996, pp. 135–148.
- 57 Marc Mamigonian, 'Scholarship, manufacturing doubt, and genocide denial (1)', *The Armenian Weekly*, April 2013, pp. 37–41.
- 58 For a discussion of Mustafa Kemal and İsmet İnönü's utterances on the subject, see Akçam, *A shameful act*, pp. 347–348, 366–367.
- 59 My thesis advisor Vahakn Dadrian often complained to me that, 'if I use the Armenian sources in order to disprove Turkish denial, they'll say that these sources are unreliable and won't take me seriously. Thus, I am forced to use Turkish sources instead'.
- 60 Raymond Kévorkian, *The Armenian genocide: a complete history* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2011).
- 61 We might mention here the works of Fuat Dündar and Hilmar Kaiser as an example. Dündar explains the loss of life during the 1915 deportation 'as the inevitable result of hunger, fatigue and sickness from the conditions en route (which may have been purposefully ignored) rather than as a "systematic massacre"' Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi, İttihat ve Terakki'nin Etnitise Mühendisliği (1913–1918)* (Istanbul: İletişim, 2008), p. 250. In his article '1915 Yazıları Üzerine Taner Akçam'a Cevap', the author opts not to use or mention the documentation from the Istanbul Courts-Martial, which contain evidence refuting this claim. For his part, Hilmar Kaiser not only did not use the body of evidence of the military tribunal but he treats some of the facts that came to light during the trials as if they are the products of the imagination of some academics and should therefore be dismissed out of hand. Hilmar Kaiser, 'Regional resistance to central government policies: Ahmed Djemal Pasha, the governors of Aleppo, and Armenian deportees in the spring and summer of 1915', *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 12, No. 3, 2010, p. 174.
- 62 We have an entire library of literature on this topic in Holocaust research. For a brief evaluation of the literature, see Ian Kershaw, *Hitler, the Germans, and the final solution* (London and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), pp. 245–248.
- 63 BOA/DH.ŞFR, no. 52/93, Coded telegram from the Interior Minister Talat to the provincial governments of Erzurum and Bitlis, dated 19 April 1916. My emphasis.
- 64 Akçam, *The Young Turks' crime*, pp. 247–248.
- 65 BOA/DH.EUM, 2. Şube, no. 12/11/1, telegram from Ohannes, son of Nikogos, Artin Mızrakian, İstapan, son of Papaz, and Markada, son of Nersis, in Konya to the Ottoman Interior Ministry, dated 5 October 1915.
- 66 For the Cretan case, see Davide Rodogno, *Against massacre: humanitarian intervention in the Ottoman Empire 1815–1914* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2012), p. 163.
- 67 Rodogno, *Against massacre*.
- 68 See A. Dirk Moses' commentary in this forum.
- 69 Taner Akçam and Ümit Kurt, *The spirit of the laws: searching for the traces of the genocide in the abandoned properties laws* (Istanbul: İletişim Yayınları, 2013).
- 70 A. Dirk Moses, 'Genocide and modernity', in Dan Stone (ed.), *The historiography of genocide* (Houndmills: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), p. 158.
- 71 Bauman quotation from Moses, 'Genocide and modernity', p. 158.
- 72 Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, p. 91.
- 73 For the various discussions of the subject, see Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller, *The Foucault effect: studies in governmentality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991); Ian Hacking, 'Biopower and the avalanche of printed numbers', *Humanities in Society*, Vol. 5, 1982, pp. 279–295; Paul Holquist, "'Information is the alpha and omega of our work": Bolshevik surveillance in its pan-European context', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 69, No. 3, 1997, pp. 415–450.

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- 74 For detailed information, see Moses, 'Genocide and modernity'; Christopher Powell, *Barbaric civilization: a critical sociology of genocide* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2011), esp. pp. 85–162.
- 75 Mark Levene, *Genocide in the age of the nation state. Volume 1: the meaning of genocide* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Mark Levene, *Genocide in the age of the nation state. Volume 2: the rise of the west and the coming of genocide* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005).
- 76 Thomas Kühne, *Belonging and genocide: Hitler's community, 1918–1945* (London and New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010).
- 77 Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native', *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 8, No. 4, 2006, p. 388.
- 78 Steven Leonard Jacobs (ed.), *Lemkin on genocide* (Plymouth: Lexington Books, 2012), p. 41.
- 79 When we look at what Lemkin wrote regarding assimilation and conversion, we can see two different approaches to the topic. In the first, Lemkin refers to assimilation as a gradual process. Nor was Lemkin opposed to the idea. On the contrary, he looked quite favourably upon the matter. In his *Axis rule in occupied Europe*, he describes assimilation as a 'voluntary transfer of individuals' and states that 'minority protection should not constitute a barrier to the gradual process of assimilation and integration'. Again, in the same chapter, when discussing 'techniques of genocide' he mentions techniques that could easily be understood as forced assimilation and forced conversion, although he does not use these exact words (Lemkin, *Axis rule in occupied Europe* [Clark, NJ: The Lawbook Exchange, 2008], p. 93, fn 54 and 82–87). He utters similar views in the book unpublished *History of genocide*, in the section he wrote entitled 'Diffusion versus cultural genocide'. He describes assimilation as diffusion, but refers to cultural genocide as something different: 'Cultural genocide is a more or less abrupt process', he claims, whereas assimilation is a gradual change that occurs 'by means of continuous and slow adaptation of the culture to new situation' (Jacobs, *Lemkin on genocide*, p. 41). Lemkin would also offer these views during the UN debates on the Genocide Convention, arguing that forced assimilation did not equate to cultural genocide. To ensure that cultural genocide survived the objections, he made a very clear-cut distinction between cultural genocide on one hand, and forced assimilation and legal assimilation on the other, claiming that the latter should not be seen as genocide. A. Dirk Moses, 'Empire, colony, genocide: keywords and the philosophy of history', in A. Dirk Moses (ed.), *Empire, colony, genocide: conquest, occupation, and subaltern resistance in world history* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008), pp. 15–16. The second way in which Lemkin employs the term assimilation is in considering it a technique of genocide. See Michael A. McDonnell and A. Dirk Moses, 'Raphael Lemkin as historian of genocide in the Americas', *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 7, No. 4, 2005, p. 505; John Cooper, *Raphael Lemkin and the struggle for the Genocide Convention* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008), pp. 91–92, 243; A. Dirk Moses, 'Raphael Lemkin, culture, and the concept of genocide', in Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of genocide studies* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 19–42.
- 80 Lemkin, *Axis rule in occupied Europe*, p. 79.

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human rights, the Armenian massacres, and Orientalism in Wilhelmine Germany', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 79, No. 1, 2007, pp. 80–113; 'Who still talked about the extermination of the Armenians? German talk and German silences', in Norman Naimark, Ronald Grigor Suny and Fatma Müge Göçek (eds.), *A question of genocide* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 199–220; and 'Helden in Zeiten eines Völkermords? Armin T. Wegner, Ernst Jäckh, Henry Morgenthau', in Rolf Hosfeld (ed.), *Johannes Lepsius—Eine deutsche Ausnahme: der Völkermord an den Armeniern, Humanitarismus und Menschenrechte* (Wallstein Verlag, 2013: pp. 126–159).

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