

Mark LEVENE  
The Changing Face of Mass Murder  
An Ottoman Case Study

In recent years, for my sins, I have taught an undergraduate class on genocide in contemporary history. Naturally, it is a rather challenging encounter for students as well as teacher, but once the former feel comfortable in the class the question they invariably want to ask is "how can people do these things?" Interestingly, it is the girls who are particularly prone to ask this question. And once begun, they who particularly persist with it. Perhaps, in return, it is my maleness which somehow determines that I take the question to be a naive one. I do not say so, to them, of course, at least not initially when I do not know them well. But what I want to be saying is : if we spend the whole course trying to answer this question alone we will only end up going around in circles while not being any the wiser as to *why* people do these things.

It is interesting, therefore, in response to Jacques' first question for this colloquium: what is the relevance of the notion of extreme violence, that I have to begin by saying something in response to his other question: what is this researcher's position with regard to the object of that research. My position in brief is this: I take it as a given that violence is latent in all of us, and that this includes for most of us, the potentiality to commit acts of extreme, gratuitous violence including acts of torture, abuse and mutilation. I do not however hold this view on grounds of faith - that human beings are irredeemably bad or prone to commit evil. Nor can I agree with the rather more common and secular notion that given half a chance contemporary human beings in so-called civilised societies will naturally regress to their more atavistic, barbarous selves, a viewpoint which I take to be entirely speculative not to say heavily loaded when we know relatively little about how our ancient forbears throughout millenia of prehistory behaved to one another. Instead, my reading of extreme violence as physiologically-grounded is empirically derived, being based on what I have read in the specialist literature<sup>1</sup> and what, like everybody else, I am exposed to if not in my immediate social environment, then certainly through the television screen. Granted, we clearly have to take into account differences, not simply between one individual and another, and between men and women but also the way that peoples living in different cultures and at different times are weaned, socialised, politicised and so on. But if we take the essential premise as correct, that the potential for violence is part of our make-up as human beings the question then becomes what can we do with this knowledge? I would propose that concentration on dissecting the anatomy and form of our subject may lead us to discover a whole variety of things about ourselves, including things perhaps we did not want to know. But ultimately, if we pursue this line of enquiry to the exclusion of others, it can only feed a certain prurience, even while we may publicly seek to deplore the subject of our observation.

The relevance of this extraordinarily fraught field of study I would thus propose can only come through asking the right questions. And that the most crucial of these must necessarily be about causation. As it is also clear that the majority of people in many modern societies are not engaged primarily if ever in their existences, in extreme violence, this must also suggest that what is latent may also be very preventable. If then we can bring more light to bear on what the mechanisms are which trigger this negative potential, are we then not better positioned to understand, promote and even liberate wholly more worthwhile aspects of human behaviour which can create the potential, among other things, for solidarity, conviviality and cooperation? Yet to arrive at this happy state demands an entirely more rigorous epidemiology of our subject than we have to date achieved. To paraphrase Comte : If one can't understand causation, one can't anticipate and if one can't anticipate one can't prevent.

My proposed contribution to this cooperative venture thus rests on what perhaps a historian can best do, namely scrutinise and analyse particular circumstances in which extreme violence has been very evident and try and find out if there was anything about the contexts in which it occurred which can help us understand why human relations took on this particularly ugly form. To argue this case I have chosen to look at the Ottoman empire in its twilight years, between the late 1870s to around 1920 in which state and societal tendencies towards extreme violence were particularly chronic. My aim however is to suggest that while the form of killing remained remarkably constant the framework in which it occurred markedly changed. And that this may in turn suggest a certain static insufficiency in the usage of the term 'extreme violence' to describe these changes. Indeed, as I also wish to propose that their evolution might represent the microcosm of a much more general series of developments in contemporary history I would propose that we need more specific descriptive terms for the different sequences of mass killing, one of which would be, at least for one of these sequences, the familiar term genocide.

Nevertheless, there are also some problems of methodology which ought be signalled at the outset. The first is that I have particularly chosen to concentrate on three sequences or episodes of specific state action against a single community, the Armenians. Even putting aside all the controversy which surrounds this subject, it is clear that the Armenians in these particular spatial and temporal parameters were not the only people to suffer extreme violence. Other minority Christian communities, notably Nestorians, also suffered in at least one of these sequences <sup>2</sup>as just very slightly later, in a different sequence did Greek-speaking Ottomans.<sup>3</sup> But in this one Turks also suffered extreme violence at the hands of Greeks, just as earlier, Ottoman Muslims on the European side of the Bosphorus also suffered at Greek hands or at those of other Christian Balkan peoples.<sup>4</sup> There again, Muslim Turks also assaulted Moslem Kurds who at all stages had been prime agents in the attack on the Armenians.<sup>5</sup> Just to add to this unwholly messy elements of the Armenian community were themselves engaged at various moments in a violent dynamic with the Ottoman state and in retributive massacres committed against other ethnic communities.<sup>6</sup>

Viewed in its totality therefore we are faced with an extremely variegated ethnic landscape of mass atrocity and one which does not readily conform to neat categorisations. Western cognitive notions of violent conflict as encapsulated within the boundaries of recognised war are completely collapsed in these sequences, the 1894-96 Armenian assault taking place in peacetime while some of the worst intercommunal killing twenty years later, being enacted after the official cessation of Great War hostilities. In a similar way the notion, sometimes offered by scholars of genocide that this type of mass killing can be understood as a one-dimensional model with a defined set of perpetrators on the one hand and a defined set of victims on the other, inadvertently or otherwise, misconstrues what, in this case, is actually a series of complex interactions. 7

Even isolating the specifically anti-Armenian episodes of extreme violence, carries with it problems. For instance, if we were to try to describe the lives of many Armenians in some of the most insecure districts of Mus or Bitlis in the 1890s, disentangling at what point in today's parlance gross human rights violations turned into something even more deadly would be very difficult.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, one might argue that the attack on the foundations of the social fabric of this community *in these regions* was so continuous throughout the entire period under discussion that if we were to use the terms of reference developed by Raphael Lemkin we could describe it in its entirety as genocide.<sup>9</sup> If then, we have chosen here to highlight particular moments of mass killing one might have to add the caveat that the reason for doing so is not because it provides a broadly accurate picture of late Ottoman anti-Armenian violence but because it is heuristically useful to concentrate on these aspects.

There is another final problem worth noting. Most though certainly not all of the direct killing occurred in the eastern Anatolian region of the empire where the majority of Armenians lived. Should we therefore assume that this was a product of structural conditions or human relationships peculiar to this region? Or do we need to factor in other relationships or conditions which might have had a bearing on the outcome? If so, how broadly do we delineate these? Should we come to a halt when we have examined state-communal relationships on the assumption that as the killing was circumscribed within the empire's boundaries all we need to know must be found here or do we need to cast our net even wider, and consider the impact of a broad range of geo-political or geo-economic issues as they impinged on Ottoman state and society? Alas, my answer to the last question, is that however methodologically open-ended this might become, it is absolutely necessary that it includes all these aspects. Indeed, if we are to really comprehend the origins of these mass killing we have to look locally but think globally!

Briefly then let me state the sequence of killings I am considering and some of the things they have in common.

The first sequence is between 1894 and 1896. It was not a continuous wall of killing but rather was punctuated by a year-long hiatus between the first massacres in the isolated Sassun district of Eastern Anatolia and a very public one in Constantinople before

spreading out again in a further more widespread wave in Eastern Anatolia, with again a final coda in a further Constantinople massacre some months later. Casualty figures vary widely but of some 2 million Ottoman Armenians, best estimates suggest something between 80,000 and 100,000 suffered direct violent deaths.<sup>10</sup> Incidentally, one might add that these events were widely reported in the foreign press and were referred to at the time as the Armenian massacres.

A second more infamous sequence occurred throughout the second half of 1915 and into 1916. It involved a much more systematic state attempt to exterminate whole communities either by direct massacre in situ or in the process of deportation to designated locations in the Syrian desert where many more were massacred. Extreme violence in the form of starvation, epidemic and abuse was also indirectly responsible for further mass death. In all between 600,000 and well over a million died. <sup>11</sup>Despite this being wartime, media reportage was extensive. There was also immediate academic analysis.<sup>12</sup> But what at the time were again referred to as the Armenian massacres, Lemkin and later commentators describe as genocide.

A third more confused sequence emerged from late 1917 through to around 1921, as Ottoman authority in eastern Anatolia and on its Caucasian borders ebbed and appeared to disintegrate. It involved repeated, extensive inter-ethnic massacres in which Armenians were perpetrators as well as victims.<sup>13</sup> The killing occurred against a backdrop of other states attempting to wrest direct or indirect control of Anatolia, particularly after the 1918 Mudros Armistice. Contemporary western awareness of these events was however, minimal or non-existent, while a general lack of data continues to impede researchers attempting to estimate casualty figures or a thorough morphology of these killings. No common descriptive term exists for this sequence.

Having said all this, consistent features in the nature of the killing are discernible throughout all three phases. At every stage there was an extreme gratuitous cruelty. Techniques were devised, revised or improvised to make people suffer as much as possible either as a prelude to or in the process of being killed, and, or to humiliate and emotionally torture them, most obviously through having to watch or participate in the sexual abuse or death of other family members.<sup>14</sup> The gendered attack on community or communities, through rape and sexual mutilation was thus a major facet of this extreme violence. One might add that despite many of these episodes involving very large numbers of people being executed or burnt alive, there is little or no evidence to suggest that any of this was carried out in an emotionless way. The equation of modern mass murder with a bureaucratised, even sanitised detachment simply does not apply in these cases.<sup>15</sup> Repeatedly, it involved face to face killing often using crude weaponry, or indeed the actual terrain of the countryside for its accomplishment.<sup>16</sup> It also often involved quite ritualised mutilation in the act of killing, suggesting on the one hand, sacrificial-cum-religious motives, on the other a release of sado-erotic fantasies.<sup>17</sup>

Indeed, if we turn our subject on its head and consider it from the viewpoint of the perpetrators, it is clear that in each of these sequences, the opportunity to participate in such killing was itself an incentive. Certainly, there were large number of uniformed men, in the army, gendarmerie or other para-military units who were required to carry out orders. But even putting aside that these individuals were presumably not under obligation to enjoy what they were doing, there were also large numbers of non-uniformed participants who were clearly under no such compunction. These included Kurdish, Turkoman and Circassian tribespeople who were arguably more innured to brutality and killing than other town and country folk. But it is also clear that there were plenty of urban participants, as well as occasions where the torture and bludgeoning to death of victims was a public spectacle sometimes involving whole communities in carnival-like outings.<sup>18</sup>

All this adds up to a catalogue of extreme violence. But where can we go with it? One legitimate line of enquiry is to ask about perpetrator motivation. What self-justification did people offer to themselves or their families for inflicting grievous bodily harm on people who were often neighbours, employers, employees, customers, even friends? We can discern very local and personal grievances in some of the assaults and one very common denominator: a desire for material gain. People who did not rob the victims of their personal possessions, often involving killing them in the process, or looting and ransacking their homes, properties or businesses, deprived themselves of what others would certainly take.<sup>19</sup> The same desire not to be left out was surely also true when it came to the enjoyment factor. Once it became clear that others were going on the rampage and having fun with nobody to stop them, one can equally imagine how the urge to be part of this became very compelling. Nevertheless, it should be blatantly clear from all this that the mass killing which resulted was not the result simply of autonomous human beings running amok: it involved a coming together of family, clan, neighbourhood or peer groups, collectively operating as, or within larger crowds, as well as in more obviously organised agencies of state. <sup>20</sup>

None of this, however, came about by a process of spontaneous combustion or in some socio-political vacuum. The French foreign minister, Gabriel Hanotaux, might shrug off the massacres of the 1890s as 'one of those thousand incidents of struggle between Christians and Muslims' <sup>21</sup>but he was actually quite wrong. While we do not have to paint some rosy picture of traditional inter-communal relationships, on the other hand very strong taboos as well as legal constraints in the Ottoman Muslim polity acted as a primary brake on exactly such attacks taking place.<sup>22</sup> For the ground-rules to change, ordinary people either had to find very compelling reasons why it was a necessary and even morally justifiable to participate in the killing or at least know that the state had given them permission to act in this way. The anthropologist Cornelia Sorabji examining the nature of extreme violence in the recent Bosnian war, has similarly proposed that while participants may have been allowed or indeed enabled to inflict whatever disorganised tortures they might have dreamt up, *the context* in which they did so was an organised one.<sup>23</sup>

One might argue that our third sequence rather defies this framework, inasmuch as state authority had effectively disappeared turning these killings in the process into a much more open ended affair. But there perhaps lies the nub. While the anatomy of atrocity may be largely unchanging across our three sequences, the socio-political conditions are actually very different. Which might suggest that to get a handle on what is catalysing the development of each sequence and indeed the evolution from one sequence to another, demands more than simply an observation of what is happening on the ground. It needs our engagement with a much wider and essentially macro-political picture. Looked at through this prism our sequences, far from being some undifferentiated mass of atrocity, actually take on characteristics which determine that each require distinctive labels.

Labels, of course, assume a coherent identification of an event which in the messiness of life - and in death - is rarely there. The devil, as they say, is in the detail. And not least with genocide, a term upon which no scholarly consensus currently exists. <sup>24</sup>It is all well and good to propose that the scholars therefore need to get their heads together to come up with a clearer definition but one is then back with the old chestnut of either having to define genocide so tightly that practically all possible cases are excluded from the rubric or alternatively so broadly that it becomes simply another way of saying mass murder.<sup>25</sup> I have already attempted to suggest that *the form* or even scale a mass killing takes cannot of its own solve the problem. Only by building up a much wider historically-based picture of state : communal interactions within the broader context of that state's relations and perceptions of its place within the wider world can we begin to get a sense of the overall appropriateness of the term. I conclude that:

'genocide occurs where a state, perceiving the integrity *of its agenda* to be threatened by an aggregate population - defined by the state in collective or communal terms - seeks to remedy the situation by the systematic, *en masse* physical elimination of that aggregate, *in toto*, or until it is no longer perceived to represent a threat.' <sup>26</sup>

Having stated then, at least by implication, that this rather specific type of mass extermination is in some way bound up with state-led developmental programmes and aspirations, I would further propose that we have here something rather modern, something indeed which we could not obviously associate with an earlier less globally connected world which lacked specific demands on individual polities to transform themselves according to some essentially western, Enlightenment yardstick. State attacks on communal ethnic or religious groups did, of course, often occur prior to this but with aims which tended usually to be punitive rather than transformative. This again does not mean that the word 'massacre' which most readily comes to mind to describe these pre-modern examples of extreme violence suddenly stopped having any salience on the arrival of the 20th century, not least when it is clear that individual massacres might either lead up to or taken together constitute a genocide. But there is not simply a quantitative difference between the spatially and temporally limited single massacre and the extended nature, on both accounts, of

genocide, but also surely a qualitative distinction in what states politically hoped to achieve by these respective deployments.<sup>27</sup>

If by further implication the term genocide carries with it a special affinity with acts of - albeit crisis-ridden - state building in the era of an emerging international nation-state system, in a way that the word massacre does not, how might we then label examples of mass communal killing in states which have administratively broken down, fragmented along ethnic or other lines, or even ceased to exist? The very question sounds peculiarly post-modern as it presupposes one or more regional breaches in the currently normative, theoretically coherent worldwide order of contiguous and interlocking nation-states. Indeed, if the label post-genocide according to our own terms of reference, might suggest an extreme violence of the future, the question then might justifiably be asked can it be applied at all to our Ottoman past? Yet as we have already noted that there was in the twilight years of the empire a complete breakdown of the functions of state in some of its regions, most particularly in Eastern Anatolia, could it be that in a few short decades from the 1890s to the 1920s we already have a complete prototypical pattern from massacre through genocide, to post-genocide ?

Let us see how successfully this formula can be applied to our three Ottoman sequences. In the broadest terms, we could argue that all fall within one single overriding context. Between the international Treaty of Berlin in 1878 through to the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, Ottoman polity and society was in a state of perpetual crisis in the face of hegemonic if competing Great Power efforts to determine its destiny. A case for portraying this period as a continuous whole might thus revolve around a repeated question we might imagine on the lips of all Ottoman patriots: is the empire to remain in neo-colonial thrall to the dictates of outside forces, possibly pending its complete dissolution, or is it to overcome this status in favour of a reassertion of its political and economic integrity? This case for continuity might however also embrace Ottoman:Armenian relations. From before the first sequence through to beyond the third, the Armenian community - of all the diverse communities of the empire - had been specifically singled out by its ruling elites as a subversive and dangerous agent of the foreign interest and thus in itself a threat to any patriotic agenda. Space dictates that the charge cannot be fully examined here. <sup>28</sup> What is important to note is that whether true or false this perception remained steadfast.

Having said this, the first anti-Armenian sequence was largely directed and organised on the personal authority of the then sultan, Abdulhamid, and at least initially seems to have represented the intention to punish a community for its alleged actions rather than a conscious policy to wipe it out. Lacking the means to undertake this in a centralised manner, Kurdish tribes - the so-called Hamidiye regiments - had already been given covert state sanction to carry fire and sword to the Armenian Eastern Anatolian heartlands.<sup>29</sup> This speaks for a very time-honoured method of state-sponsored massacre. Significantly, however, while the initial 1894 phase would seem to fall within this traditional pattern the much more widespread 1895 killings - coming as they did after Great Power interference

demanded Armenian reforms - seem to suggest something wholly more radical and thoroughgoing. Wider elements of the dominant community, as we have seen, were *consciously* mobilised to participate in the killings, and there seems to have been a much more focused effort to assault and destroy the religious infrastructure of Armenian life.<sup>30</sup> The killings, moreover, appear to have only come to an end when it had been deemed that the Armenian community had been sufficiently emasculated and weakened as a socio-political force within the broader Ottoman construct. In this sense what may have begun as a traditional series of retributive and localised massacres for alleged dissent, terrorism and insurrection, concluded as a partial genocide. And while the Armenians were the victims the killings were also intended as a clear message to the Great Powers that the empire was master of its own destiny and would not brook foreign interference in its domestic affairs.<sup>31</sup>

If this sequence thus has a notably transitional quality to it, not in only between massacre and partial genocide, but in an interconnected way between the premodern and the modern, the 1915 genocide has to be placed much more firmly in the latter context. The very fact that it was carried out not on the initiative of an autocratic despot but by the self-consciously modernising Committee of Union and Progress, the party of Young Turks, who had come to power in the anti-Hamidian revolutionary upheaval of 1908-1909, in itself speaks volumes in favour of a paradigmatic shift. With the change in power structure also came a much more focused effort to transform the empire into a very different, essentially Turkic as opposed to Ottoman construct. It is noteworthy too, that the attack on the Armenians coincided with the full crystallisation of this programme though this in turn was only made possible under the extraordinary conditions of the Great Power's global war, which the CUP joined in late 1914 primarily in order to consciously renounce foreign domination and to reassert its politico-military strength on the world stage.<sup>32</sup>

Some caveats remain in order. The logistical and personnel resources at the party's disposal remained limited and in a critical sense pre-modern. Despite the role of the army and of special units, the *Teshkilat-i Makhsusiye*, to spearhead the killings,<sup>33</sup> in the upshot the CUP was arguably as heavily dependent on its provincial administrators as was its predecessor in the 1890s, and so, in turn, on a broader range of contracted out operators, most obviously in the form of Kurdish and other tribal auxiliaries, to accomplish a full implementation of the programme.<sup>34</sup> As a result the killing process was prolonged, often chaotic and extremely grisly. Even then, as we do not yet have an entirely satisfactory picture of the evolution of the killings, there is some reason to doubt that they began as a consciously totalising agenda of extermination but rather underwent their own cumulative radicalisation as the life and death nature of the struggle deepened.<sup>35</sup> And it remains certainly true that not every last individual was killed, the 'saving' of young girls and boys for incorporation as the chattel or sometimes family members of tribal participants, or for their private sale, pointing to the perpetuation of a very ancient custom and pay-off in traditional warfare.<sup>36</sup>



None of this, however, cancels out the qualitative as well as quantitative shift which the events of 1915 represented. Though the pretext that the Armenians were an internal security threat acting on behalf of enemy powers was in effect a repeat of the 1890s justification, this time it served conscious geo-strategic aims, geared to the consolidation of the empire's eastern frontier and as a possible territorial bridgehead to Turkic peoples further east. 37 Implicit in this was an entirely new nationalising assumption as to who could and who could not be loyal members of a Turkic as opposed to a multi-ethnic Ottoman body-politic, and a warning indeed that any ethnic or religious community which was unwilling or unable to accommodate itself accordingly would not be tolerated.38 The collective destruction of the Armenians however was not just a statement that they were deemed as a fifth column or considered surplus to requirements; the killings also served tangible, overtly nation-state building goals. Liquidating them in toto, at least across Eastern Anatolia, provided the state with free, unfettered access to substantial land, property and capital which could then be redistributed or directly utilised for its own *dirigiste* purposes as a short-cut to a state-led capital accumulation.39 Whatever the nature of the extreme violence at the micro-level the 1915 killings and indeed, however driven they may have been at the level of state by acute paranoia they still ultimately served a very definite utilitarian calculus aimed at economic restructuring and social engineering. The killings can neither be seen as purely retributive, or even redemptive but as a conscious path by which a retreating and weakening traditional state might break through perceived obstacles in the way of its independent modernisation, en route to the reassertion of its power within an already globalised political economy, controlled, regulated and determined by a handful of increasingly powerful avant-garde western nation-states. It is in this framework that this particular form of extreme violence perpetrated against a communal group becomes recognisable as an act of modern genocide.

The paradox lies in the fact that the CUP's accelerated wartime drive to achieve these goals, was the rock upon which it drove itself and with it the whole empire, to self-destruction. The killings in Eastern Anatolia from late 1917 thus no longer represent state building so much as state and societal breakdown, while in place of mass killing determined by a single, relatively coherent if entirely desperate agenda one has instead killings perpetrated by a maelstrom of warring parties all attempting to hold their own against each other. Armenians, Kurds, Russians, Turks, Georgians, Azeris, as well as belatedly other interested powers, including the British and French were all part of this many-sided conflict. 40 But this was also against a backdrop of acute political, societal economic, demographic and environmental collapse, starvation, epidemic and mass refugee flows. In being thus transformed into a zone of lawlessness, eastern Anatolia also was turned into a zone of continuous killing, with the added proviso that we cannot accurately estimate the death toll as nobody was keeping count. I would label these sorts of killings, as the aftermath of genocide, or for short-hand, post-genocide.

Doubly-paradoxically the sequence of killings did not end there. The phoenix-like resurrection of the Turkish state, this time as a thoroughly remoulded national entity under

Kemal Ataturk not only brought with it a successful reassertion of state authority in the region from around 1921 but also in the following year a sequence of state-organised massacres and genocidal killings, though in the absence of Armenians, this time primarily directed at the region's Kurds. The critical difference now was that with international recognition of the new Turkey at Lausanne in 1923 there would be no outside power deploring the results.

There is surely an important footnote here for this and indeed any historical survey of extreme violence. Ultimately, there can be no such examination if information and data on episodes of mass killing have simply disappeared down a giant memory hole. It is not entirely true, of course, to say that the great extirpations of Kurdish revolt in the 1920s and 1930s have been entirely forgotten otherwise I would not be mentioning them here. But one is certainly hardpressed to find details of these events except in often quite obscure literature. 41 Could it be that Noam Chomsky's explanation for this is the correct one: that extreme violence where it is politically convenient becomes 'benign' and as a result is airbrushed out of history? 42 Could one extrapolate from this further that the usage of the term genocide to describe the events of 1915 is suspect only because the west has in Turkey a firm political-military partner which happens - actually quite correctly - to see in the destruction of the Armenians part of the authentic underpinning of its modern state formation. As Talaat Pasha, prime mover in the 1915 events, said at the time: 'I have the conviction that as long as a nation does the best for its own interests, and succeeds, the world admires it and thinks it moral.' 43

The point of this exercise, however, is not to exclusively lambast the CUP or its successors or to propose that the Turkish state alone has some monopoly either on extreme violence or on the manipulation of history in order to pretend it away. 44 What, nonetheless, I think is significant about Turkey's recent violent history is its relationship to the state's place within an emerging world system. Transformation from (Ottoman) neo-colonial subservience to strong, independent nation-state was ultimately predicated on a ratcheting up of mass killing from traditional punitive massacre to an ethnic community's entire obliteration. The label genocide certainly cannot be dispensed with here, not primarily because it is descriptive of acts of extreme violence but because without it we have no alternative basis for understanding and explaining the connecting threads between the many examples of state organised assaults on communal groups and the broader thrust of contemporary development. 45

Yet there is something else to consider. If genocide is, as Ron Aronson has characterised it, the outcome of efforts 'to realise the unrealisable,' 46 what comes thereafter, when the state has collapsed with the effort? Ottoman Turkey in its efforts to narrow the power gap between itself and the hegemonic leaders of the international system was hardly unique in seeking a way out of its problems through a crisis-ridden resort to genocide. But neither was it alone in inflicting massive injury on itself in the process. If genocide is a critical by-product of state efforts at radical transformative restructuring what happens when those

efforts have brought down the very edifice of the state and society itself.? For a few brief years the shell of the Ottoman empire appeared to enter this post-genocidal nether world. Looking at, for instance, east Central Africa today, the whole region the recipient of Rwanda's 1994 genocide, one might wonder if post-genocide will be the dominant expression of extreme violence in the 21st century.

### Endnotes

1. See Joanna Bourke, *An Intimate History of Killing, Face-to-Face Killing in Twentieth Century Warfare* (London, 1999).
2. R.S. Stafford, *The Tragedy of the Assyrians* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1935), pp. 20-40; John Joseph, *The Nestorians and their Muslim Neighbours : A Study of Western Influences on their Relations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1961) pp.131-36; .
3. Marjorie Housepian, *Smyrna 1922, The Destruction of a City* (London: Faber and Faber, 1972), p. 345. Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey* (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970 <1922>) notably chapter vii, 'The War of Extermination' in which Toynbee notes that extensive, systematic atrocities and ethnic cleansing were carried out by *both* Greeks and Turks in this struggle .Also Stephanie Yerasimos, 'La Question du Pont-Euxin, 1919-1923,' *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains* , 39:153 (1989) pp. 9-34.
4. The emerging assault on the Kurds is poorly documented to date. However see David McDowall, *A Modern History of the Kurds* (London: I.B. Tauris, 1997), pp. 105-106; Kamal Madhar Ahmad, *Kurdistan during the First World War* (London: Saqi Books, 1994) ,pp.130-131;Tessa Hoffman and Gerayer Koutcharian, 'The History of Armenian-Kurdish Relations in the Ottoman Empire,' *Armenian Review* , 39:4 (1986), p.26.
5. See the albeit rather polemical Justin McCarthy, *Death and Exile: The Ethnic Cleansing of Ottoman Muslims, 1821-1922* (Princeton, NJ, 1995, Darwin Press) and the more measured A.Toumarkine, *Les Migrations des Populations Musulmanes Balkaniques en Anatolie (1876-1913)* (Istanbul, 1995);
- 6 Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963); Hratch Dasnebedian, *History of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation Dashnaktsutiun 1890/1924* (Milan: OEMME Edizione, 1989).
7. See Frank Chalk and Kurt Jonassohn, *The History and Sociology of Genocide* (New Haven and London, 1990) p 23 for their definition of genocide as a 'form of one-sided mass killing in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a group.' Mark Levene, 'Creating a Modern 'Zone of Genocide': The Impact of Nation and State Formation on Eastern Anatolia 1878-1923', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies*, 12 (winter 1998), pp. 393-433 ' and 'Yesterday's Victims, Today's Perpetrators? : Considerations on Peoples and Territories within the former Ottoman Empire', *Terrorism and Political Violence* , 6 (winter 1994), pp. 444-461 for the multi-faceted aspects of the Eastern Anatolian case.

8. See for instance, E.J. Dillon, 'The Condition of Armenia,' *The Contemporary Review* vol. 68 (August 1895), pp. 153-189 for a vivid portrayal of the atrocities committed prior to 1894. The article is republished as *Prelude to Genocide, Conditions of Life among the Armenians in Anatolia 1890-1895* (Armenian Genocide Resource Centre, 2001)

9. Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, Washington DC. Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944, p.79 where he characterises genocide as a coordinated plan aimed 'at the destruction of the essential foundations' of the life of a national, ethnic or social group 'with the aim of annihilating the group itself.'

10. The careful, contemporary account of Johannes Lepsius, *Armenia and Europe, An Indictment* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1897), pp. 330-31, opts for a figure of 88,000 'based on incomplete and preliminary statistical compilations derived from authentic sources.' Richard G. Hovannisian, 'Historical Dimensions of the Armenian Question, 1878-1923' in his, edited volume *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Books, 1986), p. 25, considers the losses to be more in the region of 100-200,000.

11. Robert F. Melson, *Revolution and Genocide : On the Origins of the Armenian Genocide and the Holocaust* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp.145-47, after a careful review of the literature has concluded that something in the order of one million, or around half of the Armenian pre-war population perished. Yves Ternon, *The Armenians: From Genocide to Resistance* (London: Zed Press, 1983), p.18, suggests an upper figure of 1,200,000.

For the anatomy of the killings themselves see Mark Levene, 'The Experience of Genocide,: Armenia 1915-16, Romania, 1941-42,' in John Bourne, Peter Liddle and Ian Whitehead eds., *The Great World War, 1914-1945 : Volume 1, Lightning Strikes Twice*, (London, HarperCollins, 2000), pp. 580-604. G.S. Graber, *Caravans to Oblivion, The Armenian Genocide, 1915*, New York, John Wiley and Sons,

12. For the best contemporary accounts see (Arnold J. Toynbee ed.), *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire: Documents Presented to Viscount Grey of Falloden*, Misc. No. 31. Command 8325 (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1916); Johannes Lepsius, *Deutschland und Armenien 1914-1918, Sammlung diplomatischer Aktenstücke*, (Berlin-Potsdam, Tempelverlag, 1919).

13. Muted and limited reference to Armenian perpetrated massacres can be found in the accounts of some Armenophile authors. See for instance Richard G. Hovannisian, *Armenia, On the Road to Independence, 1918*, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press 1967) p.194; Christopher J. Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (London: Croom Helm, 1980), p. 279; Ahmad, *Kurdistan*, p.170.

By contrast, they are writ large in McCarthy, *Death and Exile*, pp. 198-230, and further in his *Muslims and Minorities, The Population of Ottoman Anatolia at the End of Empire* (New York and London : New York University Press, , 1983), pp. 133-38 with a view to paint a picture of quite catastrophic Muslim demographic collapse in this period. This may well be the case though McCarthy does not delineate distinctions between the death-tolls in the different Muslim ethnic communities or amongst non-Muslims.

14. For instance, in Mus, a place of mass atrocity, village headmen and leading townsmen alike had their teeth, finger nails and toenails torn out, and their noses whittled down. When their female relatives attempted to come to their rescue they 'were outraged before the very eyes of their mutilated husbands and brothers.' Toynbee, *Treatment*, p. 85. Evidence from Dillon, Lepsius and others in the 1890s and in the 1915 sequence authoritative independent observers such as the American consul in Harput, Leslie Davis, confirm that these were not isolated instances but very much the norm. See Leslie A. Davis, *The Slaughterhouse Province, An American Diplomat's Report on the Armenian Genocide, 1915-1917*, New Rochelle, New York, Aristide D.Cataratzas 1989; Ara Sarafian, ed., *United States Official Documents on the Armenian Genocide* 3 vols. Watertown, MA, Armenian Review Books, 1994, 1995; . Donald E. Miller and Lorna Touryan Miller, *Survivors, An Oral History of the Armenian Genocide*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993),

15. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Oxford, Blackwells, 1989); Robert Jay Lifton and Eric Markusen, *The Genocidal Mentality: Nazi Holocaust and Nuclear Threat* (New York, 1990) for notable examples of the mass murder as modernity thesis.

16. For instance, Toynbee *Treatment*, p.239. identifies the steep Kamakh gorge on the upper Euphrates, as a site where in the 1915 sequence deportation convoys from Erzerum, Erzindjan and elsewhere were repeatedly ambushed by cetes or regular army units. According to one survivor, 'hundreds of children were bayoneted by the Turks and thrown into the Euphrates... men and women were stripped naked, tied together in hundreds, shot and then hurled into the river.' The scale of the killing was so great here that the thousands of dead bodies created a barrage forcing the river to change 'its course for about a hundred yards.' See also the Safrastian account on p.238.

17. This is admittedly not an aspect of the Armenian mass killings which have been much analysed. Evidence of cruxificions and mass burnings as a form of purificatory expurgation or cleansing are nevertheless manifold in the accounts. See also Davis, *Slaughterhouse Province*, p.31. for Dr Atkinson's description of the corpses of women in the Lake Goeljuk (Hazar Golu) area which point specifically to the sadoerotism of the killers. p.31. For considerations of some of these aspects of killing closer to home see Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and Culture in early modern France*, chapter 6, 'The rites of violence,' (Stanford, 1975); Denis Crouzet, *La nuit de la Saint-Barthelemy, Un reve perdu de la renaissance* (Paris, Fayard, 1994) and also Alain Corbin, *Le village des cannibales* (Paris, Aubier, 1990). Cross-reference with some more general studies may also be useful. See for instance, David Riches, 'The Phenomenon of Violence' in idem. ed., *The Anthropology of Violence* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1986) pp.1-27; E. Valentine Daniels, *Charred Lullabies: Chapters in an Anthropography of Violence* (Princeton, 1996)

18. see Walker, *Armenia*, p.167 on the annihilatory 1896 killings in the Constantnople districts of Kasim Pasa and Kilidj Oglu, mostly populated by poor Armenian migrant workers. Also Abraham H. Hartunian, *Neither to Laugh nor to Weep, A Memoir of the Armenian Genocide*, (Vartan Hartunian trans. Boston, Beacon Press, 1968), pp.64-65 for a 1915 public spectacle of mass execution in Marash.

19. The extreme lengths to which people would go on this score is made clear in Consul Davis's report where he shows that the burning of the bodies in the Lake Goeljuk area were not for obvious sanitary reasons - but in order to locate gold coins, rings and so on which had been swallowed or hidden in orifices. *Slaughterhouse Province*, pp. 82-86. He also confirms that gendarmes contracted out killings to Kurds on this basis in return for a down payment.

20. There are, it is true, no statements -at least of which I am aware - of what it felt like to be a member of perpetrator crowd or mob, from these sequences. And there is certainly a more general lack of analysis of this type of group dynamic. See, of course the classic exploratory study by Elias Canetti, *Crowds and Power* and George Rude, *The Crowd in History* which while clearly mouldbreaking in critical respects remains a paean to class struggle. For a corrective, at least in the sense that it considers much less palatable crowd attacks on ethnic communities, John D. Klier and Shlomo Lambroza eds., *Pogroms, Anti-Jewish Violence in Modern Russian History* (Cambridge, 1992) Even so, one obvious complementary case history to ours, namely that of the mass communal killings in post-imperial India in 1947, until quite recently, has been striking, for its lack of scholarly analysis. Swarna Aiyar's, 'August Anarchy' the partition massacres in Punjab, 1947' *South Asia* (1995) 13-37, is thus particularly welcome for its explanation of 'crowd action' within the context of higher level organisation, planning and military expertise. Also see S.J. Tambiah, *Leveling Crowds: Ethnonationalist Conflicts and Collective Violence in South Asia* (University of California Press, 1996). With thanks to Mark Mazower for bringing these significant South Asian studies to my attention. A further recent, incisive study of collective violence which dovetails with some of Aiyar's findings in a different context is Cornelia Sorabji, 'A very modern war: terror and territory in Bosnia-Herzegovina', in R.Hinde and H.E.Watson, eds., *War: A Cruel Necessity? The Bases of Institutionalised Violence* (London, 1995), 80-99.

21. Quoted in Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence and Oxford, 1995), p. 78. 383.

22. , See generally Bat Ye'or *The Dhimmi, Jews and Christians under Islam* (London, Littman, 1985) and discussion in Dadrian, *History* pp. 147-148.

24. Sorabji, 'very modern war' p. 86.

25. Notes Ward Churchill, 'At the most fundamental level, we presently lack even a coherent and viable description of the processes and circumstances implied by the term genocide.' 'Genocide: toward a functional definition,' *Alternatives*, 11 (1986), p. 403.

26. While not polar opposites the positions of Helen Fein with her quite rigorous definition of genocide as 'sustained purposeful action ..to... destroy a collectivity..through... interdiction of the biological and social reproduction of group members.' and Israel Charny with his much more inclusivist rendering - 'Unless clear-cut self-defence can be reasonably proven, whenever a large number of people are put to death by other people, it constitutes genocide.' - provide adequate parameters for this debate. Helen Fein, 'Genocide, A Sociological Perspective', *Current Sociology*, vol. 38, (1990), p. 24; Israel W. Charny ed. *Genocide, A Critical Bibliographical Review* (London 1988) vol. 1, xiii.

26. Mark Levene, 'Is the Holocaust simply another example of Genocide?' *Patterns of Prejudice* vol. 28 (1994), p. 10.

27. This raises some very interesting questions about the crystallisation of modern genocide and the first mass killing we might speak of in such terms. Candidates for this dubious order, range through the 1794-94 Jacobin assault on the Vendee back through Anglo-Scottish colonial frontier mass killings in Ireland and the Americas. These origins are to be explored further in a first volume of my history of modern genocide (forthcoming) However, I reject in entirety the notion that pre-modern states lacked the *capacity* to commit full-blown genocide. Their technology may have been cruder but Rwanda in the contemporary era has shown that an *organised* state does not need sophisticated weaponry to kill at a rapid pace. And there were plenty of pre-modern states which were administratively and militarily well organised! See on this score, E.V. Walter, *Terror and Resistance: A Study of Political Violence : Wiith case studies of some primitive African communities* (Oxford 1969)

28. The accusation is at the heart of those who deny or downplay the scope, scale and labelling of the particularly 1915 sequence as 'genocide.' See especially Stanford J. Shaw and Ezel Kural Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey*, vol.2, *The Rise of Modern Turkey 1808-1975* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), pp.315-17. Interestingly the deniers case is predicated on the assumption that genocide by definition, cannot involve a dynamic of violence between state and communal group whereas in fact such a dynamic, involving at least elements of the communal group is the genocidal norm rather than the exception.

29. For more on the Hamidiye, see Martin van Bruinessen, *Aghas, Shaiks and State, The Social and Political Structure of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1990), pp. 185-86; Hoffman and Koutcharian, 'Armenian-Kurdish Relations,' p.16.

30 *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

31. Lepsius, *Armenia and Europe*, pp. 76-77.

32. For more on emerging CUP agendas see Feroz Ahmad, *The Young Turks :The CUP in Turkish Politics : 1908-1914* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969). Shaw, *History* ,II p. 305 interestingly characterises CUP wartime efforts as 'a rapid modernisation to save the empire' plus 'a frantic push toward secularisation.'

33. Vakahn N. Dadrian sees the coordinating role of the *Teshkilat* as seminal. See his 'The Secret Young-Turk Ittihadist Conference and the Decision for the World War 1 Genocide of the Armenians', *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* , 7: 2 (1993), pp. 173-201 and 'The Role of the Special Organisation in the Armenian Genocide during the First World War' in Panikos Panayi, ed., *Minorities in Wartime* (Leamington: Berg, 1993), pp. 50-82.

34. Hoffman and Koutcharian, 'Armenian-Kurdish Relations,' pp.24-28.

35. See Donald Bloxham, 'Power Politics, Prejudice, Protest and Propaganda: a Reassessment of the German Role in the Armenian Genocide of World War One ' in Hans-Lukas Kieser ed., *Der Voelkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah*, Publishing, Zurich, Chronos, forthcoming, 2002 ) for a critical reassessment of the evolution of the genocide.

36. See Miller, *Survivors*, chapter 5.

37. For more on this aspect see Jacob M. Landau, *Pan-Turkism in Turkey* (London: C. Hurst, 1981); George Georgiades Arnakis, 'Turanism, an Aspect of Turkish Nationalism' *Balkan Studies*, 1(1960), pp. 19-32.
38. Nergis Canefe, 'Tribalism and Nationalism in Turkey: Reinventing Politics' in Kenneth Christie ed., *Ethnic Conflict, Tribal Politics, A Global Perspective* (London, Curzon, 1998) pp.153-173; Soner Cagaptay, 'Kurds, Armenians and Turkish Nationalism During the 1930s' Barcelona Conference on Comparative Genocide 2000 unpublished, for discussions of who might be included and excluded in the emerging idea of the Turkish nation.
- 39 There is need for scholarly assessment on this score specifically on the role of the *Kuvale Metruke*, the Commission for Abandoned Properties set up to facilitate the transfer of Armenian assets to the state.
40. Again there is very little in the way of detailed consideration of the impact of these struggles at the regional and local levels. See Ahmed, *Kurdistan*, pp. 130-31; Hoffman and Koutcharian, 'Armenian-Kurdish Relations,' pp. 26-27.41.
41. Martin van Bruinessen, 'Genocide in Kurdistan? The Suppression of the Dersim Rebellion in Turkey (1937-38) and the Chemical War Against the Iraqi Kurds (1988)' in G. Andreopoulos, ed., *Genocide: Conceptual and Historical Dimensions* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994), pp.141-170. See also his chapter 'Shaikh Said's Revolt' in *Aghas, Shaiks and State, The Social and Political Structure of Kurdistan* (London: Zed Books, 1990) pp. 265-305; McDowall, *Modern History*, pp.194-211; Robert Olson, *The Emergence of Kurdish Nationalism and the Sheikh Said Revolt 1880-1925* (Austin: University of Texas, 1989); Hamit Bozarslan, 'Les Revoltes Kurdes en Turquie Kemaliste (Quelques Aspects),' *Guerres Mondiales et Conflits Contemporains*, 38:151 (1988) pp.121-136.
- 42 Milan Rai, *Chomsky's Politics* (London and New York, Verso, 1995) pp. 27-28.
43. Quoted in Dadrian, *History*, 383.
44. On the that issue see surveys by Rouben Adalian, 'The Armenian Genocide: Revisionism and Denial.' in Michael N. Dobkowski and Isidor Walliman, *Genocide In Our Time, An Annotated Bibliography with Analytical Introductions* (Ann Arbor MI : Pierian Press, 1992), pp. 85-105; Roger W. Smith, 'Denial of the Armenian Genocide,' in Israel W. Charny, ed., *Genocide A Critical Bibliographic Review* (London: Mansell Publishing 1991), vol. 2, pp. 63-85; Terrence des Pres, 'Introduction,' *Remembering Armenia* in Richard G. Hovannisian, ed., *The Armenian Genocide in Perspective* (New Brunswick, NJ and London: Transaction Books, 1986), pp. 9-17 and Hovannisian, ed., *Remembrance and Denial: The Case of the Armenian Genocide* (Wayne State UP, 1999).
45. Mark Levene, 'Connecting Threads: Rwanda, The Holocaust and The Pattern of Contemporary Genocide,' in Roger W. Smith, ed., *Genocide: Essays Towards Understanding, Early Warning and Prevention*, (Williamsburg, VA.1999), pp. 27-64 for a fuller explication of this argument.
46. Ronald Aronson, *The Dialectics of Disaster, A Preface to Hope* (London, 1983), See particularly his chapter 3 'Why? Towards Theory of the Soviet Holocaust'.



47. see Les Roberts, *International Rescue Committee (IRC) 'Mortality in Eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, Results from Five Mortality Studies ( 2001).*([http// www.the IRC.org/mortality.cfm](http://www.theIRC.org/mortality.cfm))