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# Full Issue 6.2

# Editor's Introduction

Volume 6, issue 2 is a general issue that contains an eclectic mix of articles which cover a broad range of topics directly related to the prevention and understanding of genocide in the modern era and testify to the diversity and strength of the field of genocide studies.

The first selection by Stephen Burgess, Professor at the US Air War College, examines the proposal to create an African Standby Force to intervene when genocide threatens on the continent. Burgess points out that African leaders approved the formation of the African Standby Force (ASF) and "signed off on the promise that the ASF would be prepared by 2010 to intervene to stop genocide." He notes that the leaders of the various countries have failed to come close to meeting the 2010 deadline and that this "calls into question the credibility of ... concepts such as the 'African Renaissance' and 'African solutions for African Problems.'" He concludes by noting, "Challenging timetables may prod African governments to develop their militaries, but they also lead to unrealistic expectations and suboptimal performance, such as the AU missions in Darfur and Somalia."

The second selection, "Healing Psychosocial Trauma in the Midst of Truth Commissions: The Case of *Gacaca* in Post-Genocide Rwanda," by Regine King, PhD candidate at the Factor-Inwentash Faculty of Social Work, University of Toronto, argues that while truth commissions "emphasize the dimensions of truth telling, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation, in practice, they are often challenged to fulfill the mandate of healing psychosocial traumas through these dimensions in countries that suffer not only from the traumatic experience of wars and genocide, but also from the multiple psychosocial issues that result from these forms of mass violence." She examines the role of *gacaca,* "a form of truth commission that was introduced in post-genocide Rwanda in 2002," and argues that relying only on *gacaca* to heal psychosocial trauma underestimates "the depth of suffering that the genocide created both at the individual and collective levels in Rwandan communities." She suggests that other models should be adopted to supplement *gacaca.*

The third article, "From Bloodless Revolution to Bloody Counterrevolution: The Adana Massacres of 1909," by Bedross Der Matossian, Assistant Professor of Modern Middle East History in the Department of History at the University of Nebraska/Lincoln, examines the historiography of the Adana Massacres of 1909. He notes that there are two diverging views. According to Matossian, "While some Turkish scholars deny the involvement of the local government officials in the massacres by putting all of the blame on the Armenians who revolted as part of a conspiracy to establish a kingdom in Cilicia, some Armenian scholars, whose work is overshadowed by the Armenian genocide, accuse the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) of acting behind the scenes to destroy the Armenian economic infrastructure in Adana in order to curb any future political and economic development in the area." This article "contends that the Adana Massacres should be viewed as part of the revolutionary process which led to the erosion of social and political stability in the region" and which intensified the violence perpetrated against "the vulnerable Armenian population of Adana."

The fourth contribution to volume 6, issue 2, "Did *Newsnight* Miss the Story? A Survey of How the BBC's 'Flagship Political Current Affairs Program' Reported Genocide and War in Rwanda between April and July 1994," is one of the few examinations of the role played by the media in exposing or ignoring an ongoing genocide. In this article, Georgina Holmes, a scholar of international relations theory and the media, notes that in 1994 the BBC program *Newsnight* was one of the few "within which representatives of the British government, opposition parties, the United Nations, and international non-governmental organizations could comment on British foreign policy." Holmes analyzes *Newsnight* reporting between 6 April 1994 and 30 September 1994, with a particular focus on reporting until 31 July 1994, and concludes that "despite a stack of media evidence that genocide was taking place, no representatives of the British government or opposition parties were interviewed on the role of the UK as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and signatory of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide." Instead, she notes, the discussion focused on the shortcomings of the UN bureaucracy and were characterized by a refusal to use the word "genocide." She concludes that *Newsnight* missed the story and "failed to hold British politicians to account."

The final article, "George Steiner and the War against the Jews: A Study in Misrepresentation," by Roger Smith, Professor Emeritus of government at the College of William and Mary, examines the work of George Steiner, the "pre-eminent literary critic of the past fifty years." Smith argues that Steiner's "work on the Holocaust is misleading in its interpretations, explanations, and implications." Smith notes that part of Steiner's view stems from the fact that he was worried "that the Jews brought their near destruction upon themselves: that they invented the practice of genocide, had invented the idea of a 'chosen people,' had through Moses, Jesus, and Marx created such moral demands upon ordinary human beings that the tension became unbearable and resulted in a revolt against the tyranny of conscience and perfection." Smith notes that Steiner's brilliant use of language—he calls it "dazzling prose"—can overwhelm "critical thought and lead one away from a factual understanding of the origins and consequences of the Holocaust." Smith seeks to correct that and direct the reader to the shortcomings in Steiner's work as it applies to the Holocaust.

In conclusion, volume 6, issue 2 contains a variety of articles on the prevention and punishment of the crime of genocide. We think, and hope that readers agree, that this issue helps to enhance our understanding of the causes of genocide and ways to prevent it. Our next issue, volume 6, issue 3 will be another special issue: *60 Years after Ratification of the Genocide Convention: Critical Reflections on the State and Future of Genocide Studies.*

*Herb Hirsch*
*GSP Co-editor*

# The African Standby Force, Genocide, and International Relations Theory

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*In launching the African Standby Force (ASF), African leaders over-promised to stop genocide, given their lack of political will, the weak capacity of their states, and the weak military capability of the Force's subregional brigades. The explanation lies in a combination of South African idealism and determination to exert continental leadership and the desire of African leaders to sustain or increase aid to their under-resourced militaries. South Africa does not have the power or resources necessary to supply sufficient public goods to make the ASF fully functional and capable of fulfilling all tasks. African leaders promised to stop genocide with the calculation that no one with sanctioning power would challenge them. Burden shifting by the United States and other major powers was such that African leaders expected to be rewarded with increased aid flows. A combination of African nationalism and aid dependence trumped a highly needed international public good—the political will and military capability to stop genocide.*

*Key words: African Standby Force, genocide, intervention, idealism, burden shifting, political will, aid dependence, capacity and capability*

In international politics, it is common for the leaders of states and organizations to make promises and commitments to supply international security and then not deliver on such promises. In contrast, domestic "political entrepreneurs" are usually punished, particularly in democracies, if they do not at least partially fulfill promises to deliver national security and other public goods. The anarchical nature of international politics means that there is little incentive to prevent leaders from making promises to supply international security and other public goods that they know might not be fulfilled. Furthermore, the leaders of member states belonging to an international organization are able to "scapegoat" the body; thereby, leaders can minimize responsibility for over-promising and failing to fulfill those promises. According to realist theory, the collective action problem and the tendency of weaker states to "free ride" can only be overcome by a hegemonic power which is willing to supply the lion's share of the goods.[2] According to institutionalist theory, a hegemonic power can lead in establishing a "regime" to which member states contribute a share, thus mitigating free ridership.[3] In international security, the two best-known regimes revolve around the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and collective defense and the United Nations (UN) and peacekeeping and peace-building. However, in a crisis situation, such as the 1994 Rwandan and 2004 Darfur genocides, regimes and their rules are not sufficient to compel UN or NATO member states to act and the hegemonic power—the United States—to lead in order to supply the necessary public goods.

There are various reasons why leaders over-promise or make unattainable promises to supply international security and other public goods, including a desire for prestige as well as earnest efforts to solve difficult international problems. Some

leaders make promises without realizing that there may be a lack of political will and capability to respond, while others consciously lie.[4] Middle powers and smaller states wish to demonstrate their usefulness in the international order, and poorer states strive to receive aid. Leaders of organizations such as the UN and African Union (AU) over-promise because of a desire to prove the legitimacy of their organizations and its worthiness to receive financial support or because of pressures from member states to respond to supply security.[5]

The hegemonic power and other strong states tend to cooperate with weak states and organizations in order to "burden shift" and provide aid and/or side payments, thereby compounding the problem and adding to the shortfall in international security caused by over-promising. This tendency is explained by the difficulty and costliness of supplying security in genocidal situations combined with the lack of interest and low salience of more powerful states. As an alternative, major powers persuade and pressure smaller and weaker states and international organizations to assume burdens that they lack the capability and will to manage. The gap between weak states' over-promising and powerful states' burden shifting compounds the collective action problem and causes failures in international security, including the failure to intervene to stop genocide.

One of the thorniest international security issues is preventing or stopping genocide. Most states have ratified the 1948 Genocide Convention, which obliges them to "prevent and punish genocide."[6] However, states have not acted to prevent or stop genocide, especially in Rwanda (1994), Darfur (2003–2004), and Bosnia (1992–1995). A principal limiting factor has been a lack of political will on the part of state leaders, including the leaders of major powers, to send forces to intervene in the internal affairs of sovereign states. A secondary factor has been a lack of military capacity on the part of states in the affected region that might have an interest in preventing genocide and keeping it from spilling over their borders.

A relevant case of over-promising international security is that of African leaders who approved the formation of the African Standby Force (ASF) and signed off on the promise that the ASF would be prepared by 2010 to intervene to stop genocide. In 2003, the AU Peace and Security Commission and the African Chiefs of Defense Staff (ACDS) devised the ASF and outlined six "typical conflict scenarios" in the ASF's policy framework. By 2010 the ASF would be able to meet the challenges presented by six scenarios laid out by the ACDS. The most challenging would be Scenario 6, the deployment of a robust military presence in 14 days to stop genocide:

> 1.6  A number of typical conflict scenarios, outlined below were used to develop the proposals in this document:
>
> f.  **Scenario 6**. AU intervention—e.g. genocide situations where international community does not act promptly.

The document specifies the capabilities that would be required by the ASF to respond to "genocide situations":

> 2.8  The speed with which forces will be required to deploy has particular implications for standby force structures and arrangements. Linked to this is the type of conflict into which they will deploy. Given the fluid and uncertain nature of conflict, particularly in Africa, coherence on deployment will be critical. This demands that units and HQ staff will have trained together prior to deployment. Significant implications of varying readiness levels are:
>
> At 14 days readiness collective training involving field exercises with all units is essential prior to activation. At this level of readiness there is also a clear requirement for a standing fully staffed brigade HQ and HQ support. There is also a require-

ment for an established and fully stocked logistics system capable of sustaining the entire brigade. Apart from large military alliances such as NATO, individual Member States may be best placed to provide this capability.

The document stipulates the need for rapid reaction capability to respond in two weeks' time:

2.9   Bearing this in mind, the Meeting recommends the following long-term deployment targets for the ASF (all timings are from an AU mandate resolution):

c.   Due to the nature of situations demanding intervention operations, Scenario 6, it will be important the AU can deploy a robust military force *in 14 days*.[7]

At the July 2004 summit in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, the AU heads of state approved the proposal for the ASF, including the policy framework and intention to respond to Scenario 6, with 2010 as the target date for full implementation. However, 2010 has come and gone, and African countries and the ASF have not come any closer to being able to meet the challenge of Scenario 6. African leaders have little or no will to intervene in the sovereign affairs of African states. African states do not have the capacity and the ASF does not have the military capability to respond to Scenario 6. This is clear if African military capabilities, and especially those of the ASF sub-regional brigades, are examined in relation to the task of intervening to stop genocide. It appears that, by approving the ASF, AU heads of state and ACDS leaders were over-promising, though probably not lying. The reasons for over-promising vary from African heads of state and defense forces that were willing to go along with the ASF proposal because it increased the likelihood of receiving aid to South African President Thabo Mbeki, who had a long-term political and security vision for Africa, and to South African security experts, who helped operationalize Mbeki's vision. Mbeki and other South African leaders and officials promoted the goals of an "African Renaissance" and "African solutions for African problems," and African nationalist ideology is the basis for several grand schemes, including the ASF.[8]

Given the lack of accountability in international politics and the tendency to over-promise, an additional question is how far are leaders, states, and organizations willing to push their promises. Is there anything that constrains them from making wildly unrealistic promises and lying? It would seem that there is a certain point at which incredulity arises about the promises of weaker states and organizations and at which stronger powers must step in to provide international security and other public goods or turn to the United Nations (UN) to do so, which is what happened after the AU failed to stop genocide in Darfur from 2004 to 2007 and was superseded by the UN.[9]

## Genocide and What It Takes to Stop It

As defined by the Genocide Convention,

genocide means any of the following acts committed *with intent to destroy*, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;
(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.[10]

The difficulty of proving "intent to destroy" has led to disagreements about whether or not the mass killings and displacement of people in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Darfur constituted genocide or the more euphemistic "ethnic cleansing." Subsequently, former President Slobodan Milošević of Serbia and President Omar el-Bashir of Sudan were indicted by international courts on charges of genocide.

Only in the case of Kosovo in 1999 was NATO able to stop ethnic cleansing, but only after 850,000 people had been expelled from their homes by Serbian forces. A key factor was the political will of President Bill Clinton, Secretary of State Madeline Albright, and other NATO leaders to prevent the 1992 Bosnian ethnic cleansing that had dragged on for three years from repeating in Kosovo. However, NATO leaders were reluctant to risk any casualties and announced that no ground forces would be used. Fortunately, the United States and other NATO members were able to use air force to coerce Serbia to stop ethnic cleansing and allow Kosovar Albanians to return to their homes. The Bosnia case demonstrates that weak political will and under-mobilized capability lead to failure, while Kosovo shows that a combination of strong political will and technologically advanced capacity and capability can stop genocide. African leaders lack the will, capacity, and capability to do the same.

## The Lack of Political Will to Stop Genocide in Africa

There is a large body of evidence to prove that there is a lack of political will on the part of African state and organization leaders to stop genocide.[11] Since the formation of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) in 1963, African leaders have agreed on the importance of sovereignty and non-interference in the internal affairs of member states.[12] When genocide was committed in Burundi in 1972 and 1993 and in Rwanda in 1994, African states and organizations did nothing to intervene.[13] When Tanzania intervened in Uganda in 1979 to overthrow the murderous Idi Amin regime, widespread protests were raised by OAU member states against the violation of sovereignty. Furthermore, Tanzania only invaded after Amin had ordered his forces to seize a section of Tanzanian territory.

With the foundation of the AU in 2002, it was hoped that the new organization, with South African leadership, would be more assertive in providing greater Africa-wide security and perhaps even be able to prevent or stop genocide. However, the AU did not respond in 2003 and 2004 to genocide in Darfur as a result of a lack of political will and a shortfall of African military forces. South African leadership in the AU did not make a difference. The Sudanese military dictatorship was determined to continue its scorched-earth campaign and resisted all efforts to place an effective international force in Darfur. Only after hundreds of thousands were killed and millions displaced as well as considerable international pressure did the Sudanese government agree to the deployment of an AU peacekeeping force. This force proved inadequate, and the Sudanese military and militias continued to destroy villages and murder, rape, and displace people.

The lack of political will to punish genocide has been recently manifested in many African leaders' refusal to accept the 2009 indictment of President Omar El-Bashir by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for ordering massive crimes against humanity, including genocide, in Darfur. A 2009 AU heads of state summit, in fact, called on the UN Security Council to delay the ICC indictment from coming into effect.[14] Political resistance to genocide prevention has also been evidenced by the controversy over the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) principle, which stipulates that governments must commit to protect civilians or call on international assistance if unable to do so. Many African states have resisted signing up for the principle in

the UN because they fear external intervention in their own internal affairs. Efforts to separate the R2P principle from the type of humanitarian intervention that would be needed to stop genocide have met with limited success.[15]

## The Lack of Capacity and Capability to Stop Genocide

On paper and in practice, the African Standby Force (ASF) and African militaries lack the enforcement capabilities needed to intervene, stop genocide, and defeat spoilers. At present, the ASF mainly consists of a dozen or so infantry battalions.[16] The ASF possesses little of the armor, airborne and air power capabilities that an intervention to stop genocide requires.[17] Furthermore, a multinational force will be unable to achieve the unity of effort to deploy and stop genocide.

More specifically, the full implementation of the ASF subregional commands entails the development of a number of other capabilities, including airlift, sealift, and ground transportation to dispatch the rapid deployment units and main ASF brigades and their equipment to conflict zones and re-supply them. Considerable logistics and maintenance capabilities are needed to sustain the brigades on a multi-national basis. Interoperability, including interoperable communications, is required for the brigades to achieve unity of effort in the field. Intelligence capabilities are needed to allow the brigades to operate effectively in their areas of responsibility.[18]

Full ASF implementation means that the full cost of it must be borne by each of the subregional commands and their member states, which is still a distant dream. Effective command and control by subregional organizations and force commanders over the brigades require combined training exercises as well as sound communication with subregional headquarters and the AU Peace and Security Commission. The subregional brigades are charged with developing the ability to deploy field level headquarters that take orders from the AU mission planning cell in Addis Ababa. All of these capabilities are presently lacking to one degree or another. The ASF and the subregional brigades did not achieve full implementation by the December 2010 deadline and the ASF is unable to intervene in "genocide situations where international community does not act promptly."

Some subregional brigades will be more effective in practice than others. The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the West African Brigade (ECOBRIG) appear to be well organized, led, and planned, but they have not proven their effectiveness in the field and do not have the capability to respond rapidly to stop genocide. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Southern African brigade (SADCBRIG) with South African leadership will probably be more effective if their commitment level continues to increase. The South African National Defense Force may still possess the capability of leading a response to genocide even though it has deteriorated over the last decade. The East African brigade (EASBRIG) has the advantage of the highly capable and willing Rwandan military, which is providing leadership in the building of a rapid reaction force and could lead a response to genocide. The EASBRIG suffers from a lack of command and control as a result of Ethiopia's detachment from the countries of the East African Community.

The countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) have relied on France for leadership, organization, and logistics, especially in peace-keeping operations in the Central African Republic (CAR); thus far, the Central African brigade does not have the capability to respond to genocide. The North African brigade is presently organizing under Egyptian, Libyan, and Algerian leadership, but unity of effort is proving difficult.

The hardest part—full and effective ASF operationalization with the rapid reaction capability that can stop genocide—remains to be developed. Well into the future, there will be chronically unstable states, such as Somalia, Sudan (North and South), Central African Republic, Chad, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), which will continue to face military challenges from rogue states, insurgents, warlords, and militias that the ASF will not be able to confront and defeat. Even in the long run, it is not likely that the ASF subregional commands will be a force for rapid response in "genocide situations." Africa's poverty and lack of state capacity are major impediments that prevent the ASF subregional commands from being fully developed.

In practice, the operational cases of African peacekeepers in conflict zones, including Darfur and Somalia, have not been encouraging. The African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) was undersubscribed with only a few thousand peacekeepers without helicopters or other mobility, which meant that the mission was largely ineffectual for four years.[19] In 2008, the UN established a hybrid mission that expanded the peacekeeping force from 5,000 troops to 19,500 troops and 6,500 police. This hybrid mission proved more effective, but conflict and human rights abuses continued. The African Union Mission in Somalia (AMSIOM) has been even weaker. Less than half of the requested 8,000 troops were deployed and Nigeria, Ghana, and Malawi refused to fulfill pledges to deploy battalions. As a result, AMISOM peacekeepers have been confined to Mogadishu and have become targets for Al Shabaab Islamist militia fighters.

Other relevant examples include Côte d'Ivoire in 2002, where ECOWAS forces proved inadequate to stabilize the situation in the wake of civil war and French forces had to enforce a cease-fire. In Liberia in 2003, Nigeria and other ECOWAS states intervened in the wake of a cease-fire but needed the threat of force from the 26th US Marine Expeditionary Unit to ensure stability.[20] A month later, ECOWAS handed over authority to the UN Peacekeeping Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), which had the capacity to build up the peacekeeping force and sustain it.

The fundamental problem for African militaries and the ASF is a lack of assets, resources, and sustainability. Future economic growth may provide some African states with greater resources for possible use in building the ASF and subregional brigades. However, this will still leave the ASF and its brigades deficient in regard to the type of resources to fully develop, achieve self-sufficiency, and be successful in addressing Scenario 6. More specifically, it is difficult for poor countries lacking trained personnel to develop airlift, logistics, and maintenance. Most small militaries cannot afford to maintain standby units and keep them in a state of readiness for extended periods. There is the possibility that donor fatigue will arise and that ASF structures and functions will atrophy.[21]

Political will and force projection capabilities are the missing ingredients that can only be provided by the United States, Britain, France, and a few other countries.[22] Their leadership in NATO intervention in Bosnia in 1995 and Kosovo in 1999 established a security regime against genocide and ethnic cleansing in most of Europe outside of Russia's sphere of influence.[23] In Africa, there are no great powers that can provide the political will and military capability to counter genocide.

## Why African Leaders Promised to Stop Genocide

The motivation to promise to stop genocide came in the wake of criticism of the OAU and African leaders who did nothing as the Rwandan genocide unfolded over 100 days. In particular, Nelson Mandela and Thabo Mbeki came to power in South

Africa on 10 May 1994 as genocide was occurring and regretted their inability to act. In response, both Mandela and Mbeki strove to find a way to stop mass killings in Burundi. In 2000, Mandela assumed control of negotiations to end civil war in Burundi and develop a power-sharing arrangement, and his successor, President Thabo Mbeki, committed South African troops to protect Burundian political leaders and then act as the vanguard of the AU Peacekeeping Mission in Burundi (AMIB). The South African determination to stop mass killings and genocide influenced its leadership role in the formation of the ASF and the commitment to stop genocide.[24]

Mbeki promoted the African Renaissance concept with the vision of ending violence, elitism, corruption, and poverty in Africa and creating the basis for economic progress.[25] Mbeki's leadership, South African diplomacy, and the cooperation of a number of prominent African leaders played a major role in the African Renaissance campaign and the 2002 founding of the African Union. Under the AU Charter, the AU Peace and Security Council was given greater power to authorize intervention in conflicts and to monitor human rights situations in member states. On paper, sovereignty would no longer be as powerful as it had been under the OAU Charter. In a similar vein, South African leadership spawned the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), to which African states would submit to review their security and governance situations. The African Renaissance, NEPAD, and APRM were manifestations of African nationalism as well as South African liberal internationalist repackaging. One of the aims was to attract more aid and investment from the West. The slogan, "African solutions to African problems," became prominent among African leaders at this time.[26]

South African idealism, manifested in the African Renaissance concept, was reflected in the establishment of the ASF.[27] After the founding of the AU Peace and Security Council, and Peace and Security Commission, South African leadership played a major role in influencing the African Chiefs of Defense Staff (ACDS) to adopt the ASF policy framework, including Scenario 6—AU intervention in genocide situations. In July 2004, African leaders signed off on the ASF policy framework with little comment on Scenario 6. For them, it was more important to launch the ASF with the prospect of attracting Western aid. Therefore, over-promising to stop genocide was largely a product of South African ambition and hegemony as well as acquiescence by African leaders to seek an increasing flow of aid for their militaries.[28]

## Why the United States and Other Major Powers Burden Shifted

The United States, as well as Britain, France, and other major powers, allowed the AU and ACDS's commitment to use the ASF to intervene to stop genocide to go unchallenged, which fits into the pattern of powerful states' burden shifting when intervention is not in their national interest. Clearly, intervention to stop genocide in Africa has not been and is not in their national interest.[29] Ever since the 1993 killing of 18 US soldiers in a peace enforcement mission in Somalia, the United States sought to avoid intervention in Africa at all costs and shift the security burden to African states. After the United States failed to respond to the Rwandan genocide, the Clinton administration apologized for failing to act but still sought to shift the burden of responding to genocide to African states. In 1996 the United States proposed an African Crisis Response Force which, developed with US and European funding and training, would create a standby force that could, among other things, intervene to stop genocide. After African leaders rejected the concept as too paternalistic, the United States launched the African Crisis Response Initiative (1997–2001)

to train African peacekeepers and followed it with the Africa Contingency Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program from 2002 onward. In 2004, the United States joined European states in the Global Peace Operations Initiative to cooperate in training 75,000 African peacekeepers. The vast majority of training by the United States, France, Britain, and other countries prepared peacekeepers to serve only once a cease-fire had been secured. Very little of the training was suitable to prepare for intervention in genocide situations, which is what had supposedly motivated the United States and other countries to initiate the training in the first place.

In 2007, the United States announced the formation of the US Africa Command (AFRICOM), which became fully operational in October 2008. The mission of AFRICOM is to partner with African militaries with the aim of making them more effective operationally. AFRICOM accomplishes its mission primarily through joint exercises with African militaries. AFRICOM has been particularly interested in working with the ASF and moving it toward operational effectiveness. AFRICOM has done little or nothing to prepare to intervene in order to stop genocide.[30]

## Conclusion

Given their lack of political will, the weak capacity of their states, and the weak military capability of the ASF subregional brigades, African political and military leaders have over-promised to stop genocide in agreeing to respond to ASF Scenario 6. The explanation for this behavior lies in a combination of South African idealism, exemplified by the African Renaissance concept, and determination to exert continental leadership and African leaders' desire to sustain or increase aid to their under-resourced militaries. South African behavior fits the mold of middle powers, which try to make an impact on the international system through multilateral initiatives that appear overly idealistic.[31] South Africa, as the aspiring hegemon in Africa, does not have the power or resources to supply sufficient public goods to make the ASF fully functional and capable of fulfilling all tasks.[32]

The conduct of African leaders can be explained by their countries' poverty and their desire to obtain resources to sustain their militaries.[33] African leaders promised to stop genocide with the calculation that no one with sanctioning power would challenge them. Indeed, as African leaders had anticipated, the United States and other major powers responded with burden-shifting behavior and rewarded the ASF proposal with increased aid flows. Also, Scenario 6 was just a part of the ASF policy framework and did not attract the attention of the human rights NGO community or that of the major powers. Thus, a curious combination of African nationalism and aid dependence trumped a highly needed international public good—the political will and military capability to stop genocide. In several regions of the world, weak states and organizations exhibit similarly contradictory behavior.

In regard to the limits of over-promising, the ASF policy framework did not contain the promise that African standby brigades would always be able to stop genocide on their own. Indeed, the ASF policy framework stated that it would intervene in "genocide situations where international community does not act promptly." However, given the unwillingness of the United States and other major powers to "act promptly" and intervene, the promise was actually grander than it may have seemed. In regard to over-promising that the ASF would be fully operational and capable of acting in all six scenarios by the end of 2010, this was done with the aim of injecting a sense of urgency into the development of the ASF. However, the failure to come close to meeting the 2010 deadline calls into question the credibility of African leaders and even concepts such as the "African Renaissance" and "African

solutions for African problems."[34] The ASF goals to be fully operational by 2010 and to stop genocide reflect a tendency to set unattainable goals. This is evident in the 2015 target date for achieving the Millennium Development Goals for Africa, an aim that will likely not be met. It is also apparent in the unrealistic goals of the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), especially the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which promises that African states will make major changes to their governance in response to peer review and the desire to increase foreign investment. Challenging timetables may prod African governments to develop their militaries, but they also lead to unrealistic expectations and suboptimal performance, such as the AU missions in Darfur and Somalia.

The ASF concept will not be fully implemented in the foreseeable future because African states are too poor and lack the capacity necessary for implementation. In spite of this reality, African leaders, organizations, and advisers have set up a scheme that promises to stop genocide and fully deploy but has not been able to do so by December 2010 and will have difficulty in doing so by December 2020. Nevertheless, African leaders are attempting to demonstrate that African states and organizations are making an organized effort to posture for action and will continue to ask the major powers to fill shortfalls in financial and military resources. Over-promising and the failure to fully operationalize the ASF lead one to conclude that the next genocide in Africa will be met with a failure to act with sufficient strength.

In regard to burden shifting, the ASF promise to intervene to stop genocide and the slogan of "African solutions for African problems" were welcomed by the United States and other major powers, which had been struggling to find ways to stop genocide. The ASF complemented the preventive Responsibility to Protect principle and the transitional justice institution, the ICC. The ASF proposal enabled the United States and other major powers to invest energies in working with African organizations and militaries without having to develop the doctrine, rapid reaction forces, and contingency plans to intervene to stop genocide.

Given the importance of stopping genocide, alternatives must be sought for the ASF concept, which lacks the political will and capability to stop genocide. African leaders and organizations should openly admit that Africa will not be fully capable to stop genocide while they call on the major powers to fill the gaps and intervene. The international community should pressure the African Union and African states to give an honest account of ASF progress, and lack thereof, and what steps need to be taken to fill the gaps.

In regard to stopping genocide, the R2P principle and the transitional justice regime, embodied by the ICC, are providing alternatives, though suboptimal, to the use of force. The international community, led by human rights NGOs, needs to continue to pressure the major powers and African states and organizations to establish a compact to stop genocide and other major man-made humanitarian disasters. A stepping stone to such a compact would be a commitment by African states to the R2P principle.[35] With such a commitment, the ASF and developed country forces would find it easier to work together to overcome sovereignty claims and intervene to stop genocide.

Increased commitment and political will by the United States and other major powers in cooperation with a coalition of the willing, including NGOs such as ENOUGH,[36] could contribute to stopping genocide. The United States and other major powers could provide rapid reaction and air power capabilities and logistics in cooperation with African forces to stop genocide. An example was in Liberia in 2003, when a highly capable force—the 26th US Marine Expeditionary Unit

(MEU)—combined with a highly salient force—the Nigerian-led ECOWAS Military Mission to Liberia (ECOMIL)—to stabilize a volatile situation, where a cease-fire agreement could have collapsed. Nigerian and ECOWAS desire to end the tyrannical rule of Charles Taylor and US action led to the end of a dangerous stalemate in 2003.[37] The Liberian case demonstrates that salience is important; if deployment is within the subregion, high salience will motivate the ASF brigades to respond more effectively than if deployed outside of the subregion. If regional military cooperation develops and flourishes, as perhaps in the case of ECOWAS and the West African standby brigade (ECOBRIG), subregional capability to deal with some of the more challenging scenarios requiring enforcement will be enhanced.

A larger question pertains to how African militaries should be organized and led in peace and stability operations. Given the scarcity of resources and dependence on donors and likelihood of more internal conflict in weak African states, the ASF and the subregional commands are not sustainable and will not be for a very considerable period to come. Donor fatigue will eventually pose problems for the ASF. The ASF represents a diversion of scarce resources and time that Africa and its militaries could invest in alternative methods for enhancing African security. The ASF may make African militaries more communicative with each other, but it will not make them dramatically more capable operationally. The lack of logistics, airlift, and training prevents operational progress. Also, it is easier to maintain national units rather than a multinational force with elaborate and difficult command as well as control and planning mechanisms.

Resources being spent on ASF subregional brigades and the AU Peace and Security Commission could be used to better effect to develop the capability of the armed forces of individual states to serve in UN peacekeeping missions. A greater number of highly effective national battalions and brigades could be developed that could be deployed, supported, and commanded by a UN force commander and staff. Most UN operations have a proven record of the sustainment and resolution of many African conflicts, followed by peacebuilding. The UN has resources based on the financial contributions of developed member states and combine developed countries' military resources with developing countries' troops. A related option would be to train the battalions of the most effective African militaries, such as Rwanda's, which would ensure the deployment of more capable African brigades.[38]

Ultimately, priority should be placed on effectiveness, with dependence on the UN and the West, rather than suboptimal security with self-reliance through the ASF concept. The ASF should remain a long-term goal; it could be fully operational by 2020 or 2030. Under this more modest proposal, African peacekeepers would continue to be deployed with the authorization of the AU or subregional organizations before being taken over by the UN. The UN would continue to assume control over the operations and provide financing, logistics, and other resources.

## Notes

1. The views expressed herein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the US Air War College or the Department of Defense.
2. Stephen D. Krasner, *International Regimes* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), 1; Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984), 7.
3. Charles P. Kindleberger, "International Public Goods without International Government," *The American Economic Review* 76, no. 1 (1986): 1–13; Charles Lipson, "International Cooperation in Economic and Security Affairs," *World Politics* 37, no. 1 (1984): 1–23.

4.  John Mearsheimer, "Lying in International Politics" (paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association, 22 August 2004), http://www.allacademic.com//meta/p_mla_apa_research_citation/0/5/9/9/9/pages59994/p59994-1.php (accessed 3 March 2011).

5.  Percy S. Mistry, "Africa's Record of Regional Co-operation and Integration," *African Affairs* 91, no. 397 (2000): 533–52; Keith Gottschalk and Siegmar Schmidt, "The African Union and the New Partnership for Africa's Development: Strong Institutions for Weak States?" *Internationale Politik und Gesellschaft* 4 (2004): 138–59; Paul-Henri Bischoff, "Pan-African Multilateralism: Transformative or Disconnected?" *Politikon: South African Journal of Political Studies* 35, no. 2 (2008): 177–95; James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States," *International Security* 28, no. 4 (2004): 17–18.

6.  *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 December 1948, 78 U.N.T.S. 277, Article I, http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm (accessed 1 February 2011). There are more than 130 contracting parties including the United States. Article I states, "The Contracting Parties confirm that genocide, whether committed in time of peace or in time of war, is a crime under international law which they undertake to prevent and to punish."

7.  "Policy Framework for the Establishment of the African Standby Force and the Military Staff Committee," Part I (document adopted by the Third Meeting of the African Chiefs of Defense Staff, 15–16 May 2003), 3, 6, 7, http://www.africa-union.org/root/au/AUC/Departments/PSC/Asf/Documents.htm (accessed 3 February 2010); emphasis added.

8.  Thabo Mbeki, "The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World" (speech, United Nations University, Tokyo, Japan, 9 April 1998), http://emeagwali.com/speeches/Thabo-Mbeki/African-Renaissance.html (accessed 3 March 2011).

9.  The advocacy group, ENOUGH, was founded with the express purpose of pressuring the US government and other entities to muster the political will and develop the diplomatic instruments to prevent genocide, protect civilians, and punish perpetrators. *ENOUGH: The Project to End Genocide and Crimes against Humanity*, http://www.enoughproject.org/ (accessed 1 February 2011).

10. *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, Article II; emphasis added.

11. Evidence does exist of African intervention at the invitation of sovereign rulers, which has coincidentally stopped massive human rights abuses. In the case of Liberia in 1990, Nigeria and other West African (ECOWAS) states entered the country under the pretense of keeping the peace for an agreement between the regime of President Samuel Doe, who had extended an invitation to intervene to save his regime and stop mass killings, and the rebels led by Charles Taylor. When the peace agreement collapsed, Nigeria insisted on continuing with the intervention as a peace enforcement mission, which coincided with the interests that Nigeria's military dictator, General Ibrahim Babangida, had developed in Liberia.

12. Robert H. Jackson, *Quasi-States: Sovereignty, International Relations and the Third World* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13–31; Christopher Clapham, *Africa and the International System: The Politics of State Survival* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 3–27.

13. The government of Rwanda asserts that genocide was committed against the Tutsi minority in 1959, 1973, and 1979 and that persecution continued throughout the 1960s. *Government of Rwanda*, http://www.gov.rw/Genocide (accessed 3 March 2011).

14. "Decision on the Meeting of African States Parties to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court (ICC)," Doc. Assembly AU/13(XIII) (adopted by the Thirteenth Ordinary Session of the Assembly of Heads of State and Government in Sirte, Great Socialist People's Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, 3 July 2009). Evidently, some African leaders feared that they too eventually might be targeted by the ICC.

15. Alex J. Bellamy, "Realizing the Responsibility to Protect," *International Studies Perspectives* 10, no. 2, (2009): 111–28; Alex J. Bellamy, *The Responsibility to Protect: The Global Effort to Stop Mass Atrocities* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2009).

16. Jeffrey E. Marshall, "Building an Effective African Standby Force to Promote African Stability, Conflict Resolution and Prosperity" (crisis states discussion paper 16, London School of Economics, Development Studies Institute, 2009), 1–31.

17. Alan Kuperman, *The Limits of Humanitarian Intervention* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 52–77.

18. On a positive note, the development of early warning mechanisms may mean that Rapid Development Capabilities (RDC) will not have to be in a high state of readiness for prolonged periods and might be able to react within 14 days.

19. Interview with a European Union official, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 29 May 2007. The AU mission in Darfur, which the European Union heavily assisted, led EU officials to become disenchanted with the AU and led some to question the value of contributing to the AU Peace Facility.

    All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement.

20. Blair A. Ross Jr., "The U.S. Joint Task Force Experience in Liberia," *Military Review* 85, no. 3 (2005): 60–67.

21. Interview with EU official, May 2007. It is unfortunate that another Rwandan or Darfur genocide may be required to regenerate donor interest.

22. David Dickens, "Can East Timor Be a Blueprint for Burden Sharing?" *The Washington Quarterly* 25, no. 3 (2002): 29–40.

23. NATO countries took more than three years to respond to genocide ("ethnic cleansing") in Bosnia and were unwilling to commit ground forces to stop the same in Kosovo in 1999.

24. Kristina Bentley and Roger Southall, *An African Peace Process: Mandela, South Africa and Burundi* (Pretoria, South Africa: Human Sciences Research Council Press, 2005).

25. Mbeki, "The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World."

26. Chris Fomunyoh, "African Solutions for African Problems: A Slogan Whose Time Has Passed," *AllAfrica.com,* http://allafrica.com/stories/200502090005.html (accessed 9 February 2005).

27. Meetings with Jakkie Cilliers and other security experts, Institute of Security Studies (ISS), Pretoria, South Africa, in March 2003, March 2004, and August 2005. Jakkie Cilliers and other security experts at ISS played a leading role in assisting the South African government to draft the African Union Peace and Security Council and Peace and Security Commission concept papers as well as the African Standby Force concept paper. In so doing, Cilliers and his ISS colleagues were helping to execute the vision of Thabo Mbeki and other South African leaders in drafting the ASF concept, including rapid deployment to stop genocide.

28. While South African leadership was responsible for the ASF concept and its approval, South Africa did not respond militarily to stop genocide in Darfur in 2004. This failure was partly a realization that South Africa did not have the capacity and capability to do so.

29. France is the exception to the rule, as it has demonstrated the willingness to intervene and enforce peace when it launched Operation Licorne in 2002 in Côte d'Ivoire and Operation Artemis in 2003 in the eastern DRC.

30. The Mass Atrocity Response Operation (MARO) Project is a positive sign of efforts to influence the Department of Defense to develop doctrine which would enable the US military, including AFRICOM, to respond to genocide. The project "seeks to enable the United States and the international community to stop genocide and mass atrocity as part of a broader integrated strategy by explaining key relevant military concepts and planning considerations. The MARO Project is based on the insight that the failure to act in the face of mass killings of civilians is not simply a function of political will or legal

authority; the failure also reflects a lack of thinking about how military forces might respond. States and regional and international organizations must better understand and prepare for the unique operational and moral challenges that military forces would face in a MARO." *MARO*, http://www.hks.harvard.edu/cchrp/maro/index.php (accessed 3 March 2011).

31. An example of "middle power idealism" occurred when Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali proposed a UN standby force in 1995. The United States and other major powers rejected it, while The Netherlands led other middle powers in supporting the proposal.
32. South African idealism is similar in many respects to Wilsonian idealism.
33. Carl Levan, "The Political Economy of African Responses to the U.S. Africa Command," *Africa Today* 57, no. 1 (2010): 2–23. Levan finds that the more aid-dependent countries welcomed AFRICOM, while the less aid-dependent countries tended to reject it.
34. Fomunyoh, "African Solutions for African Problems."
35. Bellamy, "Realizing the Responsibility to Protect."
36. ENOUGH, http://www.enoughproject.org/.
37. Ross Jr., "The U.S. Joint Task Force Experience in Liberia," 60–67.
38. However, more trained Rwandan battalions could skew the balance of power in East and Central Africa and could harm civil-military relations inside Rwanda.

# Healing Psychosocial Trauma in the Midst of Truth Commissions: The Case of *Gacaca* in Post-Genocide Rwanda

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*Post-conflict governments and multilateral organizations have advocated truth commissions since the end of the Cold War. The mandate of truth commissions has been to combine the rule of law with psychosocial goals in the hope that they will break systemic cycles of violence and facilitate reconciliation. While these commissions emphasize the dimensions of truth telling, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation, in practice, they are often challenged to fulfill the mandate of healing psychosocial traumas through these dimensions in countries that suffer not only from the traumatic experience of wars and genocide, but also from the multiple psychosocial issues that result from these forms of mass violence. The present article examines the psychosocial role of* gacaca, *a form of truth commission that was introduced in post-genocide Rwanda in 2002, and argues that relying on* gacaca *alone to heal psychosocial trauma in Rwanda underestimates the depth of suffering that genocide created both at the individual and collective levels in Rwandan communities. Writing as a Rwandan community-based mental health researcher and practitioner concerned with the mental well-being of individuals and communities that survive mass violence and genocide, I suggest that well-assessed models adapted to the issues at hand should be considered to promote the healing of psychosocial wounds and supplement the work of* gacaca *in the rebuilding of peace and reconciliation in the country and in similar contexts elsewhere. Mental well-being is central to the sustainable rebuilding and development of countries recovering from wars and genocide.*

*Key words: truth commissions,* gacaca, *healing psychosocial trauma*

## Introduction

In a period of only 100 days, an estimated 800,000 Tutsi were murdered by their Hutu neighbors in Rwanda. People were subjected to acts of physical and emotional cruelty, rape, body mutilation, coerced participation in the murder of loved ones, and forced mass displacement from their communities. Further, the genocide destroyed many other aspects of life including the social networks that used to protect Rwandans in times of adversity. Today, more than a decade later, Rwandans continue to face multiple serious social issues including poverty, HIV/AIDS, collective trauma, injustices, and interethnic tensions.

In 2002, Rwanda introduced the *gacaca* program as a form of truth commission in the attempt to address both the legal and psychosocial consequences of the genocide. *Gacaca*, which literally means "grass," was used traditionally as a Rwandan justice mechanism for dispute resolution to address issues related to property matters,

inheritance, and family law.[1] While the new form of *gacaca* has received praise for being a home-grown approach, its ability to meet the psychosocial mandate has been questioned.

The topic of truth commissions and their workings has been extensively discussed. The purpose of the present article is to expand our understanding of the healing of psychosocial trauma through the different dimensions of truth commissions in non-Western post-conflict situations and, in particular, the *gacaca* courts in Rwanda. Although my aim is to demonstrate the challenges and limitations of healing psychosocial trauma and offer some suggestions, my critical approach does not intend to in any way minimize the role *gacaca* has played in the political and economic restructuring of the country. Rather, I hope to raise awareness about the dangers of placing unrealistic expectations on these commissions and assuming that once they complete their work the affected individuals and communities will be able to heal their psychosocial wounds. There is no magic bullet to make this happen.

The analysis and information shared in this article are both personal and academic. I am a genocide survivor born and raised in Rwanda. After the genocide, I worked in the mental health sector in Rwanda before I moved to Canada in 2000. I have followed the *gacaca* courts very closely through regular contacts with family, friends, and colleagues, some of whom were directly involved in the preparation and execution of the *gacaca* courts. I have traveled back to Rwanda every year and was able to hear and read about what was happening in the country. I am a PhD candidate focusing on community-based mental health research with an interest in alternative models to individual-based approaches.

Wars and genocide create deep emotional and psychosocial wounds that require well-examined techniques and skills and an extended period of time, all of which must extend beyond the limited mandate of truth commissions and *gacaca* in particular. Psychosocial trauma in post-conflict situations can be understood from a structural violence framework in that it combines individual emotional wounds with the social suffering of communities. Psychosocial trauma links feelings about a past traumatic experience of violence to issues of victimhood, guilt, and fear, which characterize post-conflict situations.[2] It encompasses the struggles of individuals and collectives for systemic social transformation.[3] When these struggles are nationwide and affect different levels of social structures, a more holistic approach is advised.[4] As several scholars have shown, the immense and extremely complex psychosocial issues observed in non-Western post-conflict situations extend beyond individual suffering, but there has been a lack of models addressing individual and collective issues together. The following section provides more details about healing psychosocial trauma through truth commissions.

## Healing Psychosocial Trauma through Truth Commissions

Wars and genocide result in major social issues—such as extreme poverty, physical injuries, continued injustice, and violence—that often contribute to the deterioration of the mental well-being of affected individuals and communities. Despite the staggering effects of mass violence, there has been a scarcity of mental health interventions in many non-Western post-conflict situations, including the Rwandan Genocide. The few existing interventions have been largely initiated and managed by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) which operate with limited mandates. These organizations have also been criticized for applying individual-based models that are insensitive and inappropriate to the conditions of post-conflict societies.

Truth commissions have been suggested as an alternative model to address these gaps through their dual retributive and restorative approach. These commissions are the most commonly used model of transitional justice that has been advocated by post-conflict governments and multilateral organizations since the end of the Cold War.[5] The mandate of truth commissions is to combine the rule of law with psychosocial goals in the hope that they will break systemic cycles of violence and facilitate reconciliation.[6] These commissions have been implemented in Latin American and Eastern European countries and in African countries such as South Africa, Sierra Leone, and Rwanda. Very recently, Canada also welcomed the truth-commission approach to deal with the historic violence committed against the Aboriginal peoples of Canada.

Truth commissions have become a well-established fixture on the global terrain of human rights,[7] which suggests that countries should address past wrongs by acknowledging the pain inflicted upon a group or groups of citizens through brutality and violence.[8] Their dual role to address both legal and psychosocial trauma seemed ideal in many post-conflict situations. Although they may differ according to the particular conjunction of the political, cultural, and historical context of each country, they all tend to emphasize the dimensions of truth telling, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation. *Gacaca* shared these concepts with other truth commissions in its mandate to heal and reunite Rwandans.

## Healing Psychosocial Trauma through the Renewed *Gacaca*

*Gacaca* was inspired by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in South Africa in its legal and non-legal objectives. When the idea was introduced in Rwandan communities, both ordinary men and women and local government leaders found the hybrid nature of *gacaca* to combine legal and psychosocial objectives through truth telling, peace, justice, healing, forgiveness, and reconciliation to be very appealing.[9] For the first time since the end of genocide, a more familiar concept was brought to their attention and ordinary Rwandans were asked to play an active role in it. Rwanda, like other nations that witnessed persistent occurrences of violence, has been categorized as a distressed and traumatized country alongside its citizens. Since the end of genocide, many programs were conceptualized and supervised by international organizations, excluding many Rwandans from the decisions about the issues that concerned them in the first place. Programs that were initiated by Rwandans tended to be considered illegitimate by people in positions of power and international funders.

Many Rwandans were optimistic about the *gacaca* concept. Both Hutu and Tutsi had high expectations for it; they hoped it could bring them back together and help restore relationships. On the one hand, Tutsi survivors wished to know details about how and where their family members had been killed and who had killed them. They also wanted to at least have the perpetrators admit what they had done and apologize. The Hutu also welcomed the *gacaca* idea and contributed to information gathering in the hope that the truth would come out, set the innocent free, oblige the guilty to acknowledge the suffering of the victims, who would offer forgiveness before guaranteeing a reduced sentence to those who confessed.[10] Even those in jail expected repentance and forgiveness. Many mental health practitioners like me and some of the leading scholars in the field in Rwanda, such as Dr. Simon Gasibirege, judged *gacaca* to be a promising alternative approach to the imported models that tended to focus on the individual and ignore the collective nature of psychosocial trauma.

In various villages in the country, informal *gacaca* gatherings similar to its traditional model started taking place for small acts such as looting and destroying property during the genocide. People were willing to do their part to repair some of the damage done between neighbors. They collaborated with government workers by providing information about what had happened during the genocide and participating in the election of the "*inyangamugayo*"—"the righteous" or those who were trusted to play the role of judges during *gacaca*. I personally participated in these elections and they seemed to be the most democratic elections I had ever attended. The candidates stood in front of the voters who lined up behind the candidate of their choice. Votes were counted and people went home peacefully. A good number of prisoners started providing information about the whereabouts of the people that they knew had been killed, and their surviving family members or former neighbors were able to uncover their remains and bury them with dignity.

Mental health professionals offered input into the mechanisms that they judged were needed to protect the mental well-being of Rwandans as they entered the process of remembering, recounting, and hearing traumatizing information during the hearings.[11] Potential obstacles, especially the ability of the judges to handle the legal and moral aspects of *gacaca*, were critically debated and recommendations about the actions that could be taken before, during, and after the *gacaca* hearings were provided.[12] The steps that were taken in preparation for the *gacaca* proceedings seemed to head in the right direction to heal and reunite Rwandans.

Government officials also had high hopes for *gacaca* and viewed it as a model by which to re-establish damaged relationships and unity.[13] They wanted *gacaca* to be a Rwandan process governed by Rwandans—"a home-grown approach."

Although *gacaca* started as a grassroots approach governed by Rwandans in each community, it shifted perspectives during its implementation and integrated a new agenda to meet government demands. Over the course of the seven years since implementation, participation was no longer driven by the excitement and motivation that characterized the preparatory stage; it became a top-down approach[14] and it faced increased suspicion and safety issues. Survivors who had hoped to share their suffering and other community members who had agreed to testify feared for their lives as they started receiving threats and experienced further exclusion. Many genocide suspects who had intended to confess started manipulating facts and evidence, which often resulted in a further prison sentence that could go up to 25 years. Those who were released on the condition of compensating the survivors for the material losses ended up doing community work, called "Travaux d'Intérêt Généraux" (TIG), which they resented and which did not benefit those who had lost everything to the genocide.

While the above realities might have benefited the government's political and economic restructuring, the *gacaca* implementation has not offered satisfying results to the mass Rwandan population or to outside evaluators who criticized *gacaca* for its limitations to carry out legal trials and its inability to reconcile Rwandans. Many of these critiques have often been directed at the Rwandan government and the model itself. Truth commissions are bound to fail when they are imposed from above.

In contrast with such criticism, I argue that the whole conceptualization of truth commissions is flawed in regard to the dual mandate of retribution and restoration. Inevitable incongruent expectations and weak outcomes result from the lack of clarity about activities that are organized to fulfill both the retributive and restorative goals. The lack of contextualization and consideration of the complex realities of the

countries and communities in which truth commissions are implemented is also troubling because it can result in more harm than good. The following is an example of the complex contextual issues that I witnessed first-hand.

## First-hand Experience of *Gacaca*

In the summer of 2007, I decided to attend a *gacaca* session. Many people I met over the course of that trip greeted me with statements such as "Did you know that this person has been released?" or "Today is a *gacaca* day and you cannot do anything today, you go to the hearings, or do nothing else." Once a week in every village, all work stopped so that all citizens can concentrate on the local *gacaca* hearings. The sense of urgency and concern in what I was hearing urged me to take part in what was happening. In order to gain a better understanding of these proceedings, I decided to attend *gacaca* in my home village. The community members had gathered in different neighborhood-based groups in various cells. After a long period dedicated to paperwork preparation and registration to ascertain who was present at the session, the villagers were instructed to sit in a circle in front of four judges to facilitate the process. Like in other communities, these judges had been elected by their fellow community members. A group of suspected perpetrators stood nearby. Some of them were prisoners dressed in pink uniforms and others were community members who had been listed as suspects but were still living in their respective communities.

The hearing on that day focused on four men accused of attacking the home of a woman of about 75 years of age at the time of the hearings. She had lost her husband and seven of her ten children. It was shocking to hear that one of her surviving children from a previous relationship with a Hutu man was among the accused. During the session, each of the accused men was asked to give a personal account of his role in what had happened to the woman. Their statements were more of a form of self-defense than a testimony. A few individual witnesses were then asked to either confirm or disconfirm the alleged facts. The elderly woman was among the witnesses and she seemed disoriented when judges asked her to focus on facts and not tell her story as she understood it. Although nobody seemed to deny what had happened to her and her family, there were problems in explaining how it had happened and who should be held responsible. For more than four hours, the community members witnessed the hearing in silence, moving their eyes back and forth between the accused and the witnesses. This sense of hopelessness was troubling because in other situations people do not stand by and watch emotionlessly; they *do* something about it. When I lived in Rwanda, some neighbors who wronged my family and felt guilty about what they had done expressed remorse in various ways (for example, by offering to help on the land, offering small gifts at a wedding, or returning stolen furniture). These cultural gestures offered a window for communication and they made us not feel so alone after the genocide. Other than a few survivors who guided the elderly woman from one group of defendants to the next and under the order of the judges, nothing else moved. Was the genocide experience being relived? Was this a conspiracy to silence or was it a silenced community in the face of the legality that tends to dominate social processes such as *gacaca*? Or was it dissociation from the agony felt around this community? This silent witnessing can be interpreted in different ways. As a Rwandan interested in the participatory and dynamic action of individuals and collectives for their healing, on that day, I witnessed a disciplined community rather than an active group of excited participants.

This experience seemed to reflect the many stories I have heard from Rwandan women who confided in me that they were unable to bring up the issues that troubled them the most, such as rape, at these *gacaca* hearings. They were not allowed to say anything related to rape because doing so could lead the rapist *génocidaire* back to prison and in turn be considered as a crime committed by these women. Further, they did not see any support from the judges or other community members. This may explain the prevalence of many traumatic crises, suicidal attempts, and even occasional uncontrollable threatening statements during *gacaca* sessions instead of dialogical expressions. Silence is very damaging, especially for those whose suffering is not given value.

Scholars who examined the psychosocial aspects of truth commissions argue that *gacaca* did not result in positive outcomes,[15] partly because of the top-down approach that the government adopted halfway through the hearings. Phil Clark, who spent an extensive period of time in Rwanda observing and recording the *gacaca* proceedings, offers evidence that the Rwandan government closely controlled the functioning of due process to the point of having officials intervene to correct the judges' statements, halt disruptive behavior in the general assembly, or interpret back to the participants what the testimonies meant.[16] Although Clark judges that such actions were not generalizable, he acknowledges the impact that these interferences had on the desired open space in which dialogue was needed to enhance non-legal ends—the psychosocial goals of *gacaca*.

A close examination of truth commissions reveals that *gacaca* is not alone in the struggle to meet psychosocial needs. As the analysis of the different dimensions advocated by truth commissions will show, the inhibition of the psychosocial component is a commonly shared concern except in places where the locally initiated approaches assumed the risk of not seeking legitimacy from the top social structures of society (e.g., the Peruvian integration of the Senderistas in the Ayacucho region).[17] To me, these concerns reside in the whole conceptualization of truth commissions, which combines retributive and restorative justice and fails to critically consider the meaning and implications of each dimension in the work of truth commissions.

In the following section I pay particular attention to these dimensions, including truth telling, apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation. Accountability, public acknowledgment, and apology are all forms of recognizing the wrong done and promising to not repeat past mistakes. I use apology as the term most commonly used in truth commissions. Reconciliation will not be examined as a separate concept because the other dimensions are part of the reconciliation process.

## Truth Telling

Truth commissions have considered truth telling to be an important dimension of addressing the legal issues and psychosocial trauma that result from mass violence. With a concentration on truth telling, Alex Boraine postulates that the telling of stories about dehumanizing acts can be publicly received with dignity when relayed in a poignant manner.[18] He also asserts that truth commissions challenge people who deliberately ignore the suffering inflicted on others to stop saying that they did not know.[19] Instead, they are offered the opportunity to cooperate with survivors who are seeking the truth about what happened to their loved ones. Cathartic reactions to testimonies are thought to facilitate the transition from a wounded to a healed individual; the effects of the testimonies presumably impact those who do not have a chance to testify. Truth telling is also believed to consist of narratives

or expressions of a collectively shared understanding of the past gained from individuals' different levels of witnessing.[20] However, Mendeloff argues that truth telling through testimonies is very hard to prove empirically because it is subjective; human beings always remember and relate stories from a spatially and temporally limited perspective.[21]

From a political point of view, truth telling is a tool to break the cycle of silence surrounding mass violence so that people cannot claim ignorance.[22] Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela argues that these commissions allow for a reflection on one's own role in the past and the capacity to confront and acknowledge the wrong done and, in turn, this should lead to reaching out to others in the attempt to repair broken relationships. Using the example of South Africa, she explains that the TRC created a space for people to come together to forge a peaceful society by sharing their pain, grief, anger, and resentment, emotions that are associated with a history of violence in a reflective dialogue. She adds that the public spaces open to the TRC hearings were sufficiently intimate to allow some acts of recognition, apology, and forgiveness.[23] Michael Humphrey, on the contrary, finds troubling the adoption of psychoanalytic language which proposes that revealing is healing and that unresolved memory of past violence can be overcome by remembering, telling, and forgetting.[24]

According to my observations from *gacaca* and the anecdotal stories heard from people who have participated in it, telling and listening to testimonies was not done as a form of dialogue because it did not engage the community participants who witnessed in silence. It seemed to me that the environment was actually unsafe for those testifying and the defendants who had to prove their innocence in regard to the accusations made against them. When offering testimonies or defensive replies, the accused and the offended addressed the judges who had the ultimate power to decide the outcome of the proceedings.

Researchers who followed *gacaca* hearings in Rwanda and had opportunities to interview some of its participants reported that actually telling or giving testimony during the *gacaca* hearings had a negative impact on the psychological well-being of those involved. In a study conducted on *gacaca*, Katherine Brounéus demonstrates that survivors who testified in the *gacaca* were 20% and 40% more likely to suffer from depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), respectively, than survivors who had not done so. Among the *inyangamugayo* (the judges) or neighbors, the effect of bearing witness emerged even more strongly as the relative risks of suffering from depression and PTSD, respectively, were 60% and 75% higher among those who had testified in the *gacaca* compared to those who had not.[25] Participants also reported feelings of greater insecurity and fear after testifying as well as physical and other psychological difficulties immediately before, during, and after their testimonies, including shaking uncontrollably, fainting, and intense feelings of isolation.[26]

Studies on emotions such as shame and guilt have shown high patterns of unique relationships between emotions and motivations when participants were asked to recall "other-caused events," whereas feelings of anger, sadness, and anxiety were closely interrelated with the "self-caused event."[27] Similarly, in a case study concentrating on one particular community Max Rettig found that the healing aspect of truth telling was rather questionable as participants gave false testimonies to seek revenge for grievances related or unrelated to genocide. Rettig showed, for instance, that some community members wrongfully accused others as a result of marital affairs or land-based conflicts while others did it to avoid severe punishment or threats.[28] Of the three elements of truth telling, truth hearing, and truth shaping,

Clark found truth telling to be the most problematic. Suspects and their allies told lies to protect themselves or their loved ones, simply hid evidence, or went even further to threaten survivors to not tell what they knew.[29] Yet, there were no counselors available to support those who experienced emotional distress resulting from the *gacaca* hearings.

## Apology

Apology is another concept that has been greatly emphasized in truth commissions as the morally "right thing to do." It consists of acknowledging injustice, expressing regret, and accepting responsibility, including material or financial compensation. Sincere apology is a critical factor in restoring broken relationships.[30] According to Allan el al., genuine apology should go beyond general verbal apologies to incorporate apologetic behavior that reflects the wrongdoers' degree of sincerity as the victims perceive it.[31] For full-fledged completion, a genuine apology must elicit acceptable signs of empathy on the part of the offended party.[32] In the form of accountability, apology can range from sincere acknowledgment of the wrong done and expression of regret to material or monetary compensation or other forms of punishment, such as imprisonment.

While truth commissions place a great deal of emphasis on the process of apology, this concept has often been discouraged by a legal system in which offenders manipulate or deny facts in order to avoid any form of accountability. Concentrating on factual truth and other simple forms of public acknowledgment and reluctantly incorporating apologetic measures hinders the very nature of what apology means in a healing sense.[33]

In places like Peru, where the unrest is rooted in decades of animosity, compensation has been considered unreasonable.[34] In other countries where truth commissions recognize the importance of material compensation, financial compensation is seldom provided as a form of recognition of the injustice and pain inflicted on the victims, with a common excuse of insufficient funds. In places where mass violence was sponsored by the state, financial apology is seen as the responsibility of the government (e.g., South Africa).

In *gacaca* courts, however, compensation has been a burden on individual offenders rather than the state. Because of the poverty of many of the frontline killers, individuals who cannot afford monetary compensation do community work, known as TIG, such as repair of the roads or other tasks related to the public interest and not to the individual victims, many of whom also live in extreme poverty. This approach has left both the victims and the perpetrators dissatisfied by the outcomes of *gacaca*, thereby creating the perception of another form of injustice. While community work is good for all, survivors resent the fact that the government has done very little to help them rebuild their lives and the houses that were destroyed during the genocide. At the same time, the accused resent and blame the victims for what they view as exploitative punishment. In this context, the process of apology becomes overwhelmed by emotions of fear, anger, and resentment, and has little social space to offer sincere apology and forgiveness.

Within the context of healing emotional wounds, the process of apology entails emotional work on the part of the different parties in the conflict, who must cope with guilt, shame, anger, and pity.[35] The manner in which apology is expressed influences the nature of the response offered by the injured party. There is a lack of empirical studies on the process of apology in the context of truth commissions.

However, studies done on the concept of apology in social contexts other than truth commissions show that when offenders deny their offense and try to justify their wrongdoing—or ignore, avoid, or exclude the offended—they develop instances of active or passive dissociation[36] or disengagement. These attitudes may indicate a lack of accountability on the part of the perpetrators which, in turn, can evoke more negative reactions from the offended and augment threats to attempts at re-establishing peace.

Although many truth commissions are theoretically supposed to enhance apologetic statements, they do not offer the necessary circumstances for emotions to be expressed and processed so that genuine apology can take place. Rather, commissions often focus on testimonies, especially the perpetrators' accounts, to provide facts of the mass violence that occurred and not on the intense climate that testifying may create. Kanyangara et al.'s assessment of the emotional climate and intergroup perceptions involving a group of survivors and prisoners accused of genocide crimes in Rwanda showed that *gacaca* hearings heightened negative perceptions which then prevailed for an extended period of time.[37] Emotions of sadness, fear, disgust, insecurity, and shame increased during the course of the hearings, especially for survivors. Prisoners who accepted their role in the genocide during *gacaca* hearings reported feeling an intensified sense of guilt.

Granting the perpetrators amnesty when their testimonies match the evidence sought by the commissioners has also posed problems and raised questions about whose justice is being sought. The amnesties are often detached from remorse for the violation of victims' rights. Nevertheless, the victims of violence are required to accept the amnesty, which creates another obstacle on the journey toward forgiveness and hinders opportunities to obtain the desired psychosocial relief and benefits.

Research shows that people who go through formalistic processes of apology such as amnesty or insincere apology may later regret having apologized or experience anger and protest their innocence by blaming the victims for the violence that occurred.[38] Genuine apology constitutes an important foundation for forgiveness[39] and a two-way emotional process of giving and receiving. The presumed offenders feel relieved when they are able to express their regrets and shame about the wrong done, and the offended similarly experience relief from the pain endured when their offenders genuinely admit the wrong done. Unfortunately, this mutual communion of pain and emotion that transforms the affected individuals into renewed individuals who can in turn share the gift of forgiveness is missing from many truth commissions including the *gacaca* courts.

## Forgiveness

The topic of forgiveness has also been adopted as a dimension of truth commissions. Forgiveness and reconciliation, like truth telling and apology, are interpreted differently according to different disciplines such as theology and some branches of psychology, including social psychology and, more recently, peace psychology. From a psychosocial perspective, the concept of authentic forgiveness is embedded in inner and outer factors. In this section, I examine the factors that influence forgiveness both at the individual (inner) and external (outer) levels.

At the individual level, research identifies narcissism as a major intrinsic factor that hinders forgiveness and psychosocial well-being.[40] Narcissistic individuals tend to concentrate their efforts on the self and self-interests. They are easily offended and often preoccupied with defending their rights and requiring legal justice to be

rendered after harmful events. For the narcissists, transgression is a debt that must be paid and forgiveness is costly and morally unacceptable. Their unforgiving nature can lead to anger, anxiety, and other negative emotions, especially when society suggests acts of forgiveness after painful experiences. The interpersonal and psychological anxiety observed in narcissistic individuals tends to be negatively correlated with social connectedness[41] and tends to make the narcissists prone to mental health issues.

At the external level, factors that influence forgiveness include sociocultural and political variables. One of the conditions of belonging to a certain group is to accept group behaviors and attitudes that separate. In-group and out-group categorizations consist of showing favoritism toward group members and denigrating members of the out-group.[42] In such a context, forgiving someone from an opposing group can threaten in-group cohesion or the individual right to choice. Studies of in-group and out-group relations find the process of forgiveness to be influenced by the level of regard in-group members have for out-group members. Stangor et al., in fact, showed that belonging to a group with high negative attitudes toward members of the out-group hinders the willingness to forgive.[43]

In the case of post-conflict situations, these categorizations are understood differently. When mass violence is conceptualized as a general human tragedy, people are more forgiving and less inclined to assign collective guilt to the opposing group.[44] A recent study conducted by Cehajic et al. with high school and university students in Bosnia and Herzegovina showed that when students identified themselves as Bosnian they showed reduced social distance from the out-group, greater tendency toward forgiveness, and increased trust in the other group in conflict.[45] In contrast, other studies found that competitive victimhood and a high level of in-group identification discourage the forgiveness of members of the out-group, especially when in-group membership has links with political membership.[46]

An empirical understanding of forgiveness is crucial to psychosocial healing in the work of truth commissions. However, this dimension tends to take a legal or theological approach without considering the psychological needs of those who are involved and the complexity of the issues at hand. For instance, although forgiveness is said to be a part of the work of truth commissions, it is often excluded from the planned activities of truth commissions. When it is used, it is driven by motives and outcomes other than that of healing emotional wounds. Chapman's study on the TRC showed that some people participated in the hearing because they wished to discover the truth about human rights violations and the perpetrators. Others testified to tell their stories, gain public acknowledgment, or have their names cleared.[47] Clark, in his multiple interviews in Rwanda about *gacaca*, found that forgiveness was often performed through public confessions that involved the accused and the public prosecutor representing the state rather than the opposed parties in the conflict.[48] While these types of apology are often viewed as symbolic, their genuineness is questionable when there is no dialogue between those involved in the process.

*Gacaca* encouraged people to reconsider their situations and role in the genocide and the process itself. Some may even have attended after going through a personal process in the attempt to overcome the hurt. However, these initiatives seem to have been dashed when offenders did not come forward to tell the truth and apologize. My brother, who was severely cut with machetes several times, attended a session in which the person responsible for his attack was being tried. When I asked him what it was like to stand face-to-face with a man who left him for dead, he told me the following:

> Before I went to the gacaca, I traced the journey I took on the day I was attacked. Then I identified two people I needed to forgive if they accepted to receive my forgiveness: the woman who shouted when I tried to hide behind her hut, and the man who attacked me first with his machete.... [T]he woman came forward and kneeled down to apologize again and again. But the man lied and then did not make any effort to acknowledge what he did to me. I forgave the woman and took back my forgiveness from the man when he failed to express remorse.

Some people might have the ability to juxtapose positive emotions with the negative emotions associated with the offense, move past their negative emotions, and even establish peaceful coexistence with their offenders. This kind of forgiveness, however, is very fragile because the root problem of disagreement remains untouched. This kind of forgiveness does not provide a good foundation on which to rebuild strong relationships, and feelings of animosity can be easily revived toward self or others when there is no opportunity to hear how the damage done affects the lives of people in a conflict.

Other people use religious forgiveness to obtain peace, especially when forgiveness is motivated by the "forgive and forget" idea and when violence is committed by members of the same community. When forgiveness becomes imposed as a requirement for maintaining peaceful coexistence and fails to repair broken relationships between the offender and the offended, it lends to the fragile state of peace, in opposition to true forgiveness which allows negative emotions—such as anger, resentment, the desire for revenge, and other negative emotions toward the offender—to be released.[49] True forgiveness goes beyond the exoneration of the out-group from past injuries with the expectation that direct engagement with the out-group and reconciliatory processes will follow.[50]

It is well known that in many divided societies people form new social categories based on shared experiences and other types of in-group identification such as ethnicity, race, or gender. The question to ask is whether truth commissions, in their mandate to facilitate forgiveness, try to minimize this divide between in-group and out-group membership. In many countries where truth commissions have been promoted there is a great emphasis on victims and perpetrators as two opposing groups in the conflict. This black and white dichotomy is problematic at times when the perpetrator in one incident becomes the victim in the other. To recall the elderly woman I mentioned earlier, her son who committed genocide was also a brother to the half siblings who were killed in the genocide. In situations such as this one, the hurt can be very deep and the accusations and defensive testimonies can complicate the *gacaca* process and cause further psychosocial problems.

The exploration of each of the above dimensions provides a theoretical and empirical understanding of the dimensions and the challenges they pose to the conceptualization and implementation of truth commissions. The lack of critical consideration of these dimensions has moral causes that are often ignored in the analysis of the truth commissions. These include false promises and a lack of concern about the impact of truth commissions on the psychosocial well-being of individuals and communities.

## False Promises

False promises involve, simply put, promising things that truth commissions are unable to achieve. This practice is notable in the combination of retributive and restorative justice models—two approaches rooted in dichotomous philosophical frameworks. Retributive justice, rooted in legal justice and supported by the liberal human rights tradition, is not an equalizing discourse. Although this approach seeks

to punish the offender and vindicate the victim,[51] it does not always offer opportunities to explore the problems that caused violence or the resulting complex issues, such as psychosocial trauma. Restorative justice, on the other hand, originates from moral and religious discourse[52] and encourages the restoration of relationships and involves apology, forgiveness, and reconciliation between individuals and groups.

The combination of opposing perspectives in one intervention model has been considered a political strategy to manage post-conflict societies but is unsatisfying at the psychosocial level. In fact, in theory, truth commissions seem to lean toward a restorative approach. However, in practical terms, balancing retributive justice with restorative and reconciliation processes has been a struggle.

During the proceedings, *gacaca* became more retributive than restorative, and the collected facts were used to prosecute the wrongdoers rather than restore relationships through the processes of apology and forgiveness. Anecdotal reports about *gacaca* reveal that the complicated cases that lasted more than one session were often cases that presented complex legal challenges and not reconciliatory processes. While the initial preparatory activities tended to emphasize the restorative approach, *gacaca* was transformed over the course of its implementation into a top-down approach charged to meet the mandate of the state and not of the people. Consequently, it fell into the trap of state-driven goals imposed from above, which is common in many truth commissions.[53]

At the beginning, *gacaca* was praised for being unique in that it countered the top-down approach by involving the local population in electing their own judges, actively participating in the collection of facts, and testifying during the proceedings.[54] Both Hutu and Tutsi were chosen as judges. While people tend to think that the implementation did not go so well, the conceptualization of *gacaca* also presented initial contradictions about what it ought to achieve and how it ought to do so.

For instance, the collection of facts was not as truthful as expected.[55] The accused frequently gave evasive testimonies in order to cover up their own deeds or those of family members by admitting to minor crimes while attributing more serious violent acts to those who had died or disappeared. At the government level, the collection of facts about past wrongs contradicted the information that had been used to motivate people to participate in *gacaca*. The written objectives of this form of truth commission emphasized prosecution,[56] whereas people were told that it was reconciliation that was being sought. These conceptual and practical contradictions are a reflection of the moral issues related to the whole process. It is of no surprise that those involved both locally and nationally said they were doing one thing while actually doing exactly the opposite of what was expected.

## Caring Less about Re-traumatization

Asking people to relive traumatic experiences without adequate and appropriate support in place and trying to achieve on the social level what the psychological models attempt to accomplish on an individual level might actually be more traumatizing than healing.[57] The TRC, which is upheld as a role model for other truth commissions, has itself been criticized for underestimating the extent of the psychological impact of public testimonies of the acts of violence committed during the apartheid regime in South Africa.[58] According to Allan, the initial draft of the TRC did not have a plan to support witnesses who had to relive their traumatic past through testimonies.[59] Even when the testimonies were recognized as potentially re-traumatizing and psychologists were invited to help, the support was restricted to individuals who had given testimonies and not those who heard them. In actuality, testimonies of

mass violence can be traumatic for both the witnesses and the public who follow these unfolding stories in silence.

These testimonies can even have dramatic effects when the facilitators of the process, and judges in the case of *gacaca*, lack facilitation skills for complex and traumatizing processes (e.g., traumatic crises). In Rwanda, the elected judges received basic training in legal prosecution and not in healing processes and mediating complex cases. While this kind of training was in many ways insufficient and inadequate, it did not prevent the judges from making legal decisions that took precedence over the reconciliatory goals that the *gacaca* initiatives aimed to accomplish. Anecdotal evaluations of this process by older Rwandans who understood the difference between the old and new *gacaca* found the new one to be an instrument of the state influenced by international donors. Rather than a psychosocial grassroots intervention, *gacaca*, like many other truth commissions, became what Teitel calls "a bureaucratic response to bureaucratic murder"[60] that is driven by political and economic restructuring and governance.

In old *gacaca*, the neutral and respected members of the community who were invited to resolve a particular issue met at the scene where the wrong had been done. The process included hearing the explanations of the parties involved in the conflict, collecting factual evidence from observation, and hearing the testimony of witnesses. Rather than imposing punishment, the two parties were given an opportunity to express their feelings and needs, and through a negotiation process they agreed on compensation for the wrong done. Other community members were not silent witnesses. They participated in the discussions and even helped negotiate the compensation. If the offender did not have the means to compensate the victim for the wrong done, other members offered some assistance. Assessment of the wrong done was always followed by a recognition of responsibility and an apology. The process was accompanied by rituals of shaking hands and sharing a drink which was purchased by both parties and sometimes other community members. The restoration of the broken relationship was an important outcome of this old grassroots form of *gacaca*. The involvement of the community in the process was a sign of solidarity. The old *gacaca* model resembles other grassroot approaches observed in post-conflict countries, such as Peru,[61] and East Timor's village-based Community Reconciliation Procedures (CRPs).[62] Although these approaches tend to apply methodologies that bring local people together to challenge individual-based models and use sociocultural resources to repair the damage done, they often lack legitimacy and the methods they propose often remain understudied. The following section offers some suggestions on how psychosocial healing can be approached through an emphasis on grassroot-based truth commissions.

## Suggestions for Healing Psychosocial Trauma through Truth Commissions and *Gacaca*

The action of remembering and telling stories of violence is necessary to stop the cycles of violence that threaten livelihood in post-conflict societies. Breaking the silence that surrounds mass violence through public testimonies is important both politically and socially. Truth commissions can continue to offer an alternative to individual legal and psychological approaches. The collection of stories of violence and the use of case presentations as a way to recognize the pain inflicted and the failure of the state to protect its citizens should be encouraged for public acknowledgment. However, the institution in charge of truth commissions in each country

should focus on the needs of the people and determine what actions must be taken based on the results of assessments. This would limit unrealistic expectations and false hopes and allow the process to build on the local resources that can remain in place once the commissions complete their work.

Local governments and external supporters have the responsibility to ensure security and the rule of law and to acknowledge the impact of mass violence on the psychosocial well-being of individuals and their communities. Local people should be identified as key players in the healing of their own trauma and the rebuilding of their communities. Affected individuals need to be aware of the suffering of other community members on all sides of a conflict. The depth and extent of healing will depend to a high degree on the willingness of individuals to mobilize other community members and share resources through social and psychological group processes.

Initiating a truth commission managed by local citizens does not mean the local citizens in charge (i.e., judges elected for *gacaca* courts) need training only in legal matters, which tended to be the case in Rwanda. I suggest that the individuals trusted to be fair in their judgment should also receive other kinds of training that empower them to do their job right. One of the issues with which truth commissions have experienced difficulties is the ability to address the different forms of violence embedded in different levels of social structures. One way to address these forms of violence would be to encourage local people to identify equalizing coping mechanisms and rituals that extend beyond the borders of existing social categorizations. As explained above, in traditional *gacaca* some rituals were more restorative than the judgment itself. However, the renewed *gacaca* has tended to focus on what divides people rather than on what unites them. Rituals can facilitate the creation of the space needed for breaking the silence that paralyzes those whose identities have been violated and can enhance psychosocial healing.

## Conclusion

In this article, I discussed the different dimensions that demonstrate the lack of careful conceptualization of truth commissions and *gacaca* in particular. Although some of these dimensions involve legal and psychosocial aspects (e.g., truth telling and different forms of accountability), each of them should be well-studied in terms of its legal and psychosocial aspects and within the context of the concerned post-conflict society in order to set up appropriate and achievable objectives. The process of their implementation should also be carefully scrutinized and it should build on existing resources and mechanisms. For instance, some people had managed to settle some of the conflicts related to the genocide event by telling the truth about what happened, compensating according to one's means, and even repairing some broken relationships. The implementation of *gacaca* in each region should have used these instances as examples to encourage other community members to do the same.

On a concluding note, the healing of psychosocial trauma cannot start and finish with truth commissions or other imposed models.[63] The different dimensions of truth commissions can help bring about justice and heal psychosocial trauma if carefully conceptualized and implemented. The active involvement of the local people and the use of local resources are crucial to the achievement of healing psychosocial trauma in post-conflict situations and post-genocide Rwanda. The creation of a contained space, the use of local unifying rituals that are oriented toward social justice, and good facilitation skills can help manage the overwhelming emotions and change affected communities from broken and divided ones into healing communities.

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53. Bert Ingeleaere, "The Gacaca Courts in Rwanda," in *Traditional Justice and Reconciliation after Violent Conflict: Learning from African Experiences,* ed. Luc Huyse and Mark Salter (Stockholm: International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance, 2008), 44; Nagy, "Transitional Justice," 276.

54. Schabas, "Genocide Trials," 893.

55. Ingeleaere, "Gacaca Courts in Rwanda," 57–58.

56. *Gacaca* had the following objectives: (1) Find out the truth about what happened since residents will be called upon as eyewitnesses to the acts committed in their cells, and they will compile a list of victims and perpetrators; (2) accelerate the prosecution of genocide since those who know what happened will testify in the presence of their neighbors on the hills; (3) continue the eradication of the culture of impunity by using any method that makes it possible to identify a person who took part in the tragedy, since once the truth is known, none of those who were complicit will escape punishment, and the people will understand that an offense results in the conviction of the criminal without any exception whatsoever; (4) punish those who played a part in the tragedy, reconcile the Rwandans, and strengthen their unity since the *gacaca* jurisdictions' system will induce the residents of the same cell, sector, commune, and prefecture to collaborate in judging those who participated in the genocide, to discover the victims, and restore their rights to innocent people; and (5) prove the capacity of the Rwandan custom, since, although the cases that the *gacaca* jurisdictions will have to hear are different from those that are normally resolved within the *gacaca* framework, these jurisdictions fit well into the custom of settling differences by arbitration, even amicable arbitration. See Transitional National Assembly of Rwanda Adopted Organic Law (TNARAOL) no. 40/2000, 16 January 2001.

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*the Law* 18, no. 4 (2000): 459–77, 472; Mendeloff, "Truth-Seeking, Truth-Telling, and Postconflict Peacebuilding," 365.

58. Allan, "Truth and Reconciliation," 193.
59. Ibid.
60. Ruti R. Teitel, *Transitional Justice* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 78, quoted in Michael Humphrey, "From Victimhood: Truth Commissions and Trials as Rituals of Political Transition and Individual Healing," *The Australian Journal of Anthropology* 14, no. 2 (2003): 171–87, 175.
61. See note 17.
62. The CRPs were initiated in East Timor after the war between East Timor and Indonesia. During the war, Indonesia hired East Timorese to carry out violence against their own fellow citizens. They participated in the killing and looting of their own villages. The CRPs' objective was to bring victims, perpetrators, and other community members together to undertake acts of reconciliation. The majority of perpetrators tried by the CRPs came from the same villages as their victims. On their release, they were allowed to request to be re-accepted into their communities. Hearings were facilitated by a committee formed by a panel of local church and spiritual leaders and elders and chaired by a regional commissioner appointed by the East Timor government. Perpetrators were required to listen to their victims' stories, be confronted face to face with the pain and anger they caused, and given the opportunity to apologize. Punishment to restore some of the damage to the individual and community (e.g., building a school or paying back the stolen property) was decided by the community, and perpetrators had to comply. The hearings were completed by traditional ceremonial practices that included communal chewing of betel nut on a large mat before sending the final agreement to the district court for registration.
63. Stanley, "What Next?" 3.

# From Bloodless Revolution to Bloody Counterrevolution:
# The Adana Massacres of 1909[1]

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*The historiography of the Adana Massacres of 1909 is represented by two diverging views. While some Turkish scholars deny the involvement of the local government officials in the massacres by putting all of the blame on the Armenians who revolted as part of a conspiracy to establish a kingdom in Cilicia, some Armenian scholars, whose work is overshadowed by the Armenian genocide, accuse the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) of acting behind the scenes to destroy the Armenian economic infrastructure in Adana in order to curb any future political and economic development in the area. By deviating from the existing historiography, the present article contends that the Adana Massacres should be viewed as part of the revolutionary process which led to the erosion of social and political stability in the region, the creation of weak public-sphere institutions, and intensification of the existing economic anxieties, all of which led to the enactment of violence against the vulnerable Armenian population of Adana. Understanding the factors and the motives that led to the enactment of violence will shed new light on understanding the future acts of violence perpetrated against the indigenous Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire.*

*Key words: Ottoman Empire, violence, revolution, massacres, Armenians, public sphere*

On 29 August 1908, one month after the Young Turk Revolution, Mihrdat Noradoungian, an Armenian intellectual from Istanbul, wrote a lengthy opinion piece entitled "The Price of Freedom" in the Armenian daily newspaper *Puzantion*. In this lengthy article, Noradoungian argued that people were looking with hesitation at this freedom that came about without any bloodshed. What Noradoungian was implying in the article is that the Freedom after the revolution should have been received through violence—probably reminiscent of the violence during the French Revolution which was able to get rid of the *ancien régime*:

> The change that took place a month ago had the biggest peculiar advantage, to which the entire world views with bewilderment, and that is the lack of blood and uproar. Both of these factors are regular phenomenon in these kinds of situations... Though during the [last] 15 years a lot of blood has spilled, there was the fear of greater bloodshed which did not happen. One should know that this [bloodshed] has become a natural law and that natural laws are unavoidable. Whatever did not happen in the beginning could still happen. Whatever the revolution did not do, the counterrevolution will be able to do. There is only one way in order to prevent the occurrence of this contingency (bloodshed) and that is *discretion, modesty, wisdom, and patience*. New freedom is always fragile. Let us be careful.[2]

This connection between Revolution, Blood, and the *ancien régime* was endemic and not only to the Armenian press in the Ottoman Empire. During the first days of the constitution, while the revolutionary festivities were at their height, the ethnic presses (Armenian, Arabic, Greek, Ottoman Turkish, and Ladino, among others) warned people to be vigilant about the existing fragile situation and be wary of former officials of the *ancien régime*.[3] However, in comparison to other newspapers, the Armenian press dealt intensively with the concept of the *ancien régime* in its present form, not in its past one.[4] One such editorial sought to enlighten the public about the danger of the situation and the calamities that they should expect.[5] The article is crucial in that it predicts the upcoming calamity of the counterrevolution. It advised Armenians to not create any pretext for the eruption of these agitations. On the contrary, the editorial argued that it is the duty of the Armenians to act with love toward their Turkish brothers and be careful with every act and every word that could make them bitter against Armenians and incite the people of the *ancien régime*. "We repeat that we need to be careful from shouting 'Armenian,' or to talk about an independent Armenia," argued the editorial. "The majority of the nation is in agreement that reforming the condition of the Armenians of Turkey is dependent on the reform of Turkey." The editorial ends by recommending that Armenians cooperate with their Turkish compatriots "who support us and curse the *ancien régime*."[6]

With this connection between revolution and blood in mind, the present article discusses the correlation between the 1908 revolution and the Adana Massacres of 1909. After briefly reviewing the existing historiography of the Adana Massacres, I will introduce a new approach to the understanding of these massacres in the larger context of the revolution, specifically the development of a weak public sphere and the erosion of social and political stability, all of which led to the escalation of violence in Adana. Afterward, I will discuss the impact of the Young Turk Revolution on Adana and demonstrate the ways in which the revolution precipitated the ethnic tensions leading to the massacres.

## The Young Turk Revolution of 1908

The Young Turk Revolution of 1908 represents an important historical juncture in Ottoman history and the history of the modern Middle East, not as a new beginning, but rather as a major catalyst in accelerating the dissolution of the empire. Thus, these two contradicting paradigms of a new beginning and dissolution were inter-connected and went hand in hand in marking the last phase of Ottoman history, the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918) that ended with the defeat of the empire in World War I. Within this period two interrelated events took place that shaped the political scene of the era: (1) The counterrevolution of 31 March 1909 which was initiated by the reactionary forces within the empire and (2) the Adana Massacres (April 14–17, April 25–27) which led to the destruction of the physical and the material presence of Armenians in Adana.

The counterrevolution was not a spontaneous outburst by dissatisfied elements in Istanbul; rather, it was organized by oppositional elements mainly represented by conservative religious circles within the empire.[7] On the night of April 12, the troops of the First Army Corps mutinied and marched toward Ayasofya Square, near the parliament, accompanied by a large number of people in religious garb (*softas*) shouting slogans in favor of the sultan and demanding the restoration of the Sher'ia.[8] This resulted in the resignation of Hilmi Paşa's cabinet, which was promptly accepted by the sultan.[9] By royal order, on April 14, Tevfik Paşa was

appointed the Grand Vezir and Ismail Kemal was elected the President of Parliament.[10] This was a huge blow to the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) whose members either fled or were hiding. On April 17 the CUP began to act. The Action Army (*Haraket Ordusu*) left Salonika and headed to Istanbul to restore public order and discipline among the rebellious troops. It established its headquarters at Aya Stefanos and began negotiations with the new cabinet.[11] After failed negotiations, the Action Army entered Istanbul on April 23 and, after several skirmishes, took control of the city.

The Adana Massacres of 1909, which became a turning point for the Armenians living in the Ottoman Empire, were one of the earliest manifestations of violence during the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1918). Furthermore, the massacres represent a microcosm of the deterioration of ethnic conflict in Anatolia and its culmination in the destruction of the indigenous Armenian population during World War I. Understanding the factors and motives that led to the enactment of violence will shed new light on the future acts of violence perpetrated against the indigenous Armenian population of the Ottoman Empire. The present article contends that the Adana Massacres should be viewed as an integral part of the ongoing power struggle in Anatolia and the Arab provinces after the revolution.[12] An important factor that contributed to the escalation of ethnic tensions was the emergence of a weak public sphere within the empire after thirty years of the Hamidian despotic regime. Hence, to better understand the escalation of ethnic tensions in the empire, it is important to problematize the notion of modern public sphere and understand its implications and challenges within the Ottoman milieu.[13] Doing so will provide us with better ways of understanding communal violence as a by-product of modernity.

## The Public Sphere and the Ottoman Empire

The notion of the *public sphere* refers to a social space in which private citizens gather as a public body with the rights of assembly, association, and expression in order to form public opinion.[14] The history of the notion of the public sphere in the Ottoman Empire has yet to be written and the present study does not undertake that task.[15] Of course, the public sphere, both in its pre-modern and modern forms, existed in the Ottoman Empire.[16] However, it had a different background and was affected by different factors from the European milieu.[17] As a result of modern urban development, the public sphere began to enter into its modern form. The modern public sphere(s) in the empire was spurred by the development of peripheral capitalism and through the opening of urban spaces, in the form of public squares, gardens, and wider roads. In addition, the process was accompanied by the proliferation of cafés, associations, theaters, and scientific and literary societies, as a result of which literary public spheres were formed in the empire. However, the main factor that led to the proliferation of these public spheres in the empire during the nineteenth century was the press in general and newspapers in particular.[18] The official Ottoman press began to be published in the nineteenth century and was followed by the emergence of the private press. The transformation of the literary public spheres into political public spheres in the modern sense took place throughout the century, reaching its peak with the promulgation of the Ottoman constitution in 1876.[19] In fact, the creation of the private press and the proliferation of the ethnic press in the second half of the nineteenth century further developed the notion of multiple public spheres as opposed to the public sphere dominated by the Ottoman ruling elite.

In 1878, however, Sultan Abdülhamid dissolved the Ottoman parliament and derailed the constitution, putting an end to the political public sphere. Hence, the

institutions that once served as the basis of the developing public sphere(s) were derailed and weakened. He also established one of the most sophisticated spying systems in the history of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, by the beginning of the 1880s, the ethnic groups' journalist activities shifted West, from Lebanon, Syria, and Anatolia to European cities and Egypt. Here, an *exilic* public sphere was established in which exiles of different ethnic backgrounds expressed their political views, discussed their projects for the empire, interacted with each other, and attempted to mobilize their host governments by using various means of expression, from exilic media to public gatherings and discussion.[20]

After the Young Turk Revolution of 1908, this exilic public sphere was transformed into a homeland public sphere. The revolution allowed for an immediate boom in the serial publications of different ethnic groups in the empire.[21] In the two years after the revolution, censorship was nonexistent. In the first year alone about 200 periodicals were published in Istanbul.[22] Hence, the media that served the development of multiple/competing public spheres prior to the Hamidian period were reinstated during the post-revolutionary period. However, these contentious and weak public sphere(s) that lacked strong institutional basis would become the medium through which the existing tensions in the empire were going to surface, demonstrating the incompetence of the local administration to deal with contentious situations. The weak public sphere(s) became a medium through which both the satisfied and the dissatisfied elements aired their content or discontent with the new regime and deliberated the political future of the empire by using the tools of modernity. In addition, the weak public sphere(s) also became an important vehicle for the enactment of violence by the dissatisfied groups. Thus, the relationship between public sphere and violence is crucial to understanding the massacres carried out against the indigenous Armenian population. After the revolution, the growth in Adana's public sphere not only fomented political activism within formerly outlawed groups, but it also contributed to an escalation of ethnic tensions. The physical and verbal manifestations of Armenians in the public sphere in the forms of cultural and political processions, the bearing and selling of arms in public,[23] and theatrical presentations as well as the use of print media sent alarming vibes among the dissatisfied elements, which began to use the same medium to air their anxieties about and discontent with the new created order. Thus, the public space in Adana would become not only the place for the re-enactment of identities; it would also become a vehicle through which the existing political, social, and economic anxieties would be manifested in two waves of massacres which took place in conjuncture with the counterrevolution.

## Historiography and the Adana Massacres of 1909

The study of ethnic strife, violence, and repression in the Ottoman Empire in general and in Anatolia in particular remains marginalized in the historiography of the Ottoman Empire. Only a handful of scholars have attempted to put these subjects at the core of their inquiries.[24] However, most of these works concentrate on the Armenian Genocide during World War I and do not consider the incidents of violence prior to the war.[25] Other scholars attempt to represent the acts of violence that took place at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries as part of a linear process that culminated in the extermination of the Armenians.[26] A major methodological deficiency of these works stems from the failure to appreciate that violence during the early phase of the Second Constitutional Period was an integral part of the revolutionary process. While some Turkish scholars deny the

involvement of local government officials in the massacres by blaming the Armenians who revolted as part of a conspiracy to establish a kingdom in Cilicia,[27] some Armenian scholars, whose work is overshadowed by the Armenian genocide, accuse the CUP of acting behind the scenes to destroy the Armenian economic infrastructure in Adana in order to curb any future political and economic development in the area.[28]

## Development of Adana's Public Sphere(s)

It is impossible to understand the development of Adana's public sphere without understanding the impact of the revolution on the Anatolian provinces and the ways in which it led to the emergence of contentious public sphere(s). The Young Turk Revolution caused major changes in the dynamics of power within the provinces, leading to an erosion of social and political stability. By disturbing a thinly balanced power equilibrium, the revolution produced a great deal of dissatisfaction within some segments of the population. The sudden mushrooming of Young Turk cells and clubs in the provinces caused extreme anxiety among the notables and the *ulema* (religious clerics) in the Anatolian provinces. Although the CUP had branches in all Anatolian and Arab provinces, it was not in full control of the provinces. A major factor in the deterioration of the intra-ethnic relationship among the Muslims in Anatolia was the dismissal of local officials and their replacement with CUP members or people loyal to the CUP. This contributed immensely to the rising tension between the CUP and the people of the *ancien régime*, mainly because a whole stratum of notables who had benefited from the *ancien régime* had lost power. Hence, one cannot understand the changes in Adana after the 1908 revolution without understanding the regional waves of discontent manifested after the revolution, especially in the Anatolian provinces. What distinguished Adana from other provinces was its economic and agricultural centrality to Anatolia—which attracted thousands of migrant workers arriving from Hadjin, Erzerum, Bayburt, and Bitlis— and its complex ethnic composition, which was a main catalyst in the deterioration of this ethnic relationship.[29] Therefore, I argue that the conditions created after the revolution and the emergence of contentious public sphere(s) prepared the ground for a violent backlash.

Adana was also an important spiritual and economic center for Armenians in Anatolia. It housed the Sea of the Catholicosate of Sis (Kozan).[30] In addition, the city had eight churches, two of which were Gregorian, one Protestant, and one Catholic. There were also Greek, Syrian, and Chaldean churches.[31] Armenians had two schools, the Apkarian and the Ashkhenian schools, the French had the Jesuit missionary school for boys and girls, and the Americans had the Girls College. In Tarsus, Americans also had St. Paul's Institute College.[32]

Prior to the massacres of 1909, Adana's population consisted of 62,250 Muslims; 30,000 Armenians; 5,000 Greeks; 8,000 Chaldeans; 1,250 Assyrians; 500 Christian Arabs; and 200 foreign subjects.[33] The Muslim population of Adana included Turks, Kurds, Fellahs, Circassians, Avshars, Cretans, and nomads. In addition, every spring about 30,000–40,000 migratory workers would come to Adana from Aleppo, Harput, Sivas, Diarbekir, Erzerum, Hajin, Bitlis, Bayburt, and Erzerum to work as farmers, tilling, reaping, and cultivating the cotton fields, or to work in factories.[34] The Muslim migrant workers always exceeded the Armenian migrant workers by a ratio of 2:1.

Adana was also the center of the cotton trade on the Cilician Plain.[35] David Fraser who visited Adana prior to the 1908 revolution argued that at the end of the nineteenth century it was customary for 60,000 laborers to visit Cilicia annually for the purpose of assisting with the harvest. However, he argues that this annual

migration had ceased at the beginning of the twentieth century because the resident population aided by steam ploughs, steam threshers, and reaping machines was not able to undertake the labor by itself. This point is extremely important because it demonstrates the ways in which the introduction of modern agricultural and production technologies have caused substantial dissatisfaction among the migrant workers who used to benefit from the pre-modern agricultural mediums and has created what Ayhan Aktar calls "accumulated envy" toward the Armenians.[36] This "accumulated envy" would reveal itself in violent backlash by the migrant workers against the Armenians. In addition to this, Adana also housed several large establishments involved with ginning, spinning, and weaving. Among these, the most important factory was owned by the Greek Trypani Brothers who introduced the cotton industry to Cilicia.[37] In addition, the Deutsche Levant Cotton Company, which was financed by German, Swiss, and Austrian financiers, was also active in the region.[38] The Armenian population was very involved in trade and industry. They played a predominant role in exporting materials from Adana.[39] Armenian sources indicate that Armenian prosperity in Adana was lamented by some Turkish notables, such as Abdülkadir Bağdadizade, one of the most influential notables in Adana.[40]

## The Ottoman Public Sphere in Adana: The Climax of Contentious Politics between the CUP and the Notables

As soon as the constitution was enacted, people in Adana and Mersin began rejoicing. Masses were held in honor of the sultan and the Ottoman nation.[41] However, these festivities of the revolution were only euphoric feelings that did not reflect the different social sectors' actual attitudes toward the revolution. The revolution and the reinstatement of the constitution in Adana led to the rise of new figures. Ihsan Fikri, a self-acclaimed Young Turk, suddenly became a public figure. Fikri played an important role in organizing festivities in honor of the revolution. At the end of the festivities, Fikri sent a congratulatory telegram to the CUP branches in Manastir, Salonica, and Istanbul on behalf of the people of Adana. The next day the CUP Central Committee asked Fikri to establish a CUP branch in Adana.[42] To counter the CUP's influence, Abdülkadir Bağdadizade,[43] one of the most influential notables of Adana, formed a group called the Agricultural Club (*Zirâat Kulübü*) composed of Adana notables, people from Idlib, and *softas*.[44] They were supported by another anti-CUP committee, the Scientific Committee (*Cemiyet-i İlmiye*). As with the other CUP branches in the provinces, people from the *ancien régime* entered the ranks and the first task of the new CUP branch was to force the local *vali* (governor) to resign.[45] Bahri Paşa resigned and for some time the CUP branch administered the province. It also succeeded at removing Kâzim Bey, the chief of police (*polise müdürü*), and police superintendent (*komiser*) Zor Ali from their positions.[46] In addition, the CUP began sending delegates, consisting of one Armenian and one Turk, to villages to preach to the masses about the constitution. In order to better understand the tension that arose between the CUP and the local notables, it is important to give a brief historical background of Ihsan Fikri.

Ihsan Fikri, whose original name was Ahmed Tosun, had been an officer of the Salonica Agriculture Department. He was later exiled to Diyarbekir and then to Payas. After his exile to Payas, he represented himself as a liberal. Bahri Paşa, the *vali*, interceded with the authorities on his behalf to end his exile.[47] After returning to Adana, he married the daughter of a local property owner by the name of Menan Bey. Prior to the revolution, Fikri had been the principal of the Handicraft School

(*Sanayi Mektebi*) but was fired by the *vali*, who replaced him with Gergerlizade Ali Effendi. After the revolution and the establishment of the CUP branch in Adana under his leadership, Fikri began to persecute his opponents, particularly Gergerlizade.[48] As a result, two groups emerged in Adana, one supporting Fikri and another supporting Gergerlizade.[49] This tension can be best defined as CUP versus the local notables. In this intra-ethnic struggle the press played an important role. In the post-revolutionary period five newspapers were published in Adana: *Seyhan, Yaşasın Ordu, İtidal*, edited by Ihsan Fikri; *Rehberi İtidal*, owned by Ali Ilmi Effendi; and *Çukurova*, a weekly newspaper published by Mahmud Jelaleddin. *İtidal* and *Rehberi İtidal* were in constant conflict. The latter was also supported by *Çukurova*. According to Terzian, Ihsan Fikri wrote erratically, praising the Armenians one day and attacking them the next.

After Bahri Paşa resigned, he was replaced by Mirliva Ali Paşa, who generally kowtowed to the CUP. When Cevad Bey was appointed *vali*, tensions began to escalate dramatically. Ihsan Fikri, seeing Cevad Bey's weakness, tried to manipulate him into removing Gergerlizade from his position as the principal of the school. Gergerlizade, however, gained the *vali*'s favor. In addition, Cevad Bey used to frequently visit the Agricultural Club and the Scientific Committee.[50] This angered Fikri, who began openly attacking the *vali* in *İtidal*, even calling for his resignation, but to no avail.[51] Furthermore, he claimed that government was nonexistent in Adana and that it was people like Abdülkadir Bağdadizade who were truly running the affairs of the country. In this tensed atmosphere, Zor Ali, the former police commissary (*komiser*) of Adana who had been dismissed by the CUP, arrived in Adana and declared himself a member of the *Fedakârini Millet*, a branch of the Ittihadi Mouhamadi, and called on people of the same mind to join him.[52] In this atmosphere of intra-ethnic tension, news of the counterrevolution reached Adana, further altering the power balance within the provinces.

## The Armenian Public Sphere: Testing the Limits of Freedom

The Armenian festivities and demonstrations in honor of the constitution on 24 July 1908 were especially striking. The public sphere created after the 1908 revolution allowed Armenian political parties to be active in Adana. Armenian cultural revival began. Poetry, odes, and dramas about the Armenian national past began to be published and performed, causing anxiety among the local Muslim population. In addition, Armenians, "intoxicated with the new wine of liberty, often gave offense by wild talk or arrogant behavior."[53] In an interview with an Armenian newspaper after the massacres, missionary Christie positioned at Tarsus argued that there is no proof that the Christians as a whole desired separation from the Ottoman people or government. Granted, he argued that there were a very few foolish men (Armenians) who by their boasting and threats exasperated the Turks. However, he adds that "their acts and words ought not to be taken as justifying in the slightest degree the cruelties that make this recent massacre worse than any that have gone before it."[54] Armenian activities in the post-revolutionary period entailed physical and verbal manifestations in the public sphere causing much anxiety among the dissatisfied elements. For example, *İtidal*, the main Young Turk organ in Adana edited by Ihsan Fikri, reported that on Sunday 29 March 1909 a play was performed by Armenians at the Casino of Ziya Paşa in Mersin.[55] In the words of one contemporary Ottoman official in Adana, "At that night Armenians had opened the first curtains of revolt" (*İşte Ermeniler ilk isyan perdesini o gece açmışlardır*).[56] The play was entitled *Temurlane and the Destruction of Sivas*.[57] The local *mutessarif* (subgovernor), as

well as other officials, was invited to attend the play. At the beginning of the play, Temurlane gives an order to exterminate all the Armenians. A fierce struggle takes place between Temurlane and an Armenian king. The king, along with his servant and his daughter, becomes Temurlane's prisoner. The king, hands chained and wearing a thorn crown, sits hopelessly in a cell allocated to him by Temurlane. Suddenly, two spirits appear before the king telling him that he will reclaim his kingdom through the unity of his nation. And when the king tells the spirits that all of the Armenians have been massacred, the spirits answer as follows: "These are enough, do not feel sorry, thanks to unity the day will come that you will restore your monarchy [*kralığın tasdik edecekler*]. You are going to preserve your independence, be restful, do not detach yourself from unity, once more in the future you will regain your crown." *İtidal* reported that when the curtain closed all of the Armenians in the audience began shouting and applauding "Long live Armenia," "Long live Armenian kingdom," "Long live Armenians."[58]

On another occasion, a performance of *Hamlet* by the Armenian students of St. Paul's College of Tarsus made government officials and the local *mufti* (Islamic scholar) uneasy. Helen Davenport (Brown) Gibbons, who taught at the school, described the play and her role in putting on the performance in detail in a letter sent to her mother on 7 April 1909. Gibbons described that when things began to go badly for Hamlet's stepfather, people stopped fanning. The attending dignitaries became uneasy, and hunched their shoulders. They kept their eyes glued to the stage. She continued:

> They are not familiar with our great William, and believe, no doubt, that we invented the play as well as the actors' costumes. Horror of horrors! We had forgotten what they might read into the most realistic scene. An Armenian warning for Abdul Hamid? The assassins mastered the struggling king. He lay there with his red hair sticking out from his crown, and the muscles of his neck stiffened as he gasped for breath while his throat was cut with a shiny white letter-opener.[59]

In addition to these, the relationship in Adana between Armenian ecclesiastic leadership and the local government deteriorated after the 1908 revolution, particularly after the removal of the *vali* Bahri Paşa who had a cordial relationship with the Armenians and especially with Bishop Moushegh Seropian.[60] Fearful of what might happen, the Catholicos of Sis, Sahag, sent telegrams to Istanbul warning of imminent massacres in the area. The Ottoman-Turkish newspapers of Istanbul reacted negatively to these telegrams, saying "we do not want to believe in the existence of the threat of massacre."[61] At the time, the prelate of Adana, Bishop Moushegh, was on a mission to Istanbul. When he returned to Adana he found that letters from the villages warning of imminent threats have accumulated. Bishop Moushegh also sent a pastoral letter to the Armenians of Adana emphasizing the need for harmony among the people.[62] However, the uncertain situation and the rising tension led Bishop Moushegh to encourage Armenians to buy arms[63]:

> We advise the people, in order to be able to fulfill their duties towards the country and constitution, every person should be armed more or less according to his ability. That readiness should be at the same time somehow a means for self-defense, against an unfortunate attack, until the constitutional government comes to their aid.[64]

Dr. Christie, the American missionary, criticized Bishop Moushegh's words and deeds and those of the young men who were following him. He argued that it was wrong to bring tin boxes of arms and ammunition to Mersin addressed to Armenians

in Adana.[65] However, he explained that even these do not prove that there was an intention to rebel against the government.[66] Thus, Bishop Moushegh in the eyes of the local Muslim population became an agitator and the source of tensions for inciting the Armenians against the Turks and encouraging them to establish Kingdom Cilicia.[67] As a result, twenty-five days before the massacres Bishop Moushegh was banished from Adana to Cairo by orders from the *vali*.[68]

## The Consolidation of Violence: The Breaking Point

In March 1909 ethnic tension began to deteriorate dramatically, as manifested in a couple of sporadic attacks on Armenians.[69] One of these attacks became the catalyst precipitating the first wave of the Adana Massacres/Clashes. On 28 March 1909, an Armenian named Hovhannes was attacked by a group of Turks, led by a man named Isfendiar.[70] During the ensuing fight, Hovhannes killed Isfendiar, wounded some of the other attackers, and fled to the Armenian Quarter in Adana. From there he escaped to Cyprus. Isfendiar's funeral attracted not only those angered by the killing, but also much of the element dissatisfied with the new order, the constitution, and its Armenian "collaborators." The body was dragged through the streets for exhibition and became a catalyst in the manifestation of the existing economic and political anxieties. This immediately led to the mobilization of the masses and prepared the ground for the enactment of violence.[71] Inflammatory remarks were made in the mosques and it was proclaimed that the Armenians of Adana had risen and were "killing true believers and burning their houses."[72] Isfendiar's family demanded that the *vali* capture the murderer.[73] A few days later, one of Hovhannes's other attackers died from the wounds he received, elevating the level of anger and excitement among the Muslim population. As the situation intensified, the *vali* of Adana telegrammed Istanbul warning of an imminent threat in Adana. Adil Bey, on behalf of the Ministry of Internal Affairs responded, "The financial institutions along with foreign buildings should be protected and peace should be preserved" (*Müessesât-ı mâliye ile emâkin-i ecnebîyenin muhâfazası ve iâde-i âsâyişe dikkat olunması*).[74] Some Armenian sources understand this telegram as an order to massacre the Armenians.[75] This sentence, however, is too vague to necessarily be understood in that way. With the arrival of news about the counterrevolution from Istanbul, the situation exploded.

## The First Waves of Massacres/Clashes (April 14, 15, and 16)

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''What could I do, if there is Constitution.
Whatever the majority wants they will do so''[76]

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In Adana, Tuesdays were market days. Peasants would travel from their villages to Adana in the morning and return in the evening. On Tuesday, 13 April 1909, these peasants did not return to their homes. It is also noteworthy that because of seasonal migration, 30,000–40,000 additional Armenian, Kurdish, and Turkish farm workers inhabited Adana.[77] On April 14, the disturbances began. Armenians opened their shops in the early morning, but soon saw groups of Turks, Kurds, Circassians, Başıbozuks,[78] Cretans, and Muslim refugees along with the seasonal workers carrying hatchets, blunt instruments, axes, and swords in their hands and wearing white

bandages (*saruks*) around their fezzes[79] in various quarters of the city.[80] This made the Armenians extremely anxious, and they quickly closed their shops.[81] When the Muslims saw that Armenians were closing their shops early they too became anxious, and a rumor spread that the Armenians were going to attack them. The mob, consisting of Turks, Kurds, Fellahs, Circassians, Gypsies, and Cretan refugees along with the migrant workers, began looting and attacking the center of the town.[82] Zor Ali, the police superintendent, rallied his troops and besieged the Armenian Quarter of Şabaniye. Meanwhile, Armenians took a defensive position in the Armenian Quarter and fortified themselves in houses.[83]

The first day of the massacres/clashes saw sporadic and unorganized attacks. On the first night, the mob began burning the Armenian Quarter.[84] The attacks and the clashes intensified the next day.[85] The majority of the Armenian population found shelter in Armenian churches and schools and some in foreign missions. By the third day, the mob grew as Turks arrived from Aleppo and Sivas to take part in the pillage. Since the Armenians were running short on ammunition, they asked the government for protection.[86] In response, the *vali* organized a reconciliation meeting between Turkish and Armenian notables.[87] By the fourth day the situation had calmed. It is impossible to accurately assess the number of casualties. Hundreds of wounded Armenians were taken to the Apkarian Armenian school which was turned into a hospital. Many Armenians escaped to Mersin.[88] The carnage, looting, and killing lasted for three days (April 14, 15, and 16). Many Armenians were killed as well as many Muslims, some of whom were killed while attacking the Armenian Quarter. It seems that the first wave of massacres/clashes was minor compared to the second wave that will be discussed next. Nevertheless, Armenian shops, businesses, and institutions suffered immense damage.[89]

## Public Sphere and the Transition from Verbal to Physical Violence

Most Armenian and European sources indicate that Ihsan Fikri, the leader of the CUP in Adana, and his newspaper *İtidal* played an important role in inciting the masses before the initiation of the second wave of massacres.[90] However, these sources do not tell us exactly what kind of discourse was being propagated by *İtidal*. This raises important questions about the transition from violent political discourse to physical violence. In cases of extreme escalation of ethnic tensions, during which the existing political and civil institutions are unable to contain the lawlessness and disorder of a region, the public sphere becomes the medium through which violence manifests itself. Furthermore, it contributes to the precipitation of ethnic tensions and accelerates the motives for the perpetration of violence against the vulnerable group. In the case of Adana, instead of declaring a state of siege, the local government chose to reconcile both parties who were involved in the violence by making superficial statements about coexistence and harmony. The public sphere was not restrained nor did the local government take the necessary steps to suppress provocative statements by reactionary groups. On the contrary, the printed form of communication, one of the most important components of a public sphere, was used to instigate the public against the vulnerable population. Hence, Ihsan Fikri was able to verbally attack the Armenians, using extraordinarily violent language, and to convince the masses that the Armenians had attempted a coup d'etat to establish the Kingdom of Cilicia.[91] According to the British vice consul in Adana, Doughty-Wylie, every Turk in Adana was fully persuaded at the time that the Armenians had set fire to their own houses with the idea of bringing about foreign intervention. Stories about Armenian atrocities on Muslim men and women were also widely

spread.[92] According to Doughty-Wylie, the Turks put all of the blame on the Armenians because they armed themselves and because certain delegates of the Hunchak Party, and preachers like Bishop Moushegh, had urged the Armenians to openly fight the Turks and set up a principality; the Turks also believed that they had fixed a day on which to rise and rebel against the Turks.[93] Although Doughty-Wylie believed that the Hunchak Party was planning something, he nevertheless argued that they represented a fraction of the people. On the contrary, he argued that such widespread destruction could not have taken place without some "secret preparation on the Turkish side,"[94] demonstrating the premeditated nature of the event.[95]

On 20 April 1909, thousands of free copies of *İtidal* were distributed in the streets of Adana. In this issue, Fikri along with his colleagues Ismail Sefa[96] and Burhan Nuri vehemently attacked the Armenians.[97] In an article entitled "An Awful Uprising" (*Müdhiş bir Isyân*), Sefa stated that a wave of boiling rage and independence was destroying the country.[98] He argued that Armenians, like the Turks, had been oppressed for thirty-three years by the despotic regime. Then they united with the Turks and applauded their "holy revolution." However, Sefa argued that Armenians soon began preparing themselves for the ensuing uprising by stockpiling weapons. According to Sefa, once the Armenians possessed weapons, their rhetoric changed. The phenomenon of Armenian *fedayees* (fighters) with Mauser riffles roaming the streets alarmed the Turks. According to Sefa, the first signs of agitation occurred on Friday when two Muslim youths were killed in the Şabaniye neighborhood. He was referring to the murder of Isfendiar. Sefa argued that although the *vali* had assured the Turkish population that he would capture the murderer, thus restoring order, the Armenians refused to turn over the murderer. For Sefa this was nothing less than an uprising (*isyân*). Sefa concluded that when the Armenians, "after all this barbarism and crime," saw the profusion of soldiers and people pouring in from the villages and understood that they would not succeed, they stopped their attacks.

In the same issue, an article by Burhan Nuri posed the rhetorical question "can the Armenians establish a state?" Burhan answered that only the foolish would believe that Armenians, numbering less than two million scattered throughout the empire, could defeat the Ottoman Empire and be able to establish an independent country.[99] Burhan attacked the European powers in his article saying that any European power cannot impose on the Ottoman Empire the establishment of an Armenian state in Cilicia. Burhan concluded as follows:

> If the Armenians intend to form a state, the land for that state should not be in the Ottoman Empire, rather they should look for it in the poles, in the desert lands of Africa and immigrate there. They cannot reach their goal scattered in Istanbul, Adana, Aleppo, Diyarbekir, Bitlis, and Van.

In the section of *İtidal* on news from the provinces, an editorial lamented that Adana would be "the victim of this horrible barbarism." The editorial argued that while the Turks were striving to live with the Armenians in happiness, the Armenians caused a "huge calamity on the head of the country through the organization of an agitation."[100]

Armenians, according to the editorial, had arrived in Adana from Marash, Hadjin, Harput, Diyarbekir, and from the Armenian populated provinces of Anatolia. The article argued that by forming a majority in the area, Armenians hoped to create agitation and demand autonomy.[101] They were encouraged in this by the success of Austria-Hungary in annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina and by the *de jure*

independence of Bulgaria from the Ottoman Empire on 5 October 1908. For this purpose, they hoped to provoke the intervention of the European powers. The article concluded by saying that "looking at the painful situation, there is no doubt that they [the Armenians] were the reason of their own destruction, the Turks, and of the country."[102]

The editorial board of *İtidal* provided its own version of the causes and reasons for the deterioration of the ethnic relations and their culmination in the massacres. Whether or not the claims made by *İtidal* were true, they were vital in shaping public opinion in Adana, particularly the claims regarding an Armenian conspiracy. These articles in *İtidal* fumed public opinion in Adana after the first wave of massacres/clashes.

## The Second Wave of the Massacres (April 25–27)

When Armenians heard the news that additional troops were going to come to Adana from Mersin to help preserve order, they were elated.[103] On April 25, 850 soldiers from the second and the third regiments arrived from Dede Ağaç. After the regiments set up a camp in Adana, shots were fired at their tents. A rumor immediately spread that the Armenians had opened fire on the troops from a church tower in town.[104] The military commander of Adana, Mustafa Remzi Paşa, made no attempt to validate these rumors, but nevertheless ordered his soldiers to strike back at the Armenians. On Sunday, April 25 at 1:00 p.m. a battalion attacked the Armenian school that housed the injured from the first wave of the massacres. Soldiers poured kerosene on the school and set it on fire with people inside.[105] Regular soldiers, reserve soldiers, and mobs along with the Başıbozuks attacked the Armenian Quarter. They burned down churches and schools. The conflagration in the city of Adana continued until Tuesday morning, April 27, and destroyed the entire Armenian residential quarter and most of the houses in the outlying districts inhabited by Christians.[106]

Another factor which precipitated the massacres was the unwillingness of Turkish troops to maintain order. Armenian sources indicate that weapons were distributed freely by the government to local civilians who took part in the massacres, looting, and carnage. The second wave of the massacres was larger in scale and more violent than the first. While the massacres in the city of Adana were taking place, rumors spread throughout the province that Armenians had revolted in Adana, killed all the Muslims, and were going to destroy the villages. This caused extreme anxiety and provoked retaliatory attacks by the Muslims on Armenian villages.

## Conclusion

More than 100 years have passed since the massacres of Adana and historians continue to debate what the main causes of the massacres were. Indeed, the revolution should be regarded as the major catalyst in the deterioration of the situation. However, the massacres would not have taken place without the host of other factors mentioned in this article. The violence inflicted on the indigenous Armenian population should be understood as a manifestation of the anxieties caused by the major change within the political framework brought by the revolution. The weak institutions of the public sphere(s) in Adana played a dominant role in intensifying these anxieties and causing much distress among the local population and the notables of the *ancien régime*. This anxiety was not only political; rather it had serious economic ramifications at a time when modern agricultural technologies had replaced the old ones, causing much dissatisfaction among the poor migrant workers who were

benefiting from pre-modern modes of production. Thus, the dominant role played by the migrant population in the massacres could also be interpreted as an attack on modernization, represented by drastic changes in the mediums of production.

The bloodshed that Mihrdat Noradoungian was so much worried about did materialize during the counterrevolution. What followed was two waves of clashes, massacres, pillaging, and looting. The complicity of local government officials, such as the *vali* Cevad Bey and the commander of the army Mustafa Remzi Paşa, is undeniable as the Military Tribunals and the investigation commissions sent from Istanbul attested.[107] Worse yet was the role that one of the most important notables of Adana, Abdülkadir Bağdadizade, and his faction played in the massacres.[108] The CUP representative in Adana, Ihsan Fikri, along with Ismail Sefa, played a dominant role in shaping public opinion and transforming verbal into physical violence.[109] The reaction of the central government and the CUP against the real culprits of the massacre was lenient, as the court martial's decision attested.[110] Most of the key architects of the massacres mentioned above received light sentences. About fifty Muslims (some of them innocent)[111] and six Armenians were sentenced to death and many were sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor.[112] It seems that the CUP, having just recovered from a huge blow as a result of the counterrevolution, was afraid to take drastic action against the real culprits of the massacres because it was afraid that this would have wider effects in the region and would endanger its existence. The Adana massacres not only resulted in huge Armenian loss of life, but also led to the destruction of one of the most important Armenian economic centers in Anatolia.

## Notes

1. I would like to thank Arpi Siyahian and Michael Bobelian for reading and commenting on earlier drafts of this article. I would also like to thank the anonymous reviewers for commenting on the article. Of course, I alone am responsible for this article.

2. Mihrdat Noradoungian, "Azatut'ian ginĕ" (The Price of Freedom), *Puzantion* 3617, 1 September 1908, 1. Unless otherwise noted, all translations are my own.

3. "Ba'd al-dustūr" (After the Constitution), *Al-Muqattam* 5903, 27 August 1908, 1; "Hame'ora'ot be-mamlakhtenu" (The Incidents in Our Empire), *Hashkafa-Hazvi* 30, 31 July 1908, 1–2; "Los Aḳont\*isimiyent\*\*os en la Asya Minor" (The Incidents in Asia Minor), *El-Tiempo* 10, 28 October 1908, 92.

4. "Hin rejimĕ wana mēch" (The *ancien régime* in Van), *Arevelk* 6918, 12 October 1908, 3; Yervant Sermakeshkhanlian, "Hin Derut'ian Sharunakut'iwnĕ" (The Continuation of the Old Regime), *Arevelk* 6924, 27 October 1908, 1; "Gavar,nerun irawijagĕ" (The Condition of the Provinces), *Arevelk* 6896, 23 September 1908, 3; "Katsut'iwnĕ Mushi mēch" (The Situation in Mush), *Puzantion* 3629, 2 September 1908, 3; "Pēdk ē Vakhnal Esbar,nalik'nerēn" (We Have to Fear from Threats), *Jamanag* 6, 3 October 1908, 1; Yervant Sermakeshkhanlian, "Sahmanadrut'iwnĕ chi Gordzaderwirkor" (The Constitution is Not Being Implemented), *Arevelk* 6919, 21 October 1908, 1.

5. "Gatsut'ian wedank'nern ew p'ortsak'arerĕ" (The Dangers and the Calamities of the Situation), *Puzantion* 3592, 31 July 1908, 2.

6. Ibid.

7. Erik J. Zürcher, "The Ides of April: A Fundamentalist Uprising in Istanbul in 1909," in *State and Islam,* ed. Cees van Dijk and Alexander H. de Groot (Leiden: CNWS, 1996), 64–76; David Farhi, "The Şeriat as a Political Slogan–or the 'Incident of the 31st of Mart,'" *Middle Eastern Studies* 7, no. 3 (1971): 275–99. On the counterrevolution, see Sina Akşin, *31 [Otuz bir] Mart Olayı* (The Incident of March 31) (Ankara: Sevinç Matbaası, 1970); Talat Fuat, *31 [i.e., Otuz bir] Mart İrtica* (March 31st Reaction) (Istanbul: Türk Matbaası, 1911 [1327]); Cemal Kutay, *31 [i.e., Otuz bir] Mart ihtilâlinde*

*Abdülhamit* (Abdulhamid during the Rising of March 31) (Istanbul: Cemal Kutay Kitaplığı ve Tarih Sevenler Kulübü, 1977); Ecvet Güresin, *31 [i.e., Otuz bir] Mart Isyanı* (The Revolt of March 31) (Istanbul: Habora Kitabevi, 1969); Mustafa Baydar, *31 [i.e., otuz bir] Mart Vak'ası* (March 31st Incident) (Istanbul: Amil Matbaası, 1955); Sadık Albayrak, *31 Mart gerici bir hareket mi?* (Is the 31st of March a Reactionary Movement?) (Cağaloğlu, Istanbul: Bilim-Araştırma Yayınları, [1987]); Süleyman Kâni İrtem, *31 Mart isyani ve hareket ordusu: Abdülhamid'in Selânik Sürgünü* (The Revolt of the 31st of March and the Action Army: The Banishment of Abdulhamid to Salonica) (Istanbul: Temel, 2003); Mustafa Eski, *31 Mart olayının Kastamonu'daki yankıları* (The Repercussion of the 31st of March Incidents in Kastamonu) (Ankara: Ayyıldız Matbaası A.S, 1991).

8. Yunus Nadi, *İhtilâl ve İnkilâb-i Osmanî: 31 Mart-14 Nisan 1325; hadisat, ihtisasat, hakayik* (Ottoman Insurrection and Coup d'etat) (Dersaadet, Istanbul: Matbaayi Cihan, 1909), 35. For the other interpretation of the event on the same day, see Lütfi, "Dunki Hâl" (Yesterday's Situation), *Volkan* 104, 14 April 1909 (1 Nisan 1325), 1–2.

9. Nadi, *İhtilâl ve İnkilâb-i Osmanî*, 44.

10. Ibid., 45.

11. For a detailed contemporary description of the action army's entrance into Istanbul, see the ten-volume journal *Azatarar Sharzhumn Banakin Haght'akan Mutk'n i K. Polis* (The Victorious Entrance of the Freedom Action Army to Istanbul) (K. Polis: Tparan ew Gratun H.G. P'alagashean, 1909), vols. 1–10.

12. See Elie Kedourie, "The Impact of the Young Turk Revolution in the Arabic-Speaking Provinces of the Ottoman Empire," in *Arabic Political Memoirs and Other Studies* (London: Frank Cass, 1974), 124–61; Hasan Kayalı, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908–1918* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997); and Bedross Der Matossian, "Ethnic Politics in Post-Revolutionary Ottoman Empire: Armenians, Arabs, and Jews in the Second Constitutional Period (1908–1909)" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Columbia University, 2008), 203–83.

13. For a discussion on the emergence of public spheres after the Young Turk Revolution, see Der Matossian, "Ethnic Politics in Post-Revolutionary Ottoman Empire," 55–65.

14. The concept of the *public sphere*, which is very much associated with the experience of Europe and North America, was introduced by Jürgen Habermas in his work *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Scholars have criticized and modified the theory in different ways. Habermas himself has even revisited his approach and admitted that his notion of bourgeois public sphere is a "eurocentrically limited view." Jürgen Habermas, "A Philosophico-Political Profile," interview by Perry Andersen and Peter Dews, *New Left Review* 151 (1985 May–June): 104. For example, in his recent writings, Habermas has shown that there is no inherent reason that the notion of public sphere must be confined to an idealized European bourgeoisie. Jürgen Habermas, "Faktizität und Geltung" (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1992), 62–77, quoted in Dale F. Eickelman and Armando Salvatore, "The Public Sphere and Muslim Identities," *Archives européennes de sociologie / European Journal of Sociology* 43, no. 1 (2002): 92–115. Some have argued that the notion of public sphere applies to periods well before the late eighteenth century, while others challenged the distinction and relationship that Habermas envisions between "public" and "particular" realism. See, for example, Harold Mah, "Phantasies of the Public Sphere: Rethinking the Habermas of Historians," *The Journal of Modern History* 72, no. 1 (2000): 153–82, 158. Some have criticized Habermas's idealization of the liberal public sphere while others point out that he failed to examine other, non-liberal and non-bourgeois, competing public spheres. See Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1992), 115. The criticism of Habermas' public sphere created new approaches to our understanding of the public sphere. See Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*; Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts, eds.,

*After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing/ Sociological Review, 2004). First, criticism revealed the exclusionary nature of the Habermasan public sphere in its classical liberal form. Second, it argued for the multiplicity of public spheres or publics as opposed to the existence of one dominant public sphere. Third, it introduced the notion of counter-public or subordinate public sphere. Nancy Fraser proposes calling them subaltern counter-publics "in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests and needs" (123). This is important, because in the Ottoman case we see not only the emergence of one dominant public sphere, but also the development of competing/contending non-dominant public sphere(s). The interaction between these competing/contending public spheres would become an important catalyst in the deterioration of ethnic relations in Anatolia.

15. One of the best studies that exist on the public sphere in Muslim societies is Miriam Hoexter, Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, and Nehemia Levtzion, eds., *The Public Sphere in Muslim Societies* (Albany: State University of New York Press; Jerusalem: Van Leer Jerusalem Institution, 2002). See also Eickelman and Salvatore, "The Public Sphere and Muslim Identities"; Srirupa Roy, "Seeing a State: National Commemorations and the Public Sphere in India and Turkey," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 48, no. 1 (2006): 200–232.

16. Harold Mah argues that what distinguishes modern from pre-modern forms of the public is the particular mode of form of the public subject. Harold Mah, "Phantasies of the Public Sphere," 165.

17. Haim Gerber, "The Public Sphere and Civil Society in the Ottoman Empire," in Hoexter, Eisenstadt, and Levtzion, *Public Sphere in Muslims Societies*, 75.

18. See Ami Ayalon, *The Press in the Arab Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995).

19. Notably, for different ethnic groups the emergence of the political public sphere took place in different decades of the nineteenth century.

20. The *Pro-Armenia*, *Meşveret, Şuray-i ümmet*, and *al-Muqattam* could be regarded as the best example of such a tool.

21. The best study on the post-revolutionary press is Palmira Brummett, *Image and Imperialism in the Ottoman Revolutionary Press, 1908–1911* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2000). Although it concentrates primarily on the satirical press during the post-revolutionary period—mainly on the Ottoman press—it provides important information on political discourse on the Ottoman press from the Turkish perspective. The same kind of work needs to be undertaken on the ethnic press.

22. Ibid., 25. For example, during the first two years after the revolution, about seventy-nine new Armenian newspapers were published in the Ottoman Empire: forty-nine in Istanbul, eight in Van, six in Izmir, and the rest in Diyarbekir, Erzincan, Trebizond, Erzerum, and Sivas. See Amalya Kirakosian, *Hay Barperagan Mamuli Madenakruitiun (1794–1967)* (The Literature of the Armenian Periodical Press) (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH Kulturayi Ministrut'yun, 1970), 488–89.

23. Armenians along with the Muslims began selling arms after the revolution as one of the fruits of the revolution. Famous merchants like Haigazun Bezdigian, Mihran Yolciyan, and Revin Dikran Jeridian began selling arms in Adana. Later, when the incidents began, they were accused of preparing a revolt. Karebet Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor* (Report Pertaining to the Adana Incident) (Istanbul, 1911 [1327]), 19–21.

24. David Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway, NJ: Georgias Press, 2006); Fatma Müge Göçek, "The Decline of the Ottoman Empire and the Emergence of Greek, Armenian, Turkish, and Arab Nationalisms," in *Social Constructions of Nationalism in the Middle East*, ed. Fatma Müge Göçek (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 15–83; Fatma Müge Göçek, "Silences in the Turkish Republican Past: An Analysis of

Contemporary Turkish-Armenian Literature" (paper presented at a workshop at the Hagop Kevorkian Center for Near Eastern Studies, New York University, 27 October 2003); Fatma Müge Göçek, "Reconstructing the Turkish Historiography on the Armenian Deaths and Massacres of 1915," in *Looking Backward, Moving Forward: Confronting the Armenian Genocide*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NS: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 209–30; Taner Akçam, *Insan haklari ve Ermeni sorunu* (Human Rights and the Armenian Question) (Istanbul: Image Press, 1999); Fatma Müge Göçek, *Turk ulusal kimliği ve Ermeni Sorunu* (Turkish National Identity and the Armenian Question) (Istanbul: İletişim Publications, 1994); Fatma Müge Göçek, *Ermeni Tabsusu Aralanırken: Diyalogdan Başka Bir Çözum Var Mı?* (While the Armenian Taboo is Being Cracked: Is There Any Solution Other than a Dialogue?) (Istanbul: Su Publications, 2000); Fatma Müge Göçek, *From Empire to Republic: Turkish Nationalism and the Armenian Genocide* (New York: Zed Books, 2004); Fatma Müge Göçek, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2006); Fatma Müge Göçek, *Ermeni Meselesi Hallolunmustur' Osmanli Belgelerine Göre Savas Yillarinda Ermenilere Yönelik Politikalar* (The Armenian Issue is Resolved: Policies Toward Armenians During the War Years, Based on Ottoman Documents) (Istanbul: Iletişim Press, 2008); Taner Timur, *Türkler ve Ermeniler: 1915 ve Sonrası* (Turks and Armenians: 1915 and Its Aftermath) (Ankara: Image Press, 2001); Fuat Dündar, *Ittihat ve Terakki'nin Müslümanları iskan politikası (1913–1918)* (The Muslim Settlement Policy of the Union and Progress Party) (Istanbul: Iletişim Press, 2001); Fuat Dündar, *Modern Türkiye'nin Şifresi: İttihat Ve Terakki'nin Etnisite Mühendisliği (1913–1918)* (The Cipher of Modern Turkey: The Ethnic Engineering of the Union and Progress [1913–1918]) (Istanbul: Iletişim Press, 2008); Fuat Dündar, *Crime of Numbers: The Role of Statistics in the Armenian Question (1878–1918)* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 2010); Selim Deringil, "The Study of the Armenian Crisis of the Late Ottoman Empire, or, 'Seizing the Document by the Throat,'" *New Perspectives on Turkey* 27 (2002): 35–59; Üngör Uğur Ümit, "When Persecution Bleeds into Mass Murder: The Processive Nature of Genocide," *Genocide Studies and Prevention* 1, no. 2 (2006): 173–96; Üngör Uğur Ümit, "Seeing like a Nation-State: Young Turk Social Engineering in Eastern Turkey, 1913–1950," *Journal of Genocide Research* 10, no. 1 (2008): 15–39; Üngör Uğur Ümit, "Geographies of Nationalism and Violence: Towards a New Understanding of Young Turk Social Engineering," in "Demographic Engineering – Part 1," ed. Nikos Sigalas and Alexandre Toumarkine, special issue, *European Journal of Turkish Studies* 7 (2008), http://www.ejts.org/document2583.html (accessed 24 March 2010). See also the collected essays in *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 5 (Spring 2007). For a review of Turkish liberal historiography, see Bedross Der Matossian, "Venturing in the Minefield: Turkish Liberal Historiography and the Armenian Genocide," in *The Armenian Genocide: Cultural and Ethical Legacies*, ed. Richard Hovannisian (New Brunswick, NS: Transaction Publishers, 2007), 369–88.

25. Rarely do we see scholars working on the pre-1915 era. See Selim Deringil "'The Armenian Question is Finally Closed': Mass Conversions of Armenians in Anatolia during the Hamidian Massacres of 1895–1897," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 51, no. 2 (2009): 344–71; Meltem Toksöz, "Adana Ermenileri ve 1909 'iğtişâşı'" (Armenians of Adana and the 1909 Revolt), *Tarih ve Toplum Yeni Yaklaşımlar* 5 (2007): 147–57; and Matthias Bjørnlund, "Adana and Beyond: Revolution and Massacre in the Ottoman Empire Seen through Danish Eyes, 1908/9," *Haigazian Armenological Review* 30 (2010): 125–56.

26. See, for example, Vahakn N. Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence, RI, and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995); Raymond H. Kévorkian, *Le génocide des Arméniens* (Paris: Jacob, 2006).

27. Esat Uras, *Tarihte Ermeniler ve Ermeni Meselesi* (Armenians in History and the Armenian Question) (Ankara: Yeni Press, 1950); Salahi Sonyel, *İngiliz Gizli Belgelerine Göre Adana'da Vuku Bulan Türk-Ermeni Olayları (Temmuz 1908-Aralık 1909)* (The Turco-Armenian "Adana Incidents" in the Light of Secret British Documents [July 1908–December 1909]) (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurmum Baismevi, 1988). Even in their memoirs, the Ottoman officials involved in the events at the time argue that Armenians were preparing to establish their Cilician Kingdom. These are Mehmed Asaf (the *mutessarif* of Cebel-i Bereket), Ali Münif Bey (Adana's deputy in the parliament at the time), and Cemal Paşa (Adana's *vali* after the massacres). See Mehmet Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım* (Armenian Incidents of Adana and My Memoirs), yay. haz., Ismet Parmaksizoglu (Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu, 1982). Asaf wrote his memoirs in order to exonerate himself from the accusations against him by Bishop Moushegh; Ali Münif Bey, *Ali Münif Bey'in hâtıraları* (hazırlayan), Taha Toros (Istanbul: İsis Yayımcılık, 1996); and Cemal Paşa, *Hatıralar, Ittihat-Terakki ve Birinci Dünya Harbi* (Memoirs, the Union and Progress and the First World War), haz. Behçet Cemal (Istanbul: Selek Yayınları, 1959).

28. Vahakn N. Dadrian, "The Circumstances Surrounding the 1909 Adana Holocaust," *Armenian Review* 41, no. 4 (1988): 1–16; Raymond H. Kévorkian with the collaboration of Paul B. Paboudjian, "Les massacres de Cilicie d'avril 1909," in *La Cilicie (1909–1921) de massacres d'Adana au mandat français*, ed. Raymond H. Kévorkian, Revue d'histoire Arménienne contemporaine (Tome III, 1999), 7–248; Raymond H. Kévorkian, *Le génocide des Arméniens* (Paris: Jacob, 2006), 97–150; Raymond H. Kévorkian, "The Cilician Massacres, April 1909," in *Armenian Cilicia*, ed. Richard G. Hovannisian and Simon Payaslian, UCLA Armenian History and Culture Series: Historic Armenian Cities and Provinces 7 (Costa Mesa, CA: Mazda Publishers, 2008), 339–69.

29. On economic and agricultural centrality, see Meltem Toksöz, "The Çukurova: From Nomadic Life to Commercial Agriculture, 1800–1908" (unpublished doctoral dissertation, SUNY Binghamton University, Binghamton, 2001).

30. The deputy of Adana, Ali Münif Bey, highlights this fact in his memoirs in order to demonstrate the strategic location of Adana for Armenians and the ways in which the Church became a center of revolutionary activities for the Armenian committees. In addition, he argues that during a congress of Orthodox Armenians, who had gathered in Paris in 1905, a decision was taken to establish Cilicia as an independent entity. See Ali Münif Bey, *Ali Münif Bey'in hâtıraları*, 46–48.

31. Hampartsoom H. Ashjian, *Atanayi Yegehernĕ ew Goniyayi Husher* (The Massacres of Adana and the Memoirs of Konya) (New York: Gochnag Press, 1950), 15.

32. Ibid.

33. Hagop Terzian, *Atanayi Kiank'ĕ* (The Life of Adana) (Istanbul: Zareh Berberian Press, 1909), 7. For detailed information about the population, see Yeghyayan, *Atanayi Hayots' Patmut'iwn*, 148–51.

34. Terzian, *Atanayi Kiank'ĕ*, 6; David Fraser, *The Short Cut to India: The Record of the Journey along the Route of the Baghdad Railway* (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909), 80–81; Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 6.

35. According to David Fraser, about 70,000 bales of cotton are produced annually in Cilicia. Fraser, *The Short Cut to India,* 76.

36. Ayhan Aktar, "On Ottoman Public Bureaucracy and the CUP: 1915–1918" (paper presented at The State of the Art of Armenian Genocide Research: Historiography, Sources and Future Directions, Strassler Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies, Clark University, 8–10 April 2010).

37. Fraser, *The Short Cut to India*, 77–78.

38. Henry Charles Woods, *The Danger Zone of Europe: Changes and Problems in the Near East* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1911), 128.

39. Garabed Ashekian, a merchant from Adana, provides detailed information about the Armenian families that were involved in local trade as well as in the fields of import

and export. See Yeghyayan, *Atanayi Hayots' Patmut'iwn*, 157–64. See also Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 2–3. The book that Çalyan wrote after the Adana Massacres provides ample information on the ways in which the interethnic relations deteriorated. It also in a sense protests the ways in which justice was served after the massacres by the different military tribunals. Çalyan was a prominent Dashnak leader in Adana and was accused by the *mutessarif* of Cebel-i Bereket of agitating the masses. See Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 9.

40. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 3. Ferriman Duckett, *The Young Turks and the Truth about the Holocaust at Adana in Asia Minor, during April, 1909* (London, 1913), 12.

41. "Mukātabāt: Mersin" (Correspondence: Mersin), *Lisan al-Hal* 5793, 19 August 1908, 3. For detailed information about the event see "Azatut'yan Dōnĕ Gawaṛin Mēch: Mersin 28 Hulis" (The Feast of Freedom in the Province), *Puzantion* 3608, 20 August 1908, 1; "Mukatabāt: Mersin" (Correspondence: Mersin), *Lisan al-Hal* 5793, 19 August 1908, 3; "Les Province: Lettre d'Adana," *The Levant Herald and Eastern Express*, 13 August 1908, 2. On the manifestations of the constitution in Adana, see Kudret Emiroğlu, *Anadolu'da Devrim Günleri: II. Meşrutiyet'in İlanı, Temmuz-Ağustos 1908* (Revolutionary Days in Anatolia: the Proclamation of the Second Constitution, July–August 1908) (Ankara: İmge Kitabevi, 1999), 188–93.

42. Terzian, *Atanayi Kiank'ĕ*, 35.

43. On Abdülkadir Bağdadizade and his anti-Armenian sentiments, see Çalyan, Adana Vak'ası *Hakkında Rapor*, 40–41.

44. Moushegh Seropian, *Atanayi Jardĕ ew Pataskhanatunerĕ: nakhent'ats' paraganer* (The Massacres of Adana and the Accountable People: Precedent Circumstances) (Gahire: Tparan Ararat-S. Darbinean, 1909), 19.

45. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 17.

46. Ibid.

47. During the reign of Bahri Paşa all three (Ihsan Fikri, Abdülkadir Bağdadizade, and Gergerlizade) were exiled. Some returned with Bahri Paşa's aid. See L. Papazian, "Shahekan Tesaktsut'iwn mĕ Atanayi Nakhkin Vali Pahri Bashayi Hed" (An Interesting Meeting with the Previous Vali of Adana Bahri Pasha), *Jamanag* 191, 15 June 1909, 1–2.

48. Ali Münif Bey, the deputy of Adana, describes the tension between Ali Gergerlizade and Ihsan Fikri and mentions that Bishop Moushegh sat on the committee that replaced Fikri with Gergerlizade. Ali Münif Bey, *Ali Münif Bey'in hâtıraları*, 49.

49. Terzian, *Atanayi Kiank'ĕ*, 36. Ali Münif Bey argues that Armenians benefited from this tension between the two groups. Ali Münif Bey, *Ali Münif Bey'in hâtıraları*, 50.

50. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 22.

51. Ibid., 41.

52. Ibid., 43.

53. F. D. Shepard, "Personal Experience in Turkish Massacres and Relief Work," *The Journal of Race Development* 1 (1910–1911): 327.

54. Interview with Dr. Christie of Tarsus (from an Armenian newspaper), 13 August 1909, American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions (ABCFM) Archives, 2.

55. "Mulhakat: Mersinden Bir Mektup" (A Letter from Mersin), *İtidal* 39, 12 May 1909 (29 Nisan 1325), 2–3. This report also appeared in Arabic. See "Riwayat Istiqlāl al-Arman" (The Story of the Independence of Armenians), *al-Ittihad al-'Uthmani* 29, 31 May 1909, 3. Mehmet Asaf also discusses the play arguing that it was the first sign of the uprising. See Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 7–8, 27–28.

56. Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 27.

57. *İtidal*'s information about the play and its content is totally misleading. The real title of the play was *Sev Hogher kam Hetin Gisher Araratyan* (Black Soil and the Nights of Ararat). The play is a tragedy written by Armenian poet and playwright Bedros Turian (1851–1872). The original play is found in the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem. It

was performed for the first time in the *Osmaniye* Theater in Gedig Paşa on 6 March 1871. The ad was first published on the front page of the *Menzume-i Efkâr* on 5 March 1871. The play was first published after the Young Turk Revolution of 1908. The subject and plot totally differ in the original from the subject that was reported in *İtidal*. For the whole play, see Petros Duryan, *Erkeri zhoghovatsu* (Collection of Works) (Yerevan: Haykakan SSH GA Hratarakch'ut'yun, 1971), 1: 67–131.

58. "Mulhakat: Mersinden Bir Mektup," 3.

59. Helen Davenport (Brown) Gibbons, *The Red Rugs of Tarsus: A Women's Record of the Armenian Massacre of 1909* (New York: The Century, 1917), 98.

60. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 3.

61. *Ikdam* dismissed these reports from the provinces as total fabrication for political aims. See *Ikdam*, 21 October 1908, 3. Asaf also said that Bishop Moushegh was complaining to the central government against local officials and spreading false rumors about threats against Armenians. Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 32, 34.

62. Moushegh Seropian, *Atanayi Jardě ew Pataskhanatuněrě*, 26.

63. Thomas D. Christie to Mr. Peet, Tarsus, 6 May 1909, ABCFM Archives, 1. As a matter of fact, Christie provides one of the most excised accounts of the deterioration of the ethnic tensions after the revolution.

64. Moushegh Seropian, Atanayi Jardě ew Pataskhanatuněrě, 32.

65. According to the *mutessarif* of Cebel-i Bereket, the weapons were brought from Cyprus to be distributed to the Armenians of Adana by convincing them that the Turks were going to kill them. Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 7.

66. Interview with Christie of Tarsus, ABCFM Archives, 2.

67. The deputy of Adana accused him of agitating the revolutionary activities of the Armenians in Adana. See Ali Münif Bey, *Ali Münif Bey'in hâtıraları*, 49; Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 5–7. Asaf accused him of being a member of the Dashnak party and planning for the establishment of the Kingdom of Cilicia. In his booklet composed of two letters sent to the First Military Tribunal, Artin Arslanian exonerates Bishop Moushegh of all charges saying that on the contrary he appealed for the unity of elements (*ittihad-i al-anasır*). The booklet furthermore criticizes the ways in which justice was performed. Arslanian himself was imprisoned by the First Military Court and, under torture, had confessed that the aim of the Armenian agitation was to establish the Kingdom of Cilicia. Artin Arslanian, *Adana'da Adalet Nasıl Mahkûm Oldu* (Comment la justice a été condamnée á Adana) (Le Caire – El-Kâhire, 1909 [1325]), 11.

68. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 3. Another account says that two days before the events Hovhannes escaped to Cyprus and from there to Cairo. See Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 10.

69. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 13–14.

70. Hagop Terzian, *Kilikioy Aghetě: akanatesi nkaragrut'iwnner, vawerat'ught'er, pashtonakan teghekagirner, t'ght'akts'ut'iwnner, vichakagrut'iwnner, amenen karewor patkernerov* (The Catastrophe of Cilicia: Eyewitness Accounts, Documents, Official Reports, Correspondence, Census, with the Most Important Pictures) (Istanbul, 1912), 18–19; Çalyan, Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor, 14–16; Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 10–11.

71. Stephen R. Trowbridge to William Peet, 20 April 1909, ABCFM Archives, 1; Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 25.

72. Thomas D. Christie to William Peet, Tarsus, 6 May 1909, ABCFM Archives, 2.

73. Terzian, *Kilikioy Aghetě*, 20.

74. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 47.

75. Kévorkian, *La Cilicie (1909–1921) de Massacres d'Adana au mandat français*, 139. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 47–49. Even during the parliamentary debates in the post-massacre period, Armenian deputies in the Ottoman parliament understood the telegram that was sent by Adil Bey as an order to massacre the Armenians. For example, Armenian deputy Krikor Zohrab discussed the issue saying, "I saw the telegram

from the Ministry of the Interior of which complaint has been made, and its purport was in keeping with the traditions of the old regime. It did not say 'Kill the Armenians,' but 'restore order.' The hon. Members know that that was the formula used under the despotic regime; formulas depend upon their interpretations and it is certain that the phrase, 'Keep order and protect the foreigners and banks in particular,' would be misunderstood there." Summary of the Debate in the Chamber of Deputies on the Adana Massacres, in Sir G. Lowther to Sir Edward Grey (received 11 May 1909), Constantinople, 4 May 1909, inclosure, no. 84.

76. *Ben ne yapabilirim. Mâdemki Meşrûtiyet vardır. Ekseriyet-i âhâli ne isterse öyle yapar*. The quote is attributed to the *vali* of Adana, Cevad Bey. See Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 30.

77. On the seasonal migration see Toksöz, "Adana Ermenileri ve 1909 'iğtişâşı,'" 148–49.

78. Başıbozuks were literary known as "damaged head" meaning "disorderly" and were irregular soldiers of the Ottoman army. They were armed and maintained by the government but did not receive pay. They did not wear uniforms or distinctive badges. They were notorious for being brutal and undisciplined, thus giving the term its second, colloquial meaning of "undisciplined bandit" in many languages.

79. All Muslims who participated in the massacres were wearing the white hatbands round the fez. See Doughty-Wylie to Sir G. Lowther, Adana, 3 May 1909, inclosure 4, no. 96; Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 29.

80. Lawson P. Chambers to William Peet, 4 May 1909, ABCFM Archives, 1. Lawson Chambers was the nephew of Nisbet Chambers, a Canadian-British subject, head of the American Mission in Adana.

81. Herbert Adam Gibbons to Doughty-Wylie, Mersina, 2 May 1909, ABCFM Archives, 1. Gibbons provides in the letter a lengthy account of the incidents that occurred during the first waves of massacres.

82. The Fellahs are "Turkified" Arabs who are the descendants of the Egyptian Fellahin and brought to work in the cotton fields of Cilicia.

83. P. Rigal, "Adana. Les massacres d'Adana," *Lettres d'Ore, relations d'Orient* (revue confidentielle des missions jésuites éditée par le siege de Lyon et publiée à Bruxelles, Novembre 1909), 143; Shepard, "Personal Experience in Turkish Massacres," 328.

84. Duckett, *The Young Turks and the Truth about the Holocaust at Adana*, 24.

85. See F. W. Macallum to Dr. J. L. Barton, Adana, 19 April 1909, ABCFM Archives, 2. Macallum provides a detailed report based on the various notes made by Rev. W. N. Chambers.

86. Lawson P. Chambers to William Peet, 4 May 1909, ABCFM Archives, 8.

87. See F. W. Macallum to Dr. J. L. Barton, 5; Terzian, *Kilikioy Agheté*, 54.

88. For a detailed list of the casualties and deaths, see Stephen R. Trowbridge to William Peet, 21 April 1909, ABCFM Archives.

89. For a detailed account of the damaged places, see Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 31.

90. Hag-Ter, "Atanayi Yergrord Jarté" (The Second Massacre of Adana), *Jamanag* 179, 1 June 1909, 1–2. See also the lengthy article of Suren Bartevian, "Hayots Dēm Zrpartut'iwnk' ew *İtidal*'i Stut'iwnneré" (False Accusations against Armenians and the Falsifications of *İtidal*), *Puzantion* 3831, 19 May 1909, 1; Doughty-Wylie to Sir G. Lowther, Adana, 2 May 1909, inclosure 2, no. 96.

91. Fikri was tried by the Military Tribunal [*Dîvân-i Harb-i Örfî*] and sentenced to two years in exile for agitating the public during the massacres. From his exile in Alexandria he wrote to the Ministry of Internal Affairs complaining about the unjust accusations against him and the unfair trial. See Fikri to the High Commissioner of Egypt, 21 October 1909 (Teşrîn-i Evvel 1325), DH.MUİ.23–2/21_4 and DH.MUİ.23–2/21_5 (archives).

92. See Doughty-Wyllie to Sir G. Lowther, Adana, 2 May 1909. See also Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 10–13.

93. Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 21–25.

94. See Doughty-Wylie to Sir G. Lowther, Adana, 21 April 1909, inclosure 1, no. 83.

95. On the premeditated nature of the massacres see DH.MKT, 2854/6. The document includes a copy of the telegram submitted by the governmental and parliamentary investigation commission which was sent to Adana and which indicates clearly that the incidents were part of a premeditated plan (*evvelce tertib ve ittihâz edilmiş bir plan*). The report was submitted to the Sublime Porte on 16 June 1909 (3 Haziran 1325). For Mustafa Remzi Pasha, see Grand Vezir Hüseyn Hilmi, telegram to the Council of Ministers, 1456, 14 July 1909. See also Ministry of Internal Affairs, telegram to the Administration of Adana, 14 July 1909 (Temmuz 1325), DH.MKT, 2875/81. Doughty-Wylie argued that the fact that the massacres were perpetrated on the same day in distant places shows that the authorities knew of the intended massacre beforehand. Doughty-Wylie to Sir G. Lowther, Adana, 21 April 1909.

96. Ismail Sefa was an officer in the provincial administration.

97. The arguments made by Ihsan Fikri and his friends can be found in Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 32–34.

98. Ismail Sefa, "Müdhiş bir Isyân" (An Awful Uprising), *İtidal* 33, 7 April 1909 (25 Mart 1325), 1–2.

99. Burhan Nuri, "Ermeniler Hükümet Teşkil Edebilirler mı" (Can Armenians Form a Government), *İtidal* 33, 7 April 1909 (25 Mart 1325), 1–2. Even after the second wave of massacres, Fikri continued to claim that the main reason for the disturbances was the Armenians' quest to establish their kingdom. See Ihsan Fikri, "Ermeni Hemşerilerimize: İtilafa Doğru" (To Our Compatriot Armenians: Toward Entente), *İtidal* 37, 4 May 1909 (18 Nisan 1325), 1–2.

100. "Vilayat Havadisi" (Incidents in the Province), *İtidal* 33, 7 April 1909 (25 Mart 1325), 2.

101. Arslanian, who lived among Armenians for four years, had not found any desires by the local population for separation because such a thing would have been impossible. Arslanian, *Adana'da Adalet Nasıl Mahkûm Oldu*, 17. The same argument was made by Çalyan, who claimed that after the revolution the Armenian committees did not have any desire to promote separatist tendencies and that it would have been impossible to separate because they did not form a majority in any of the provinces. On the contrary, he argues that their first task became to preach brotherhood among all the elements of the empire. Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 14, 18–19. On the other hand, Mehmed Asaf argues that Moushegh brought Armenians from Maraş, Zeytun, Van, Harput, Diyarbekir, Bitlis and had been seeking to settle them in Adana in order to alter the demographic composition. Asaf, *1909 Adana Ermeni Olaylari ve Anılarım*, 24.

102. "Vilayat Havadisi," 2.

103. Terzian, *Kilikioy Aghetĕ*, 94.

104. See Doughty-Wylie to Sir G. Lowther, Adana, 7 May 1909, inclosure 3, no. 103. The vice-consul argues that some of the Roumeliot soldiers indicated that the shots that were fired at them and started the whole affair had been fired by Turks either with the wish to bring about a quarrel between the different sorts of soldiers or to raise more hope to rush the hated Armenian Quarter. See also Woods, *The Danger Zone of Europe*, 135.

105. Hampartsoum H Ashjian, *Atanayi Yegehernĕ ew Goniyayi Husher* (The Massacres of Adana and the Memoirs of Konya) (New York: Gochnag Press, 1950), 55. See also Lawson P. Chambers to William Peet, 4 May 1909, ABCFM Archives, 10.

106. Woods, *The Danger Zone of Europe*, 137.

107. See note 95 above.

108. See Ministry of Internal Affairs, telegram to the Vilayet of Adana, 11 July 1909 (28 Haziran 1325), DH.MKT, 2872/68.

109. See Ministry of Internal Affairs, telegram to the Prime Minister, 12 July 1909 (29 Haziran 1325), DH.MKT, 2873/58.

110. Çalyan is extremely cynical in terms of the way that justice was achieved in Adana. See Çalyan, *Adana Vak'ası Hakkında Rapor*, 36–55. The phase of the court martials, the Military Tribunals, and the government/parliamentary investigation commissions is the subject of a separate study. The trials were conducted in a manner unsatisfactory to the Armenians, who were extremely angry when the court's decision was announced. Nine Muslims and six Armenians were subjected to capital punishment in the autumn of 1909. In addition, twenty-five Muslims were hung in December 1909. These included the *mufti* of Bahçe. Armenians condemned the court for hanging six innocent Armenians. Articles and booklets were written denouncing the court's decision. Kassab Missak, one of the Armenians who were hung became the symbol of injustice for Armenians. Some even represented him as the Armenian Dreyfus. See *Arslanian, Adana'da Adalet Nasıl Mahkûm Oldu*, 13. Armenian sources also indicated that some of the Turkish peasants who were hung were innocent. The real culprits of the Adana Massacres escaped justice. Besides the Military Tribunals, two other official bodies were sent to Adana on May 12 to investigate the massacres. Faiz Bey and Harutiwn Mosdichian were sent on behalf of the government by the Ministry of Justice, and Hagop Babigian and Yusuf Kemal Bey were sent by the parliament. Babigian and Kemal Bay were accompanied by the *mutessarif* of Mersin. Both bodies conducted their investigations in Adana and were supposed to send their official reports to their respective bodies. On Babigian's report, see Hagop Babigian, *Atanayi Eghernĕ* (The Massacres of Adana) (Istanbul: Ardzagang Press, 1919); Yusuf Kemal Tengirşenk, *Vatan Hizmetinde* (Istanbul: Bahar Matbaası, 1967), 110–24.
111. Arslanian, *Adana'da Adalet Nasıl Mahkûm Oldu*, 12. Other sources provide the number 41 for the Muslims who were hung. See *1909 Adana Olaylari*, http://www.adanayorum.com/haber_detay.asp?haber=14896 (accessed 29 April 2009).
112. See, for example, War Ministry, telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 23 November 1909 (10 Teşrîn-i Sânî 1325), DH.MUİ, 43–1/32_2. The same orders were sent to Adana on 25 November 1909 (11 Teşrîn-i Sânî, 1325). See DH.MUİ, 43–1/32_1; War Ministry, telegram to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, 22 November 1909 (9 Teşrîn-i Sânî, 1325), DH.MUİ, 43–1/23_2. The same orders were sent to Adana on 23 November 1909 (10 Teşrîn-i Sânî, 1325). See DH.MUİ, 43–1/23_1.

# Did *Newsnight* Miss the Story? A Survey of How the BBC's "Flagship Political Current Affairs Program" Reported Genocide and War in Rwanda between April and July 1994

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*At the time of the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, the BBC's late-night political discussion program* Newsnight *was one of the few media political spheres within which representatives of the British government, opposition parties, the United Nations, and international non-governmental organizations could comment on British foreign policy. Since 1994 the British media have been charged with failing to report genocide; yet a focus on print media has created a void in understanding how BBC's* Newsnight *covered events. The present article analyzes* Newsnight *reporting between 6 April 1994 and 30 September 1994 and reveals that the BBC framed the genocide in a specific way until 31 July 1994. A comparative reading between the discourse of presenters, guests, and the news reports filed by journalists reveals that, despite a stack of media evidence that genocide was taking place, no representatives of the British government or opposition parties were interviewed on the role of the UK as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and signatory of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide from April to the end of July. Rather, a focus on the stateless "international community" and the failings of UN bureaucracy, the timing of debates, and the presenters' refusal to use the word "genocide" when guests and journalists did reveal that* Newsnight *failed to hold British politicians to account.*

*Key words: Rwanda, genocide, BBC, British media, war, democracy, British government*

## Introduction

In the years since the 1994 genocide in Rwanda, the British media have come under considerable scrutiny for failing to distinguish between government and Rwandan Patriotic Front fighting on the front line and the systematic killing that was taking place well behind government lines. By framing the killings as ethnic conflict and tribal civil war, the British media have been accused of contributing to the British government's disinterest in Rwanda and failure to meet its legal obligation as a signatory of the UN Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948). This accusation has been challenged by numerous journalists who seek to ensure that their version of events will go down in history.[1] Former Africa editor for *The Independent* Richard Dowden has contended that Rwanda itself has

"challenged assumptions and changed perspectives" about how the media should report on political crises in Africa.[2] Dowden was responding to an article published in *African Affairs* by Linda Melvern and Paul Williams which argued that the British press may also have contributed to "a wilful policy of indifference and obstructionism by the British government."[3]

There have been several studies detailing press coverage on Rwanda and questioning the extent to which the British media missed the story during the three months of genocide.[4] A focus on the UK "CNN Effect" equivalent, which assumes that media coverage can influence government foreign policy, overrides discussions on the extent to which the British government dictated how the British media should frame events. In both academic and journalistic spheres, discussions have been limited in scope by an almost obsessive focus on broadsheet newspapers, at the cost of omitting television news programs. This omission is deeply unsettling, not least because, unlike printed texts which remain under tight editorial control, television news and political discussion programs provide media spaces within which political discourse is created and contested by multiple political actors simultaneously.

Perhaps more surprising is the absence of BBC's *Newsnight* from the discussion. Deemed an essential component of British democracy and renowned for its provision of in-depth analyses of political events and for holding to account those people responsible for them,[5] *Newsnight* in 1994 was one of a limited number of media public spheres within which British politicians jostled to appear. Without the Internet and multiple television channels, *Newsnight* provided an opportunity for British politicians to promote themselves, their party politics, and their position on British foreign policy. They are joined by a host of experts who together contribute to *Newsnight*'s political discourse.

The absence of any extensive analysis of *Newsnight* has led me to assess how the BBC current affairs program reported on the Rwandan Genocide between 6 April and 30 September 1994. A cross-examination of news features provided by journalists on the ground in Rwanda, media discourse generated by studio guests, and the debates set by editor Peter Horrocks raises questions about whether *Newsnight* had deliberately avoided using the word "genocide" and controlled studio debates in order to protect the interests of the British government. The present article addresses two aspects of reporting. The first part maps how and when political violence is referred to as genocide to suggest that there existed a conflict between the images and language in the news features sent by journalists in Rwanda and the spoken words of the presenter (or news anchor) during the program. The second part examines *Newsnight*'s political discourse and studio debates. Until now, there has been no consideration of how political actors—including representatives of the UN, members of governments, NGO workers, missionaries, military operators, and civilians—maneuver to influence BBC narratives about war and genocide in the region. An analysis of their political discourse, from which members of the British government are distinctly absent, provides a new perspective on the way in which the news anchors chose to frame events in Rwanda between April and July 1994.

A total of 29 *Newsnight* programs broadcast between 6 April 1994 and 30 September are analyzed. The corpus is based on a key-word search conducted by staff at the BBC Archives to identify *Newsnight* programs that contained news features on Rwanda during this period. These documentaries, in addition to all programs broadcast in April 1994, were viewed and transcribed at the British Film Institute (BFI) film archive in London in August 2007.

## *Newsnight*'s Institutional Framework

First aired on Wednesday, 30 January 1980 with presenter Peter Snow, BBC's *Newsnight* aimed to provide an in-depth analysis of the day's news in a format that brought together the genres of television news and current affairs, which until then had been distinctly separate in British broadcasting. Founding editor George Carey enforced one rule stipulating that *Newsnight* should not lead on the same story as the BBC's *Nine O'clock News*.[6] *Newsnight* would also contribute to the BBC's requirement to provide impartial coverage of news and current affairs. Today, as in 1994, *Newsnight* has a clear generic structure and has developed its own institutional framework for organizing media political discourse.

The *Newsnight* presenter uses conventions typical of political interviews and has a specific role to play in setting the agenda of the debate, questioning and challenging politicians, other representatives of the public, or lobbyists of governments and international organizations. News anchors such as Peter Snow, Jeremy Paxman, Sue Cameron, and Kirsty Wark, who all reported in 1994, adopt the generic identity of the *Newsnight* presenter to appropriate specific discourse traits and a tough questioning style.[7] In addition to the political debates, each *Newsnight* program includes a series of extended news stories, often termed "news features" in the broadcasting industry, by documentary filmmakers and distributors.[8] Between ten and twenty minutes in length, many of these short documentary films merge news and current affairs and often provide some form of historical background or evidence which is then debated in the studio.

The *Newsnight* formula and generic presenter persona have led some critics, such as *New Stateman*'s Michael Leapman, to argue that the program's style leans too much toward "attack journalism" and focuses on creating rather than reporting, or indeed, analyzing news.[9] Advocates such as former Economics editor Will Hutton believe that *Newsnight*, in enabling political discourse, provides "an essential aid to living in a democracy"; in 2002, he stated that the program was "one of half a dozen ... components now of actual British democracy and British citizenship."[10] Former Director of Television Mark Thompson once described *Newsnight* as "the single most important program on the BBC."[11] The BBC boasts how over the years, the program has "broken countless stories, produced ground-breaking and policy-shifting films," and "delivered many memorable interviews."[12]

## Rwanda 1994

On 6 April 1994, the plane that was carrying the Rwandan President Juvenal Habyarimana and President of Burundi Cyprien Ntariyamira back from Tanzania was shot down by missiles above Kanombe airport in Kigali just after 8 p.m.[13] The presidents were returning from Arusha, where they had signed a UN peace agreement as part of the Arusha Accords which aimed to establish power sharing between the Hutu majority government and the Ugandan based, predominantly Tutsi-led refugee movement, the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). On the ground, the UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was led by Canadian Brigadier-General Roméo Dallaire who, under a Chapter Six mandate, was to oversee and monitor the Broad Based Transitional Government (BBTG). Within an hour of the plane crash, roadblocks were set up around the capital and mass killing on a scale that has not been seen since the Nazi Holocaust began. In the first forty-eight hours Hutu extremists, led by Colonel Théoneste Bagasora, undertook a military coup which saw the deaths of Hutu Power's political opposition, including the then interim

Prime Minister and pro-democratic Agathe Uwilingiyimana and ten UN Belgian soldiers who had been protecting her.[14] According to the UN, from April 6 to the end of July 1994, an estimated 800,000 people were killed, many within the first two weeks of the shooting down of the plane. The genocide took place four years into a war between the RPF and the former Mouvement Révolutionnaire National pour le Développement (MRNDD) government.

In the regions where genocide was taking place, witnesses spoke of neighbors killing neighbors but there was also a series of militias—Burundian Hutu refugees and the Hutu extremist youth-wing, the *Interahamwe*—who travelled from district to district killing and carrying out the most horrific human rights violations. During this period, an estimated 250,000 women, many of whom were Tutsi or had family members who were Tutsi, were raped. Civilian men and boys also suffered extreme gender-based violence and were among the first group to be targeted for death. In the first two weeks of genocide France, Belgium, and Italy sent troops into Rwanda under a national remit to rescue their citizens, but they were not under UN command. On April 11 the Belgian peacekeepers began to pull out and by the end of the first week of genocide and war, the US, France, and Belgium had closed their embassies. On April 21, the UN Security Council passed Resolution 912—its first since the beginning of the genocide—to withdraw the majority of peacekeepers and retain a small contingency.

Throughout April, France cautioned the international community against an intervention that would mean taking sides against the extremist Hutu government. There was a reluctance to refer to the violence as genocide, with Britain and the US being among the most vociferous in avoiding the term. On April 29, Czech Ambassador Karel Kovanda, alongside Colin Keating, called for the UN to officially recognize genocide in Rwanda.[15] British Ambassador David Hannay claimed that if the UN used the word genocide in official documents, the Security Council would become a "laughing stock."[16] According to Melvern, British representatives, renowned for their ability to frame "resolutions with mind-numbing ambiguity," played a direct role in crafting a statement taken from the Genocide Convention, objecting to "the killing of members of an ethnic group with the intention of destroying such a group in whole or in part," arguing that such a crime, although not directly called genocide in the statement, would be punishable under international law.[17] By the beginning of May, Sir David Hannay argued that the Organization of the African Unity (OAU), which had put pressure on securing the peace agreement from 1990 onward, had a "key role to play" in halting the violence.[18] It was not until May 13 that Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali suggested to the UN Security Council Dallaire's proposal to send in an additional 5,500 troops.[19] There followed hours of discussion behind closed doors before a public debate on May 17, whereupon it was agreed that an additional force was required. Resolution 918 was passed, which recognized that UN troops may be required to use force to protect civilians. No troops were made available and both the UK and US believed that there should be a clear mandate for military operations, but member states did not put forward the funds or military personnel requested by the UN.[20]

Throughout May, Dallaire retained a voluntary force of some 350 men, despite having been called to withdraw the troops early in April. From mid-May onward, debates in the Security Council focused on the need to extend UNAMIR's mandate to military intervention. By June 17, as the MRNDD government and the extremists were retreating westward into Zaire, France put forward a proposal to deploy French

troops under a humanitarian mission *Operation Turquoise*. The Security Council endorsed this proposal on June 22 in Resolution 929. The operation was met with criticism by the British media and it was widely held that France was trying to retain its francophone influence in the region.

## Genocide or War? *Newsnight*'s Silenced Debate

"Genocide" was first coined by Polish lawyer Raphael Lemkin to describe the politically sanctioned annihilation of targeted civilian groups outside of the context of war. Under the United Nations Convention for the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (1948) genocide constitutes the "intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial, or religious group."[21] The Convention was established out of recognition that the newly ratified Crimes against Humanity perceived national sovereignty as sacrosanct. At the time, under international law, states and individual perpetrators who acted within the boundaries of those states could still freely commit genocide unless they did so across national borders.[22] The UN stipulates that nation states that have signed the Convention have a legal responsibility to act to stop genocide and to hold perpetrators to account.

Since 1948 it has become apparent that the extent to which those UN member states halt genocide rests more on political will than any acknowledgement of legal responsibility. It is for this reason that using the word genocide in news stories and political discussion programs that report on political violence is considered so important. Accordingly, *Newsnight*, considered a central component of British democracy, should at most challenge the British government and opposition parties to ensure that the UK, as a signatory of the Convention, fulfills its role in preventing and halting genocide. However, an analysis of *Newsnight* programs broadcast between 6 April 1994 and 30 September 1994 reveals that the British government is not challenged throughout the course of the genocide.

In the first days of the genocide, *Newsnight*'s coverage of political violence in Rwanda is generated within the studio and completely controlled by the editor Peter Horrocks. The first story is provided on the day after President Habyarimana's plane was shot down, Thursday, 7 April 1994, when the following is mentioned by presenter Peter Snow in a single-sentence story during the summary of the day's news: "eleven Belgian troops serving with the UN have been killed in fighting in the central African Republic of Rwanda."[23] The following day, Rwanda is mentioned in the summary news by Kirsty Wark, who announces that the central African state is "in a state of anarchy tonight" and that "thousands of people have been killed during two days of ethnic violence in the capital Kigali."[24] In addition to using the ethnic conflict/coming of anarchy framework of reporting, Wark refers to the history of colonialism by honing in on the actions of the Belgian government who is "making plans to fly its nationals out of the country," although no effort is made to describe the political history, which includes the genocides of 1959, 1963, and 1972.[25] Visual images portray both militarization and humanitarian catastrophe: we see soldiers chanting and raising their guns in the air followed by pictures of refugee camps and people—mainly women—huddled in makeshift temporary huts. According to my research, in the first nine days of war and genocide, Rwanda received a total of 2 minutes and 50 seconds of coverage on *Newsnight*. Comprehensive reporting on the country does not occur until almost a month after the genocide began when, on 4 May 1994, we are presented with the first news feature.

## Using the Word ''Genocide''

Overall, news features vacillate between describing political violence as "civil war," "ethnic war," "ethnic cleansing," and "genocide" in all its clarity. However, an analysis of *Newsnight* programs reveals that the word genocide was only mentioned five times between 6 April 1994 and 27 July 1994, before the RPF claimed victory and declared a unilateral cease-fire. *Newsnight* presenters refer to the term just three times and only after the US and UK recognize the new RPF government at the end of July. Genocide is first mentioned by reporter Tom Carver in a news feature broadcast on May 16: "Everyday, evidence of the genocide inside Rwanda washes up at this outpost."[26] His statement is not echoed by presenter Sue Cameron who uses the ethnic conflict/coming of anarchy framework of reporting: "As the killings continue in Rwanda's civil war, most of the dead are members of the minority Tutsi killed by government supporting Hutus."[27] The word genocide is not mentioned again until June 20 by expert Ian Lindon from the Catholic Institute for International Relations in his second appearance on the show since the plane crash. Lindon argues that French intervention to create a humanitarian zone in the west of the country and a UN brokered cease-fire agreement will not stop the killing because it is state-led political violence and a deliberate targeting of a particular civilian group:

> One of the sides – the Interim Government – has been guilty of genocide. The other side, the Rwandan Patriotic Front, has done more than external agencies to free people and to rescue their kith and kin. To consider a ceasefire at this point would simply be to allow the killings to go on because it is not primarily regular armies that are doing the killing, it's the Hutu extremist mobs.[28]

Ignoring Lindon's reference to genocide, Peter Snow continues the debate on whether France should intervene in a pre-recorded (and therefore controlled) interview with the General Secretary of the RPF, Dr. Theogine Rudasingwa, who refers to the "people responsible for genocide" three times.[29] Rudasingwa talks about the "people who definitely have carried out and planned the genocide" on July 4, the day when the RPF took control of Kigali and declared it will establish a new government based on the Arusha Accords, but again, this is not picked up on and debated by presenter Sue Cameron.[30] Later on, on July 15, Robin Denselow in his second news feature for *Newsnight* since the genocide began, reports exclusively on the shooting war, although his introduction makes it clear that genocide was taking place: "They've captured the capital and now the rebel troops of the RPF are poised for the final battle for Rwanda. It's been an extraordinary victory, but can they really bring peace to a country divided and wrecked by genocide."[31] Denselow is practically ignored by Paxman in the studio, who relies once more on the ethnic conflict/coming of anarchy framework of reporting to emphasize the importance of a cease-fire.

It is not until 27 July 1994, when both the US and UK officially recognize the new RPF government, that the word genocide is mentioned by a presenter when Kirsty Wark hosts a *Newsnight Special* debate on Rwanda. Although this is the first time a news anchor utters the word, Wark continues to use the ethnic conflict/coming of anarchy framework of reporting, thus suggesting that the targeting of civilians was degenerative in a backward, "African" kind of way. One month later, on August 25, Kirsty Wark, echoing Martin Shaw's concept of *degenerative war*, declares somewhat inaccurately that "civil war turned into genocide."[32] *Newsnight* only begins to use the word genocide continuously from 22 September 1994 onward, in sync with the UN. During this September broadcast, Jeremy Paxman introduces

the headline story in a manner which criticizes the UN, even though *Newsnight* (and the BBC) played no role in pressuring the UN into acknowledging that genocide was occurring from April onward. Paxman declares, "A United Nations investigation has at last given slaughter in Rwanda the name it so long seemed to merit: it was genocide."[33] This statement is qualified by Robin Denselow's news feature wherein he reports that the "UN is under attack in Africa for taking so long in bringing those responsible for genocide to justice."[34] In the first three months of reporting since the plane crash, journalists in the field and guests on the show refer to genocide, while *Newsnight* presenters avoid using the word.

## Describing the ''Act of Genocide''

Agence France Presse (AFP) reporter Anne Chaon has argued that journalists are obsessively preoccupied with their failure to properly describe political violence in Rwanda following the shooting down of President Habyarimana's plane. "Most journalists," she writes, "are not expert in genocide. Many of them, myself included, arrived in Rwanda with very little knowledge of the country."[35] As a consequence, war was described more often than genocide. The problem of describing political violence in Rwanda is expanded upon by BBC correspondent Mark Doyle, who spent a significant amount of time in the first three months after the plane crash filing stories from Rwanda. Doyle claims to have reported two types of conflict: the "shooting war" and the "genocide war," but observes that he did not use the actual word genocide until April 29 in a report which referred to British aid agency Oxfam's announcement that genocide was taking place.[36] Doyle has since admitted that in the first weeks he got the story "terribly wrong," in spite of having been briefed on the political situation in Rwanda by the ambassador of the African Embassy in Kigali in early 1994.[37]

Like Chaon, journalists who were reporting in Rwanda alongside Tom Carver at the beginning of May have expressed their difficulty in knowing how to recognize genocide as something distinguishable from war. Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) British journalist James Schofield, who met the BBC *Newsnight* team outside the gates of the interim government's temporary headquarters in Giterama (its members having fled Kigali the month before), felt that his own coverage was flawed. Schofield had missed the start of the genocide, had not been engaged, and later found it difficult to gain entry into Rwanda. When he did travel into the interior from Burundi's capital, Bujumbura, Schofield kept hearing stories of widespread massacres but could not see any bodies, in part because the perpetrators had concealed them. Schofield felt that it was challenging for journalists on the ground to comprehend what was taking place, claiming that "you do have this blind spot about genocide – it's jolly difficult to imagine it."[38]

Other journalists who reported in Rwanda at the time felt, retrospectively, that the difference between genocide and war was distinct. Geoff Adams Spink was a producer for the BBC Radio Four *Today Programme* in May 1994. Having some interest in Burundi, Spink approached his editor Roger Mosey for permission to travel to Rwanda from the UK. His editor agreed, provided that he report only from the borders of neighboring countries and not enter into the interior. Spink notes that his brief was to report on the refugees and the tensions because they had similar ethnic tensions in Burundi.[39] While in Tanzania, Spink was reliant on conversations with NGO workers for information but they were only providing stories about what Spink terms "the human migration fall-out."[40] Upon spending four days in Burundi, Spink, broadcaster Andy Kershaw, and another journalist secured an accompanied

journey into Rwanda with an RPF guide. During his three-day trip, Spink indicates that while in Rwanda he saw both war and genocide, but confusion lay in understanding what atrocities were taking place in the war zone and what was taking place behind government lines (i.e., in the areas where genocide was continuing):

> We saw both ... front lines are not demarcated nicely with white picket fences ... they are very fluid places. I think we'd happened upon the frontline when even the [RPF] officer who was escorting us believed that we were well behind it. But the distinction to me is that ... five minutes before the landmines and the ambushes started to happen, we stood on the bridge of the river with a detachment of RPF troops and they pointed down and literally once every thirty seconds – and we timed it – literally once every thirty seconds there was another body floating down the river and it was usually civilian. No. it was exclusively civilian. Usually older people, children, women – hands tied behind their backs, floating with their face down. Now that's not war, that's genocide as far as I'm concerned. In the same way that the trashed village had the bodies of all the villagers stuffed down the village well. And again, that's not war, that's genocide. It's the same with what we saw in Nyamata, so that was genocide. And then we happened upon war as well.[41]

Concerned that *Newsnight* was too dependent on rehashing the pieces that BBC news was delivering, producer David Belton sought an agreement from Peter Horrocks to report on Rwanda in late April 1994. Like Spink, Belton's brief was to cover the refugee crisis that was building up in Tanzania and he was told to stay outside of Rwanda's borders. Alongside a sound technician and cameraman, Belton arrived in Kenya on April 25 and travelled by car from Nairobi to Boneo camp in Tanzania with BBC World Service correspondent Tom Carver, who had recently reported from Johannesburg. The *Newsnight* team shot its first news feature on those borders, where they encountered the RPF at Rusumo Falls before returning to Nairobi to cut the film. Like Spink, Belton knew that they were witnessing genocide but concedes that the first film was not explicit enough:

> It wasn't that we didn't think it was genocide – we couldn't say with certainty standing on the border. It was a difficult position to be in. It was complex in terms of what we were seeing and what we were hearing. If we had been standing on a live wire to Paxman and were asked were we seeing genocide, we couldn't say yes. [In that first film] there should have been a line saying this is what people inside the country are saying. We made amends in the second one – no one else had been to or seen Kabgayi.[42]

In another parallel with Spink, the team rebelled against the instructions of *Newsnight* management and travelled into Rwanda from Bujumbura. A priest from the former Yugoslavia, Vjeko Curic, was running an ad hoc aid mission into the country. Curic would not let them ride in his lorry, and agreed instead that they could tailgate him to Kabgayi, located well behind the extremist government lines and known to the Red Cross as a place where systematic killing was taking place. Belton believed that they saw genocide but at the time found it challenging to depict on camera:

> Yes, I believed we were witnessing genocide. It was complex – you saw it in various ways but not on camera – that was switched off. We knew it was genocide as there were people lying on the side of the street in large numbers. Some were butchered in front of us and we saw the process happen. There was one man with pink identification papers – we saw them. It was very difficult to tell people this or visualise it for people – we didn't do a good job in conveying what we'd witnessed. The camp was

> more complex because they [the Tutsi] were alive. Soldiers were walking in and out. There was a Red Cross presence and therefore it was very difficult for the Hutu soldiers to wipe out this particular group of people. The Bishop was high up in the political hierarchy of the country but at the same time he was a bishop. The killing was not something the government wanted to see themselves and at the time they were under heat from the international community. The camp was just off the main road, it was one month after the genocide had begun and they were several leagues behind the front line – it was difficult for the government to call it civil war, which is what they were saying.... The people in the camp were slowly starving to death and were being pulled out. A lot of young women I think lost their lives. It felt like a death camp in a Bosnian war – only more brutal.[43]

Journalists in the field and distributors of news features were aware that the story was big. Ron McCullagh, director of the documentary film production company Insight News TV based in London, distributed for journalists Catharine Bond, Nick Hughes, and Lindsey Hilsum during the genocide. It was in his company's interests to rally broadcast new editors into purchasing footage. Insight News TV had hours of rushes provided by Catharine Bond but no polished documentaries. From April to June 1994, Insight News TV distributed footage to Germany, Spain, and Canada, among others. But there was little interest in the UK. McCullagh recalls,

> We faxed people around the world and we said this was happening, could you possibly send us your interest and we'll send you some material. Part of the problem was that the material was unprocessed. Normally this is a company that produces and makes films ourselves and so normally they get a finished piece. In this particular case, we couldn't do that because Catharine was on the road and filming all the time and what finished pieces she was doing, she was doing directly for Channel 4.[44]

For McCullagh, there was a sense that the editors had already decided not to run the story. Although he admits that his team did not explicitly use the word genocide, Insight News was stressing that the level of violence was extreme and more than a typical African civil war scenario:

> This company has a reputation for dealing with stories around the world and therefore not the stories that are high up on the agenda, and we are careful about the people we work with in order to protect that reputation. So there is never a question of the veracity of our material. It's down to whether it's important enough to get on the news bulletin from where the editor stands.... We tell them the story, they don't respond. Then we come back and tell them look, it really is a story. They still don't respond. Then we go back and say look this is really serious. At which point, they close down. And they think "well you're pestering." They've already made their decision.[45]

## Describing Genocide

If media institutions are expected to monitor political violence and assess whether genocide is in process, the question might focus on what evidence should be mediatized. Genocide scholar Helen Fein's paradigm is apt for assessing the extent to which evidence of genocide was present in *Newsnight* news features. Fein identifies five conditions which constitute genocide: evidence of a sustained attack on a selected group; evidence that the perpetrator is part of an organized group, often led by a commander; evidence that victims are targeted because they are members of a certain collectivity as defined by the perpetrators; evidence that victims are defenceless; and, finally, evidence that an intent to kill is sanctioned by the authorities.[46] As

Belton suggests, within *Newsnight* news features there is evidence of all of these conditions in Rwanda, most notably in the documentaries shot in early May 1994. For example, in the news feature broadcast on May 16, Carver interviews Vjeko Curic, who reports, "The Tutsi I've met so far, those left behind, are just waiting to be killed. ... They don't know how to get out of the situation, and most of them think they will be killed. They are just waiting to die."[47]

In the same news feature, Carver observes that the authorities are both condoning and instigating the targeting of civilians. Here, it is worth quoting the documentary at length, since it demonstrates a logic of reporting based on the distinction between war and genocide:

> Most ordinary people are struggling to continue their lives amidst the carnage. But they're being bombarded by extremist propaganda on the radio, urging them to keep killing their Tutsi neighbours and every so often we would get a glimpse of the horror that lay beneath the surface. Yesterday, as we were waiting at this spot to be led into the Seminary [the camp at Kabgayi], we watched a man being interrogated by soldiers. With his hands tied behind his back, he knelt in the dirt pleading his innocence. Suddenly, the soldiers handed him over to a group of civilians who clearly wanted to kill him.... All this took place in sight of the Bishop's palace. This is a country where all moral order seems to have been destroyed.

> The UN may be trying to stop the war between the government and the rebels but that's not where most of the atrocities are occurring. They are taking place in remote villages deep inside the government controlled areas, far away from front lines and foreign eyes.[48]

The challenge in describing genocide is also evident in their news features. On May 10, Carver states, "You cannot explain this as just a tribal conflict. At an ordinary human level, Hutus and Tutsis have lived easily together, so much so that it's hard to distinguish one from another."[49] Instead, the *Newsnight* team borrows from documentary film representations of the Nazi Holocaust to reproduce visual representations of genocide that would have been familiar to a British audience at the time. Carver uses the language of the Holocaust to describe the death camp—labelled a refugee camp—wherein Tutsi are selected to be taken away and killed by *Interahamwe* and government soldiers. "These people are caught in a terrible dilemma," Carver says, "it felt as though we'd entered the Jewish ghettos at the height of Nazism."[50] Here, camera shots echo the scenes of the Nazi concentration camps, first honing in on people in the background, then focusing on a baby crying and a frail old woman resting her head against the wall, before readjusting the focus of the camera on to the wire fence in the foreground. The documentary then cuts to a hand resting on the wire, before the scene pans out to see more children standing behind the wire.

Witnesses provide the most graphic accounts, but it is clear that they are unable to adequately describe in words what they saw. Missionary Rob Wilson, interviewed by Tom Carver for the May 10 news feature, recalls,

> As a Christian, I can't understand how a normal person would take up a *panga* (machete) and er ... just kill an innocent baby or a child or a mother. ... And so something snapped inside these youths or whoever did the killing ... that made them do things that were unthinkable. It's just not normal. I mean, you can understand in a war situation, soldiers shooting each other but innocent people that had no political affiliation – they were just children and so on ... you just can't ... I just can't imagine ... something gripped the people who were committing these massacres and it's difficult to explain it in human terms."[51]

It is also clear that members of the Tutsi population are being singled out. On May 16, Tom Carver interviews Swiss businessman Claude Sonier, who was trapped in Butare with his Rwandan wife and children before being rescued by an Italian consort and is now in Burundi. It is quite clear that Sonier is deeply traumatized by what he has seen, and Carver weaves his words into a narrative that sensational-izes the horror of the journey into Rwanda on which they have only just begun to embark:

> Tom Carver: He told us that hundreds of people, including his wife's mother, had been thrown alive into a pit full of burning tires.

> Claude Sonier: Forty percent of the population is dead today. Forty percent! Because you have not so much Tutsi in life today.

> Tom Carver: You talked about a big pit. Can you just describe this please?

> Claude Sonier: No! No, it's too much [*shaking his head*] . . .

> Tom Carver: As he was leaving he gave a chilling warning of what lay ahead.

> Claude Sonier: Sa mère, son frere sont capité. Un vieux – coupé en quarters.[52]

While at Kabgayi, unarmed civilian Rwandan Tutsi boys who are interviewed by the *Newsnight* team also find it difficult to explain the horror they face:

> Tutsi boys [*translated*]: They are attacking us. It's unbelievable. They come in here and take the old and the young out of the camp and kill them using knifes and machetes. It defies imagination and there's nothing we can do. . . . All the people they target are Tutsi. They don't want us to live in this country any more.[53]

Fein indicates that this inability to describe genocide is common among first-hand witnesses and was just as notable during the 1915 Armenian Genocide when reports by foreign correspondents, missionaries, travellers, and diplomats were sent from Turkey to London and America. Fein notes that these observers knew that horrors and crimes were taking place, and "words such as 'atrocities,' 'extinction,' 'extermina-tion,' and 'perished' were reiterated," but nothing with as much as the legal term or concept of genocide.[54] In the case of *Newsnight* reporting, "horror" becomes the most frequently used word by both journalists and witnesses to describe what they saw. If journalists, witnesses, and those about to be killed cannot find a word suitable for the crime, we are left wondering who in media institutions *is* responsible for identi-fying genocide amid such a stack of media evidence.

## Studio Debates

Since *Newsnight* prides itself on its ability to challenge politicians on behalf of British citizens one might ask, what was the political discussion program's approach to engaging representatives of the British government, a permanent member of the UN Security Council, in studio debates when its very own news features provided evidence of genocide in Rwanda? In this regard, how were studio debates framed to allow for taking those in power to task?

On May 4, Rwanda is described in sensationalized terms by presenter Sue Cameron who states that the "horror worsens" before questioning "what the UN should do in Rwanda. Can intervention stop the bloodshed?"[55] This first debate sets the scene for many repeat discussions between May and July 1994 about whether or not the UN (but not UN member states) should intervene in Rwanda. Each time, the angle of the story changes slightly but the issue on the agenda remains the same. On

10 May 1994 *Newsnight* questions the role of US intervention in Rwanda, with presenter Peter Snow describing two situations: civil war and humanitarian crisis (refugees are fleeing), and the West having problems delivering aid to them.[56] Civil war dominates the next debate on May 16, the same day that the UN votes to send 5,500 troops to Rwanda and Carver's accompanying news feature portrays images similar to those of the Nazi Holocaust. The following day, concern is expressed for "world failure" in stopping war generally, and the "tragedy of Rwanda" as the "most recent" war becomes the case study in which to frame a discussion led by Jeremy Paxman on the role of the US in "gearing [UN] member states into action," although member states are not singled out.[57] Six days later, on May 23, *Newsnight* reports on the UN's failure to "broker a ceasefire" and asks "what should [the then Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations] Iqbal Riza do next?" placing emphasis on UN bureaucracy and the role of international civil servants.[58]

On June 20, the issue on the agenda concerns France's decision to send in its own troops on the humanitarian mission *Operation Turquoise*, and *Newsnight* asks "should France go in."[59] On July 4, *Newsnight* reports the victory of the RPF, stating that "the victorious Rwandan Patriotic Front find their advances blocked by France" before questioning "are French motives purely humanitarian and will it come to open battle between French and Rwandans?"[60] Eight days later, on July 15, *Newsnight* continues to report on the civil war, heralding that a cease-fire is "imminent" before discussing the exodus of refugees fleeing into Tanzania. It is not made clear that these refugees are Hutu, some of them perpetrators, fleeing the advances of the Rwandan Patriotic Front. Attention returns to the role of the world in saving refugees from the "latest horror" on July 18 and 22, when again Rwanda serves as a case study for discussing whether the West "really know[s] best" when dealing with humanitarian crises.[61]

All of these debates are confined to the realm of international politics and international organizations (in particular the UN), which are imaged as detached from domestic UK politics and British government foreign policy. *Newsnight* avoids discussing the British role in influencing UN decisions around military intervention. Not once throughout the course of reporting on Rwanda does *Newsnight* refer to the lobbying efforts of the political activists and NGOs that urged the UK government to recognize that genocide was taking place. In late April, when Rwanda is absent from *Newsnight*'s agenda, Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, and Oxfam publicly demanded that the British government take immediate action in the interests of Rwandan civilians.[62] On Tuesday, May 3 David Bryer, the director of Oxfam, and British actress Helen Mirren presented a petition and accompanying letter to the then Prime Minister John Major at 10 Downing Street stating that genocide was taking place.[63] On the following day, May 4, Oxfam printed an advert in *The Times*, labelling the violence in Rwanda genocide—but arguing that genocide was something extreme, greater than war—and the deliberate targeting of civilians. Below the image of piles of skulls the caption reads,

> After Cambodia the world said: "Never again," yet in Rwanda there is genocide. Oxfam does not use the word genocide lightly, but there is no other way to describe the mass slaughter happening right now. Men, women and children are being systematically hunted down, tortured and killed. The rivers are choked with bodies.... Half a million people, mainly Tutsis, face imminent death.[64]

Oxfam appeals directly to the British government: "What is happening in Rwanda is a crime. The apathy of the world is criminal. We believe Britain must use its seat on the Security Council to call for effective UN intervention in Rwanda, now."[65] This political activism is not included in *Newsnight*'s analysis of the day's news. Instead, on the day that Oxfam prints the advert, *Newsnight* begins its two-month-long series of debates on the role of the international community, the need for a world leader in gearing nation states into action, and criticism over the ineffectiveness of the UN. From the start of the genocide until the end of July when the RPF took control of the country, no British MP from any of the parties and not a single member of the British government is interviewed by *Newsnight,* in spite of the importance of the program in 1994, at a time when there were less media public spheres and less opportunities for political actors to promote themselves and their parties. Interestingly, the first MP to speak on *Newsnight* is interviewed on July 22 during *Newsnight*'s declaration that America has "seized the initiative . . . to counter the crippling epidemic" in Goma refugee camps in Zaire. Long-standing Conservative MP Toby Jessel chooses to hone in on the humanitarian refugee crisis to commend both the US and UK for funding aid agencies and the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees): "If every country had responded as well as the Americans and the British," he states, "the problem wouldn't be as grave as it is."[66]

Once the RPF declared victory on July 22 and was recognized by the US as a legitimate government, representatives of the British government began to appear more frequently on *Newsnight*. However, an analysis of the *Newsnight Special* broadcast on 29 July 1994 and a close examination of the political discourse generated by numerous actors during the studio debate suggest that *Newsnight* reporting ensured, above all, that the interests of the British government were protected.

In the hour-long extended program, Kirsty Wark hosts a chat-show style debate to examine the "developing crisis in Rwanda." Baronness Lynda Chalker, the then Minister of State for Overseas Development at the British Foreign Office, is the special guest in the studio. She is joined by Rwandan Tutsi Joseph Mutabobo and Rwandan Hutu Ally Yusuf Mugenzi, Rakiya Omaar of Africa Rights, former British Gulf Commander General Sir Peter de la Billiére, former director of War on Want George Galloway, war crimes expert Dr. John Pritchard, Stuart Wallis of Oxfam, Ali McHums of the Tanzanian High Commission, BBC World Affairs editor John Simpson, Conservative MP Nick Budgeon, and Great Lakes scholar Filip Reyntjens. US Special Envoy to Rwanda Brian Attwood, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the UN's Iqbal Riza, the UNHCR's Sylvanna Foa, Dominique Moisi from the French Institute of Foreign Affairs, and RPF representative Dr. Rudasingwa—many of whom had already appeared on *Newsnight* over the course of April, May, and June—appear on the show via satellite link-up. The program includes a news feature by reporter Robin Denselow in Goma and a "personal argument" by John Simpson. A series of debates construct an overall story of events from, as Kirsty Wark describes in her introduction, "the roots of the killings, the international response and its failures, what the UN can deliver and the agendas which govern the West's dealings with post-colonial Africa."[67] The role of individual nation states is barely discussed and Britain is imaged as trying to prevent crisis in Rwanda from April onward.

Wark does well to avoid challenging Chalker about the role of the UK as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. However, Chalker, introduced as having just returned from Rwanda (and therefore appearing to be heavily involved in the crisis), claims that "Britain has been helping in Rwanda since the beginning

of April" before suggesting that the UK is itself powerless because other factors prevent an international response. Chalker states,

> We've already spent over £50m in this crisis. We have a large number of soldiers, we all know in other places, but we have said we would help in the way that General Dallaire has requested of us and we've fitted exactly what he needs. We were not able to do so in May but it was generally agreed in the OAU that African forces would go in. There has been a real difficulty I think in procurement, not only of forces, but equipment, to allow them to be deployed. And that is something that the UN has really got to put right.[68]

Wark then turns to Rakiya Omaar and asks whether the UN's role, as Chalker says, has been good enough. Omaar refers directly to the UN as having "completely betrayed the hopes of the Rwandan people."[69] Emphasis on the role of a seemingly independent United Nations, existing outside the control or influence of member states, is challenged first by Andrew Wallis from Oxfam, who makes the point that General Dallaire and his small number of forces "have done their best" but have been let down by the international community who "did not do enough to get 5,500 troops in."[70] Wark turns to Archbishop Desmond Tutu to qualify that it was not just a "Western failure" to act, thus detracting from a potential focus on the role of the British government in providing troops. The Archbishop is the first person on the program to refer to the "Rwanda crisis" as genocide, claiming that "governments could have responded much earlier ... to stop the genocide."[71] This statement provides a platform for the then Assistant Secretary-General in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Iqbal Riza, to cleverly expose the inaction of the member states, in particular the UK:

> Well I think Arch Bishop Tutu has already spoken for us [i.e. for the UN]. Indeed there were troops on the ground, as Baroness Chalker says, but with all due respect to her, those were troops that did not belong to the United Nations and the countries who had contributed them immediately decided to withdraw them. Within a matter of a couple of weeks, we were down from 2,500 to 250 because governments decided to withdraw them and because the Security Council itself decided to reduce the force. There was a certain reason. The governments who had sent those troops had sent them for a certain mandate, which was to help the parties to implement the agreement, which then broke down. They were not willing to leave these troops in the condition when these massacres and the civil war resumed. One has to say that the very fresh experience of Somalia was hovering in the background—the ghost of Somalia, and that I suppose influenced governments. But as Arch Bishop Tutu has said, the capacity, the potential, was there. It was not simply an African operation. The west is very much a part of the United Nations and it has demonstrated that when the will exists, they can deploy. The French deployed in a matter of days. The Americans have deployed in a matter of days. And Baroness Chalker is right. The British have offered a unit just during the last few days, and it will be there in the next few days.[72]

In closely analyzing the dynamics between Baroness Chalker, Brian Attwood, and Iqbal Riza, we perhaps have some insight into the tensions between member states and UN bureaucracy. Riza's comment on the situation is quickly derided by US Ambassador Attwood, who himself uses a number of tactics to divert attention away from individual member states. First, Attwood contends that debates around the responsibility of individual governments are "not particularly constructive," since "if we blame the United Nations, we're blaming ourselves."[73] In seemingly speaking on behalf of the public, Attwood's use of rhetoric moves the audience away from

thinking about the crisis in terms of genocide and toward viewing it as chaotic ethnic war and he cleverly distinguishes between "irrational" African politics and "rational" Western politics. At the same time, Attwood argues that we (that is, we in the "West") must distance ourselves from what has already happened so that the entire world can examine the crisis. It seems that Attwood subtly calls for the kind of distance that only the passing of time can bring, thereby arguing that what has happened has happened and there is nothing we can do now. Here, it is worth quoting his discourse in full:

> I *don't think this debate is particularly constructive, frankly*, I think we have a serious problem in dealing with these kinds of *conflagrations*. The *world itself* must examine this situation as a case study. *It's a very emotional situation* because so many people have lost their lives. *But we should be realistic here*. What has happened is that we were faced with the need to place troops in the midst of *a hot civil war*. It's very rare that you will find the political will to do that. It seems to me we need to look—not blame—the United Nations. Indeed, it is true we are all part of that. If we blame the United Nations, we're blaming ourselves. We have to look at our capacity to respond to these things. *It's a much more constructive debate* it seems to me, *if we can examine whether or not there was a way to prevent this crisis from happening* in the first place. *These irrational forces at play*. We're now looking back with 20/20 hindsight and expecting to come up with rational answers. It's easy to do in hindsight, as opposed to on the spot.[74]

Later, Attwood uses similar tactics to distance the US from the responsibility of making political decisions about whether to intervene (to stop genocide), announcing that, with the RPF government in place, the US "will be putting two hundred people on the ground in Kigali" as part of a humanitarian mission. "Everyone has to play their proper role," Attwood concludes, "I think that's the role we define ourselves."

## A Public Relations Exercise?

In addition to its focus on UN bureaucratic failure, *Newsnight*'s extended debate also appears to whitewash events in order to further dumb down public questioning of British foreign policy. This is most noticeable in the discourse of Conservative MP Nicolas Budgeon, who contends that the British government will only act to prevent political violence or war abroad at the behest of the British public. When asked by Wark whether the Organization of the African Unity (OAU) needs more help, Budgeon appropriates an argument that had previously been used to challenge nation states on their failure to act to prevent genocide and then subverts it by reminding the audience that domestic priorities must come first. In doing so, Budgeon taps into both the fears and needs of the average British citizen, or perhaps the average viewer of *Newsnight* in 1994:

> The so-called international community doesn't have a budget and doesn't have any money … it is all about political will. What this boils down to is whether there is a national political will. And in this instance, I don't find people coming up to me in the streets and saying "I'd like my son to go and fight in Rwanda and run the risk of being killed." Nor if you ask them "are you in favour of a lot of money being spent there" are they prepared, for instance, to delay the start of a new hospital so as to aid in Rwanda.[75]

As part of the program, BBC World Affairs editor John Simpson provides a personal commentary. Filmed in an editing suite, Simpson considers why it was that the international community neglected Rwanda. Simpson appropriates the "balance of

power" image of politics to contend that during the Cold War "no one hung around waiting for a public reaction" and states that nations have "cut back on long-term development aid"[76] to focus on short-term relief. Simpson concludes his "expert" analysis by arguing that "public opinion's only aroused once the crisis point has already arisen." The inclusion of Simpson, as the BBC's World Affairs editor, masks *Newsnight*'s own failure to extend its "in-depth political analysis" to challenge UK politicians during the three months of genocide. And it is quite ironic that *Newsnight* now discusses the need to rouse public interest in order to ensure that governments act, when the program itself failed to report on the British public's interest in Rwanda in early May.

## Conclusion: *Newsnight*'s Denial

Fein has argued that denial can take many forms and includes a failure to recognize an event as genocide at the time.[77] Policy elites of allied states have a political interest in denying genocide in order to demonstrate loyalty or allegiance to the country or allied countries that are closely connected to the state committing genocide. It has been suggested that Britain's engagement in politics of revisionism at the time stemmed from a loyalty to France: an early Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the UK Foreign Office in 2005 for information on Britain's knowledge of genocide at the time was rejected on the grounds that it would compromise Britain's relationship with France.[78] Fein indicates that governments and elites often adopt various framing devices to confuse public opinion. My analysis of *Newsnight* suggests that between April and the end of July 1994 the program did well to convey a sense of confusion, off-setting media evidence of genocide in the news features with sensationalized statements by news presenters to the contrary and confining debates to brokering a UN cease-fire and the bureaucratic failings of the UN. *Newsnight*'s control over studio discussions and its reluctance to add to its media agenda the obvious debate—is this war or genocide?—between April and July 1994, followed by the sudden appearance of members of the then Conservative government once the RPF had taken control of the country are both particularly striking.

In failing, and quite possibly deliberately avoiding, to use the legal term genocide, the *Newsnight* team was not obliged to follow the BBC's own mandate of aggressively interrogating British politicians. Rather, the presenters are seen to be aggressively interrogating a host of international politicians who themselves make no reference to Britain's status as a permanent member of the UN Security Council. The tactic of avoiding British influence in international politics is strengthened by an alignment to the frameworks propounded by Samuel Huntingdon in his *Clash of Civilisations* and Robert Kaplan's *The Coming of Anarchy*, which assume there is a morally constituted "international community" to police world politics from which Britain appears to be decidedly absent.[79]

The continued ignorance of Britain's citizens of the decision making of British government representatives such as Lord Hannay and Linda Chalker during the Rwandan Genocide is endemic of British foreign policy. Melvern asserts that the UK's foreign affairs are the "most private realm of political affairs in the UK" and that "there is a governance which is unaccountable and does not have parliamentary oversight."[80] Melvern and Williams have contended that there is a need to undertake a thorough assessment of the government under John Major's leadership in either preventing or suppressing genocide in Rwanda in 1994 or helping to facilitate and prolong it.[81] *Newsnight*'s failure to challenge UK politicians has further hindered a collective understanding of the extent to which the British government practiced

denial and has prevented the sourcing of additional leads of inquiry which might expose individuals who should be held to account for failing to act on behalf of British citizens. As observed, many academic studies concentrate on the role of the UK media in influencing British foreign policy. Yet my own analysis of *Newsnight* suggests that one of the most crucial questions remains unanswered: to what extent were politicians influencing the *Newsnight* agenda? David Belton, who when interviewed appeared to be surprised that *Newsnight* presenters did not use the word genocide throughout the course of reporting between April and July, provides some idea of the logic behind the selection of studio guests:

> I'm not sure if *Newsnight* tried to contact [then Minister of Foreign Affairs] Douglas Hurd and he turned them down. In my experience, the only person that matters is a government minister—preferably from the Foreign Office. It is not so important if it is a member of a party making a claim.... If he could avoid answering questions on Bosnia, think how much easier it is to avoid answering questions on Rwanda—for example "deeply regretful, monitoring the situation, doing all we can...."[82]

## Notes

1. See James Schofield, *Silent Over Africa: Stories of War and Genocide* (London: Harper-Collins, 1996); Richard Dowden, "Comment: The Rwandan Genocide: How the Press Missed the Story; A Memoir," *African Affairs* 103, no. 411 (2004): 283–90; Tom Giles, "Media Failure over Rwanda's Genocide," *BBC News*, 7 April 2004, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/panorama/3599423.stm (accessed 7 January 2010); John Borton and John Eriksson, *Assessment of the Impact and Influence of the Joint Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda* (Denmark: Ministry of Foreign Affair, 2004); Mark Doyle, "Reporting the Genocide," in *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, ed. Allen Thompson (London: Pluto Press, 2007), 145–59; Nick Hughes, "Exhibit 467: Genocide Through a Camera Lens," in Thompson, *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, 231–34.
2. Richard Dowden, "Comment: The Rwandan Genocide," 283.
3. Linda Melvern and Paul Williams, "Britannia Waived the Rules: The Major Government and the 1994 Rwandan Genocide," *African Affairs* 103, no. 410 (2004): 1–22, 3.
4. See Greg Philo et al., "The Media and the Rwanda Crisis: Effects on Audiences and Public Policy," in *World Orders in the Making: Humanitarian Intervention and Beyond*, ed. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998), 211–29; Alan J. Kuperman, "How the Media Missed the Rwanda Genocide," *International Press Institute Report* 6:1 (2000); Linda Melvern, *A People Betrayed: The Role of the West in Rwanda's Genocide*, rev. ed. (London: Zed Books, 2009); Anne Chaon, "Who Failed in Rwanda? The Journalists or the Media?" in Thompson, *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, 160–66; Tom Giles, "Media Failure over Rwanda's Genocide."
5. BBC, "A History of *Newsnight*," *BBC News*, 28 May 2009, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/newsid_8070000/newsid_8072000/8072060.stm (accessed 10 January 2010).
6. George Carey, "Newsnight's Difficult Birth...," *BBC News*, 21 January 2005, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/programmes/newsnight/newsnight25/4111751.stm (accessed 10 January 2010).
7. Anne O'Keeffe, *Investigating Media Discourse* (London/New York: Routledge, 2006), 63.
8. Scott White (documentary filmmaker and director of SW Pictures), interview with the author, London, 13 February 2006.
9. Michael Leapman, "Time to Pension Off Paxman," *New Statesman*, 2 July 2005.
10. Will Hutton, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 21 February 2002.
11. Baffour Ankomah, "*Newsnight*, What a Night!" *New African* 387 (2000): 32.
12. BBC, "A History of *Newsnight*."
13. Linda Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder: The Rwandan Genocide* (London: Verso, 2006), 133–36.

14. See Melvern, *Conspiracy to Murder*.
15. Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 202.
16. Ibid., 203.
17. Ibid.
18. Ibid., 214.
19. Ibid., 289.
20. Ibid., 219.
21. *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 December 1948, 78 U.N.T.S. 277, http://www.preventgenocide.org/law/convention/text.htm(accessed 16 May 2011).
22. Samantha Power, *A Problem from Hell: America and the Age of Genocide* (London: Flamingo, 2002), 49.
23. Peter Snow, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 7 April 1994.
24. Kirsty Wark, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 8 April 1994.
25. Ibid.
26. Tom Carver, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 16 May 1994.
27. Sue Cameron, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 16 May 1994.
28. Ian Lindon, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 20 June 1994.
29. Theogine Rudasingwa, *Newsnight,* BBC2, broadcast on 20 June 1994.
30. Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 325.
31. Robin Denselow, *Newsnight,* BBC2, broadcast on 15 July 1994.
32. Genocide scholar Martin Shaw argues that genocide should not be seen as distinct from war, but a "particular form of modern warfare, and an extension of the more common form of *degenerate war*." In degenerate war, civilians or certain groups of people within a society may be defined as the enemy. However, in the case of Rwanda, it seems genocide was an extreme measure implemented by the MRNDD government to retain state power. See Martin Shaw, *War and Genocide* (London: Polity, 2003), 5; Wark, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 25 August 1994.
33. Jeremy Paxman, *Newsnight,* BBC2, broadcast on 22 September 1994.
34. Robin Denselow, *Newsnight,* BBC2, broadcast on 22 September 1994.
35. Chaon, "Who Failed in Rwanda?" 162.
36. Mark Doyle, "Reporting the Genocide," in Thompson, *The Media and the Rwanda Genocide*, 145.
37. Ibid., 146.
38. James Schofield (journalist), interview with the author, Oxford, 23 July 2007.
39. Geoff Adams Spink (BBC correspondent), interview with the author, London, 16 April 2007.
40. Ibid.
41. Ibid.
42. David Belton (former *Newsnight* producer), interview with the author, New York, 2 November 2009.
43. Ibid.
44. Ron McCullagh (head of Insight News TV), interview with the author, London, 12 December 2005.
45. Ibid.
46. Helen Fein, "Denying Genocide: From Armenia to Bosnia," LSE Occasional Paper (London: LSE, 2001).
47. Vjeko Curic, interview by Carver, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 16 May 1994.
48. Carver, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 16 May 1994.
49. Carver, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 10 May 1994.
50. Carver, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 16 May 1994.
51. Rob Wilson, interview by Carver, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 10 May 1994.
52. Claude Sonier, interview by Carver, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 16 May 1994.
53. *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 16 May 1994.

54. Fein, "Denying Genocide," 11.
55. Cameron, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 4 May 1994.
56. Peter Snow, *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 10 May 1994.
57. *Newsnight,* BBC2, broadcast on 17 May 1994.
58. *Newsnight,* BBC2, broadcast on 23 May 1994.
59. *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 20 June 1994.
60. *Newsnight,* BBC2, broadcast on 4 July 1994.
61. *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 18 July 1994; *Newsnight*, BBC2, broadcast on 22 July 1994.
62. Melvern, *A People Betrayed*, 274.
63. Ibid.
64. Oxfam campaign advert, *The Times*, 4 May 1994, 11.
65. Ibid.
66. Toby Jessel, *Newsnight,* BBC2, broadcast on 22 July 1994.
67. Wark, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
68. Lynda Chalker, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
69. Rakiya Omaar, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
70. Andrew Wallis, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
71. Desmond Tutu, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
72. Iqbal Riza, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
73. Brian Attwood, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
74. Ibid.; emphasis added.
75. Nicolas Budgeon, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
76. John Simpson, *Newsnight Special*, BBC2, broadcast on 29 July 1994.
77. Fein, "Denying Genocide," 2.
78. Hazel Cameron (researcher), discussion with the author, London, 31 August 2005.
79. Gavin Mount, "A 'World of Tribes,'" in *Contending Images of World Politics*, ed. Greg Fry and Jacintha O'Hagan (Hampshire: Macmillan Press, 2000), 151; see also Robert D. Kaplan, *The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War* (London: Vintage, 1992); and Samuel Huntington, *Clash of Civilisation and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).
80. Linda Melvern (investigative journalist), interview with the author, London, 4 October 2009.
81. Melvern and Williams, "Britannia Waived the Rules," 32.
82. David Belton, telephone interview with the author, New York, 2 November 2009.

# George Steiner and the War against the Jews: A Study in Misrepresentation

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*The literary and cultural critic George Steiner has been described as the preeminent literary critic of the past fifty years. Certainly, he has written eloquently about aspects of the Holocaust, and his emphasis on language and its power to make and unmake much of human life, has been widely influential. Yet Steiner's work on the Holocaust is misleading in its interpretations, explanations, and implications. Part of this stems from his worry that the Jews brought their near destruction upon themselves: that they had invented the practice of genocide, had invented the idea of a "chosen people," had through Moses, Jesus, and Marx created such moral demands upon ordinary human beings that the tension became unbearable and resulted in a revolt against the tyranny of conscience and perfection. Part of it comes from his uncritical focus on Freudian psychology and reliance on literary works as a substitute for history. Yet there is almost always the dazzling prose, which can overwhelm critical thought and lead one away from a factual understanding of the origins and consequences of the Holocaust. The present article provides a critical assessment of Steiner's interpretation of the Holocaust, its antecedents, causes, and consequences.*

*Key words: Holocaust, forms of explanation, George Steiner, Moses, Freud, survivors*

Genocide is a species of total war, but one in which the attempt is not to defeat the "enemy" using any means possible, but rather to eliminate the "enemy" in whole or in part, whether armed or unarmed. This was the pattern in the ancient world and it is now common in the modern age, with Rwanda being the most recent case. The example best known today is what some historians call "The War against the Jews," while most others know it as the Holocaust.[1]

The literary and cultural critic George Steiner has written eloquently about aspects of the Holocaust in numerous essays and books. Many of us who came of age in the 1970s in the United States and write about genocide were influenced by his focus on the power of the "Word": language and its power to make and unmake much of human life. Here is the concern he has about language but also about the power of the humanities to curb violence against humans:

> Central to everything I am and believe and have written is my astonishment, naïve as it seems to people, that you can use human speech both to bless, to love, to build, to forgive and also to torture, to hate, to destroy, and to annihilate.[2]

Nathan Scott of the University of Virginia described George Steiner as the preeminent literary critic of the last half of the twentieth century, and the late Terrence Des Pres, a Holocaust scholar of the first order, said there was "no doubt of his brilliance."[3]

Yet Steiner's work on the Holocaust is misleading in its interpretations, explanations, and implications. Part of this stems from Steiner's own worry that the Jews brought their near destruction upon themselves: that they had invented the practice of genocide, had invented the idea of a "chosen people," had through Moses, Jesus, and Marx created such moral demands upon ordinary human beings that the tension became unbearable and resulted in a revolt against the tyranny of conscience and perfection. Part of it stems from his uncritical focus on Freudian psychology, reliance on literary works as a substitute for history, and apparent distance from empirical social science. One appreciates Steiner's deep moral concern, his Enlightenment belief in the power of the humanities to shield us from barbarism, and his vivid and often dazzling prose. In these and other ways, Steiner is, in Plato's phrase, "the Honeyed Muse," the artist whose work is seductively beautiful, but leads us radically astray.

Steiner imagines in all sincerity that it was the ennui of bourgeois culture at the close of the nineteenth century that helped pave the way for visions of destruction, culminating in the attempt to destroy the Jews; that the density of population in the industrial-urban milieu triggered instincts of devastation or, as he puts it, "some obscure but primal need for free space, for the silence in which the ego can cry out its mastery"[4]; that the concentration camps that played a decisive role in the killing of Jews (and others) were a literal version of "Hell," forgetting that in Christian belief Hell was a place of justice. And he subscribes to Elias Canetti's view that the Holocaust was made possible by the abstraction of large numbers related to the collapse of currency in the 1920s. Large numbers had only "unreal meaning" which "tainted with unreality the disappearance and liquidation of peoples."[5] On the other hand, Steiner is particularly concerned with why literature and other aspects of the humanities did not prevent the Holocaust and indeed originated in a land of high civilization. As often is the case with Steiner, there are important points scored but opportunities missed. Here he gives no consideration to civic and political culture, which may well serve as barriers to genocide or spurs to it. And one final example: he alters the concept of "survivor" beyond recognition.

## The Survivor Theme

One can relate to Steiner's deep concern with the failure of the humanities to serve as a barrier to the Holocaust yet point out his lack of understanding of the importance of civic and political awareness, the role of authoritarian culture (he can deal with this only in terms of the German language), and how, in a time of crisis, the humanities and their claims to furthering a disposition toward decency and morality can be overcome by nationalism and the psychology of "us and them."

On the other hand, what is one to make of Steiner's claim that he is "a kind of survivor?"[6] Not a "literal survivor," but "a kind of survivor." His family left France in 1940, shortly before the Nazis arrived, and lived a comfortable life in New York City as the Holocaust proceeded. Some critics have described Steiner's claim as arrogant, self-indulgent, and masochistic (the latter comes from non-psychologists who have read a little Freud). Those statements may well be right, but my own reflections are quite different.

Steiner was born in Paris on 23 April 1929; he attended a Lycee there until the family moved to New York in January 1940. With the exception of Steiner and one other student, all of the Jewish students in his school were killed by the Nazis with the collaboration of the French police. Today, all over Paris, there are schools that

have inscriptions that mention the destruction of their Jewish students and speak of the collaboration of the French authorities in carrying it out.

George Steiner writes,

> We left France, where I was born and brought up in safety. So I happened not to be there when the names were called out. I did not stand in public squares with the other children with whom I had grown up. Or see my father or mother disappear with the train doors torn open. But in another sense I am a survivor, and not intact.[7]

He sees himself as a survivor, not only because of his fellow students who did not survive, but because the "black mystery of what happened in Europe is to me indivisible from my own identity."[8] He cannot be normal; his relationships with others are simply different because of the Holocaust, or at least that is what he says. And he appears to have a deep desire to enter into the pain of those who died, who were killed in a horrible manner. Nowhere does he express it more openly than in his commentary on a poem by Sylvia Plath.

Shortly before the American poet Sylvia Plath committed suicide by putting her head into a gas oven, she wrote a number of Holocaust poems. Steiner thought some of them went to the heart of what the Holocaust experience must have been and noted that they came from an American, non-Jewish woman. But I think he also had himself in mind when he wrote the following: "Perhaps it is only those who had no part in the events who can focus on them rationally and imaginatively; to those who experienced the thing, it has lost the hard edges of possibility; it has stepped outside the real."[9]

So according to Steiner, those who were not there, in the places of deportation and killing, are those who can report accurately on what happened in the ghettos and in the camps and are the ones who, unlike the victims, can make sense of the terrible events. Steiner characteristically does not make many comparative statements. Was this true only of the Holocaust, or would he extend the same vision to the Armenians, Cambodians, Tutsi? This kind of approach is one of the reasons that critics have argued that Steiner is using the Holocaust to aggrandize himself, claiming to be a kind of survivor. But if it is a matter of being "affected" (a loose and indefinite word) by genocide—any genocide—who, except those who are indifferent, is not a survivor; who is not a victim? Genocide is a crime committed on the body of a particular people, but also against humankind. It reduces for all time biological and cultural possibilities, it reduces the plurality of human existence, and, when any group claims the right to determine who has the right to live, all humans are under attack. Still, is not the basic notion of a "survivor" that of one who has been directly victimized and has somehow survived and gone on, more or less, with a life? Steiner, with whose personal account I am sympathetic, alters the whole concept of what a "survivor" is, distorting it beyond recognition, diluting and diverting it, as we shall see, into a matter of identification and the preservation of a Jewish humanistic tradition.

What about those ethnic/racial/religious groups whose recent ancestors (and the question can be raised, how far back do we go?) have been subjected to genocide? Some will have strong cultural or intellectual traditions, while others may not. If we adopt Steiner's standard, they would seem to be of lesser importance, less likely to be "survivors" than he is. But then his standard is very individualistic, very much a matter of egocentrism, and he certainly privileges the Holocaust over all other genocides, and in that he is not alone. Yet how many Jews, from whatever country or circumstances during or after the Holocaust, qualify in his terms as a "kind of

survivor?" Is this a solo act? Has he ever sought out those who were free from the direct terror of the Nazi onslaught, living in a safe environment during the Holocaust, but who have his sense of being "a kind of survivor?" It could be an extraordinary exercise, painful, dissonant, even confirmatory.

The problem that I have with Steiner's use of the idea of the "survivor" is that it distorts the concept of "survivor," it shows disrespect for actual survivors of the Holocaust, and it privileges a literary and humanistic life, equating writing a few books with the millions who died in the Holocaust. The other problem I have with his approach is that he never discusses the other genocides (Armenian, Cambodian, Rwandan, and others) in the same terms. Of course, he is providing a kind of memoir of his own obsession with the Holocaust ("the Holocaust left its mark on me"), but a few comparative statements would have been helpful. Do those who were potential victims of other recent genocides, but were safe because abroad, see themselves as survivors? Or is Steiner reflecting on his own experience and aspiration rather than pointing to a common reaction of those saved from victimization by geographical separation?

The themes that Steiner addresses in Plath's poems can be described as masochistic, but I would see his concern with them as a matter of empathy. On the other hand, he gives credence to other interpretations. In speaking of Plath's poem "Daddy," in which she "became a woman being transported to Auschwitz,"[10] he deeply identifies with her evocation of events that she had not actually witnessed, but with which she had a fateful identification and longing. Speaking for her, but also for himself, Steiner writes, "Was there latent in Sylvia Plath's sensibility, as in that of many of us who remember only by fiat of imagination, a fearful envy, a dim resentment at not having been there, of having missed a rendezvous with hell?"[11]

Steiner is a survivor of sorts, but only at a distance; he can only imagine what his schoolmates and Jews of many backgrounds suffered. He wishes that he had been there and claims that he was envious for having "missed a rendezvous with hell." Yet he sees himself as a "kind of survivor." His relations with others, his life's work, and his daily thought revolve around the Holocaust. Still what is striking about Steiner's claim to be a kind of survivor is his cultural claim that he is one of the last survivors of the lost and destroyed Jewish humanistic culture of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries: Heine, Bergson, Hofmannstahl, Proust, Marx, Kafka, Freud; Wittgenstein should certainly be added to the list. But Steiner is attuned to the Word and leaves out the strong presence of the many composers of Jewish origin, such as Mahler and Stravinsky, and of major artists, such as Chagall, perhaps because he can only see himself as a successor to literary artists and critics, not philosophers, painters, and musicians.[12] But that leaves out an amazing part of the Jewish humanistic contributions to contemporary life and defies his notion that most of the Jewish contributions are now behind us, partly because of the Holocaust, but for other reasons as well.

> That which has been destroyed–the large mass of life so mocked, so hounded to oblivion that even the names are gone and the prayer for the dead can have no exact foothold–embodied a particular genius, a quality of intelligence and feeling which none of the major Jewish communities now surviving preserved or recaptured. Because I feel that specific inheritance in my own reflexes in the work I try to do, I am a kind of survivor.[13]

Steiner goes on to talk about the humanities in Central Europe and how Jewish contributions were at the forefront, not only among intellectuals but in communities

as well, whether in Prague, Vienna, Berlin, or Paris. But he comments, after the Holocaust, "Almost nothing of it survives."[14] Still, he sees himself as a successor to the great figures who had gone before, a successor to the Jewish humanistic culture that has now largely disappeared. He wants to think of himself in this respect as one who keeps a tradition alive and, in his view, thus as a survivor.[15]

Steiner is good with words, but here he fails: rather than "survivor," the appropriate term is "heir." He may well be the heir to a tradition, a heritage, which he sees as his duty to continue, but this is a far cry from the idea of a survivor. Yes, cultures survive or they don't, but it is a fallacy to confuse the survival of a culture with the survival of humans in the face of politically imposed death. Steiner surely must be aware that being a survivor in a literary sense—which as I have suggested is a misuse of words—cannot be equated with the same notion of survival where victims of the Holocaust, or of any genocide, are concerned.

## The Central Argument

I have already referred to some of Steiner's explanations of the Holocaust: density of population, noise that sets one's nerves on edge, large numbers losing their meaning due to inflation, and thus an intellectual inability to respond to the mass killings of so many millions of people in Europe. These are contained in Steiner's most powerful statement of his understanding of why the Holocaust took place and why the Jews were its victims, his eloquent and seductive essay "A Season in Hell" in *In Bluebeard's Castle*, published in 1971. These claims can be easily dismissed. If it were a question of density, lack of personal space, and noise, then genocides should have broken out—in fact should be taking place at this very moment—in Tokyo, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, New York, Marseille. And with regard to the large-numbers thesis, there are two issues: first, how many people actually knew the extent of the killing of Jews? In Germany, not so many; in Ukraine, where executions were in the open, more people were aware of it. And, second, why does Steiner not mention the other groups, such as Gypsies and Soviet prisoners of war, who were killed by the Nazis in incredible numbers? I shall come to this in a moment, but other mass killings do not fit into Steiner's theological explanation of the Holocaust. His narrative and explanation only refer to Jews. Even within the killing done by the Nazis and their allies, there were others killed and, of course, those killed in genocides before and after the Nazi period.

There is an additional issue here: even if Germans knew about many of the deaths (which is questionable) but large numbers had blunted their capacity to respond, might they not have understood that war—especially modern, total war—claims many victims, civilian and military, but could still have wondered why all the other killings took place? Put differently, if big numbers explain some things, they do not explain much. But if one wants to pursue the theme, the inability to respond to the massive loss of life during World War II, from whatever causes, was most likely due to the mass carnage of World War I, where in the Battle of the Somme alone over a million and a half casualties occurred and an additional 700,000 at Verdun.

Steiner has misrepresented the Holocaust and the antecedents of genocide, here and in other cases. But the heart of his argument is that the cause of the Holocaust was Moses, Jesus, and Marx—Jewish perfectionism and ethical pressure on an unwilling human nature. He reaches the conclusion that the Jews brought the Holocaust upon themselves.[16] He even writes a novel in which Hitler is alive, though old, in the Amazon rain forest, and Hitler says that everything he did he learned

from the Jews.[17] Although this is a novel, there is a close similarity between Hitler's arguments in a trial held in the jungle and Steiner's own arguments and, indeed, closeness of language. Shakespeare is not Hamlet, and Steiner is not the A.H. of his fiction, but Steiner identifies a type of closeness, not necessarily between himself and Hitler (God forbid), but between ancient Judaism and Hitler's ideology. He mentions that the 90-year old Hitler has a "withered right arm." And so does George Steiner due to a birth defect. How do we interpret this? Is it just a coincidence or something more? Is it perhaps a recognition, in terms of the Hitler speech, that Judaism and Nazism have some things in common: the idea of a "chosen people" and the idea that ancient Hebrews committed genocide repeatedly, and perhaps even invented the practice? This is the great burden that hangs over Steiner, and it is an extraordinary question: Did the Jews create the very model of their destruction? Is Hitler correct in identifying the Jews as his inspiration for the destruction of that group?

Steiner is right to recognize that the ancient Jews did engage in what today would be called genocide. If we can trust the accounts in the early books of the Bible, such as that in Numbers 31, again and again, whole groups were destroyed.[18] But what Steiner and his fictional Hitler (or A.H. as he is called in *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*) fail to tell us is that the attempt to eliminate whole groups was the common mode of warfare in early society. The Assyrians in the eighth century BCE, for example, embarked on genocidal destruction almost annually, afterward erecting monuments boasting of their "success." Beyond that, the Greeks and Romans also engaged in the destruction of whole groups (Melos and Carthage, for example). And Hitler would have been aware of the destruction wreaked by Genghis Khan, but above all, the Young Turk genocide of over one million Armenians that began in 1915.

Two facts stand out: no one knows who invented genocide, and those who have sought to commit it have had no lack of models from which to choose. Nevertheless, Steiner is caught in a web of anxiety over the possibility that not only had the Jews brought on their own destruction, but that they provided the basic idea of how to carry out the elimination of a people.

With regard to the exclusiveness and exalted status of a particular group, a "chosen people," Steiner hardly puts up a fight. The "poison," he says, "is in ancient part, Jewish."[19] But is there no difference between a people chosen by God to bring his presence into the world and who have deep responsibilities imposed upon them by God and, on the other hand, a "master race" that is biological, naturalistic, with no assigned moral imperatives? Steiner could have pursued these issues, but he does not; this again suggests his acceptance of the Jews' responsibility for the Holocaust.

He describes the matter as follows:

> By one of the cruel, deep ironies of history, the concept of a chosen people, of a nation exalted above others by a particular destiny, was born in Israel. In the vocabulary of Nazism there were elements of a vengeful parody on the Judaic claim. The theological motif of a people elected at Sinai is echoed in the pretense of the master race and its chiliastic dominion. Thus there was in the obsessed relation of Nazi to Jew a minute but fearful grain of logic.[20]

But Steiner should surely tell us of what the "elements of parody" consist, and since there is only a "minute" element of logic connecting the ancient Jewish claim with that of the Nazis' master race, what is that minute element and how are the two concepts otherwise distinguished? Still, these issues provide more evidence of the cloud that hangs over him and lead to serious misrepresentations of the Holocaust and, above all, the question of why.

Steiner's central argument is a variant on Freud's in *Civilization and Its Discontents*.[21] Freud claimed that society was increasingly imposing moral demands on individuals that were contrary to their nature and which they could not possibly fulfill. The attempt was to curb sexuality (he was writing in 1929) and human instincts toward aggression. But the demands, which he termed the "cultural superego," collided with the instinctual needs (the id) of individuals. The result was enormous tension between the ethical exhortations/demands and the biologically based needs of the individual. Freud saw an increasing sense of guilt, unhappiness, and neurosis in society and argued for a lowering of the moral burdens on individuals. Freud's individuals were rebels, but impotent rebels; they were unhappy, a few of them committed crimes to relieve the pressure, but many others either accepted their unhappiness or became anxious, depressed, or neurotic; and many women, unlike men, became hysterical.

Steiner's individuals (but why only in Germany and a few other places?) are also rebels who can no longer bear the demands made upon them, but instead of retreating into neurosis, they become killers. But such an explanation will not do. Not everyone in Germany or anywhere else engaged in genocide. So, how does one distinguish between those who felt the pressure of righteous, yet utopian, demands and did not kill and those who felt the same demands and did kill?

To go back to the beginning, Steiner argues that the Jews/Moses invented monotheism. In effect, they invented God, but an invisible God, one who was all demanding and was the only God, displacing the polytheism that was for people at the time the fundamental means by which to explain the world in which they lived. Then Jesus followed, with his radical demands for ascetic love, compassion, self-suppression, and the disdain of worldly goods. Finally, there was Marx and the claims of a socialist society, in which privilege and property would be abolished and all forms of oppression would be eliminated.[22]

Three times a demand was made for perfection and self-sacrifice; three times, that is, a utopian demand was made that collided with ordinary human capacities to respond. Three times, a Jew was at the center: Moses, Jesus, Marx. But Steiner tells us,

> Nothing is more cruel than the blackmail of perfection. We come to hate, to fear most those who demand of us a self-transcendence, a surpassing of our natural and common limits of being. Our hate and fear are the more intense precisely because we know the absolute rightness, the ultimate desirability of the demand. In failing to respond adequately, we fail ourselves. And it is of deep-lying self-hatreds that hatreds spring.[23]

Here, one may object to Steiner's assumption about the "absolute rightness" that "we" accept. Who is the "we?" And is it not the case that many persons are atheists and so the question of one God as opposed to many is not an issue? Also, there are few individuals who have ever been able to respond to the radical demands of Jesus, though lip service has undoubtedly been paid to them. And while Marx has had many adherents, and still does in an intellectual sense, how many people can believe in the possibility of a utopian society as Marx had presented it?

But if "we" do not accept monotheism or God, if "we" do not respond to the radical demands of Jesus, and if "we" either reject the demands of Marx or do not see the possibility of actually bringing about the kind of society he had in mind, then where will the anger come from or the hate that will be directed toward Jews? And why only Jews? Why not Christians and many others as the object of hatred?

Well, as it turns out, the Nazis had a very long list of those to be killed and it was not limited to what Steiner imagines as the Jews appearing three times, demanding perfection and self-sacrifice.

The details are different, but the theory is Freud's: cultural demands and a sense of guilt collide with the instinctual portion of human nature, the id. Something has to give: for Freud the moral demands lead to neurosis; for Steiner they lead to the Holocaust.

It is a convenient and simple theory, but it ignores almost all of the facts leading up to the Holocaust: social, political, ideological (social Darwinism and racial science, preceded by a long history of anti-Semitism). And it does not account for the fact that the Holocaust did not take place earlier. Just when did the revolt against the three Jewish utopians build up, and why at that moment? Why not elsewhere as well? Also, why was the Holocaust mainly directed against Jews? Since Steiner indicates that Jesus was a central figure here, why not against Christians as well? And how can any of what Steiner proposes about the origin of the Holocaust, explain, or help to explain, any other genocide?

In the end, Steiner takes the Nazi onslaught against the Jews as retribution for Moses, Jesus, and Marx.

## Concluding Remarks

George Steiner, now in his eighties, is the author of some twenty books and hundreds of articles and reviews, with many awards for his cultural and literary contributions. He was educated at the University of Paris, the University of Chicago, Harvard, and Oxford, and was a fellow at the Institute for Advanced Study at Princeton. He has been in residence or lectured at most of the major universities in the Western world, including Oxford, Cambridge, Harvard, and Stanford, among many others. He was for many years Professor of Comparative Literature at the University of Geneva, where he gave lectures in four languages.

Steiner is a brilliant writer who has spent years interpreting the destruction of the Jews. His narrative has never changed, yet the ideas can startle: the Jews were killed, not because they "Killed God," but because they "invented God."[24] An interesting idea to be sure, but totally unanchored in historical fact.

Various scholars have said that Steiner's views on the Holocaust were the result of a split in his personality, that he was self-hating, that he was simply arrogant. I cannot speak to any of these comments, but my own are very different.

I have argued, and I think shown, that George Steiner, even though obsessed with the Holocaust, has seriously misrepresented it in various ways. He is not a person who relates to social science studies; he has a superficial acquaintance with Freud but bases much of his argument on one of Freud's popular works; and he is not someone who thinks historically, despite his claim to do so. He is decidedly ahistorical and that is where many of the problems with his work begin and end.

The basic problem with Steiner's work is that, despite his apparent use of history, his whole approach is literary. For him symbols are everything, and they involve both representation and causation. He identifies a text, Dante's *Inferno,* and then sees it as the model for concentration camps; he sees some similarity between this and that, and explains it in terms of cultural determinism. But cannot there be similarity without direct causation? Or does cultural determinism put symbols to work with almost foreordained results? Steiner starts with a symbol and then points to a result, but fails to fill in the historical, empirical connection between the two; or he starts with a result, and then hunts for a symbol that can be said to have served

as a model or inspiration for the event, but again, he does not make the actual connection. Is social and historical reality only a matter of symbols and metaphors and is that the theory of knowledge that Steiner has adopted? In effect, Steiner's approach is long on assumption and short on demonstration. This is perhaps not surprising since he is known to have said that the Holocaust cannot be explained by empirical and historical analyses since these are unable to reach down to "the roots of the inhuman."[25]

But does his reliance on Freud and the revolt against instinctual repression get down to the roots of the inhuman? Far from it, and it is worth noting that Freud thought that socialism could relieve pressures on individuals in their quest to live a full life. Also, while he dismissed all religion as an illusion, Freud never considered heightened moral pressures as a problem that derived from monotheism. Nor did he put Moses at the center; Moses is not even mentioned in *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Moreover, Freud even suggested in *Moses and Monotheism* (1939) that Moses was not a Jew at all, but rather an Egyptian who was murdered by the Jews as they approached the Promised Land. It is Steiner's idea of an instinctual revolt against the Jewish demand for perfection by Moses, Jesus, and Marx, which after a genesis of 3000 years came to a fever pitch in the twentieth century, that remains to be documented if, indeed, it can be.

Steiner never demonstrates that there was such instinctual repression or, if there were, that it was identified as emanating from Jews. And even if it were, why did the Holocaust occur when it did (not earlier or later) and where it did? Were people in other lands having a jolly time, while only the Germans were instinctually repressed to the breaking point?

## Notes

1. The present article is based upon a paper presented at the International Conference on "Varieties of Experience II" (University of Caen, France, 27–29 May 2010).
2. D. J. R. Bruckner, "Talk with George Steiner," *New York Times Book Review*, 2 May 1982, 20.
3. Nathan A. Scott Jr., "Steiner on Interpretation," in *Reading George Steiner*, ed. Nathan A. Scott Jr. and Ronald A. Sharp (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994), 1–13, 1; Terrence Des Pres, "Kulturkritiker," *Nation* 240 (2 March 1985): 241.
4. George Steiner, *In Bluebeard's Castle: Some Notes Toward the Redefinition of Culture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1971), 51.
5. Ibid., 53. The overview of Steiner's arguments is based on this text.
6. George Steiner, "A Kind of Survivor" [1965], in *Language and Silence: Essays on Language, Literature, and the Inhuman* (New York: Atheneum, 1967), 140–54.
7. Ibid., 140.
8. Ibid.
9. George Steiner, "Dying Is an Art," in *Language and Silence*, 295–302, 301.
10. Ibid.
11. Ibid.
12. On the other hand, Steiner says that late in life he is consumed with music, not only the Word: music is the "center of me." See George Steiner, "A Responsion," in Scott and Sharp, *Reading George Steiner*, 275–86, 283–84. His notion of music is, however, not that of Bach, Mozart, or Verdi: "the question 'what in the world is music like?' has become for me the 'metaphysical inquiry incarnate.'" Steiner, "Dying Is an Art," 301.

    With few exceptions, Steiner has not written about music, but where he did, it was with distinction. See George Steiner, "Schoenberg's Moses and Aaron," in *Language and Silence*, 127–39. I have never seen anything from Steiner about painting, but that has surely involved the humanistic tradition also.

13. "A Kind of Survivor," 145.
14. Ibid., 147.
15. Ibid., 145.
16. George Steiner, "A Season in Hell," chap. 2 in *In Bluebeard's Castle*, 27–56; George Steiner, *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1981), chap. 17.
17. *The Portage to San Cristobal of A.H.*, 163
18. Steiner mentions Joshua, but Numbers 31 is more instructive. See Roger W. Smith, "Women and Genocide: Notes on an Unwritten History," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* 8, no. 3 (1994): 315–34.
19. "A Kind of Survivor," 153.
20. Ibid.
21. Sigmund Freud, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. James Strachey (London and New York: Norton, 1961).
22. "A Season in Hell."
23. George Steiner, "The Long Life of Metaphor: An Approach to the 'Shoah,'" in *Writing and the Holocaust*, ed. Berel Lang (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1988), 154–71, 164.
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., 161; see also 170.

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# Notice of Errata

The article by Marko Attila Hoare, "A Case Study in Underachievement: The International Courts and Genocide in Bosnia-Herzegovina," *GSP* 6, 1 (April 2011): 81–97, was published with the following errors:

On p. 81, for "Only one middle-ranking individual has been convicted of a genocide-related charge by the ICTY" read "Only one middle-ranking individual has been definitely convicted of a genocide-related charge by the ICTY"; for "So far, the ICTY has successfully prosecuted one individual for genocide" read "'So far, the ICTY has definitely successfully prosecuted one individual for genocide".

On p. 83, for "Only one individual—a lowly deputy corps commander—has been convicted of a genocide-related charge by an international court" read "Only one individual—a lowly deputy corps commander—has definitely been convicted of a genocide-related charge by a fully international court".

On p. 93, for "Among Croats, the acquittal of one member of the Vukovar Three and the initial sentencing of a second member to only a short prison term are likewise widely viewed as evidence of anti-Croat bias, and have even provoked a complaint from the Croatian parliament itself" read "Among Croats, the acquittal of one member of the Vukovar Three and the initial sentencing of a second member to only a short prison term were likewise widely viewed as evidence of anti-Croat bias, and even provoked a complaint from the Croatian parliament itself".

An updated version of the article containing these corrections is now available at *GSP Online* (doi:10.3138/gsp.6.1.81). *GSP* and our publisher regret these errors, which are the sole responsibility of the publisher.