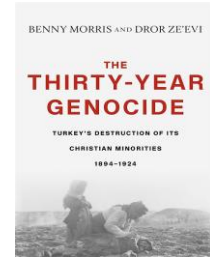




## Thirty-Year Genocide

### *The Destruction of Christian Minorities 1894-1924*

Historians Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi enlarge the Armenian Genocide's scope not from 1878 to 1923, as their colleague Taner Akçam suggested in 2017. Instead, they chose the period from 1894 to 1924, calling it "The Thirty-Year Genocide" when ethnic-religious cleansing with bouts of large-scale massacres, systematic expulsions, forced conversions, and cultural annihilation occurred. Thus, the share of Asia Minor's Christian inhabitants fell from 20 percent in 1900 to two percent by 1924.



Morris and Ze'evi rely on files of a dozen archives covering the periods of sultan-caliph Abdülhamid II with massacres from 1894 to 1896 when 200,000 Armenians died; the Young Turks with the Adana pogrom as 30,000 were slaughtered; the core genocidal event of the Armenian Genocide from 1915 to 1918 as 1 to 1.5 million people were murdered; and Mustafa Kemal's Nationalists from 1919 to 1924 with the massacres of Armenians and Greeks, the latter already in the first half of 1914 in the Aegean and western Asia Minor and then between 1919 and 1925 with 1.5 million murdered Greeks besides those who were deported from the Pontic coast and Smyrna. Therefore, the authors claim that the Ottomans killed at least between 1.5 and 2.5 million Christians between 1894 and 1924.

Their conclusion features helpers, chiefly Kurds, Circassians, Chechens, and occasionally Arabs. The perpetrators described their victims as "cancer, microbes or scum." This would be echoed later by the Nazis' description of Jews. So not only Nazis used derogatory speech, but also former Arab Ottoman officers, who spread it after the First World War as leaders in nascent Arab lands like the Jerusalemite grand mufti Amin al-Husaini. The use of special death squads and brotherhoods was already known under the Ottomans.

According to the authors, the key target were Armenians, not being backed by any state of their own unlike the Greeks, for whom ethnic cleansing could also mean exile. Morris and Ze'evi support Richard Hovannisian's thesis on a "continuum" of genocidal intent and ethnic cleansing for the "de-Armenization of the Ottoman Empire and the Republic of Turkey," or the "de-Christianization." The culprits learned from each other. The authors claim that the 1880s persuaded the Ottomans of genocide as the populace and the troops executed it, the great powers did not interfere, and the Armenians did not resist, all of which did not escape the Kaiser-Germans either, among them in trenches Adolf Hitler.

The proof in this well-researched book is overwhelming. While Morris and Ze'evi refer to the killing of "infidels" but leave out what parallel occurred to the Jews of Palestine, other scholars applied the "Lemkin method" – according to article 3 in the UN Genocide Convention of 1948 that the lawyer Raphael Lemkin had campaigned for – also using the term "attempted genocide" for the Jews in Palestine. Bridging a gap on those Jews and taking the authors' "de-Christianization" further, it seems that "attempted and realized de-infidelization" of the Ottoman Empire most clearly reflect the core genocidal period in the Great War and, at least on a large side, with a just updated global war ideology of Islamism.

Records show the Ottomans' broad ethnic-religious view of the three major non-Muslim groups. A report from 1921 called "Palestine during the War" describes the figures and parallel attempts against Jews too: the role of military leader Cemal Pasha, the prohibition of land sales to Jews, sending families into the interior of Asia Minor and the mass expulsion in late 1914, Baha ad-Din Shakir's encircling of Tel Aviv, guards at crossroads, house searches, arrests, the first exodus from Jaffa, a series of court proceedings, evacuation orders seen by Jews "as the prelude to a repetition of the Armenian massacres," the persecutions in Judea and Samaria in 1917, and Jews sent away with Christians, "only the [swift British] liberation of Judea and the capture of Jerusalem" ended it. Some envoys of the German emperor Wilhelm II tried to avoid besides of Armenians an additional massacre of Jews, many of them still his German subjects, for which he would be held accountable.

Was there a shift "from imperial to nationalist methods" or rather a continuity in de-infidelization? In the Tanzimat era pan-Islamist jihad ensued. "Nationalists" took the lead later breaking sharply with Islamists of the sultanate and caliphate in 1923-24. On the other side, 30,000 German soldiers in Ottoman units saw how minorities perished; many of those later were to become leaders under Adolf Hitler. After the war, the Bolsheviks in Soviet Russia, the Fascists in Italy, and the Nazis in Germany studied the "massacres of groups." In 1921 dailies covered a brief trial of Talat Pasha's killer in Berlin. Hitler's men read it and looked up to the Turkish fight against the "Dictate of Versailles" by the Allies and alleged or real "minority support behind them." There grew a truly enduring axis of Ottomans and Kaiser-Germans, later of the Islamists and Nazis with their many auxiliaries.

Morris and Ze'evi allow for new questions on interactions of generations in Central Europe and the Mideast before, during and after the world wars; in the Tanzimat era beginning in 1839; the Berlin congress of 1878 dealing also with Armenians; the German militarization of Ottomans while looking the other way in the pogroms of the years 1894 to 1896 and 1909; the trip of Kaiser Wilhelm II to Jerusalem in 1898; the jihad plan of 1914 for him and the caliph to jihadize Islamism as an ideology of interfaith coalition war to turn jihadists also against "infidel neighbors."

This joint Christian-Muslim actions delivered genocidal ideas for decades to come, the first Sunni theory of Islamism in 1916 and the first basic Shiite idea of an Islamic State.

- But how did genocidal ideas develop in parallel in Central Europe and the Mideast out of diverse cultures?
- What were the key religious and non-religious sources, paradigms, and strains?
- What made their activists in the world wars compatible with attempted and realized genocides?
- Which syntheses of Fascism, National Socialism, Islamism, and versions of Marxism survived in this ideological mixture beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century?

Benny Morris and Dror Ze'evi open in their hugely important study new horizons to discover history without too narrow frames and topics open to the related research of transregional human interactions. Much of what both found out is getting now a less particular and even more global meaning.

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**Benny Morris, Dror Ze'evi:** The Thirty-Year Genocide. Turkey's Destruction of Its Christian Minorities 1894-1924, 672 S., Harvard UP, Cambridge, London 2019.

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