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# Structures of Genocide: Making Sense of the New War for Nagorno-Karabakh

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"Terrorists we're fighting and we're never gonna stop

The prostitutes who prosecute have failed us from the start

Can you see us?"

- System of a Down, "Genocidal Humanoidz"

On December 10, 2020, Turkey and Azerbaijan held a joint victory parade in Azerbaijan's capital of Baku. Turkey's president Tayyib Recep Erdogan and Azerbaijan's president Ilham Aliyev stood together on a dais in front of twenty Turkish and Azerbaijani flags, as 3,000 members of the Azerbaijani Armed Forces marched by, displaying military hardware captured from their Armenian foes. Military bands played the anthems of the old Ottoman Empire, the Turkish dynasty that ruled much of the Middle East in the name of Islam until World War I. Azerbaijani jets roared over the capital, dropping smoke in the green, blue and red colors of the Azerbaijani flag.

Certainly, there was much to celebrate. In forty-four days of brutal combat, Azerbaijani forces reversed the humiliating defeat they experienced at Armenia's hands in 1994 and recaptured much of the disputed territory of Nagorno-Karabakh. Turkey worked with Azerbaijan hand-in-glove during the war, supplying it with weapons, providing intelligence and air support, and bringing in thousands of battle-hardened fighters from Syria to fight on the ground.[1] The victory opened up the possibility that the hundreds of thousands of Azerbaijanis driven from Armenian-occupied territory in the first Karabakh war, many of whom had lived for decades in squalid camps in Baku and its environs, would be able to go home.[2] It was an impressive vindication of the alliance of these two Turkish states, exemplifying their alliance's motto, "two states, one nation."

But a darker spirit was on display during the parade. In his speech, President Aliyev boasted of "breaking the enemy's spine and crushing its head." He declared over half of the territory of the Republic of Armenia, including its capital city Yerevan, to be "our historical lands." He was laying claim not only to all of Nagorno-Karabakh, including those parts of it which remain unconquered, but to the Republic of Armenia itself.

When Erdogan's turn came to speak, he said, "Today, may the souls of Nuri Pasha, Enver Pasha, and the brave soldiers of the Islamic Army of the Caucasus be happy."[3] Enver Pasha was the Ottoman Minister of War during World War I, when the Ottoman State killed over one million Armenians and other Christians living in Turkey, and deported hundreds of thousands more, an event known today as the Armenian Genocide, and which the Turkish state continues to deny took place. At the end of the war, his brother, Nuri Pasha, led an Ottoman military unit called the "Islamic Army of the Caucasus" to rally Azerbaijani Muslims to battle against British, Russian and Armenian forces in the region. Upon capturing Baku in September 1918, they massacred over 10,000 Armenians living there.[4]



During the recent war, many Armenians described this new war as a continuation of the Armenian Genocide. Armenia's Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan claimed, "The Turkish state, which continues to deny the past, is once again venturing down a genocidal path."[5] "This is the third genocide attempt," Pargev Martirosyan, the Archbishop of Nagorno-Karabakh said. "The first was in 1915, the second in Sumgait and other cities of Azerbaijan [in 1988-1989]. Now, we're on the third one."[6] Serj Tankian, the lead singer of the Armenian heavy metal band System of a Down, said, "When the grandchildren of genocide perpetrators are firing at the grandchildren of genocide survivors, bombing not just military positions but civilians, it is safe to assume that the people of Artsakh and Armenia are fighting an existential battle."[7]

At that point, it was still at least possible for outside observers to dismiss these continuities, to see the war as merely an effort by Azerbaijan to restore its lost territory, to imagine that its promises that the Armenian civilian population of Karabakh were Azerbaijani citizens and would be allowed to live under Azerbaijani sovereignty were more than just words.[8]

Now, in victory, all pretense is gone. Here is the president of Turkey, invoking the spirits of the architects of the Armenian Genocide at the site of one of its greatest massacres. There is the president of Azerbaijan, throwing his claims under international law to the wind and announcing his desire to conquer large parts of the Republic of Armenia itself. Videos are circulating of Azerbaijani soldiers destroying Armenian graveyards in Karabakh.[9] An official campaign is underway to erase the region's Armenian cultural history, claiming, preposterously, that the centuries- and millennia-old monasteries dotting Karabakh's hills are not really Armenian.[10] In a growing number of cases documented by human rights groups, those Armenian civilians with the bad luck to have been left behind in territory seized by Azerbaijan have been captured, abused and sometimes executed. In one horrifying incident, Azerbaijani soldiers recorded themselves holding down an elderly Armenian man pleading for his life in Azerbaijani and sawing off his head.[11]

In short, it is difficult not to see what the Armenians see: a continuity between the atrocities of a century ago, and those of today.

Nationalists on all sides of this conflict have a way to talk about this continuity that makes internal sense. For them, the Turkish nation and the Armenian nation are discrete, ancient, self-existent units locked in a centuries-long struggle to be free, to claim their "rights" and to avenge old losses. Beginning with Elie Kedourie, modern historians have long rejected this "primordialist" view in favor of a constructivist view, which asserts that most "nations" as we know them emerged in the 19th or 20th centuries as the result of deliberate nation-building efforts led by politicians, intellectuals, and the modern state.[12] (Some, such as Rogers Brubaker, go even further and prefer to speak of nations as contingent "events" that emerge under specific circumstances and need to be continuously constructed).[13]

One historiographical corollary of this position is that historians tend to insist on the specificity of events, on analyzing discrete historical occurrences in their own contexts. They resist connecting disparate events over a long period of time, lest they mirror nationalist narratives of "the nation's journey" too closely. Whatever Slobodan Milosevic and his supporters might say, for example, the modern historian insists that the Battle for Kosovo in 1999 has nothing to do with the Battle for Kosovo of 1389. Each belongs to its own historical time.[14]

Are we obliged to take the same tack in explaining the repeated acts of genocide and ethnic cleansing that have befallen the Armenian people in this region since 1894?[15] Is it possible to account for a genocide that appears to take place in installments over a century and a half without resorting to national essentialism? When Armenians ask, "Why does this keep happening to us?," nationalists have a ready answer: the Turkish nation is our enemy and always will be. Do modern historians have any explanation to offer in response, other than, "bad luck"?

In a lecture about the Armenians of Syria at the University of Chicago in March 2016, historian Keith Watenpaugh encouraged scholars to "think about what's happened to the Armenians in Syria as part of a much larger historical process." These Armenians, the descendants of survivors of the genocide of 1915, were (and are) once again facing the destruction of their community, caught up in the civil war between Syria's Assad regime and Turkish-backed insurgents. Using the concepts of "ideologies of hate, structures of oppression, and regimes of impunity," Watenpaugh suggested that perhaps, for Syria's Armenians, the genocide never ended – it was merely paused.[16]



In this essay, I propose that the 2020 Karabakh war, its attendant atrocities, and the destruction of Karabakh's Armenian community it augurs, can be analyzed similarly, as a resumption in a process of genocide against Armenians in Anatolia and Caucasia driven by long-standing, self-reproducing "structures of genocide" produced during World War I and its aftermath. This process cannot be blamed on any one specific set of actors, and indeed, it has claimed many Azerbaijani and Turkish victims as well. But to disregard this historical process is to fundamentally misunderstand the Karabakh war.

Several such structures of genocide can be readily identified: authoritarian rule, geopolitical competition between Russia and Turkey, and importantly, state-directed and enforced denial of past genocides. After briefly summarizing the Karabakh conflict for the (justifiably) perplexed, this essay will focus on one structure of genocide in particular: the nationalization and territorialization of ethnicity.

**The Karabakh Conflict: A (Very Quick) Recap**

Nagorno-Karabakh is a mountainous region in the South Caucasus, poor in natural resources but rich in history. Both Azerbaijanis and Armenians rightly claim it as a region of great cultural importance, and debates about its historical demography are fierce, but it seems clear that for at least the past century, ethnic Armenians have always been a strong majority of its population.

In 1918-1920, the South Caucasus region was the site of large-scale ethnic violence between Armenians and Azerbaijanis, in which thousands of people were massacred as each side struggled to set up its own ethnic nation-state after the temporary retreat of the Russian Empire. Azerbaijani forces received support from the Ottomans and their successor state, the Republic of Turkey. But by 1920, Russia had reconquered the region, and incorporated Armenia and Azerbaijan as republics within the Soviet Union. For reasons that are still debated today, the Soviets placed Armenian-majority Nagorno-Karabakh inside the borders of the Soviet Republic of Azerbaijan as an "autonomous oblast," despite the express wishes of its population.

When the Soviet Union began to unravel in the late 1980s, a protest movement emerged in Nagorno-Karabakh, agitating for independence or union with Armenia. The protests gave way to clashes along ethnic lines, which in turn gave way to ethnic massacres on both sides. Hundreds of thousands of Armenians living in Azerbaijan were driven out of their homes and fled to Armenia, and vice versa. Azerbaijan deployed its military to Nagorno-Karabakh and besieged its capital city, Stepanakert. In 1991, the Republic of Armenia sent its own armed forces into the fight. After three years of fighting that left 30,000 dead, Armenia defeated Azerbaijan, thanks in part to Russian aid and political chaos in Baku. Nagorno-Karabakh, or "Artsakh" as Armenian nationalists called it, became an independent republic, albeit heavily dependent on Armenian aid and unrecognized by any country in the world.

Despite being overwhelmingly Armenian in demographics, Nagorno-Karabakh was not contiguous with the Republic of Armenia. Thus, in one of the grimmer aspects of the war, Armenia conquered seven territories surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh to create a kind of "greater Karabakh" that would share a long border with Armenia and be easier to defend. Armenian forces expelled the overwhelmingly Azerbaijani populations of these regions from their homes. In one incident, tens of thousands of Azerbaijanis were forced to flee by foot through the mountains in full winter, an eerie replay of the deportations of Armenians from Turkey in 1915.[17]

Although there were regular serious clashes along the "line of contact" between the two sides, the ceasefire reached in 1994 largely held for twenty-six years. But peace negotiations led nowhere. On September 27, 2020, fighting broke out between the two sides again. What at first appeared to be a replay of the exchange of fire that took place in July 2020, or even the "four day war" of 2016, quickly revealed itself to be something else: a well-planned, full-scale Azerbaijani operation to retake all of Nagorno-Karabakh and the seven territories and, inevitably, cleanse it of its Armenian population. The Armenian authorities in Karabakh ordered a full mobilization of its male population, while over 100,000 Armenian civilians – about two-thirds of the region's population – fled to escape the Azerbaijani bombing campaign, which seemed to indiscriminately target residential areas.[18] Some 6,000 people, mostly combatants, were killed.[19]

With a population three times smaller than Azerbaijan's, and a military budget six times smaller, Armenia was already at a disadvantage. With Azerbaijan receiving thousands of reinforcements from Turkish-backed rebel groups in Syria, and being armed with high-tech drones and other weapons from Turkey and Israel, the contest became even more lopsided. After forty-four days of



desperate fighting, in which the government of Armenia misled its population about the true course of the war was taking, Azerbaijani forces captured the key town of Shushi.[20]

At this moment, Russia stepped in and forced a ceasefire on the two sides. Its terms were devastating to the Armenians. Azerbaijan would keep all the territory it had conquered in Nagorno-Karabakh, and would receive back all of the "seven territories" Armenia conquered in the 1990s war. Armenia would withdraw all its armed forces from Karabakh. Only Russian peacekeepers would be there to protect Armenians living in the rump territory left to them. The question of Nagorno-Karabakh's final status remained completely unresolved.[21]

For the Armenians who fled their homes during the war, this uncertainty made the already difficult prospect of returning to their bombed-out neighborhoods a dubious venture indeed. For those refugees whose homes were in territory conquered by Azerbaijan, the ceasefire meant that they could not go home at all. For those Armenians still living in territories ceded to Azerbaijan in the ceasefire, it meant forced evacuation. Hundreds of families chose to burn the homes they were abandoning, rather than leave them to Azerbaijan.[22] After losing so much of their ancestral homelands since 1915, in one fell swoop, Armenians lost about a quarter of the territory that remained to them. For the millennia-old Armenian community of Nagorno-Karabakh, the meaning of Azerbaijan's military victory is likely its own destruction.

**Nationality, Territory, and Genocide**

Three years ago, after a summer studying the Armenian language in Yerevan, I traveled to Nagorno-Karabakh as a tourist. Walking through the streets of Armenian-ruled Shushi, I realized with disquiet that many of the houses around me were empty. On one street was a long stone building, which seemed to have once housed a number of shops and small businesses. The roof and windows on the upper floor of the building had long since been destroyed, and sunlight shown through tufts of grass growing on the exposed stone supports. But on the lower floor, there were a dozen sets of closed and locked double doors, each concealing what had once been a shop. Each of the doors had been painted over with a scene of daily life: a tailor sewing clothes, a butcher chopping meat, and so forth. It was a grim parody of the real life that had, presumably, once taken place in the ruined building.

The solution to this riddle, of course, is that Shushi lost its entire Azerbaijani population when the Armenians conquered it in 1992. In 1920, the reverse had happened: an Azerbaijani army had stormed the town and massacred hundreds of its Armenian inhabitants.[23] Now, after Azerbaijan's victory in the 2020 war, Shushi is once again Armenian-free. Every time the city changes hands, this can be expected to happen.

In the course of World War I, the war in the Caucasus that followed, and the war of the 1990s, an incontrovertible rule was established: Armenians cannot live in Turkish or Azerbaijani territory. Turks and Azerbaijanis cannot live in Armenian territory. Any exchange of territory means ethnic cleansing, by default. Any advance in any war means ethnic cleansing, by default.

It was not always this way. Armenians lived under Ottoman Turkish rule for over five hundred years. They were often abused and never equal, but often also achieved great prosperity and power. By the nineteenth century, the Ottoman state had such close ties with the Armenian church and Armenian merchant networks that Armenians were nicknamed "the loyal *millet* (nation)."[24]

Likewise in the Caucasus. President Aliyev's "historical" claims on Yerevan are outrageous and aggressive, but not completely fanciful. There *was* a large Azerbaijani presence in Yerevan in the past, just as Baku once had a large Armenian population, and Tblisi in Georgia was at several times an Armenian-majority city![25] When the Armenian armed forces conquered the "seven territories" around Nagorno-Karabakh in the 1990s and forced out its Azerbaijani population, they quite naturally recovered and trumpeted a number of ancient Armenian heritage sites. They could have done so in any amount of Azerbaijani territory they seized. When Armenian and Azerbaijani nationalists claim Shushi as an essential part of their national heritage, they are both correct. Shushi was both an Armenian and an Azerbaijani city, usually simultaneously. This was possible because, for long centuries, neither the Armenian nor the Azerbaijani ethnicity was tied to a nation-state with defined territory. Georgians, Armenians, Turks, and Azerbaijanis shared the same spaces under the rule of various empires, not always harmoniously, but without anyone thinking it was strange.



This coexistence was no match for the horrors that World War I brought to Anatolia and the Caucasus. In the war between the Ottoman and Russian Empires, both sides protected some ethnic groups while targeting others. Ottoman forces and their Azerbaijani allies massacred Armenians in Baku in September 1918; six months earlier, Russian forces and their Armenian allies had massacred Azerbaijanis in the same city. Those who survived the genocide of the Armenians in Turkey and the huge ethnic massacres of Armenians and Azerbaijanis in the Caucasus in 1918-1920 were utterly, and rightfully, convinced of one thing: to be free, to even be safe, one had to belong to a *nation*, represented in a *state* that controlled its own *territory*.

There was a brief attempt in 1918 to set up a "Republic of Transcaucasia" that would have united Georgians, Armenians and Azerbaijanis in a single state. It broke apart after the Ottoman Army invaded the region. Predictably, the Turkish Muslim Azerbaijanis saw this Ottoman force as a protector against Russia, while the Armenians sought Russian protection against the armies that targeted them for genocide.[26] The Republic of Transcaucasia broke apart into the Republics of Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan, and each side tried to seize "its" territory – the territory they had once shared – by cleansing it of other ethnicities. The massacres that followed created, for the first time, geographies defined by ethnicity, land that was distinctly Armenian or Azerbaijani. Whatever idea of coexistence that survived the war of 1918-1920 was put to rest in 1988-1989, when Armenian nationalists drove Azerbaijanis out of the Republic of Armenia, and hundreds of Armenians were killed in pogroms in Azerbaijan's cities.

Ronald Suny describes the unfortunate result: "The discourse of the nation—the notion that political legitimacy flowed upward from a culturally coherent community, 'the people' constituted as a 'nation'—had narrowed to the view that the people must be ethnically, perhaps racially, singular."[27]

In the competition to divide up the land that Turks, Armenians, and Azerbaijanis had once lived together in, Armenia was at a distinct numerical and military disadvantage. Having been massacred and driven out of vast regions of eastern Anatolia, the Armenians were reduced to living in a tiny rump state, the Republic of Armenia – and that under Soviet rule. Little wonder, then, that when the Soviet Union broke up, the Armenians were desperate to hold on to Nagorno-Karabakh at any price, including ethnically cleansing Azerbaijanis who "belonged" to the state that was trying to ethnically cleanse Armenians. Little wonder, too, that in victory, the Azerbaijanis are doing the same.

This view of nationality – or rather, this way in which nationality is *constructed* and *practiced*, since everyone in the region is subject to it whether they view nationality that way or not – is one of the key structures that keeps the Armenian genocide going. Nationalism drives the governments of both Turkey and Azerbaijan, egged on by civil society, to seek legitimacy by pursuing maximalist territorial claims, through war if necessary. And thanks to the nationalization and territorialization of identity, in the South Caucasus, war equals ethnic cleansing. No historian or analyst should try to claim otherwise.

A necessary corollary is the "ideologies of hate" and "regimes of impunity" Watenpaugh speaks of. National claims can only be pursued through ethnic cleansing, and ethnic cleansing requires both impunity and a social environment where hatred against the other is normalized. The world got an early warning about how far this process had advanced in Azerbaijan in 2004, when an Azerbaijani military officer at a NATO conference in Budapest snuck into the hotel room of his Armenian counterpart and bludgeoned him to death with an ax. After serving eight years in prison in Hungary, the man, Ramil Safarov, was "extradited" to Azerbaijan – where he was welcomed with an official parade, a house, and a pension.[28] Only time will tell how the Azerbaijani state will respond to the Azerbaijani soldiers who videoed their own war crimes in the 2020 conflict, but there is little reason for optimism.

A final structure of genocide, too complicated to explore in detail here, but essential to the genocide process, is the geopolitical competition between Turkey and Russia for influence in the Caucasus region and beyond, a pattern that has endured since the 19th century. Both sides instrumentalize ethnic and national groups in the region to gain an advantage, leading periodically and inevitably to war and ethnic cleansing. Over the last five years, Turkey has expanded its regional influence by repeatedly confronting Russia in Syria, Iraq, Libya, and elsewhere. Turkish support made this latest war, and the effective ethnic cleansing of Armenians from much of Nagorno-Karabakh, possible.



Of course, to a certain extent, these dynamics hold true in Armenia as well. The Armenian government pursues maximalist territorial claims and has historically treated Azerbaijani civilians in its territory as an unacceptable security risk. Azerbaijani civilians suffered terribly as a result in the first Karabakh war. (One important distinction is that, while Turkey is an increasingly illiberal democracy and Azerbaijan is controlled by an absolutist family dictatorship towards the bottom of the world's political freedom rankings, Armenia is an imperfect liberal democracy with genuine political competition and space for civil society to operate.)

But the operative difference, unfortunately, is that Armenia is small. As a result of the stages of the Armenian genocide that have already taken place, Armenia simultaneously has much more to lose and *is* much more likely to lose. Azerbaijan has ten million people, Turkey has 82 million. Armenia, wedged in between the two, has three million. Over a million Armenians were killed in 1915-1923. In the nationalized world of the modern Caucasus, where peoples survive only by clustering within nation-states strong enough to protect them, the 1915 genocide lingers as a blow that Armenia may never recover from. Every successive defeat advances the genocide process, and makes defeat more likely in the next round. In this context, Aliyev's declaration that Yerevan rightfully belongs to Azerbaijan is dangerous indeed. The 2020 war has left Armenia almost completely dependent on Russian protection to survive. And how long can that last?

The planners of the 1915 genocide are long dead; the historical conditions in which they launched the 1915 genocide are long gone. Yet thanks to these structures of genocide, the process they set in motion continues, towards an end that is unlikely to be happy.

**Final thoughts: A Bewildering Lack of Solidarity**

Admittedly, 2020 was a busy year. (For those of you reading in the distant future, I'm talking about the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic and the U.S. presidential election.) Granted as well, a great many other atrocities have escaped the world's notice. Social capital and real capital play essential roles in deciding which events enter into the public consciousness.

Even taking these factors into account, the lack of attention this war received was bizarre. The Armenian diaspora is one of the world's most wealthy, influential, and well-connected. Over the past century, they have successfully lifted the 1915 killings onto almost everyone's list of major genocides of the 20th century. Yet the limited press coverage this new war did receive in the West tended to depict it as just another incomprehensible conflict between two former Soviet states, over a territory with a name that's impossible to pronounce. Few politicians or advocacy groups outside the Armenian diaspora had much to say about it.

In particular, the 2020 war should put to rest forever the notion that U.S. foreign policy, particularly under Republican presidents, is somehow biased towards Christians overseas. President Trump, of course, was vocal about his support for persecuted Christians in the Middle East, a winning issue with his supporters. But as a close military ally of both Turkey and Azerbaijan, the United States was well-positioned to force an end to the war. The most support the Armenians received from the Trump administration came when Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said, "We're hopeful the Armenians will be able to defend against what the Azerbaijanis are doing."[29] Crowds of Armenians followed Trump to his various election campaign events, waving Armenian flags and asking him to help. The president received their support gratefully, but despite his repeated promises that he was going to "get that sorted out," he delivered nothing but a ceasefire that was immediately violated.[30]

Robert Nicholson, the director of the Philos Project, a nonprofit that advocates for persecuted Christians in the Middle East, summed up the problem this way:

> It is worth noting that President Trump has done more for religious minorities than any president in history. Yet at no point during six weeks of war did he try to stop Azerbaijan and Turkey, let alone come to the aid of Armenians. His reasoning was simple: Foreign policy is about interests, and relations with powerful majorities will always trump the rights of weak minorities.[31]

Nor was much help forthcoming from Christian civil society in the U.S., even those corners of it expressly dedicated to supporting persecuted Christians overseas. The Reverend Johnnie Moore, a megachurch pastor who sits on the U.S.' Commission on International Religious Freedom, told *Christianity Today* that "Christians shouldn't instinctually support Armenia just because it is a majority-Christian country."[32] It's an odd statement coming from a pastor who has authored a book about the "genocide" of Christians in Nigeria, and



has the Arabic letter "n" in his Twitter profile, a symbol of solidarity with Iraqi Christians who had that letter spray-painted on their homes by the Islamic State in 2014. The Christian Right in the U.S. has been vocal about the persecution of Christians by geopolitical foes of the U.S., from ISIS to China to Iran. But a war of conquest led by two U.S. allies against a tiny enclave of Christians – the ultimate David and Goliath story – went almost unnoticed in these circles.

In his book *Against Massacre*, Davide Rodogno tells the story of how the ideal of protecting Armenians and other oppressed Christians under Ottoman rule became a major component of domestic and international politics in Europe in the nineteenth century, for better or worse (often worse.) Keith Watenpaugh's book *Bread from Stones* traces the origins of modern humanitarianism to the worldwide outpouring of civil society support for Armenians during and after the 1915 genocide. Again, Watenpaugh's research reveals that this effort led to mixed results, but it did lead to results. Observing the worldwide non-reaction to the 2020 war, it is clear that something has shifted. But exploring that shift would take another essay.

**Conclusion**

In this essay, I have attempted to re-describe the Armenian Genocide as a historical process stretching from the Hamidian massacres of 1894-1896 through the recent war in Karabakh, events linked together not by specific actors, reified nations, "national character," "national destiny" or any other unempirical notions, but by a set of self-reproducing structures that have led repeatedly to acts of ethnic cleansing against Armenians in Anatolia and the Caucasus. These structures include the geopolitical power struggle between Turkey and Russia, the nationalization and territorialization of identity, and the persistence of authoritarian regimes in Turkey and Azerbaijan that repress civil society and promote genocide denial and hatred of Armenians. These interlocking structures help reproduce each other over time, and periodically lead to bouts of violence against the region's Armenians, each of which leaves their population and territory reduced and makes the next round more likely. In this sense, President Erdogan was right: the spirit of Enver Pasha is alive and well.

Speaking of genocide as a process produced over centuries by long-standing structures is a delicate task, susceptible to distortion and abuse. Yet it is an analytically fruitful, even necessary, way to describe the experience of many marginalized groups in the modern world – the Armenians, indeed, but to take another important example, the indigenous peoples of the Americas. The destruction of these peoples was not a single event, or even the work of a single group, but a process stretching across centuries, repeatedly activated by the structures of racism, genocide denial, practices of settler violence, education systems, competition between European empires and U.S. expansionism. One could also apply this way of thinking historically about genocide to Iraq, where millions of people have been killed since 1980 in repeated military operations by the United States, Iran, and their respective proxies, each of which lays the groundwork for the next.

History as a discipline offers no solution to this genocide process. What it does offer is knowledge – knowledge that nationality is *not* destiny, that it is possible for Armenians, Azerbaijanis and Turks to live together, that nations are not eternal facts but things that we choose to do together, that no side is innocent, that we are not responsible for the crimes of our ancestors, but we can remedy them, and that more war will only make things worse.

Knowledge is no panacea. But the ability to understand the structures that govern our lives may lead to the ability to change them. As the prophets say, "The people are destroyed for lack of knowledge."[33] The converse may also be true: where there is knowledge, there is hope.

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**Recommended Reading/Viewing:**

Thomas de Waal, *Black Garden: Armenia and Azerbaijan through Peace and War* (2003)
John Eibner and Caroline Cox, *Ethnic Cleansing in Progress: War in Nagorno Karabakh* (1995)
Vicken Cheterian, *War and Peace in the Caucasus: Ethnic Conflict and the New Geopolitics* (2008)
_____, *Open Wounds: Armenians, Turks and a Century of Genocide* (2015)
Ronald Suny, "Constructing Primordialism: Old Histories for New Nations," *The Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 73, No. 4 (December 2001), 862-896
Keith Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism* (2015)
Davide Rodogno, Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914, (2012)
Elie Kedourie, "Minorities," *The Chatham House Version and Other Middle Eastern Studies* (1970)
Documentary: "Parts of a Circle: History of the Karabakh Conflict" (2020), https://www.c-r.org/news-and-insight/film-parts-circle-history-karabakh-conflict



[1] See, e.g., Ed Butler, "The Syrian mercenaries used as 'cannon fodder' in Nagorno-Karabakh," *BBC News*, December 10, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/news/amp/stories-55238803
[2] "Azerbaijan: Analysis of Gaps in the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)," *UNHCR*, October 2009, https://www.unhcr.org/4bd7edbd9.pdf
[3] "At Baku Victory Parade, Aliyev Calls Yerevan, Zangezur, Sevan Historical Azerbaijani Lands, Erdogan Praises Enver Pasha," *The Armenian Mirror-Spectator*, December 11, 2020. https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/12/11/at-baku-victory-parade-with-erdogan-aliyev-calls-yerevan-zangezur-sevan-historical-azerbaijani-lands-erdogan-praises-enver-pasha/.
See also, "İlham Əliyev: "Zəngəzur, Göyçə, İrəvan mahalı bizim tarixi torpaqlarımızdır." *BBC Azerbaijani Service*, December 10, 2020, https://www.bbc.com/azeri/live/azerbaijan-55212140/page/2; "İlham Əliyev və Türkiyə Prezidenti Rəcəb Tayyib Ərdoğan Vətən müharibəsində Qələbəyə həsr olunmuş Zəfər paradında iştirak ediblər," *President.az*, Presidential Administration of Azerbaijan, December 10, 2020, https://president.az/articles/48788.
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[5] "Armenian PM says Turkey taking new genocidal path," *Reuters*, October 2, 2020, https://www.reuters.com/article/armenia-azerbaijan-turkey-int-idUSKBN26M7LP
[6] Inés San Martin, "Archbishop accuses Turkey of backing 'third Armenian genocide' in Nagorno-Karabakh," *Crux Now*, October 16, 2020. https://cruxnow.com/church-in-europe/2020/10/archbishop-accuses-turkey-of-backing-third-armenian-genocide-in-nagorno-karabakh/
[7] Paul Antonopoulos, "Serj Tankian of System of a Down to GCT: 'No one has ever conquered Artsakh, they are our Spartans,'" *Greek City Times*, October 3, 2020, https://greekcitytimes.com/2020/10/03/serj-tankian-of-system-of-a-down-to-gct-no-one-has-ever-conquered-artsakh-theyre-our-spartans/
[8] Seda Sevencan, "Azerbaijan create new reality after enemy expelled," *Anadolu Agency*, December 1, 2020, https://www.aa.com.tr/en/azerbaijan-front-line/azerbaijan-created-new-reality-after-enemy-expelled/2061672
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