
EDWARD ERICKSON'S LATEST ARTICLE, ENTITLED 'THE ARMENIAN LOST CAUSE AND THE INTERPRETED HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN CIVIL WAR' IS PUBLISHED

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In the latest issue of *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* (Vol. 39, Issue 3, 2018, pp 1-7.) Dr Edward J. Erickson, an American military historian, published a very interesting and informative article, summarizing the state of the dominant narratives on the Armenian Question.

Dr Erickson's study is a very balanced article discussing the Armenian campaign for recognition and myth of innocence in the context of the "Lost Cause" narrative. According to Dr Erickson, the Armenian Diaspora, which had long mobilized itself into effective lobbying groups, established a huge international support infrastructure of youth clubs, political action committees, endowed academic chairs and programs, and social organizations dedicated to perpetuating their mythology. He notes that the standard Armenian diaspora narrative is dominated by selective and cherry-picked focus on mythological memory and ignores many inconvenient facts. He gives a very clear and concise summary of the inconvenient facts debunking the Armenian narrative of innocence. According to Dr Erickson, some of these inconvenient facts include the following:

- The well-armed Armenian Revolutionary Committees (the Dashnaks and Hunchaks in particular) actively rebelled against the Ottoman state in 1914-1915.
- The Armenian Revolutionary Committees were encouraged to rebel and were supported by the Russians, British, and French.
- The Ottoman Diaspora, such as it existed in 1914, actively conspired with the Allies to bring an independent Armenia into existence. This effort continued post-war through 1921.
- Prominent Armenians (both Ottoman and Russian Armenian citizens) led Russian-based conventional Armenian military forces against the Ottomans.
- The removal of the Ottoman-Armenian population from the six eastern provinces constituted a counterinsurgency campaign.
- The mass murder of Ottoman-Armenians in 1915 was localized and not systematic in eastern Anatolia (in some places almost all Ottoman-Armenians were killed while in other places very few Ottoman-Armenians were killed).
- The Ottoman state took active measures to halt and alleviate the mass murder of Ottoman-Armenians in the summer of 1915 and held hundreds of individuals accountable in 1916 for crimes against Ottoman-Armenians.
- Many loyal Ottoman-Armenians fought for the Ottoman state throughout the war and, by 1918, some 350,000 Ottoman-Armenians remained safely in their homes in the western regions of the empire.
- Some 300,000 Ottoman-Armenians fled to Russia, became refugees there in 1914-1915, and survived the war.

- There were three historically discrete periods of the mass murder of Ottoman-Armenians in the First World War: (1) during the 1915 eastern Anatolian removal, (2) during the 1918 recovery of Erzincan and Erzurum by the Ottoman army, and (3) in 1921 during the Turkish nationalist recovery of Cilicia and Kars/Ardahan.
- During periods of Armenian and Russian occupation of Ottoman territory thousands of Ottoman Muslims were killed by the Armenians.
- Many Ottoman officials (particularly Cemal Pasha) directly protected and helped relocate Ottoman-Armenians in 1915, enabling thousands to survive.
- The Ottoman Teşkilatı Mahsusa (the Ottoman Special Organization) was not organized to kill civilians rather it was a CIA-like intelligence organization which also attempted to raise Muslim rebellions in Allied territories.

According to Dr Erickson very large amount of archival evidence is excluded from the Armenian narrative. In order to reach more balanced and scholarly ground, Dr Erickson recommends that five major revisions to the Armenian narrative on the basis of the archival evidence in the British, French, Russian, and Turkish archives. These are:

- First, the Armenian revolutionary committees and the expatriate leadership of the pre-war Armenian Diaspora bear at least some responsibility for these events.
- Second, these events were often overlapping (rather than sequential) which created synergistic conditions for misunderstandings and reactions by both sides leading to a large number of civilian deaths.
- Third, the fate of the Ottoman-Armenians was not the result of a pre-war Young Turk conspiracy to ethnically purify Anatolia.
- Fourth, there was no single period of annihilation of the Ottoman-Armenian population.
- Finally, at least some Ottoman-Armenians willingly supported the Ottoman war effort and a large part of the Ottoman-Armenian population survived the First World War.

Dr Erickson calls attention to the fact that the persistent advocacy of Lost Cause narratives often perpetuates the continuation of myths and historical inaccuracies. In this regard the Armenian Lost Cause narrative has served to build a global trans-generational hatred of both Turks and anyone advancing a narrative counter to the Armenian Lost Cause narrative. Accordingly, he concludes that it is about time to move beyond a hate-based Armenian Lost Cause narrative about the First World War and move on to an archive-based narrative which is inclusive rather than selective and exclusive. Overall this is a valuable contribution to the growing literature on the Armenian Question. We congratulate Dr Erickson for this scholarly article as well as for his courage.

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