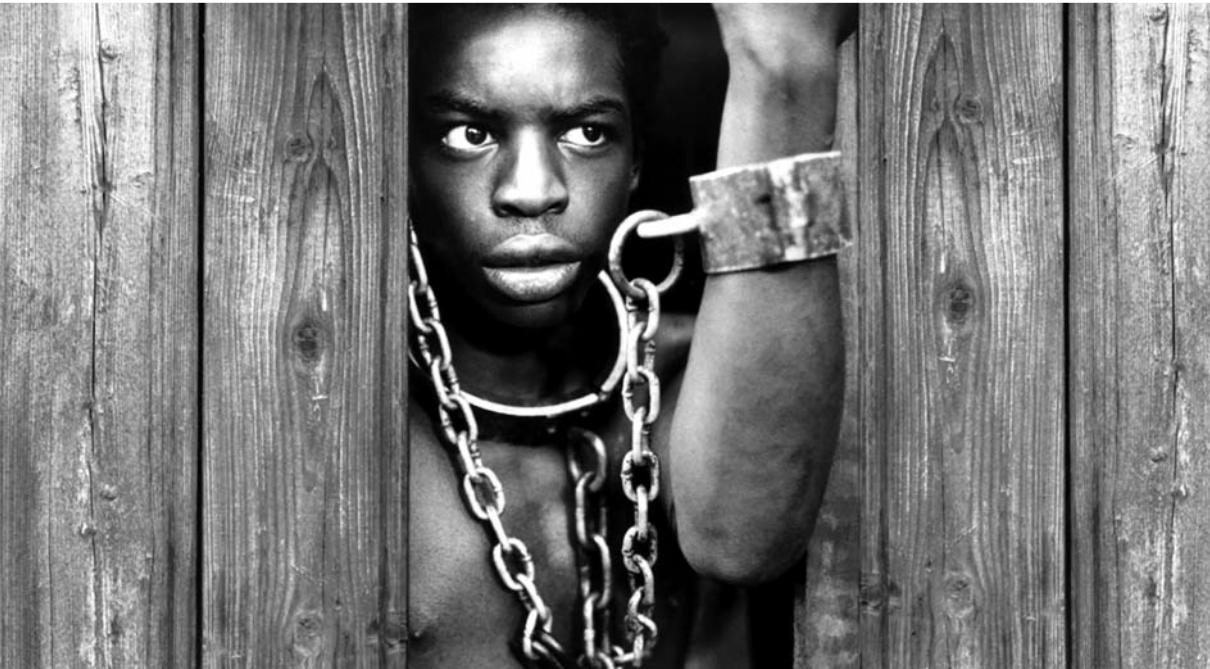


**POLICY OF MASS KILLINGS IN THE EARLY  
20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY IN COLONIAL AFRICA:  
THE CASE OF GENOCIDE IN NAMIBIA  
AND THE LESSONS LEARNED**

Lecture Delivered by Prof. Joseph B. Diescho  
at Middle East Technical University and AVİM in May 2015





Türkmeneli İşbirliği ve Kültür Vakfı  
AVRASYA İNCELEMELERİ MERKEZİ  
CENTER FOR EURASIAN STUDIES



# **Policy of Mass Killings in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Colonial Africa: The Case of Genocide in Namibia and the Lessons Learned**

**Prof. Joseph B. Diescho**

**AVİM  
(Center for Eurasian Studies)  
Conference Book No: 16**

**May 2015  
Ankara**

## **AVİM CONFERENCE BOOK No: 16**

### **EDITOR**

Turgut Kerem Tuncel

### **TRANSCRIPTION**

Cemre Dilay Boztepe  
Hazel Çağan  
Miguel Moreno

### **REDACTION**

Şakire Furtun  
Mansur Ali Gedik  
Hilal Gökmen  
Ecem Gönül  
Merve Moray

### **PHOTOGRAPHS**

Hazel Çağan

### **DESIGN**

Ruhi Alagöz

### **PUBLICATION DATE**

July 2015

### **PRINTING**

Özyurt Matbaacılık  
Büyük San. 1. Cad. Süzgül Sok. No: 7 İskitler / ANKARA  
**Tel:** 0 312 384 15 36 - **Faks:** 0 312 384 15 37

**Copyright © AVİM (Center for Eurasian Studies)**

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, transmitted or utilized in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without permission in writing from the Publishers.

To get your own copy of this or any of AVİM publications please visit  
<http://www.avim.org.tr/>

## Foreword

**P**rofessor Joseph B. Diescho is an expert in strategic leadership, corporate relations, policy analysis, transformational issues and diversity management. He is specialized in African politics and constitutional democracy. Prof. Diescho is currently the executive director of the Namibia Institute of Public Administration and Management. Earlier, he was one of the campaigners at the United Nations for the independence of Namibia.

Prof. Diescho was in Turkey in May 2015 for a number of visits and meetings with different institutions in Ankara and Istanbul. During his stay in Ankara, Prof. Diescho gave two lectures at the Department of International Relations in Middle East Technical University on 12 May 2015 to a large audience and the next day on 13 May 2015 at AVİM to a selected audience composed of scholars, journalists, *corps diplomatique*, and serving and retired diplomats of the Turkish MFA.

In those lectures, Prof. Diescho conveyed his thoughts on the still relevant humanitarian and economic consequences of the European colonization of Africa. He also expressed his views on the mass killings, which some scholars argue amounted to genocide, perpetrated by Germany against the Herero and Nama peoples in Namibia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Within this framework, Prof. Diescho reflected on the specific aspects of the legally defined crime of genocide.

Prof. Diescho's lectures were not one of those 'dry' academic speeches. On the contrary, Diescho's lectures were vivid and unreserved discourses grounded on profound factual knowledge collated with a certain philosophical cognizance. As such, Prof. Diescho's lectures were genuinely instructional addresses on the human condition(s) that European colonialism, in general, in Africa and German colonialism, in particular, in Namibia, induced.

This book is composed of the transcription of Prof. Joseph B. Diescho's aforementioned presentations that he delivered in Ankara on May 12<sup>th</sup> and May 13<sup>th</sup>. AVİM hopes that this book will provide the reader with the opportunity to get acquainted with the views of a distinguished intellectual from the 'Dark Continent'. AVİM believes that historical experiences from the Colonial Africa and, in this case, particularly from Namibia have many things to tell to humanity as a whole.

**AVİM**  
Center for Eurasian Studies





**POLICY OF MASS KILLINGS IN THE EARLY  
20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY IN COLONIAL AFRICA:  
THE CASE OF GENOCIDE IN NAMIBIA AND THE  
LESSONS LEARNED**

**Prof. Joseph B. DIESCHO**

*Executive Director of the Namibia Institute of  
Public Administration and Management*

I am very delighted and honored to be with this audience. I will not give you a lecture. That is not why I am here. I will tell you a story so that you can perhaps use the story to help you understand the current conversation in Europe with regard to whether or not certain incidents in history are genocide or not.

In the world of learning, Turkey is in the forefront. Not only in the Middle East, but in the whole world. I came to Turkey for the first time last year and I was ashamed to the core. I was really ashamed to discover my own ignorance about Turkey. I didn't know of Turkey's contribution to human civilization. As you can guess, when Namibia was colonized, the tribes were divided in accordance with

## Prof. Joseph B. Diescho

---

which European states colonized what part and my part was taken by the German, Roman Catholic missionaries. They signed an agreement with the chiefs that no other religion should come there. So when I was a child I didn't know that there were faiths other than the Catholic one. I say that because I only discovered my ignorance about the bible as a Catholic. I was really astonished to find out only when I did a tour in İstanbul that Turkey is a biblical place. My great tour guide, a typical Turk, was so generous. He was more interested in the tour than I was. I was tired on the second day, and he said: "Sir, I must take you to Topkapi museum". I said I was tired. He said: "No sir, I must take you there". So we go to this room and I see the shoes of Prophet Muhammad. I am getting curious now. The intellectual me is now wide awake, "Really? Is it still here? There is the sword of Prophet Muhammad, the sword of David". And in the last moment, he showed me the stick that Moses parted the water with. I am shaking now. I am finished. The stick that Moses used... I have heard about this! And I called people back home, and said: "when I come back, you must pay me to shake my hand... with my own eyes, I saw the stick". I didn't know that Saint Paul was born in what is now Turkey. I didn't know Tarsus was in Turkey. I didn't know Ephesus was in Turkey. I didn't know Mount Ararat was in Turkey. You can understand my shame, can't you?

I came here to AVİM to participate in a very important conversation about where we are at with regard to some of the things that the world is discussing today. But let me start by warning you that I am not giving a lecture as such, but I have a story to tell you. I have an African-Turkish story. Because, Turkey is Africa and Africa is Turkey.

There is an African story of warfare. Africa is always in some kind of ethnical/tribal conflicts. One of such conflicts happened in one part of the continent and one group was wiped out by the other. But they didn't call it genocide; it was just war. One group was wiped out. It was a war for survival; a war for existence. However, one young person in the group that was defeated managed to hide in a tree. When the war was over, he got out of the tree. He was wondering how it was possible that, for the sake of the good God, everybody in his family and friend circles killed. So he became somewhat spiritual and he said: "No, somebody must have survived in this war." So he started to ask around in the neighborhood: "Did people run away?" And he learned that some people from his tribe ran away to a faraway village. So he went to that village. It took him three days to know that he was walking to that village. He didn't know where he was but he knew that he was walking for three days. So, he goes up to a man and says: 'Sorry to bother you. I am a foreigner here.' And this man says 'Okay, I can see that you are a foreigner. Can I help you?' The foreigner says: "I am looking for a village called Bongo Bongo. Have you heard of village Bongo Bongo?" This man says; "Yes, I know where Bongo Bongo is." So the foreigner feels relieved. He says: "Thank you. Can you help me? Can you direct me how I can get there?"

## Policy of Mass Killings in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Colonial Africa: The Case of Genocide in Namibia and the Lessons Learned

---

and this man says: ‘Okay, you walk that side. There’s a road.’ “Thank you, but I see that the road there splits into two directions; one goes right, other goes left. Which one should I take?” The man says: “Take right”. He says: “Thank you. I am seeing that you know where the village is. How long do you think it will take me to get to the village Bongo Bongo?” So the man says “No, my friend. I cannot help you with that. You have to figure out yourself.” So the man continues his walk and when he gets into the junction, he turns right. The old man calls him back. Now he gets scared. “He is going to hurt me. Why is he calling me back?” So, he walks softly towards to the men. A different conversation takes place:

-You say you are foreigner?

-Yes.

-You say you are looking for the village Bongo Bongo?

-Yes.

-Did I say you to go left or right?

-Yes.

-Did you ask me how long it will take you to get to Bongo Bongo?

-Yes, I did.

-It would take you only one day.

So he now says: “Excuse me. Not too long ago, when I asked you, you said you did not know how long it will take me to get there. What changed?” So this man says “You see? I could not tell you how long it would take you to get there. I had to see you walking first. I watched your pace from here to the junction. Now I know you walk fast. It will take you one day.”

This is where we are in relation to the Republic of Turkey. We have now seen how Turkey walks. And we can tell how long it will take Turkey to get to the new world. The ignorance that we share is very deep. We are both ignorant; Africa is ignorant, Turkey is ignorant.

I was asked to make some remarks about the mass killings in Africa, generally and specifically, the genocide in my country; the genocide was perpetrated by the German Reich against the Herero and Nama communities. I speak about this subject today here when Turkey is under barrage of suspicion, misjudgment, miscommunication and misreading of history, revisionist history, if you like. I speak to you at a time when there is a great deal of sensitivity with regard to certain episodes that happened in the world. The world is searching for better definitions about these episodes. In the main, Europe is a bit divided about deciding what to call some of the incidents that happened in the history. But, beware that the people



who were part of the history are all dead. They cannot speak for themselves. So, we are only judging them on the basis of limited understanding of the happenings in the world. We are judging on the basis of our own assumptions, perceptions and sometimes, on political opportunism. What do you get out of this when you call other people that? We have a lot of crimes in Africa. We have a lot of issues that we are managing and most of the issues we now know are as simple as the concepts we agree upon and talking about. If you don't know what defines something, you cannot have a meaningful conversation about it. For instance, about fifteen years ago, Coca-Cola staged the very serious campaign to sell coke in some part of the Middle East. You can tell when Coca-Cola wants to mount a campaign, it is very serious. They wanted to kill Pepsi, so that people there would buy only coke. They went there and typical of Americans, they put billboards everywhere -a person drinking coke. They had one that was very strong. Here a man is walking. He is tired and exhausted. In the middle, he drinks a can of coke and at the right he is running, like Usain Bolt. The idea is, when you are tired and exhausted, drink this. You are powerful here. However, Coca-Cola Company did not understand the Middle Eastern context. A month after the campaign, the sales of coke went down by 80%. Nobody was buying coke so they wanted to understand why. The fact of the matter was people in that part of the world read from right to left. So what they saw was Usain Bolt running, he drinks coke, he is an exhausted man. Context determines the ways in which we understand things.

We are in a particular context right now. We have entered a new terrain with Turkey. Turkey is a very attractive country to do business with. Turkey is very progressive in trying to understand the new world. It is not a coincidence therefore that Turkey has opened just in the last ten years or so, thirty-nine embassies in Africa. It is very progressive. I'm grateful for the trip I have with Turkish Airlines, it was heavenly. It is not a coincidence, the context has changed. Turkey has a very important place in the world. Turkey can define where the world is going.

As part of Europe, Turkey does not share the blemish of colonization and slavery. Turkey is innocent. In fact, part of the encumbrances that the Turkish nation has to overcome is all this innocence and naiveté about the world. You cannot continue to be naive. We are very grateful that Turkey is getting involved. I was told that it is only Turkey that had courage to go as far as rural Somalia. The Queen of England would not go there. The Pope would not go there. They would be scared of the war and the diseases in that part of Africa. Yet, Turkey goes, because Turkey wants to engage with the people there, and we are grateful for that.

The mass killings in Africa should be seen in the context of the times they happened. But in order for us to get a better understanding, we need to go back a few steps and understand the background. It is not new for you to hear that Europe and the European economy, which, by extension, include the United States,

## Policy of Mass Killings in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Colonial Africa: The Case of Genocide in Namibia and the Lessons Learned

---

Canada, the Caribbean and South America, would not have developed without the slave trade. So, Africa is very much part of the development of the First World, if you will. One cannot imagine the dehumanization that the African people went through with the slave trade. And, this is before the genocidal episodes that we are speaking about. Let me tell you to make my point.

The story of Barack Obama visiting Africa...As a matter of fact, Obama went to Ghana in 2009, and in 2013 June-July he took another “African trip” including only three countries. Visiting only three African countries was the “African trip” of Obama. Only, three. There are fifty-four nations who are members of the African Union today. Three is not even 10%. But this is the African trip for the Americans. Obama says that he wants to go to three countries, namely, Senegal, South Africa and Tanzania. As you know, an American president cannot just pack his bags and go to some country. He has to go to the Congress and justify the trip and its expenditures. He says: “I want to go to Senegal”. Congress men and women say: “Why Senegal?” Obama says: “Senegal is very important place in the history of America.” Senegal is the place, where among other things, slaves were processed before we put them on boats and cross the Atlantic. Then, the men and women in Africa were literally captured. They were taken to the island called “Goree” in Senegal. On this island called “Goree”, these men and women were processed. Their eyesight was checked. Their teeth were counted. Their private parts were examined and when it was determined that they were fit for the purpose, in other words, that they would make “good slaves”, they were put in a twenty-five meters square room to be sent somewhere without returning; a place of no return. Once this African man was in that place, they put a badge on his wrist with the name of the awaiting master across the Atlantic. That became the identity of the slaves. At that point, this person lost his culture, lost his history, lost his name, lost his identity. Talk about the humanism. The records show millions of, at least ten million African men and women who made it to the boat perished on the road. If a slave felt sick on the trip, his body was thrown into the ocean. You could not afford to be sick. This is worse than a gunshot.

Everything about you is lost and you belong to another person, not as another human being, but as a slave. That means you are a non-person. That is why, at some point, black Americans were called “three-fifth persons”. You are only three-fifth human being. What is the percentage of that? 42%? That context is very important. So when did the genocide occur in Namibia? After the slave trade. The mental preparation for what became genocidal experiences in Africa was solidified, fossilized, and made official during the Berlin Conference that started in November 1884, and continued until February 1885. By the way, Berlin Conference was before the ‘European tribal wars’, which we are told were World War I and World War II. They were ‘European tribal wars’ among the European potentates. The purpose was to decide which European nation gets which African

## Prof. Joseph B. Diescho

---

land and to recreate Africa in their own image. What we know today is that African countries are the consequence of that conference.

The people in Namibia did not determine their own borders. It was Europe. It was Germany, the United Kingdom and Portugal. Germany got my country, which they called it “German South West Africa”. At that conference, not a single African was present. Not even to serve water or tea. Britain got Nigeria, Botswana, Basutoland, South Africa and Uganda. Germany got Namibia, Tanzania and Cameroon. Can you see the distance between Namibia, Tanzania and Cameroon? How do you become the owner of places that are so far apart? Italy got this and that. France got Senegal. Portugal got Angola, Mozambique, Principe, Guinea-Bissau. This caused the decimation of the African personality. We became, as Namibians, an extension of the German Reich. South Africa became an extension of the British Crown. People there did not matter. It is only with their resources and their labor, cheap labor, the European economy developed.

The people of Africa were no longer full human beings; they were the conduit of European interests. Even what we speak today is not what we would speak of if we were not colonized. It is a matter of fact that entire Africa even today is divided according to who colonized whom. We have Francophones, who speak French. They believe they are French. We have the Anglophones, who speak English. They will never be an English man, they’ll never be English woman, but they believe they are English. We have Lusophone in Angola, Capo Verde, Principe, Mozambique. They are the worst affected, because they even lost their names. They’re De Santos, De Oliviera, De Jesus. We are very confused and that confusion comes from the way in which we were described as extensions of Portugal, England, France, Spain. That is our identity.

Then, you have two countries in Africa that were not colonized really with Berlin Conference; Liberia and Ethiopia. Ethiopia survived colonialism. It is a fact that Ethiopia is very idiosyncratic today. They have a different civilization. The Ethiopian calendar is different from the African calendar. When the rest of Africa have their new year in January as the Europeans, Ethiopians have their new year in September. That is Africa. Then you have Liberia. Liberia is not an indigenous civilization. Liberia is a child of President James Monroe, who put few slaves on the boat back to Africa and a place was somewhere in West Africa; “We dump you here. Let’s see if you can govern yourself.” The name “Liberia” derives from the word liberty. The capital of Liberia is Monrovia, coming from the President Monroe. However the complication doesn’t end; there are the so called Americo-Liberians and the Afro-Liberians. Apparently those who believe they are more American than African believe they are superiors to other.

The point I try to make here is that human beings always suffer from inferiority-

## Policy of Mass Killings in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Colonial Africa: The Case of Genocide in Namibia and the Lessons Learned

---

superiority complex. Sometimes we believe we are superior to others and sometimes we believe we are inferior. It depends on where you are. The fact is material presence. If you have more clothes in the neighborhood, if you have a better house in the neighborhood whether you like it or not, you'll begin to feel you are better. If you have children and they are running a race and one of them wins the race, five times out of seven times he will develop a superiority complex. Yet, others will just say he is a faster runner. In the interactions between Europe and Africa, Europeans with clothes and Africans without clothes, Europeans developed an attitude that they make better human beings. Even in Africa there are tribes that believe they are better than others. In Namibia we have two tribes they believe they are better than others. We call them 'executive tribes'. They have access to jobs. Somehow, they have internalized the belief that they are better. Tall people always believe that they are better. You cannot tell Usain Bolt that he is equal to other Jamaicans.

The times of mass killings, slavery and colonization in Namibia were very difficult. Germany has always been driven by the sense of superiority; the Aryan race. The Africans were considered sub-human secondary human beings. During the first mining expeditions in Namibia, German administration had a law ordering that Black Namibians were not to be allowed to wear a watch, because it was not meant for them to know what time it was; they had to work. They were not allowed to eat white bread. White bread was only for white people. I never understood that they were not allowed to enter the only shopping place in town. If they wanted to buy a shirt, they went and stood at the window. There was a white woman in the window. The white woman would ask "what do you want". "I want a shirt or a jacket". It was for the white woman to determine the texture the size and the color of the cloth. That's why old photographs of African workers in the mines would be seen to be wearing things that didn't fit. That is because they didn't choose. They were not allowed to drink alcohol. That I understand; because they had to work. But importantly, there was a regulation that Germany proclaimed. They called it the *Vaterlichezuchtigungsrecht*, translated as the right of fatherly protection. Any white person, regardless of age, gender and status had the obligation to assault physically any black person who in the eyes of the white person was slow at work, in order to protect the black person from being lazy. You beat them, because you are protecting them. You have this right to fatherly protect them from being lazy. Many people died as a consequence of that. Many people died. If the case reached the magistrate that an African was killed in the mine for being lazy, the evidence, the words of the killer, this white person who committed the act, could only be matched by the evidence of seven black people who had to be present when the killing took place. You can imagine that is an impossible scenario. This is before the war against the Herero and the Nama.

The genocide about which we speak was a consequence of a serious and official policy of Germany. It was a result of the order by the German Parliament to exterminate. They used this word in the official documents. The German Colonial Bund issued a decree which was called *Vernichtungsbefehl*. The word *vernichten* means to destroy, to annihilate, and to exterminate. It is like when you have cockroaches in your room, you have an insecticide and you spray to exterminate. Germany issued an order to exterminate whoever from the Herero or Nama community stood in the way of the German conquest of German South West Africa.

It is an important understanding for us, especially for Europe today and Turkey specifically, that “genocide” is not a word you use because you want to. Genocide is a particular, very specific experience during which, by an order, in other words, as a consequence of an intention, one group of human beings decide that we now have to exterminate, to kill as individuals and a collective, people who look like this, who talk like this, who have this religion.

I must say that the Pope is wrong to describe what happened here in 1915 as both the first experience of genocide in modern history or that it was, in fact, genocide. I am convinced that the Pope did not possess the right facts to conclude like that. The first experience of genocide in the twentieth century was Namibia, when more than 75% of the people who were designated as Herero and Nama were killed as a consequence of a German order. More than 65,000 Hereros were killed. More than 10,000 Namas were killed. If in 1904 you kill 65,000 people, who was left? Ladies and gentlemen, they were arrested. Not even arrested; they were captured, they were ambushed, they were blockaded and hanged alive in trees. They were hanged in trees. Men, women and children. Sometimes Germans used a church to lure people to come to worship and to get gifts, and the boxes were opened and they were all killed. That is because the law said “kill them all”. That is why Namibia’s population today is only two million. The majority, who were in the south, were exterminated by a German order.

There were about twenty five thousand German nationals in and out of Namibia. They only counted the cattle, not the people. You will not find any record of the people, but you’ll find the number of cows. In other words, the lives of the cows were more important than the lives of the Hereros and the Namas. It is therefore genocide. In 1915, it’s now a very important date for us, the Germans were defeated by the Afrikaners, by the white people of South Africa, the Dutch. In 1915 Germany gave up its power in South West Africa, and the white South Africans annexed Namibia as the fifth province of the Union of South Africa. It was a skirmish, many people were killed. Yet, this war is not classified as genocide. It was a war. Germans were killed by the Afrikaans. But it was not genocide because there was no decision in South Africa to go and seek out the

## Policy of Mass Killings in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Colonial Africa: The Case of Genocide in Namibia and the Lessons Learned

---

Germans and exterminate them. We had skirmishes after that; by 1966, the black people of Namibia started an armed struggle. Talking to the United Nations and the world was not helping, so they decided to pick up the gun and fight for liberation. Many people died on both sides. It has never been classified as genocide, because it was war. We have had a series of wars in Africa. Main among them is the Biafra war in Nigeria in the 1960s. One group of people in Nigeria decided to break away. People were killed in thousands. It never met the definition of genocide, because it was a war. The South Africa-Angola war, South Africa-Namibia war, the Portuguese war in Angola and Mozambique had many, many casualties. They were never classified as genocide.

I want to be very clear that this is not me making it up. The record is there. Historians who are intellectually honest will confirm that the first experience of genocide in our world today was Namibia. That helps us to identify whether other episodes of conflicts are genocidal or not. And as a political scientist trained around the world, I can tell you without fear of contradiction that what happened in this part of the world [Anatolia] in 1915 does not come close to genocide. War, yes. Hurtful experience of human beings, yes. Painful, yes. Unnecessary, maybe. But genocide, it was not. For a number of reasons:

1- The definition of the crime of genocide is very clear. I cannot find in archival records a single document that shows that when the Turkish authority at the time, the Ottoman Empire, decided to single out people who spoke Armenian and kill them because they were Armenians. You will recall better than I do that Turkey was in a process of evolving as a nation. There were conflicts. It happened that where the Armenian community was concentrated, where the Russians were, there were more casualties. But it is not genocide. You see, philosophy will tell you, that when you have a war, it is a war. In other words, when you come out of the war, no one's hands are clean. You have blood on your hands. We have to accept that there was blood, there was pain. But we have to be very clear not to call things that were not. So I want to make it very clear that it was an unfortunate situation of war, but it was not genocide.

2- In Namibia during the time of the genocide of the Herero and the Nama, there were other groups who were killed during the German march of conquest. My people, the Kavango, they are in the north east. One of the kings was killed. A few people were killed because they refused to give their land up for missionary stations. They were killed, but that was not genocide. Because, at that time there was not an intentional decree that ordered killing them. It was a moment of skirmish. "Because you are in my way, I'm going to remove you"; The Germans said and did. The genocide in Namibia is very specific to the moment of 1904 and 1908 when there was a decree in Germany to kill the Hereros and the Namas. The others are incidental casualties of colonial expenditure.

3- Germany was not only in Namibia. As I said, it was in Cameroon, Tanzania... England was everywhere on the continent, France was there. The Portuguese were there. In fact, first the Portuguese came to Africa. But you do not find any accusation that Portuguese killings of the people in modern Angola were genocide. Because, Portuguese government did not make any intentional decision to kill the people in Angola. I hope you are getting my point. Genocide is a very specific experience, where there must be an intention to hurt a group or groups of people because they had the particular designation of a language, racial connotation, maybe history and religion. We cannot confuse all wars as genocide.

4- What can amount to genocide to us in our understanding is the killings in Rwanda in 1994. Historical and political records verify that Rwanda constitutes genocide. Why? There was a decision that was taken by one group, the Hutu, who felt that history has been unkind and ungenerous to them, who felt that they have been marginalized and that they have to take the laws in their own hands. And they said "It's time for us to kill the Tutsi" and the decree that went over the radio said: "Let's remove the cockroaches". The cockroaches was the nickname for the Tutsi. It was so bad. So bad, that because of the designation of a particular group you had wives killing their husbands because the husband was a Tutsi. You have mothers killing their children because the mother knew that the father of the child was a Tutsi. You see, in Africa we say: "Only a mother knows 100% who the father of the child is". A child to all intents and purposes can have a wrong father, but never a wrong mother. The mother knows. So the Hutu mothers, who knew that their children, their babies, were Tutsi, took a knife from the kitchen and stabbed the eyes out of the child. You can imagine the banality of this. That Roman Catholic church bishops who were of Hutu designation would use churches to kill the Tutsi, because there was an order to kill the Tutsis. I have a friend, a totally traumatized human. I don't think any person can overcome my friend's pain and anguish. Sometimes he cannot sleep because of the genocide in Rwanda. He remembers the case that when they discovered where his father was laid to rest, his best friend, they grew up together, killed him in his bed with cold blood. Because his best friend was a Hutu and he was a Tutsi. The point here is that you cannot have genocide by accident. Genocide is a consequence of a decision to exterminate another group.

5- Africa has had a series of wars. They are still going on right now as we speak. We had wars in Biafra, in Nigeria in 1960s. We had wars in Uganda. We had wars in Lesotho. None of them is classified as genocide. But, people were killed. Sometimes one group will suffer more than the other, because they have less power. I want to make a very solid case here. To put it to you today; Turkey, modern Turkey, should really not feel anguished and belittled by the language that is now going around in Europe about genocide. Do the right thing. You see, when you are a strong boy on the block, others will be jealous of you. We know that; it

## Policy of Mass Killings in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Colonial Africa: The Case of Genocide in Namibia and the Lessons Learned

---

is human. And Turkey is doing very well in the world. If you put yourselves in the shoes of any European colonial power, Britain, France, Italy, Germany, you would see that they have some restlessness to want to put some blemish on Turkey. Turkey is too clean. You can understand that. It is part of the geopolitics, part of *realpolitik*. You cannot be clean alone. So they will say “you also did something wrong”, even if you did not. But please, ladies and gentlemen, you can never allow other people to determine your own self-definition. You are not an extension of British opinion, French opinion or the opinion of the Vatican. Turkey is Turkey.

6- It was before the existence of modern Turkey, when fighting was going on. Turkey became Turkey after 1923. International law says there is something called *pacta sunt servanda*, that when you become a ruler or a republic, you inherit the good and the bad from your predecessor, we accept that. But it must be correct. If it was not genocide before Atatürk, it cannot be genocide after Atatürk. The moment does not define the event. The event defines the event. If it was not genocide, then it cannot be genocide now. In law, if a person is accused of rape, the person raped somebody, the defense lawyer will find a way to argue around it, to say “no, it was not rape, it was an attempted rape”. In other words, there are certain factors that are not part of the story.

What happened here in relation to the Armenian conflict; to all intents and purposes, historically, ontologically, sociologically, cannot qualify as genocide. It was painful, yes. But it was not genocide; unless we find recorded evidence that shows someone in the Ottoman authorities said “from now on, if you look Armenian and we find you, we are going to shoot you”. The Holocaust can qualify as genocide, because there were orders. I am told by very authoritative reports that at some point Hitler himself, the master racist, said: “There is no such a thing as racial superiority, but for the purposes of my propaganda, I will create it”. So, it is a decision.

You cannot control that you are a boy or a girl. So, do not take on the blame for something that you did not do. Just be yourself. It is the right of Turkey to get on this movement now to be the part of the new world. And I mean this very seriously, because the world is sick. The people who created the mass killings in the world, the people who are responsible for colonizing other people cannot be the same people to lead the direction to the new world. Albert Einstein once wrote that “You cannot solve a problem with the same mindset that created the problem.” One of the French philosophers says “the past is the past, not even God can change the past”. And you can understand what that means.

Now, what have we learned from all these things? We have learned, firstly, that human beings, when left alone on their own, when not supervised, can do the worst to our own and fellow human beings. Human nature is terrible, if not guided.



One of the philosophers of social contract, you know the likes of John Locke, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Hobbes, warned us of the degenerative nature of human life. Thomas Hobbes is clear when he says “we, as human beings, we are beasts”. All the time human beings in this world are of *bellum omnium contra omnes*; we are, each of us, waging a war against all for survival. When unwatched, we can hurt our own brothers and sisters. It means that the moment of slavery and colonization came and went. It really does not mean that the people who did this are less human than we are. They were motivated by their own crisis of existence at the time. I wish we had a whole day to unpack this statement, but what it means is that it was not the exclusive sin of white people to enslave Africans. It was not for the simple reason that Africans themselves participated in the slave trade. Slave trade could not have been done without the participation of African kings and chiefs. Apartheid in South Africa would not have lasted as long as it did without the participation of the black people. That is human life. The point I am trying to make is that we learn not to derive self-righteousness from the history of slavery and colonialism. Africa participated in that, otherwise Europe and the Americas would have not succeeded.

We have learned, secondly, that Karl Marx was right: Arrival of private property messes up the human condition. You can imagine, when the first Europeans arrived in Angola in Africa, everybody they found there was half-naked, wearing the bare minimum from the goat that they once owned. These Europeans were fully dressed. Can you really imagine that they would consider the Africans as their equals? It is not human. You know yourself that when you are in the community and you are the most educated, no way you consider the uneducated your equal. You think they are to be forgotten, they are not to be heard. Now, imagine if you add race to that. This white people come with blue eyes, straight hair, smelling soap. The moment of equality was not there. I say this with a heavy heart. Even today in my country and in South Africa, you will find that what the Europeans did to Africans before, the middle class and upper class Africans are now doing to the lower class Africans. You go to a baptism, to a wedding, to a funeral, and after the ceremony, food is served. You will see that the upper class eats somewhere with a table with a table cloth. The rest eats somewhere on the sand. Even the food that is served is not the same. But, there is no white men telling them where to sit. We have internalized that. As a consequence of slavery and colonization, Africans have internalized that they are inferior to white people. We have learned this. That is why you have the *xenophobia* in South Africa today. Black South Africans killing who? Other Africans in South Africa. Because in South Africa, right now, white people do not look foreign. Indian people don't look foreign. The history of colonization and the history of slavery made black people in Africa to suffer from a very deep sickness, a psychosis, self-doubt, self-pity and self-hate. That is why today you have in Africa a very deep sickness. You have African women with longer hair than you here have “Brazilian hair”,

## Policy of Mass Killings in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Colonial Africa: The Case of Genocide in Namibia and the Lessons Learned

---

“Chinese hair”. Because they believe when they look like the way they came into this world, they are not pretty. We learned that from slavery, colonization. Mass killing has killed the African psychologically more than it killed physically. We have learned that this world is not very kind. This is very painful for an African to admit. We have learned that without the white people who came to Africa, Africa would not be where it is today. The better developed economies in Africa are South Africa, Namibia and Zimbabwe, where white people live. Where the black people are on their own, very little in the realm of development happens. I admit this to you with a very heavy heart. Congo DRC is the richest country on the African continent. However, there are no roads, no infrastructure. Greed and corruption is very deep. It just happens, and I’m going to say this because, I don’t have other friendlier words to say it, management of resources and maintenance of infrastructure is not a domain where Africans are very strong. Ali Mazrui argues that the reason that Africans by themselves, on their own, don’t develop is that they are spoilt by the climate of Africa. The climate is nice all year round. They don’t have the fear for winter. In the absence of winter, they do not built brick homes because they are always warm.

The point I am making is we, in Africa, would not be where we are if it was not for the colonization. It’s very sad. So, we need white people in Africa, we learned that. In 1994, President Mandela became the president of South Africa. I had the privilege to write some of the speeches for the old man. One of the visitors to Mandela in September 1994 was president Nyerere of Tanzania. He already stepped down as president, and he said “I want to talk to Mr. Mandela, alone, because I have something to tell him.” Nyerere visited Mandela, and told him: “please, do not make the mistake we made, that is, chasing away white people. Your country will not develop as fast as you wish without them”. The point is that history is history; we are now where we have white people in Africa, and we have us. And I’m not saying that white people are superior. I am saying purely and simply that white people have a certain ability to do things with innovative thinking, creation, maybe because of the fear of their winter if you like. Africans have a deep richness of forming good relations. *Ubuntu*. That means, without white people we would not be where we are now in terms of our development. Without the African spirit there would not be peace in Africa. My friends, this is very serious. There could not have been a peaceful South Africa after apartheid, or a peaceful Namibia after colonization if the racial equation was reversed. In other words, if those who were oppressed were white and those in power in minority were black, tells me that white people would not have been as forgiving as black people have been. It is part of the African spirit to treat everybody equal. Because we say *ubuntu*; “I am because you are”. And, we are because others have been and others shall be. Relationships are important for an African. Therefore, what we learned is to bring the innovative abstract world of the white people into a constructive conversation with the human world of the African people. That is

## Prof. Joseph B. Diescho

---

where we are at. We have learned that when you remove the upper skin, we are all human beings. The blood is exactly the same. The inner side of our body is exactly the same. It took us a long time to realize that our humanity is the same.

But finally, we have learned that the world is really a global village. It is shrinking by the day. No country can do it alone. No country can survive in peace and stability without working with other people. And that is why we are really admiring the Turkish efforts right now. We owe it to Turkey to show us the spirit of the new world. It is not about “I am better than you are”, it is not about “I am worse than you are”. It is about what you bring to the table. Show me your weakness, show me your strength, I’ll show you mine and together we will discover our common strength to make this world a better place. I was in Namibia, I was in South Africa just yesterday and I am here today. I can leave here and tomorrow morning I have a meeting in Namibia, is that not a wonderful world? We have learned finally that as much as we are frustrated about what has happened in the past, we must learn the grammar, we must learn the language, we must learn the syntax of saying thank you to those who made it possible for us to be here today. The world is definitely more peaceful than it was and we thank to those who made it possible.

For me in my small world, I thank you. Yesterday I was taken to the place where Atatürk was finally laid to rest. I read, I saw and I wished I could have brought more Africans to see the story. I read three statements that the leader Atatürk made. In each of the statements, he used the word “civilization”. We are in defense of a country, in defense of a new civilization. If you were to ask me what you can do, what I can do to make this world better, my answer would be to build a new civilization. And, Turkey is in the forefront of that civilization. A civilization where we, all human beings, come together, bring our strength, bring our weaknesses to make the world a better place. And we thank Turkey. I thank you, especially the young ones, for belonging to this process, this project of building a common village for all of us and our children.

Thank you very much.

Policy of Mass Killings in the Early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in Colonial Africa:  
The Case of Genocide in Namibia and the Lessons Learned

---





## AVİM Conference Books

- REGIONAL INTEGRATED TRANSPORT CORRIDORS PROJECT
- ADDRESS BY H.E. AMBASSADOR NACI KORU, DEPUTY MINISTER OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY AT CENTER OF EURASIAN STUDIES
- A GENERAL LOOK AT ASIA AND TURKEY'S PRIORITIES: PROSPECTS AND PRIORITIES OF TURKEY IN ASIA
- AVRASYA PERSPEKTİFLERİ: KAZAKİSTAN VE TÜRKİYE'DEN BAKIŞ (In Turkish)
- CAUCASUS AND AZERBAIJAN
- SOUTH EAST EUROPE, THE BALKANS: PROSPECTS FOR THE REGION
- TURKISH-ARMENIAN DIALOGUE
- TURKEY'S AND TAIWAN'S OUTLOOK ON EURASIA-PACIFIC
- TURKEY-IRAN: REGIONAL COOPERATION IN AN EVOLVING EURASIAN GEOGRAPHY WITH A FOCUS ON THE CAUCASUS AND CENTRAL ASIA
- THE ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJANI NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT: A THREAT TO REGIONAL PEACE, SECURITY AND NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS
- REGIONAL COOPERATION POSSIBILITIES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE IN THE CAUCASUS
- 28 OCAK AİHM PERİNÇEK-İSVİÇRE DURUŞMASININ IŞIĞINDA TÜRK-ERMENİ SORUNU (In Turkish)
- THE 'SOCIOLOGICAL TURN' OF TAIWAN-CHINA RELATIONS
- TURKIC COUNCIL AND COOPERATION IN EURASIA IN THE LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS ACROSS THE REGION
- PROSPECTS FOR TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS