

UNIVERSITY OF CANTERBURY

# Genocide on Fleet Street

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The Armenian Genocide in the British Press, 1915-1918

*'This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA Honours in History at the University of Canterbury. This dissertation is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of other historians used in the dissertation is credited to the author in the footnote references. The dissertation is approximately 9,822 words in length.'*

**Daniel Steel**

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## Abstract

This paper examines British attitudes towards the Armenian genocide through the three most prominent contemporary newspapers: the *Times*, the *Manchester Guardian* and the *Daily Mail*. In particular, it considers the nature and extent of these papers' interest in the events and, as far as can be discerned, that of their readers. Despite substantial scholarly interest in atrocity narratives in First World War Britain, British reception of the Armenian genocide, by far the war's worst atrocity, has attracted little attention. Historians in this area, who concern themselves overwhelmingly with atrocities committed by the German military, have given the subject only passing mention. Conversely, recent inquiries by scholars of humanitarianism have focused almost exclusively on reception amongst Britain's pro-Armenian humanitarian advocates, giving only supplementary consideration to the press. This paper adopts a comparative approach, contrasting the presentation of the genocide in the 'elite press' (the *Times* and the *Guardian*) with that of the most prominent and widely-circulated 'popular' newspaper, the *Mail*, in order to consider differing attitudes amongst upper- and middle-class observers respectively. While the elite press provided significant coverage of the events, demonstrating a humanitarian concern for the Armenian victims, the *Mail* gave the genocide only passing attention, despite its potential propaganda value and having access to a substantial volume of graphic eye-witness accounts. Two conclusions are drawn from this disparity. First, it is suggested that the *Mail*'s inattention resulted from a lack of interest by their readers, indicating that the Armenian cause was a predominantly elite phenomenon. Second, it is argued that the *Mail* exercised a deliberate editorial decision not to reproduce much of the details published by the elite press, demonstrating that the *Mail*'s long-standing scholarly reputation as a government propaganda outlet 'duping' the public into the war through graphic atrocity stories is unfounded.

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## Introduction

On 24 April 1915, the Ottoman Empire's Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) arrested and executed thousands of Armenian elites in Constantinople. This was followed by a general policy lasting into 1916 of 'relocating' its entire Armenian population, including women, children, and the elderly, to the Syrian desert without provisions under the pretext of military necessity. Those who survived the death marches suffered brutal massacres by Turkish and Kurdish forces under the instruction of Ottoman officials. Scholars estimate that this policy of annihilation, known subsequently as the Armenian genocide, eradicated over one million of the Ottoman Empire's approximately two million Armenians.<sup>1</sup> The genocide, coinciding with the First World War, was swiftly condemned by Britain and its Entente allies. On 24 May 1915 they publicly declared that they held 'all members of the Ottoman Government...personally responsible for the massacres.'<sup>2</sup> Britain made it an official war aim to liberate the Armenians from Ottoman rule and establish an Armenian nation state.<sup>3</sup> These commitments were swiftly abandoned in the post-war period, leaving Armenia to be conquered by Bolshevik Russia. Consequently, Britain's protests to the Armenian genocide are conventionally viewed as little more than wartime expediency, serving as propaganda to convince the United States to join their war effort and to mask imperialist policies in the Middle East in a humanitarian façade.<sup>4</sup> This dissertation considers British attitudes towards the genocide beyond the Foreign Office through an examination of the contemporary press.

The presence of narratives of enemy brutality towards non-combatant civilians in Britain's press and government propaganda has been the subject of ongoing scholarly attention since the

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<sup>1</sup> For useful introductions, see H. Kaiser, 'Genocide at the Twilight of the Ottoman Empire', in D. Bloxham and A.D. Moses, *The Oxford Handbook of Genocide Studies*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2010, pp. 365-385; H-L. Kieser and D. Bloxham, 'Genocide', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War, vol. 1: Global War*, Cambridge; New York, Cambridge University Press, 2014, pp. 585-614. For some recent historiographical overviews, see R.G. Suny, 'Writing Genocide: The Fate of the Ottoman Armenians' in R.G. Suny, F.M. Göçek and N.M. Naimark (ed.), *Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 29-50; J. Laycock, 'Beyond National Narratives? Centenary Histories, the First World War and the Armenian Genocide', *Revolutionary Russia*, vol. 28, no. 2, 2015, pp. 93-117.

<sup>2</sup> 'Allies' Stern Warning to Turkey', *The Times*, 24 May 1915, p. 5.

<sup>3</sup> 'War Aims', *The Times*, 17 May 1917, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> For examples of this traditional view, see J.M. Reed, , *Atrocity Propaganda, 1914-1919*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1941, pp. 216-222; A. Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question, 1915-1923*, New York, St. Martin's Press, 1984; D. Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, nationalism, and the destruction of the Ottoman Armenians*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2005.

late 1920s. Interwar pacifists like Harold Lasswell and Arthur Ponsonby condemned these atrocity narratives, chiefly lurid accounts of German massacres of civilians in Belgium and northern France (the ‘rape of Belgium’), as fabricated propaganda intended to demonise the enemy and mobilise public support for the war effort.<sup>5</sup> Their polemical writings, now largely discredited, framed discussion on atrocity narratives for nearly fifty years.<sup>6</sup> Subsequent historians, notably J.M. Read, Cate Haste and Trevor Wilson, accepted without question the sinister intent behind their apparent fabrication.<sup>7</sup> The British press, and in particular popular newspapers like the *Daily Mail*, was charged with being one of the chief outlets for this propaganda through its supposedly insatiable appetite for atrocity stories. Haste alleged that ‘the patriotic newspapers took on the role of recruiting agents’, printing “‘violent appeals to hate and animal lust for blood’.”<sup>8</sup> John Horne and Alan Kramer’s demonstration that the German army did commit large-scale atrocities in their invasion and subsequent occupation of Belgium and northern France, intentionally killing over 6,000 non-combatant civilians, thereby verifying many apparent ‘falsehoods’,<sup>9</sup> has prompted re-evaluations of the role atrocity narratives played in Britain’s wartime culture. Scholars like Catriona Pennell have shown that atrocity narratives proved crucial to defining for Britons the moral purpose of their war.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> H.D. Lasswell, *Propaganda Technique in the World War*, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co, 1927; A. Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime: Containing an assortment of lies circulated throughout the nations during the Great War*, Torrance, CA, Institute for Historical Review, 1980 [1928].

<sup>6</sup> For a direct refutation of many of Ponsonby’s allegations and an analysis of his highly dubious methodology, see A. Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 40–44, who suggests that *Falsehood in Wartime* was itself a ‘propaganda lie’. For a discussion of how these interwar polemics nevertheless achieved such enduring influence and uncritical scholarly acceptance for over half a century, see N.F. Gullace, ‘Allied Propaganda and World War I: Interwar Legacies, Media Studies, and the Politics of War Guilt’, *History Compass*, 2011, vol. 9, no. 9, pp. 195–211; N.F. Gullace, ‘War Crimes or Atrocity Stories? Anglo-Armenian Narratives of Truth and Deception in the Aftermath of World War I’, in E.D. Heineman, *Sexual Violence in Conflict Zones: From the Ancient World to the Era of Human Rights*, Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, pp. 105–121.

<sup>7</sup> Read, *Atrocity Propaganda*; C. Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning: Propaganda in the First World War*, London, Allen Lane, 1977; T. Wilson, *The Myriad Faces of War: Britain and the Great War, 1914–1918*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 1986, pp. 731–747.

<sup>8</sup> Haste, *Keep the Home Fires Burning*, pp. 83–84. See also Trevor Wilson’s comments on the press in Wilson, *Myriad Faces of War*, p. 739.

<sup>9</sup> These findings were first published in J. Horne and A. Kramer, ‘German “Atrocities” and Franco-German Opinion, 1914: The Evidence of German Soldiers’ Diaries’, *Journal of Modern History*, vol. 66, no. 1, 1994, pp. 1–33. Their research was subsequently expanded into a 600-page volume, J. Horne and A. Kramer, *German Atrocities, 1914: A History of Denial*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 2001, now considered the definitive account of the ‘rape of Belgium’.

<sup>10</sup> C. Pennell, “‘Why We Are At War’: Justifying War in Britain, 1914”, in D. Welch and J. Fox (ed.), *Justifying War: Propaganda, Politics and the Modern Age*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2012, pp. 95–108; C. Pennell, *A Kingdom United: Popular Responses to the Outbreak of the First World War in Britain and Ireland*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2012, pp. 56–67, 92–107. See also Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 291–326. Stéphane Audoin-Rouzeau and Annette Becker have presented similar arguments in a broader European context, focusing particularly on France and Germany. See S. Audoin-Rouzeau and A. Becker, *1914–1918: Understanding the Great War*, trans. C. Temerson, London, Profile Books, 2002, pp. 113–158.

Conversely, Nicoletta Gullace, while conceding that atrocity narratives were not ‘the lurid fabrication contended by Ponsonby and Lasswell’, continues to view them as part of a co-ordinated propaganda effort to present German aggression as an attack on Britain’s very way of life.<sup>11</sup> However, as Emily Robertson has recently argued, while propaganda reinforced these anti-German sentiments, it certainly did not create them.<sup>12</sup> Scholarship on Britain’s wartime press has not undergone similar maturation. Despite recent work by Adrian Gregory showing that the popular press’ interest in atrocity stories has been greatly overstated and mischaracterised,<sup>13</sup> the traditional picture remains. Press historians Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, writing in 2015, claim ‘there can be little doubt the press colluded with the military authorities to publicise and sensationalise the events in Belgium.’<sup>14</sup>

Notably absent from these discussions, which focus almost exclusively on Britain’s reception of German atrocities, is the Armenian genocide, which, if discussed at all, generally receives only passing notice.<sup>15</sup> The most comprehensive account in this strand of scholarship remains Read’s brief overview which assumes the genocide’s presence in the press to be an extension of government propaganda.<sup>16</sup> Recent accounts of British attitudes towards the genocide instead come from the perspective of scholarship on humanitarianism. Extending Akaby Nassibian’s initial discussion of Britain’s Armenophiles in the 1980s, recent works by Jo Laycock, Michelle Tusan and Keith Watenpaugh have considered both the nature of Armenophile interest in the Armenians and how they presented them to a wider audience in their humanitarian appeals.<sup>17</sup> The Armenophiles, informed by a Gladstonian liberal desire to

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<sup>11</sup> N.F. Gullace, ‘Sexual Violence and Family Honor: British Propaganda and International Law during the First World War’, *The American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 3, 1997, pp. 714-747; N.F. Gullace, *“The Blood of Our Sons”: Men, Women and the Renegotiation of British Citizenship During the Great War*, New York, Palgrave Macmillan, 2002; N.F. Gullace, ‘Barbaric Anti-Modernism: Representations of the “Hun” in Britain, North America, Australia, and Beyond’, in J. Pearl (ed.), *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, Lincoln, University of Nebraska Press, 2010, pp. 61-78. Quotation from Gullace, *History Compass*, p. 693.

<sup>12</sup> E. Robertson, ‘Propaganda and “manufactured hatred”: A reappraisal of the ethics of First World War British and Australian propaganda’, *Public Relations Inquiry*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2014, pp. 245-266.

<sup>13</sup> Gregory, *Call to Arms*, pp. 15-49; A. Gregory, *The Last Great War: British Society and the First World War*, New York, Cambridge University Press, 2008, pp. 40-69.

<sup>14</sup> A. Bingham and M. Conboy, *Tabloid Century: The Popular Press in Britain, 1896 to the present*, Oxford, Peter Lang, 2015, p. 29. See also Gullace, *Blood of Our Sons*, pp. 26-33.

<sup>15</sup> See, for example, Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime*, p. 24; M.L. Sanders, and P.M. Taylor, *British Propaganda During the First World War*, London, MacMillan, 1982, pp. 142, 145-146, 178; Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 296-297.

<sup>16</sup> Read, *Atrocity Propaganda*, pp. 216-222

<sup>17</sup> A. Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question, 1915-1923*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1984, pp. 33-66; J. Laycock, *Imagining Armenia: Orientalism, ambiguity and intervention*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2009, esp. pp. 99-143; M. Tusan, *Smyrna’s Ashes: Humanitarianism, Genocide, and the Birth of the Middle East*, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press, 2012, pp. 133-143; K.D. Watenpaugh, *Bread from Stones: The Middle East and the Making of Modern Humanitarianism*, Oakland, CA,

champion the cause of persecuted Christian minorities,<sup>18</sup> should not be taken as representative of broader attitudes. Indeed, Nassibian noted that ‘a discussion of pro-Armenian public opinion’, which he did not attempt to provide, would require ‘a detailed examination of the press’.<sup>19</sup> While Laycock has examined the press to some extent, she confines her analysis to the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*, which she assumes to necessarily represent all British ‘public opinion’.<sup>20</sup> As Troy Paddock observes, however, there is a distinction between ‘published opinion’ and ‘public opinion’ such that a paper’s editorial views cannot be taken as immediate evidence of the views of their readers.<sup>21</sup> Moreover, these papers had a small elite audience and her analysis gives no consideration to the popular press. The extent and nature of British interest in the genocide, therefore, still requires close examination.

Three national papers have been selected for this purpose: the *Times*, the *Daily Mail* (both accessed electronically via Gale Newsvault) and the *Manchester Guardian* (accessed electronically via ProQuest Historical Newspapers). Their differing audiences allow insights into a broad spectrum of British society.<sup>22</sup> The *Times*, although nominally neutral as the ‘newspaper of record’, had attracted a conservative reputation following its pre-war acquisition by the notoriously right-wing press magnate Lord Northcliffe. Accordingly, Gregory notes that it became ‘highly suspect in liberal circles, who feared it was becoming a higher priced version of the *Daily Mail*’.<sup>23</sup> Whatever the validity of their perception, the *Times*’ readership was consequently predominantly conservative. By 1914 the *Guardian* was, conversely, the ‘principal voice of establishment liberalism’.<sup>24</sup> It played an influential role in late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Liberal politics. Its editor, C.P. Scott, was himself a Liberal M.P. from 1895 to 1906 and used the paper to push Liberal agendas, most notably opposition to the

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University of California Press, 2015. See also Gary Bass’ brief discussion in G. Bass, *Freedom’s Battle: The Origins of Humanitarian Intervention*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2008, pp. 320-321.

<sup>18</sup> See Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, pp. 33-44.

<sup>19</sup> Nassibian, p. 44.

<sup>20</sup> Certain *Times* and *Guardian* articles and editorials are discussed in Laycock, *Imagining Armenia*, pp. 103, 114-116, 124, 130.

<sup>21</sup> T.R.E. Paddock, ‘Introduction: Newspapers, Public Opinion, and Propaganda’, in T.R.E. Paddock (ed.) *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion and Newspapers in the Great War*, Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers, 2004, pp. 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Though technically a regional paper, the *Guardian* maintained a national readership, particularly prominent in London. See A. Gregory, ‘A Clash of Cultures: The British Press and the Opening of the Great War’, in T.R.E. Paddock (ed.) *A Call to Arms: Propaganda, Public Opinion and Newspapers in the Great War*, Westport, CT, Praeger Publishers, 2004, p. 18.

<sup>23</sup> Gregory *Call to Arms*, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup> Gregory, p. 18.

Boer War.<sup>25</sup> The *Mail* presents a ‘popular’ counterpoint to the *Times* and *Guardian*’s elite readerships. With a wartime circulation of about a million, it was the most widely-read paper during the war.<sup>26</sup> It did not, however, target the ‘average’ Briton. It was highly conservative, proudly middle-class and viewed working-class people with contempt.<sup>27</sup> The *Mail* was not unusual in this respect. According to Adrian Bingham and Martin Conboy, it was not until the 1930s that the ‘popular press’ sought to appeal to working-class sensibilities.<sup>28</sup>

A fundamental limitation of the sources, therefore, is that they can only hope to represent middle- and upper-class attitudes. Additionally, the distinction between ‘published’ and ‘public’ opinions requires confining this study to press opinion on the Armenian genocide and press *perception* of middle- and upper-class British interest or otherwise in the events. Using digital archives to obtain these articles, despite the obvious practical benefits, bring further potential issues, particularly regarding the accuracy of optical character recognition (OCR).<sup>29</sup>

Sources were primarily obtained by searching for all articles within the dissertation’s timeframe (24 April 1915 to 11 November 1918) which contained the words ‘Armenia’, ‘Armenian’ or ‘Armenians’. Supplementary searches were conducted where necessary, such as for the term ‘frightfulness’, used by the press to describe the CUP’s genocidal policy, in order to consider its use in atrocity discourse more generally. Although such a broad search would ideally have returned all articles pertaining to the genocide, poor OCR could have omitted articles which did contain these key words from the search results.

This dissertation contains two chapters. The first chapter explores the *Times* and *Guardian*’s considerable interest in the Armenian genocide. The primary database search returned 532 articles and 85 editorials and commentaries for the *Times*, and 543 articles, 90 editorials and 40 commentaries for the *Guardian*. Naturally, not all results pertained to the genocide (other events, such as Russia’s campaign in Armenia and the sinking of the *Armenia*, were also

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<sup>25</sup> For a discussion of the *Guardian*’s opposition to the Boer War, see M. Hampton, ‘The Press, Patriotism, and Public Discussion: C.P. Scott, the “Manchester Guardian”, and the Boer War, 1899-1902’, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 44, no. 1, 2001, pp. 177-197. For contemporary views of Scott’s liberalism and its influence on the *Guardian*, see C.E. Montague, ‘Journalist and Editor’, in *C.P. Scott, 1846-1932: The Making of The Manchester Guardian*, London, F. Muller, 1946, pp. 75-83; L.T. Hobhouse, ‘Liberal and Humanist’, in *C.P. Scott*, pp. 84-90. For a modern assessment of his role in the progressive ‘New Liberalism’ movement, see P.F. Clarke, *Lancashire and the New Liberalism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1971, pp. 153-198.

<sup>26</sup> McEwen, *Journal of Contemporary History*, p. 482.

<sup>27</sup> Bingham and Conboy, *Tabloid Century*, pp. 165-175.

<sup>28</sup> Bingham and Conboy, pp. 175-183.

<sup>29</sup> See B. Nicholson, ‘The Digital Turn: Exploring the possibilities of digital newspaper archives’, *Media History*, vol. 19, no. 1, 2013, pp. 59-73, esp. pp. 61-64.



included), but both papers published extensively on the events. Since this study primarily concerns press opinion, preference in the analysis is given to editorials to ascertain the papers' official views and articles to consider how they presented the events to their readers. While letters written to these papers provide direct evidence of particular readers' views, it would be unwise to extrapolate from these individual cases to broader social attitudes. Accordingly, letters are only used as a supplement to the analysis of press opinion. The chapter argues that these papers presented the Armenians as identifiable to their audience and deserving, in a wartime context, of elite Britain's moral consideration. Moreover, it contends that the genocide's primary significance was in Germany's perceived culpability, thereby aligning with Britain's conception of its conflict as a 'just war'.

Chapter two explores the *Mail's* comparatively negligible interest. The primary search for the *Mail* returned 239 articles and 17 editorials and commentaries, although only a handful pertained to the genocide. Full issues were examined on the most prominent days of the *Times* and *Guardian's* coverage to confirm that this reflected genuine inattention to the events rather than poor OCR. A comparative methodology is used to demonstrate its peculiarity.<sup>30</sup> Since Northcliffe, the *Mail's* owner and *de facto* editor,<sup>31</sup> also owned the *Times*, and must, therefore, have had access to the same substantial volume of information on the genocide, it focuses particularly on the quantitative disparity in their respective coverages. To confirm that this is not the product of their differing journalistic approaches,<sup>32</sup> comparisons with the *Mail's* concurrent coverage of other wartime atrocities are also made. Chapter two argues this sparse coverage was a deliberate editorial decision. Through comments from the elite press regarding public interest in the Armenians and an appreciation of the social strain of concurrent military events, it suggests this reflected their readers' apathy towards the Armenians due to more immediate wartime concerns.

The disparity in the elite and popular press' coverage revealed by these two chapters calls for a re-evaluation of the *Mail's* scholarly reputation as having capitalised on atrocities to 'dupe'

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<sup>30</sup> For a discussion of the benefits and issues of such an approach, see J. Kocka, 'Comparison and Beyond', *History and Theory*, vol. 42, no. 1, 2003, pp. 39-44.

<sup>31</sup> Although the *Mail's* official editor was Thomas Marlowe, Northcliffe exercised effective editorial control of the paper. See J.L. Thompson, *Lord Northcliffe & The Great War*, Kent, Kent State University Press, 1999, p. 2.

<sup>32</sup> On the *Mail's* preference for shorter, entertainment-based content rather than the conventional political discussion of papers like the *Times*, see M. Hampton, *Visions of the Press in Britain, 1850-1950*, Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 2004, pp. 36-37, 39-40.

the public into a meaningless war and, ultimately, reveals that the Armenian cause was a predominantly elite preoccupation motivated by wartime ideology.

# Chapter One

## The Armenian Genocide in the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*

From the perspective of a post-Holocaust world, where genocide is seen as inherently abhorrent and evil, Britain's condemnation and humanitarian interest in the Armenian genocide seems self-explanatory. Taken in the contemporary context of a brutal and taxing total war, however, their concern with the plight of a distant people on the eastern-most frontier of the Ottoman Empire, with whom most Britons had no contact, is rather peculiar. This chapter seeks to account for the moral consideration given to the Armenians and the broader significance of their genocide in a wartime context through an analysis of the 'elite press', the *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian*. It is argued that the Armenians aroused elite sympathies in part due to a belief that the Armenians were an extension of the 'self', as previous authors have suggested. More important in a wartime context, and one which hitherto has not been fully realised, was that the Armenians were thought to have proved themselves deserving of British concern through active and valiant resistance to their Ottoman oppressors, a theme prevalent in both papers. Further, the chapter suggests that the true significance of the Armenian genocide to Britain's elite was in confirming their belief that their conflict was a 'just war'. Evidence from the press demonstrates a genuine belief that the genocide, despite being ordered and perpetrated by the Ottoman Empire, was ultimately Germany's responsibility. Thus, the genocide could be interpreted as yet another manifestation of the existential threat German militaristic ideology presented to civilisation and against which Britain's war was being fought. The genocide's significance to Britain's wartime ideology, the press believed, was the primary reason for British interest in the events.

Conscious reporting on the Armenian genocide began following the Entente governments' official condemnation of the Ottoman Empire's massacres of Armenians on May 24, 1915,<sup>33</sup> precisely one month after the CUP began their genocidal policy. There were passing references

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<sup>33</sup> 'Allies Stern Warning to Turkey', *The Times*, 24 May 1915, p. 5; 'Massacres in Armenia', *Manchester Guardian*, 24 May 1915, p. 4. For clarity, this dissertation gives subsequent citations of newspaper articles in full. Since there are multiple articles with the same name in the same paper, and in some instances multiple articles on the same date and page, any conventional abbreviation would cause ambiguity. This is applied for all articles, even when no such ambiguity would arise, as a matter of consistency.

to the initial deportations previously, although neither paper showed any awareness of their significance or the CUP's malicious intent until later.<sup>34</sup> The *Times* reported on April 29 that 'the vicar of the Patriarchate and 400 other Armenians have been arrested' following the discovery of an 'Armenian conspiracy.'<sup>35</sup> As late as May 22 the *Guardian*, in a report on the state of affairs in Constantinople in connection with Britain's Gallipoli campaign, noted merely that 'arrests of suspected Armenians continue to be made.'<sup>36</sup> In subsequent months, both papers reported in considerable and often graphic detail the particulars of the genocide. The *Guardian*, for example, recounted that:

five whole battalions, with machine guns... established a ring cordon round the village, and strongly guarded every point of exit, and incendiaries were sent with lighted torches. Fire was applied to buildings from several points...and the miserable inhabitants, men, women, and children, were almost all burnt alive. Those who tried to escape were shot down, and only four escaped, one of whom is the person who related the story of this horrible holocaust.<sup>37</sup>

These were not merely violent appeals to the hatred of the nation, as conventional scholarly wisdom might assume. Rather, the papers demonstrated a genuine interest in the Armenians' suffering. The *Times*, for example, reproduced a telegram from a Russian official urgently calling for 'doctors, nurses, provision for feed, and medical treatment' for the thousands of

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<sup>34</sup> The *Guardian*, for example, first made the connection in 'The Armenians in Turkey', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 May 1915, p. 6.

<sup>35</sup> 'Armenian Conspiracy in Constantinople', *The Times*, 29 April 1915, p. 11. See also 'Turks Severely Handled', May 5, p. 10.

<sup>36</sup> 'The Dardanelles', *Manchester Guardian*, May 22, 1915, p. 11. See also 'German Plan to Run the Gauntlet', May 13, 1915, p. 8.

<sup>37</sup> 'Turks and Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 September 1915, p. 12. For similarly graphic accounts, see, for example: 'Atrocities in Armenia', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 August 1915, p. 10; 'The New Armenian Massacres', *Manchester Guardian*, 4 August 1915, p. 5; 'Turkish Outrages in Armenia', *Manchester Guardian*, 6 August 1915, p. 8; 'Armenia without Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1915, p. 4; 'The Doomed Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 August 1915, p. 6; 'Exterminating the Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 September 1915, p. 9; 'Armenian Horrors', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 September, 1915, p. 4; 'Destroying a nation: The Armenian Massacres', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 September, 1916, p. 6; 'The Armenians in the Desert: An Eye-Witness Story', *Manchester Guardian*, 5 October 1915, p. 8; 'Armenian Atrocities', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 October, 1915, p. 14; 'Armenian Atrocities', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 December, 1916, p. 10; 'The Armenian Massacres', *The Times*, 8 October 1915, p. 5; 'The Armenian Massacres', *The Times*, 27 November 1915, p. 7; 'Armenian Massacres', *The Times*, 15 December, 1915, p. 9; 'More Armenian Atrocities', *The Times*, 21 December, 1915, p. 10; 'Turks' Vengeance on the Innocent', Feb 23, 1915, p. 8; 'German Aid to Murder', *The Times*, 8 February 1916, p. 8; 'Trebizond and Erzurum Massacres', *The Times*, 22 May 1916, p. 7; 'Another Armenian Massacre', *The Times*, 24 August 1916, p. 6; 'Sufferings of Deported Armenians', *The Times*, 12 September 1916, p. 7; 'In the Hands of the Turks', 27 September 1916, p. 7; 'The Sufferings of Armenia', *The Times*, 14 December 1916, p. 7; 'The Murder of a Race', *The Times*, 1 January 1917, p. 8; E. Candler, 'The Armenian Tragedy', *The Times*, 21 June 1917, p. 5; 'Extermination of Armenians', *The Times*, 15 October 1917, p. 7; 'Armenian Horrors', *The Times*, 22 August, 1918, p. 5.

Armenian refugees who successfully reached Etchmiadzine.<sup>38</sup> This was accompanied by an announcement that the Armenian Refugees (Lord Mayor's) Fund's (LMF) current relief effort would accordingly 'have to be largely supplemented in the near future if real good is result.' Informing its readers that 'the whole of the money goes to the refugees' and printing an address to which donations could be sent, this was clearly an implicit appeal on the LMF's behalf.<sup>39</sup> The *Guardian*, as shown below, went even further and made explicit humanitarian appeals in its editorials. Naturally, both papers focused primarily on the genocide itself, but this additional coverage reveals that they perceived their audiences' interests to extend beyond the brutality of the massacres to a humanitarian concern for the Armenian victims themselves.

It is tempting to attribute the abhorrence with which this news was received and the associated humanitarian interest in the Armenians to the massacres' genocidal nature. Certainly Britain was aware of this. Naturally, no contemporary observer in Britain or elsewhere could explicitly call the events 'genocide', a term which did not exist until the Second World War, but they were frequently identified as an 'extermination of a race'.<sup>40</sup> The equivalence between the two terms in modern discourse has led some scholars to take such contemporary descriptions to immediately imply recognition of genocidal intent. Laycock, for example, claims that the use of the term 'extermination' by British observers reflected 'the belief that it was the intention of the Ottoman government to empty the Ottoman Empire of its Armenian population.'<sup>41</sup> Davide Rodogno casts doubt on the appropriateness of such an inference, noting that in nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century discourse the term 'extermination' did not necessarily connote an

<sup>38</sup> All Armenian places are transliterated as given in the contemporary newspaper articles.

<sup>39</sup> 'Lord Mayor's Armenian Fund', *The Times*, 18 November 1915, p. 11. For similar items in the *Times*, see 'Help for Armenians', 5 October 1915, p. 11; 'Lord Mayor's Fund for Armenian Refugees', 15 December 1915, p. 13; 24 January 1916, p. 7; 'Relief of Armenians Refugees', 26 January 1916 p. 5; 23 March 1916, p. 8; 'Relief for Armenian Refugees', 6 April 1916, p. 4; 'British Relief for Armenia', 6 April 1916, p. 9; 'Help for the Armenians', 10 May 1916, p. 5; 'Armenian Repatriation', 8 June 1916, p. 6; 1 July 1916, p. 11; 'Armenia Sunday', 8 January 1917, p. 3.

<sup>40</sup> See 'Constantinople in War Time', *The Times*, 16 September 1915, p. 7; 'Destruction of a Race', *The Times*, 25 September 1915, p. 5; 'Wholesale Murder in Armenia', *The Times*, 30 September 1915, p. 5; 'The Armenian Massacres', *Times*, 8 October, 1915, p. 5; 'The Armenian Massacres', *The times*, 27 November 1915, p. 7; 'German Aid to Murder', *The Times*, 8 February 1916, p. 8; 'Trebizond and Erzrum [sic] Massacres', *Times*, 22 May 1916, p. 7; 'Massacre—A Weapon of "Kultur"', *The Times*, 24 July 1916, p. 5; 'Fate of the Armenians', *The Times*, 24 July 1916, p. 7; 'The Murder of a Race', *The Times*, 1 January 1917, p. 8; 'Extermination of Armenians', *The Times*, 15 October 1917, p. 7; 'Armenia without Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 16 August 1915, p. 4; 'Turks and Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 10 September 1915, p. 12; 'Exterminating the Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 11 September 1915, p. 9; 'An Heroic Armenian Defence', *Manchester Guardian*, 7 October 1915, p. 8; 'Armenian Massacres', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 October 1915, p. 10; 'The "Manchester Guardian" History of the War', 26 November 1915, p. 5; 'Extermination of the Armenian Race' 27 November 1915, p. 8. The preceding list, while extensive, is certainly not exhaustive.

<sup>41</sup> J. Laycock, *Imagining Armenia: Orientalism, ambiguity and intervention*, Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 2009, p. 116.

‘intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group’, as the United Nations has defined an act of genocide.<sup>42</sup> While Rodogno casts doubt on the validity of a general equivalence between ‘extermination’ and ‘genocide’, contemporary British descriptions of the massacres demonstrate clear recognition of the CUP’s ‘intent to destroy’ the Armenians. On 25 September 1915, the *Times* published an article detailing the CUP’s policy of deportation under the title ‘Destruction of a Race’.<sup>43</sup> That day the *Guardian* published an article on the same subject under a similar title, ‘Destroying a Nation: The Armenian Massacres’.<sup>44</sup> As Rodogno notes, however, genocides had not previously been seen as inherently evil crimes and did not usually invite humanitarian concern. Genocides of indigenous populations resulting from European colonial ventures, for example, were seen as a natural consequence of the contact between the ‘civilised’ and ‘savage’ worlds. Their deaths resulted from their failure to embrace civilisation and were thus outside the realm of ethical consideration.<sup>45</sup> Even the 1904-1908 genocide of the Herero and Nama people of German South-West Africa, exploited by the British government during the war to discredit Germany’s colonial claims, received no official British protest at the time.<sup>46</sup> Moreover, as discussed below, the recognised genocidal intent of the massacres did not imbue them with any special significance. Why the genocide of the distant Armenians should have invited Britain’s concern therefore requires explanation.

In Watenpugh’s view, humanitarian ventures during both the First World War and today are contingent on those giving aid (the humanitarian subject) believing those to whom they give aid (the humanitarian object) to be worthy of their help. For this to occur, he argues, the humanitarian subject must identify with the humanitarian object ‘to the point of being envisioned as an extension of the self or community of that subject.’<sup>47</sup> Existing explanations, which focus chiefly on the Armenophiles, adopt a similar framework. They believed that the Armenians, despite residing in the East, were ‘in the closest personal touch with Western

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<sup>42</sup> D. Rodogno, *Against Massacre: Humanitarian Interventions in the Ottoman Empire, 1815-1914: The Emergence of a European Concept and International Practice*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 2011, p. 32; United Nations, General Assembly, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, 9 December 1948, art. 2. Emphasis added.

<sup>43</sup> ‘Destruction of a Race’, *Times*, 25 September 1915, p. 5.

<sup>44</sup> ‘Destroying a Nation: The Armenian Massacres’, *Manchester Guardian*, 25 September 1915, p. 6.

<sup>45</sup> Rodogno, *Against Massacre*, p. 34.

<sup>46</sup> D.J. Schaller, ‘“Every Herero Will Be Shot”: Genocide, Concentration Camps and Slave Labor in German South-West Africa’, in R. Lemarchand (ed.), *Forgotten Genocides: Oblivion, Denial, and Memory*, Philadelphia, PA, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2011, p. 52.

<sup>47</sup> Watenpugh, *Bread from Stones*, pp. 33-34.

civilisation.’<sup>48</sup> This belief was grounded first and foremost in the Armenians Christianity,<sup>49</sup> which was at the forefront of their humanitarian arguments to the broader public. In a widely-attended special service for the Armenian victims held at Manchester Cathedral, which doubled as a fundraiser for the Armenian Relief Fund (ARF), the Dean of Manchester, Bishop Welldon, presented the Armenians, through their Christianity, as deserving charitable assistance. Linda Colley has shown that for Protestant Britain religion formed the foundation of their national identity. Despite the varying local customs and denominations of Christianity throughout the island, they could all negatively identify against the Catholic ‘other’.<sup>50</sup> Welldon, expanding his pre-war arguments, claimed that the Armenian Church was ‘even further removed than the Church of England from the Church of Rome, as their whole life has been and still is independent of the Papal See.’<sup>51</sup> The Armenians, through their even greater opposition to this ‘other’, were thereby presented as an extension of the British Protestant ‘self’. It was in this light that he framed his appeal on the part of the Armenians: ‘And now, in the hour of her extreme agony, she turns with pathetic confidence to her sister Churches, so near her in faith and doctrine, so unlike her in their long immunity from persecution, the Churches of Western Christendom.’<sup>52</sup>

The *Guardian*’s editor was sympathetic to the Armenophile movement,<sup>53</sup> and consequently used the paper to make appeals on the Armenians’ behalf. Following the inauguration of the ARF in Manchester on October 1, 1915, for example, the *Guardian* wrote an editorial encouraging donations. The editorial, entitled ‘The Way to Help the Armenians’, detailed the plight of an estimated 250,000 Armenian refugees in the Russian Caucasus, and concluded: ‘We believe that Manchester’s response will be quick and generous, for not Serbia, nor Poland,

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<sup>48</sup> A.J. Toynbee, *Armenian Atrocities: The Murder of a Nation*, London, Hodder and Stoughton, 1915, p. 30. For a nuanced discussion of exactly how ‘Western’ the Armenophiles perceived the Armenians to be, see Laycock, *Imagining Armenia*, pp. 28-32.

<sup>49</sup> Laycock, pp. 55-63.

<sup>50</sup> L. Colley, ‘Britishness and Otherness: An Argument’, *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 31, no. 4, 1992, pp. 309-329.

<sup>51</sup> J.E.C. Welldon, quoted in ‘Armenian Massacres: The Community at the Cathedral’, *Manchester Guardian*, 18 October 1915, p. 3. For Welldon’s letters to the *Guardian* defending his interpretation of Armenian Christianity, see J.E.C. Welldon, ‘Correspondence: Rome and Armenia’, 25 October 1915, p. 4; J.E.C. Welldon, ‘Correspondence: The Armenian Christians’, 29 October 1915, p. 4. For Welldon’s identical pre-war views on Armenian Christianity, see J.E.C. Welldon, ‘Introduction’, in M. Ormanian, *The Church of Armenia: Her History, Doctrine, Rule Discipline, Liturgy, Literature, and Existing Condition*, trans. G. Marcar Gregory, London, A.R. Mowbray & Co, 1912, pp. v-vii.

<sup>52</sup> J.E.C. Welldon, quoted in ‘Armenian Massacres: The Community at the Cathedral’, *Manchester Guardian*, 18 October 1915, p. 3.

<sup>53</sup> A. Nassibian, A., *Britain and the Armenian Question, 1915-1923*, New York, St. Martin’s Press, 1984, p. 48.

nor even Belgium has presented a case of more poignant suffering than does Armenia.<sup>54</sup> This editorial's clearly-stated humanitarian purpose required it to present the Armenians in a way that reflected *Guardian* readers' interests to succeed. To this end, it stressed that the Armenians were an 'ancient persecuted Christian people', revealing that the *Guardian* believed that liberal Britain's concern for the Armenians was grounded in a shared Christianity.<sup>55</sup>

The *Times*' interest in the Armenians is less easily established. Lacking a moral crusader like Scott at the helm, it did not make humanitarian arguments for the Armenian cause in its editorials. Like all papers, however, it had to present the events in such a way that would appeal to its readership. To do so, it gave particular attention to the executed Armenian elites, who shared a common class and status with the *Times*' key demographic. The *Times* outlined Ottoman Interior Minister Talaat Bey's 'dastardly conduct' thus:

Three of the leading Armenians murdered—Vartkes Effendi, Haladjian Effendi, and Pastermadjian Effendi—had long been [Talaat's] intimate personal friends... The relations between the two men seemed, indeed, to be those of two chums...

Haladjian was eloquent in his defence of the Young Turkish regime, and spoke warmly of the friendship of Talaat... Talaat was cordial towards Haladjian as he had been towards Vartkes. Now both have been murdered at the instance of Talaat.<sup>56</sup>

The article's publication date is significant. By 30 September 1915, the *Times* was well aware of Talaat's genocidal intent. In an editorial published that same day, it stated his goal was 'to obliterate the million and a-half Armenians in Turkish territory'.<sup>57</sup> Despite this, the initial executions retained their significance. Talaat's 'dastardly conduct' is explained not through his brutal methods of 'exterminating the entire Armenian people and getting rid of a subject race', which the paper had outlined a few days earlier,<sup>58</sup> but through a more comprehensible and relatable narrative of personal betrayal between individuals. The three victims, specific named individuals, are identifiable to the reader through their shared elite status. The abstract notion

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<sup>54</sup> 'The Way to Help the Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 October 1915, p. 8.

<sup>55</sup> 'The Way to Help the Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 October 1915, p. 8.

<sup>56</sup> 'Wholesale Murder in Armenia', *The Times*, 30 September 1915, p. 5. See also 'The Armenian Massacres', *The Times*, 8 October, 1915, p. 5, which presents a similar narrative.

<sup>57</sup> 'Wiping out the Armenians', *The Times*, 30 September 1915, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> 'Destruction of a Race', *The Times*, 25 September 1915, p. 5.



of ‘massacre’ or ‘extermination’ is given a face through the character of its chief architect. Elsewhere Talaat’s policy of indiscriminate massacre is likened to the harsh disciplinary policy of an infamous nineteenth-century Eton schoolmaster.

The preventative system of justice which Talaat Bey has adopted... dispense[s] with the tedious process of discrimination between the innocent... Talaat has gone one step farther than the famous Dr. Keate, who flogged Eton boys lest they should be naughty; with the suppression of all possible offenders offences can no longer exist.<sup>59</sup>

As offensive as this comparison strikes a modern reader, it presents the genocide in terms which contemporary *Times* readers, many of whom were likely educated at elite public schools, could understand. Through the implied equivalence of Talaat and Keate, readers could identify with the distant Armenians against a common enemy.

Explanations from identity cannot fully account for British interest in the context of a society confronted with the brutality of a total war, however. This is a fact which Watenpaugh’s framework, conceived primarily as an explanation for the humanitarianism of the neutral United States who never had to confront such realities, does not fully realise. As Trevor Wilson points out, there was no shortage of humanitarian causes Britons could support or relief funds to which they could donate. The Armenian refugee crisis, the subject of much coverage in both papers, was not unique: Belgian, French, Italian, Polish and Serbian civilians all faced similar crises and all had their own relief funds. There were, for example, at least 69 different Belgian relief charities.<sup>60</sup> Unlike those with whom they competed for British attention, the Armenians were not properly speaking European. British humanitarian organisations recognised this. According to Tusan, the Armenian Red Cross ‘encourag[ed] patrons to see Armenia as an actual military ally’ by drawing their attention to Armenian volunteers in the Russian army.<sup>61</sup> The Anglo-Armenian community similarly insisted that they were not passive victims but actively and valiantly resisted their Ottoman oppressors. ‘The Armenians are tired of being represented to the world as an easy prey of the devilish instinct of the Turk’, one Anglo-

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<sup>59</sup> ‘The Massacres of Armenians’, *The Times*, 20 June 1916, p. 7.

<sup>60</sup> Wilson, *Myriad Faces of War*, pp. 774-776.

<sup>61</sup> Tusan, *Smyrna’s Ashes*, pp. 117-118. On the eventual formation of an officially-sanctioned Armenian liberation force in late 1916, the *Légion d’Orient*, see A. Varnava, ‘The Politics and Imperialism of Colonial and Foreign Volunteer Legions during the Great War: Comparing Proposals for Cypriot, Armenian, and Jewish Legions’, *War in History*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2014, pp. 351-359.

Armenian wrote to the *Guardian*. 'The manhood of the nation is up in arms, and they have a right to demand, and they do demand, help to carry on their fight for liberty and revenge.'<sup>62</sup> It was 'not charity' to help the Armenians, wrote another, who, 'fully deserve the practical sympathies of the Allies and the British nation.'<sup>63</sup>

Such arguments found particular resonance in the elite press. On 2 August 1915, the *Guardian* published an eye-witness account of the Armenians' four-week-long defence of Van against the invading Turkish forces. The Armenians were presented as heroic and accomplished soldiers who, despite being outnumbered and with limited supplies, easily bested the Turk. The *Guardian* heralded this 'A Brilliant Armenian Exploit'.<sup>64</sup> This nearly fifteen-hundred-word account was judged sufficiently interesting to its audience to warrant reproduction in full. Reporting on similar resistance in Shabihan-Karahissar, a village south-west of Trebizond, the *Guardian* implied the Armenians' deaths were more deserving of sympathy because they chose to fight 'instead of submitting to the Turks and being butchered'.<sup>65</sup> Such stories were also of great interest to the *Times*. In their coverage of the publication of the 'Blue Book' (formally titled *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*) in December 1916, the *Times* drew its readers' attention to the three of its 149 documents it evidently found most interesting. Included in this small selection was a dramatic account of Armenian resistance to the massacres of Sassoun as told by one of its survivors:

Men, women and children fought with knives scythes, stones, and anything else they could handle. They rolled blocks of stone down the steep slopes killing many of the enemy. In a frightful hand-to-hand combat women were seen thrusting their knives into the throats of Turks, and thus accounting for many of them. On August 5, the last day of the fighting, the bloodstained rocks of Antok were captured by the Turks. The Armenian warriors of Sassoun, except those who had worked round to the rear of the Turks to attack them on their flanks, had died in battle. Several young women who were in danger of falling into the Turks' hands, threw themselves from the rocks, some of them with their infants in their arms.<sup>66</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Letter, Anglo-Armenian, 'The Armenian Horror', *Manchester Guardian*, 14 September 1915, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> Letter, Anglo Armenian, 'Turkey and Armenia', *Manchester Guardian*, 8 October 1915, p. 12.

<sup>64</sup> 'A Brilliant Armenian Exploit', *Manchester Guardian*, 2 August 1915, p. 6.

<sup>65</sup> 'The Doomed Armenians', *Manchester Guardian*, 23 August 1915, p. 6.

<sup>66</sup> 'The Sufferings of Armenia', *The Times*, 14 December 1916, p. 7. See 'The Armenian Massacres', 27 November 1915, p. 7, for the *Times*' similarly dramatic initial report on the events.

Through these accounts, the Armenians were presented as having proved themselves, in a wartime context, deserving of Britain's moral consideration and assistance. Their men, women and even children had fought heroically to the death against their assailants. Heroic narratives of sacrifice resonated deeply with Britons during the war.<sup>67</sup> Consequently, this characterisation of the Armenians provided crucial to igniting the sympathies of a society confronted with total war. Their presentation in the *Mail* as simply passive victims, it will be suggested in the next chapter, perhaps explains the apparent apathy towards their suffering outside Britain's elites.

The war, at the same time as forcing the Armenians to prove their worth militarily, provided the impetus for renewed interest in their plight amongst Britain's elites. Ottoman massacres of Armenians were not a new phenomenon and had received considerable attention in late-nineteenth-century Britain. Britain's conflicting desires to impose reforms on the Ottoman Empire regarding their oppressive treatment of these Christians (advocated forcefully by Liberal politicians like W.E. Gladstone) and to maintain the crumbling empire's integrity as a bulwark against Russian expansion, placed the Armenians at the centre of the highly contentious 'Eastern Question' in British politics.<sup>68</sup> Consequently, when Sultan Abdul Hamid ordered the massacre of some 200,000 Armenians from 1894-1896, it did not pass Britain's notice. Roy Douglas writes that British reactions were 'violent and immediate. A thrill of horror ran through the land, without distinction of party or social class.'<sup>69</sup> British observers were hardly surprised to learn that such practices had resumed in 1915. In an editorial following the May 24 declaration, the *Guardian* opined that it was only natural that the CUP should continue the anti-Armenian policy of its predecessors. 'The tyranny of Abdul Hamid', it wrote, 'did not disappear with his deposition'.<sup>70</sup> Britain's condemnation of the genocide was not, however, the inevitable continuation of previous moral outrage as such comments might suggest. British interest in the 'Armenian question' had largely dissipated by the turn of the twentieth century.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>67</sup> M. Jones, *The Last Great Quest: Captain Scott's Antarctic Sacrifice*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2003, pp. 253-263.

<sup>68</sup> For a detailed discussion of the 'Eastern Question' in British politics more generally, see J.P. Parry, *The Politics of Patriotism: English Liberalism, National Identity and Europe, 1830-1886*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2006, pp. 323-387. On the later, subsidiary 'Armenian Question', see R. Douglas, 'Britain and the Armenian Question, 1894-7', *The Historical Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1976, pp. 113-133; P. Marsh, 'Lord Salisbury and the Ottoman Massacres', *Journal of British Studies*, vol. 11, no. 2, 1972, pp. 63-83; M.J. Somakian, *Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the Great Powers, 1895-1920*, London, I.B. Tauris, 1995, pp. 1-37; Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, pp. 1-32. For a discussion of these events in the context of Britain's humanitarian movement, see M. Tusan, '"Crimes against Humanity": Human Rights, the British Empire, and the Origins of the Response to the Armenian Genocide', *The American Historical Review*, vol. 119, no. 1, 2014, esp. pp. 52-56.

<sup>69</sup> Douglas, *The Historical Journal*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1976, p. 117.

<sup>70</sup> 'The Armenians in Turkey', *Manchester Guardian*, 26 May 1915, p. 6.

<sup>71</sup> Laycock, *Imagining Armenia*, pp. 83-84.

This did not reflect any improvement in the Armenians' situation. Ottoman repression of its Armenian people continued, some 20,000 of whom were massacred by the CUP in 1909.<sup>72</sup> Rather, Laycock suggests, British interest had simply been driven elsewhere to issues such as the Boer War.<sup>73</sup>

It was surely no coincidence that interest in the Armenians revived during the First World War. The 1915 massacres were not committed by an Ottoman Empire with whom Britain had a crucial, if morally complicated, alliance, but by one who had sided with Germany against Britain in what Pennell characterises as 'a battle for the ideas that underpinned the Allies' and Central Powers' sense of identity and moral purpose.'<sup>74</sup> In particular, contemporary Britons understood the war as an ideological struggle between British civilisation and German militarism or *Kultur*.<sup>75</sup> Atrocities like the 'rape of Belgium', the sinking of the *Lusitania* and the execution of Edith Cavell resonated with the British public as the ultimate demonstration of *Kultur*'s threat to civilisation and were central to Britain's wartime culture.<sup>76</sup> The sinking of the *Lusitania* on 7 May 1915 and the publication of the official inquiry into German military conduct in Belgium, the 'Report on the Committee on Alleged German Outrages' (or Bryce Report), on 12 May 1915 provided the immediate context in which contemporary Britons received news of the genocide later that month.

The role enemy atrocities played in reinforcing Britain's 'just war' gave the 1915 massacres a new ideological significance as a wartime atrocity in its own right. Despite the CUP's known genocidal intent in ordering the massacres, this did not place them as a unique event in the elite imagination. The English physiologist E.A. Schäfer, for example, wrote to the *Times* condemning Germany's long list of egregious military conduct, which he took to be:

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<sup>72</sup> Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>73</sup> Laycock, *Imagining Armenia*, pp. 83-84. For a discussion of the *Guardian*'s official opposition to the Boer War, see Hampton, *The Historical Journal*, pp. 177-197.

<sup>74</sup> Pennell, *Justifying War*, p. 98. Welch, *Justifying War*, pp. 76-79 presents a similar thesis. For a more detailed discussion, see S. Audoin-Rouzeau and A. Becker, *1914-1918: Understanding the Great War*, trans. C. Temerson, London, Profile Books, 2002, pp. 113-158.

<sup>75</sup> For a discussion of both the British wartime interpretation of *Kultur* and the rather less sinister German meaning of the term, see Gregory, *Last Great War*, pp. 58-63. For Britain's conception of the war's purpose and their perceptions of Germany, see Pennell, *A Kingdom United*, pp. 56-67, 92-107.

<sup>76</sup> Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, pp. 291-326. Government domestic propaganda helped to reinforce this image. See Robertson, *Public Relations Inquiry*, pp. 245-266, esp. 258-262; Gullace, *The American Historical Review*, pp. 714-747; N.F. Gullace, *The Blood of Our Sons*, pp. 15-33; Gullace, *Picture This: World War I Posters and Visual Culture*, pp. 61-78.

the laying of mines in the Thames estuary and the shooting of an unarmed Englishman in a German train by a Prussian officer... the long list of massacres and outrages committed in Belgium, France, Serbia and Armenia on inoffensive civilians—amongst them large numbers of women and children; the shocking ill-treatment and systematic neglect of prisoners both in camps and elsewhere; the official murder of Miss Cavell, of Captain Fryatt, and of the many other victims who have been done to death for no other reason than the performance of duties dictated by their high sense of patriotism; the bombardment of undefended towns; the torpedoing of hospital ships; and the tragedies of the *Lusitania* and of the innumerable other vessels, large and small, ruthlessly sunk in disregard of the safety of passengers and crew, and in opposition to every established principle of naval warfare.

Schäfer presented no indication that he believed the genocide to be any more deplorable than these other atrocities. It served as yet another example of ‘the frequent and deliberate departure from the recognized rules of modern warfare which has characterized the act of the Germans and their allies.’<sup>77</sup> Accordingly, Laycock argues that the genocide operated as an ‘Ottoman atrocity’ which offered a contrast between ‘civilised Britain, protecting innocent people, and a barbaric, amoral enemy, which massacred its own population without mercy.’<sup>78</sup> To call the genocide an ‘Ottoman atrocity’ is, however, to miss its true importance. Germany, Britain’s chief enemy both militarily and ideologically, was the primary subject of criticism. A *Times* correspondent wrote that ‘for the horrors perpetrated in Belgium and Armenia and the high seas’ the Kaiser would ‘have to answer (in the words of his New Years’ message to his troops) “before God and humanity”.’<sup>79</sup> The *Guardian*, similarly, editorialised that the genocide ‘will not be the least heavy of the counts against Germany in her trial before history.’<sup>80</sup> This was more than just baseless tangential criticism of Germany for the crimes of its ally. As far as the press was concerned, there was no doubt that Germany was genuinely responsible for the genocide.

Both papers frequently alleged that Germany’s influence in Constantinople was such that they could have easily convinced the CUP to stop the genocide. Thus, they reasoned, the genocide

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<sup>77</sup> Letter, E.A. Schäfer, *The Times*, 18 December 1916, p. 7.

<sup>78</sup> Laycock, *Imagining Armenia*, p. 100.

<sup>79</sup> ‘Frenchmen in Bondage’, *The Times*, 23 January 1917, p. 7.

<sup>80</sup> ‘Germany and Armenia’, *Manchester Guardian*, 13 August 1915, p. 4.

must have occurred with German acquiescence if not outright approval. The *Guardian* claimed that ‘the German Government has the power if it has the will to persuade the Ottoman Government to better courses. If it does not use its power to that end it becomes a partner in the guilt of the Turks.’<sup>81</sup> The *Times* wrote in no uncertain terms that ‘without the countenance and tacit approval of the German Government, the whole-sale extermination described in the Blue-book would never have been attempted at all.’<sup>82</sup> Since ‘Enver and Talaat are not the rulers of Constantinople, but are in the hands of their German masters’, who ‘could compel the cessation of the Armenian massacres with a nod’, the *Times* concluded that ‘the ultimate guilt for the attempt to obliterate the million and a-half Armenians’ rested upon Germany.<sup>83</sup>

Germany was charged with not only failing to stop the genocide but also for inspiring its systematic methods. Whereas Abdul Hamid was content with mere massacre, the CUP followed this up by ‘a crueller system of persecution than Abdul Hamid ever invented.’ This system was that of deportation, forced conversion to Islam, separation of families, and death marches of old men, women and children.<sup>84</sup> These differences were attributed to ‘the worst and most reactionary sides of German officialdom’ which the CUP had imported from their German ally.<sup>85</sup> In this way, the CUP were, as one *Times* article put it, a union between ‘German *Kultur* and the old-fashioned Turkish barbarism...a real Frankenstein monster that now stalks the Eastern world.’<sup>86</sup> They were also described as ‘official exponents of the German theory of “frightfulness”’, a term which, like *Kultur*, was used in atrocity discourse as a shorthand for Germany’s uncivilised military conduct.<sup>87</sup> Explicit comparisons were drawn between the

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<sup>81</sup> ‘Turkey and the Armenians’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 25 August 1915, p. 4. See also ‘The Way to Help Armenians’, 2 October 1915, p. 5; ‘The Armenians’, 26 October 1915, p. 6; ‘“In Aid of Armenia”’, 5 February 1916, p. 6.

<sup>82</sup> ‘The Martyrdom of the Armenians’, *The Times*, 14 December 1916, p. 9. See also ‘Suffering Armenia’, 9 September 1915, p. 5; ‘Destruction of a Race’, 25 September 1915, p. 5; ‘Trebizond and Erzurum Massacres’, 22 May 1916, p. 7; ‘The Sufferings of Armenia’, 14 December 1916, p. 7; ‘The Armenian Tragedy’, 21 June 1917, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> ‘Wiping out the Armenians’, *The Times*, 30 September 1915, p. 7.

<sup>84</sup> ‘The Armenian Massacres’, *The Times*, 8 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>85</sup> ‘The Armenians in Turkey’, *Manchester Guardian*, 26 May 1915, p. 6.

<sup>86</sup> ‘Another Armenian Massacre’, *The Times*, 24 August 1916, p. 6.

<sup>87</sup> ‘Wiping out the Armenians’, *The Times*, 30 September 1915, p. 7. A similar claim is made in ‘A German Army in Constantinople’, *The Times*, 24 Jan 1916, p. 8. For selected examples of the term being used by the *Times* elsewhere to describe German military conduct, see ‘Frightfulness’, 29 November 1914, p. 3; ‘“Frightfulness” in Belgium’, 18 February 1915, p. 9; ‘Lethal Gases in War’, 29 April 1915, p. 9; ‘New Submarine “Frightfulness”’, 10 October 1916, p. 9; ‘Grotius and War Crime’, 10 April 1917, p. 7; ‘“Kultur” for Norway’, 28 June 1917, p. 7; ‘Germans Shell U.S. Coastland’, 24 July 1918, p. 6. The term was used by the *Guardian* in a similar fashion. For some examples, see ‘Pedantic Barbarity’, *Manchester Guardian*, 18 December 1914, p. 6; ‘German “Frightfulness” at Sea’, 2 April 1915, p. 7; ‘Full Story of Zeppelin Raid’, *The Times*, 16 April 1915, p. 7; ‘How British Beat the Gas-Poisoners’, 17 May 1915, p. 14. The famous Dutch cartoonist, Louis Raemaekers, also condemned German ‘frightfulness’. See Horne and Kramer, *German Atrocities*, p. 301.

CUP's methods and Germany's. The *Guardian* wrote of the deportations that it recognised as the first phase of the genocide, 'the theory underlying this conduct is, of course, the same which governs the terroristic methods of the Germans in their occupied territories.'<sup>88</sup> The *Times* similarly characterised the genocide as 'an act of policy, as deliberate as the exercise of German "frightfulness" in Belgium and in France.'<sup>89</sup> It was thus not only seen as the same kind of phenomenon as other German atrocities, but as arising from the same fundamental problem. It was yet another manifestation of Germany's militaristic ideology against which Britain's war was being fought.

This is not to imply, however, that these papers were running propaganda to convince the neutral United States to enter the war on Britain's side, as some scholars have suggested.<sup>90</sup> Certainly, as Nassibian has shown, the British Foreign Office capitalised on Germany's apparent role in the genocide for this purpose.<sup>91</sup> Moreover, the press' narrative of German complicity was inaccurate. Though Germany refused to condemn their Ottoman ally, Donald Bloxham convincingly argues that German influence in Constantinople was not nearly as strong as was claimed and casts doubt on their ability to have stopped the genocide, whether they would have liked to or not.<sup>92</sup> There is, however, no reason to believe that contemporary Britons were aware of this and evidence points to the contrary. Bryce privately advised

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<sup>88</sup> 'The Armenians in Turkey', *Manchester Guardian*, May 26, 1915, p. 6. For an exposition of these 'terroristic methods' to which the *Guardian* refers, see Audoin-Rouzeau and Becker, *1914-1918*, pp. 54-64.

<sup>89</sup> 'The Armenian Massacres', *The Times*, Oct 8, 1915, p. 7.

<sup>90</sup> J.M. Read, *Atrocity Propaganda, 1914-1919*, New Haven, CT, Yale University Press, 1941, pp. 216-222; Ponsonby, *Falsehood in Wartime*, p. 24.

<sup>91</sup> Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, pp. 73-75. For a discussion of the role atrocities played in this propaganda effort more generally, see J. Bennett and M. Hampton, 'World War I and the Anglo-American Imagined Community: Civilization vs. Barbarism in British Propaganda and American Newspapers', in J.H. Weiner and M. Hampton (ed.), *Anglo-American Media Interactions, 1850-2000*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 155-175.

<sup>92</sup> Bloxham, *Great Game*, pp. 115-133; D. Bloxham, 'Power Politics, Prejudice, Protest and Propaganda: A Reassessment of the German Role in the Armenian Genocide of WWI', in H.-L. Kieser and D.J. Schaller (ed.), *Der Völkermord an den Armeniern und die Shoah*, Zürich, Chronos, 2002, pp. 213-244. Ulrich Trampener, writing some decades earlier, argued a similar view: U. Trampener, *Germany and the Ottoman Empire 1914-1918*, Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 1968, pp. 200-270. Cf. V.N Dadrian, *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn, Providence and Oxford, Berghahn Books, 1997, pp. 248-299, who argues forcefully for German complicity. The most comprehensive account to date of German attitudes towards their ally's actions is S. Ihrig, *Justifying Genocide: Germany and the Armenians from Bismarck to Hitler*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press, 2016, esp. pp. 93-190. For briefer discussions, see E.D. Weitz, 'Germany and the Young Turks: Revolutionaries into Statesmen', in R.G. Suny, F.M. Göçek and N.M. Naimark (ed.), *Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 168-187; M.L. Anderson, 'Who Still Talked about the Extermination of the Armenians? German Talk and German Silences', in R.G. Suny, F.M. Göçek and N.M. Naimark (ed.), *Question of Genocide: Armenians and Turks at the End of the Ottoman Empire*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011, pp. 188-202; H.-L. Keiser, 'Germany and the Armenian Genocide of 1915-1917', in J.C. Friedman (ed.), *The Routledge History of the Holocaust*, New York, Routledge 2010, pp. 30-44.

Toynbee to downplay any explicit suggestion of German responsibility in his pamphlet, *Armenian Atrocities: The Murder of a Nation*, because ‘we want to get the Germans to stop the massacres and to try to make them responsible is not the best way to do that.’<sup>93</sup> Clearly, Bryce, whose work on the Blue Book and the Bryce Report was widely circulated by Britain for propagandist purposes, genuinely believed that Germany was culpable in the way the press described. Nor is there any evidence that the press’ coverage of the genocide was connected to Britain’s propaganda efforts. The *Times*’ owner, Northcliffe, did not assume his controversial position as head of the British War Mission in the United States until May 1917,<sup>94</sup> after the apparent propagandist purpose of its coverage of the Armenian genocide had been achieved. Subsequent suggestions of German complicity would actually have been counterproductive from a propagandist standpoint. By mid-1917, the genocide’s main political value was to provide moral justification for Britain’s controversial war aim of dismantling the Ottoman Empire amidst criticism that such a policy would turn the war into an imperialist venture.<sup>95</sup> Blaming Germany for the genocide would have undermined this narrative, which characterised the tragedy as the consequence of an inherent Turkish inability to govern subject peoples, yet such suggestions continued to be made in both papers.<sup>96</sup> The disproportionate attention given to Germany’s perceived role by the press rather reflects the broader interests of their readers.

The *Guardian*, as previously noted, had an overt humanitarian interest in the Armenians. In their aforementioned appeal for the ARF, they placed particular emphasis on Germany’s role in the killings. ‘The German Government has not disgraced itself by any of its acts more utterly’, it began, ‘than by its acquiescence in Turkey’s attempt, by massacre and deportation, to exterminate the Armenian people.’ The Ottomans’ direct role in perpetrating the genocide received only passing notice; it was Germany’s ‘acquiescence’ in the crime that was at the forefront of their appeal.<sup>97</sup> Clearly, the *Guardian* felt it would be more successful if the Armenians were presented as victims of a ‘German atrocity’ rather than an Ottoman one. The

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<sup>93</sup> The National Archives: Public Record Office, FO96/205, Toynbee Papers, Bryce to Toynbee, 19 October 1915. Information supplied by David Monger.

<sup>94</sup> G.S. Messinger, *British propaganda and the state in the First World War*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992, p. 152.

<sup>95</sup> Nassibian, *Britain and the Armenian Question*, pp. 86-88.

<sup>96</sup> For example, see ‘Turkey of To-day’, *The Times*, 13 June 1917, p. 6; ‘The Armenian Tragedy’, *The Times*, Jun 21, 1917, p. 5; ‘The Turk Militant’, *The Times*, Jan 3, 1918, p. 5; ‘Armenian Survivors’, *Manchester Guardian*, 21 June 1917, p. 3; ‘The Future of Palestine’, *Manchester Guardian*, 10 December 1917, p. 4; ‘Pro Palastina’, *Manchester Guardian*, 6 June 1918, p. 4.

<sup>97</sup> ‘The Way to Help the Armenians’, *Manchester Guardian*, 2 October 1915, p. 8. See also ‘The Armenians’, *Manchester Guardian*, 26 October 1915, p. 6, which advances an appeal of a similar nature.



*Times'* emphasis on Germany's role is best attributed to simple commercial interests, in ensuring that it presented the events to their audience in a way that interested them. On 25 July 1916, it published a forty-page volume of its weekly *History of the War*. It recounted in great detail not only the massacres themselves, but the entire history of Ottoman-Armenian relations dating back to its assimilation into the empire in 1375.<sup>98</sup> Its article advertising this volume mentioned none of these details, focusing exclusively on its assessment of German culpability:

*"Germany in fact signified in the clearest manner that the Young Turks' attempt to exterminate their Armenian subjects was right in German eyes."*

Such is the inevitable conclusion of the writer of the impartial account of the recent Armenian massacres, appearing in the 101<sup>st</sup> Weekly Part of The Times History of the War, to be published to-morrow. The evidence of American, Danish, and Swiss eye-witnesses of the ghastly horrors leaves no room for doubt that the Germans were not only aware of what was intended, but also encouraged and in some instances participated in, this campaign of deliberate murder.

To-morrow—Part 101—To-morrow.

*At all the Bookstalls, 8d.*<sup>99</sup>

Evidently, the *Times* believed Germany's complicity to be the genocide's most interesting aspect to potential buyers. Moreover, through the article's title, 'Massacre—A Weapon of "Kultur"', it directly connected the genocide to Germany's other wartime atrocities and Britain's 'just war'. Although these papers certainly did not restrict their coverage to German complicity, they evidently believed that it was the genocide's status as a 'German atrocity' that was at the forefront of British interest.

This chapter has explored why the *Times* and the *Guardian* believed their elite audience found the Armenian genocide an event of moral concern. In particular, it has focused on why the distant Armenians figured into their moral consciousness, despite the daily pressures of total war and the seemingly endless series of humanitarian crises presented to them. Embracing existing scholarship, it has argued that it was necessary for Britain to be able to identify with the Armenians as an extension of the 'self'. To this end, the *Guardian* stressed the Armenians'

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<sup>98</sup> See 'The Extermination of the Armenians', in *The Times History of the War*, vol. VIII, London, The Times, 1916, pp. 353-392.

<sup>99</sup> 'Massacre—A Weapon of "Kultur"', *The Times*, 24 July 1916, p. 5.

Christianity so as to appeal to their liberal audience's religious convictions. The *Times*, on the other hand, focused instead on the leading Armenians killed at the outset of the genocide, with whom their readership could identify based on class and status. A second component of this moral consideration, especially important in a wartime context and one for which existing scholarship fails to account, was that the Armenians were not believed to be passive victims. Rather, the press took great interest in a narrative of Armenian military heroism, fighting valiantly and, if necessary, to the death to resist their Ottoman oppressors. While such narratives were a necessary component of British interest, this chapter has argued that the genocide's true significance was ideological, in confirming Britain's belief in the war's righteousness. Germany assumed ultimate responsibility for the genocide in the press' narrative which, consequently, could be interpreted as further evidence of the threat German *Kultur* presented to British civilisation. Rather than the propaganda older historians have claimed, this narrative was shown to be an appeal to the interests of their readership. Elite Britain's interest in the genocide was thus ultimately tied to wartime concerns.

## Chapter Two

### The Armenian Genocide in the *Daily Mail*

The previous chapter explored the elite press' interest in the Armenian genocide and sought to establish the event's significance to wartime Britain's upper classes. This chapter, by contrast, seeks to account for the surprising lack of interest the *Daily Mail*, the most prominent of the popular presses with a scholarly reputation for atrocity mongering, showed in the genocide. First, it argues that the large quantity of information available to the *Mail* through its shared ownership with the *Times* reveals the sparse coverage to have been an intentional editorial decision. Second, it shows this decision to be at variance with the *Mail*'s general interest in 'German atrocities' through a comparison with their extensive coverage of the execution of Edith Cavell, which occurred concurrently with the genocide. Third, it suggests that this decision reflected a broader public indifference to the Armenians' suffering resulting from wartime pressures and an inability to identify with them as an extension of the 'self'. The Armenian cause is thereby revealed to have been a predominately elite preoccupation. Finally, it argues for a re-evaluation of the popular press' reputation as a military recruitment outlet 'duping' the public into a meaningless war.

Given the *Mail*'s previously outlined scholarly reputation as a government propaganda outlet using atrocity stories to appeal to public bloodlust, it is particularly surprising that it did not seem to find the Armenian genocide of any interest. Throughout the war it published less than a dozen news articles on the genocide, many very brief.<sup>100</sup> Some were especially graphic. One, a reproduced eye-witness account, described 'about a hundred human wolves plung[ing] among about ten times as many defenceless beings, also human, tearing them to pieces with bayonets. The Armenians could not run as they were tied together and utterly exhausted. The assassins simply nailed them to the ground.'<sup>101</sup> The scarcity of their coverage suggests only passing interest in these details, however. This can only have been an editorial choice, since

<sup>100</sup> 'Turks' Reign of Terror', *Daily Mail*, 2 August 1915, p. 5; '50,000 Armenian Refugees', 10 August 1915, p. 7; 'Organised Cruelties in Turkey', 16 August 1915, p. 6; '5,000 Armenian Refugees Rescued', 22 September 1915, p. 6; 'Armenian Massacres', 5 October 1915, p. 6; 'The Unspeakable Turk', 26 October 1915, p. 8; 'A Nation Almost Wiped Out', 7 October 1915, p. 5; 'Turk's Murderous Boast', 27 November 1915, p. 6; 'Terrible Plight of the Armenian Girls', 15 December 1915, p. 7; 'More Armenians Massacred', 16 January 1916, p. 6; 'Women Sold for a Crust', 18 June 1916, p. 6.

<sup>101</sup> 'The Unspeakable Turk', *Daily Mail*, 26 October 1915, p. 5.

Northcliffe, as owner of the *Times*, can be expected to have had access to the same substantial volume of the information. In October 1915, by far the most substantial period of its coverage, the *Mail* devoted little over a thousand words of space to the Armenian genocide.<sup>102</sup> The *Times* eclipsed this on a single day, October 8, when it published an article over three thousand words long, spanning six columns.<sup>103</sup> Naturally, the *Times*, as a larger broadsheet, could afford to devote more space to the events. However, in view of the *Mail*'s substantial coverage of the execution of Edith Cavell, another atrocity that occurred concurrently, arguments from the papers' quantitative differences do not sufficiently account for this disparity.

Cavell was a British nurse working for the Red Cross in German-occupied Belgium who was discovered by the German army to be helping Allied soldiers escape into Britain. She was consequently sentenced to a trial by court martial and executed on October 16, 1915.<sup>104</sup> In the two weeks following her execution, the *Mail* published over thirty dedicated news articles and editorials on the subject, more than was published on the Armenian genocide throughout the entirety of the war.<sup>105</sup> So great was the spectacle surrounding Cavell's death that the *Mail* published an advertisement in advance of their full-length account. This advertisement cast the atrocity in highly emotive terms:

This account will strike a note of horror throughout the world. It will tell of the wonderful heroism of a woman who had nursed the German wounded. It will tell of the greatest fight for a woman's life that was ever fought, of the unavailing efforts of the noblest neutrals to combat the callous and secret cunning of the German masters of frightfulness.<sup>106</sup>

Atrocity stories clearly still retained their emotive resonance with the *Mail*. The eventual article was nearly 3000 words long,<sup>107</sup> far eclipsing anything it published on the Armenian genocide. The article's length was a point of interest itself (it was advertised as being 'many columns

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<sup>102</sup> 'Armenian Massacres', *Daily Mail*, 5 October 1915, p. 5; 'A Nation Almost Wiped Out', 7 October 1915, p. 5; 'Turks' Greatest Crime', 6 October 1915, p. 3; 'The Unspeakable Turk', 26 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>103</sup> 'The Armenian Massacres', *The Times*, 8 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>104</sup> For an overview of Cavell's arrest and trial, see K. Pickles, *Transnational Outrage: The Death and Commemoration of Edith Cavell*, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan, 2007, pp. 15-38. For an older account, see A.A. Hoehling, 'The Story of Edith Cavell', *The American Journal of Nursing*, vol. 57, no. 10, 1957, pp. 1320-1322.

<sup>105</sup> These articles began with 'German Sentence at Brussels', *Daily Mail*, 16 October 1915, p. 5 and ended with "'We Shall Not Forget'", *Daily Mail*, 30 October 1915, p. 7.

<sup>106</sup> 'Nurse Edith Cavell', *Daily Mail*, 21 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>107</sup> 'Miss Cavell's Heroism', *Daily Mail*, 22 October 1915, p. 6.

long'),<sup>108</sup> suggesting that the *Mail's* considerable attention to Cavell's death reflected its readers' interests.

The *Mail's* coverage of these atrocities' national memorial services provides a more direct comparison. A nation-wide service 'for the expression of our common sympathy and earnest prayer on behalf of our Armenians and Syro-Chaldean [Assyrian] brethren', known as Armenia Sunday, was authorised by the Archbishop of Canterbury to be observed on 6 February 1916.<sup>109</sup> The *Mail* published only a single brief note on February 2 that such a service would be observed.<sup>110</sup> No coverage of Armenia Sunday itself was provided and the later annual observances received no mention at all. By contrast, the national memorial for Cavell held in St Paul's Cathedral, London, on 29 October 1915 received six articles during this two-week period, each of considerably greater length than the single article on Armenia Sunday.<sup>111</sup> The write-up the following day, for example, was over a thousand words in length.<sup>112</sup> Again, the *Mail* clearly considered Cavell's execution of more public interest than the Armenian genocide. Their respective coverage of the associated memorial funds bears out this conclusion further. Appeals from the most prominent Armenian relief fund, the LMF, feature numerous times in the advertising section of *Mail*,<sup>113</sup> but this does not itself imply a perceived public interest in their initiatives. In fact, unlike the *Guardian*, the *Mail* showed very little interest in informing their readers of the LMF's progress, providing no more than a brief, single-sentence update on only four intermittent occasions.<sup>114</sup> The fund set up by the *Mail's* competitor, the *Daily Mirror*, to pay for a nurses' home in Cavell's memory, by contrast, received five dedicated news articles from 25 October to 29 October.<sup>115</sup> Each article from within this four-day period was substantial and received considerably more space than all the non-advertising space given to the LMF, which in its entirety did not exceed one hundred words.

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<sup>108</sup> 'Nurse Edith Cavell', *Daily Mail*, 21 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>109</sup> Tusan, *Smyrna's Ashes*, p. 128.

<sup>110</sup> *Daily Mail*, 2 February 1916, p. 3.

<sup>111</sup> 'Mother's Message', *Daily Mail*, 25 October 1915, p. 5; 'St. Paul's Service', 26 October 1915, p. 3; 'The King to Be Represented', 27 October 1915, p. 7; 'Nurse Cavell', 28 October 1915, p. 3; 'Nurse Cavell', 29 October 1915, p. 5; 'Edith Cavell', 30 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>112</sup> 'Edith Cavell', *Daily Mail*, 30 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>113</sup> *Daily Mail*, 10 June 1916, p. 2; 16 June 1916, p. 2; 15 July 1916, p. 3; 22 July 1916, p. 2; 19 August 1916, p. 3; 26 August 1916, p. 2; 5 May 1917, p. 1; 13 June 1917, p. 2.

<sup>114</sup> *Daily Mail*, 27 January 1916, p. 3; 7 April 1916, p. 3; June 3, 1916, p. 3; 23 May 1917, p. 5; 8 June 1917, p. 3.

<sup>115</sup> 'Mother's Message', *Daily Mail*, 25 October 1915, p. 5; 'Queen Alexandra's Lead', 27 October 1915, p. 7; 'Nurse Cavell', 28 October 1915, p. 3; 'Memorial Fund', 29 October 1915, p. 5. On this fund see Pickles, *Transnational Outrage*, pp. 147-148.s

Germany's believed culpability in the genocide as outlined in the previous chapter makes this inattention more peculiar. Despite the *Mail's* notoriously anti-German editorial stance,<sup>116</sup> it only criticised Germany twice on this point. It is the first instance, occurring in a report on the publication of the Blue Book that is most interesting.<sup>117</sup> It drew the reader's attention to a particular document of 'outstanding interest', a letter from Minister of Education, H.A.L. Fisher, who concluded that 'the unspeakable horrors which the volume records might have been mitigated, if not wholly checked, had active and energetic remonstrances been from the first moment addressed to the Ottoman Government by the two Powers (Germany and Austria) who had acquired a predominant influence in Constantinople.'<sup>118</sup> This was the extent of the *Mail's* coverage of the Blue Book. Its thorough and extensive documentation of the genocide's particulars was evidently not judged sufficiently interesting to warrant their attention. Thus, not only was the *Mail* aware of this German connection, German culpability was, by late-1916, the most (and perhaps only) important aspect of the genocide in their view.

While both Cavell's execution and the Armenian genocide were believed by the *Mail* to be German atrocities, only the former attracted significant attention. The most probable explanation for this editorial decision is that the *Mail's* readers simply were not interested in the Armenian genocide. Whereas fifteen letters were written to the paper regarding Cavell's death in the space of two weeks,<sup>119</sup> only two letters were published on the genocide throughout the war's entirety. One was written collectively by the Armenian revolutionary newspaper *Dorschak*, sent from Genva, rather than an actual *Mail* reader, and took the form of a humanitarian appeal.<sup>120</sup> Discounting this, there remains one letter written on the Armenian genocide throughout the whole war,<sup>121</sup> hardly evidence of interest by the *Mail's* readers. Comments in the elite press suggest that this represented a wider apathy towards the Armenians' suffering. The *Guardian* complained in a July 1916 editorial that the 'terrible [Armenian] massacres of the last two years have passed almost unnoticed amidst the general

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<sup>116</sup> Gregory, *Call to Arms*, p. 17.

<sup>117</sup> The second instance of criticism is found in 'In Sheep's Clothing', *Daily Mail*, July 17, 1917, p. 4.

<sup>118</sup> 'Huns behind Turks', *Daily Mail*, 14 December 1916, p. 6.

<sup>119</sup> Letter, A. Clifford Smith, *Daily Mail*, 19 October 1915, p. 4; letter, F. Trotter, *Daily Mail*, 20 October 1915, p. 4; B. Bennet Burleigh, *Daily Mail*, 22 October 1915, p. 4; Letter, Anon., *Daily Mail*, 22 October 1915, p. 4; 'Public Stirred', *Daily Mail*, 25 October, 1915, p. 6. This last entry was a collection of ten letters published as an article.

<sup>120</sup> Letter, *Dorschak*, organ of the "Young Armenians", 'Cry for a Martyred People', *Daily Mail*, 11 September, 1915, p. 6.

<sup>121</sup> Letter, C.H. Watson, "'Be Kind to the Turk!'", *Daily Mail*, 23 March 1917, p. 4.

carnage, though they are on a scale perhaps unparalleled in history.’<sup>122</sup> Likewise, the *Times* wrote later in June 1917 that ‘the sufferings of the Armenian people...have in a manner been overshadowed by events in the more immediate perspective’.<sup>123</sup> Both newspapers suggest that the genocide’s failure to resonate with the British public resulted from a greater concern with the parallel events of the war.

Gregory stresses that ‘for communities at war, military casualties predominate. The fundamental reality is loss of life and limb. All other considerations are secondary.’<sup>124</sup> Pierre Purseigle similarly argues that throughout Europe ‘the weight of military losses framed the social response to the war’, such that an historian cannot ‘avoid the gigantic consequences entailed by the mass slaughter caused by the Great War.’<sup>125</sup> With this in mind, it is significant that the genocide coincided with Britain’s ill-fated Gallipoli campaign. Although Britain refused until 1928 to acknowledge the catastrophic defeat they had suffered,<sup>126</sup> this can hardly have lessened the societal impact of the 70,000 British casualties.<sup>127</sup> Similarly, news of the massacres’ severity and genocidal qualities, first published in the elite press 25 September 1915, coincided with the beginning of the Battle of Loos. As the first battle to use the new civilian volunteer armies,<sup>128</sup> it was of particular public interest, and received substantial coverage by the *Mail*, including an article nearly 2000 words long.<sup>129</sup> Consequently, its 60,000 casualties<sup>130</sup> must have carried significant social resonance. Britain’s civilian population can thus be expected to have undergone what Purseigle calls a ‘process of victimisation’. Purseigle explains this process with reference to the French town of Béziers, although he suggests that it was not uniquely French and applied equally in Britain. In 1914, refugees fleeing the German-occupied territories in northern France and Belgium were revered as heroic victims of German militarism. This favourable attitude took a stark turn in early 1915. ‘Reinforced by marks of otherness and a set of prejudices’, Purseigle writes, ‘the refugees were no longer granted any

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<sup>122</sup> ‘A Question of Policy’, *Manchester Guardian*, 19 July 1916, p. 4.

<sup>123</sup> ‘Armenia Day’, *The Times*, 13 June 1917, p. 3.

<sup>124</sup> A. Gregory, ‘Lost generations: the impact of military casualties on Paris, London and Berlin’, in J. Winter and J.-L. Robert, *Capital Cities at War: London, Paris, Berlin 1914-1919*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1997, p. 57.

<sup>125</sup> P. Purseigle, ‘Beyond and Below Nations: Towards a Comparative History of Local Communities at War’, in J. Macleod and P. Purseigle (ed.), *Uncovered Fields: Perspectives in First World War Studies*, Lieden and Boston, Brill, 2004, p. 109.

<sup>126</sup> J. Macleod, *Gallipoli*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 133-134.

<sup>127</sup> Macleod, *Gallipoli*, p. 67 gives a figure of 70,775, including 27,054 killed. This amounted to over half of the total Allied casualties in the Gallipoli campaign.

<sup>128</sup> A. Gregory, *A War of Peoples: 1914-1919*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2014, p. 61.

<sup>129</sup> G. Vallentine Williams, ‘Storming of Loos’, *Daily Mail*, 30 September 1915, p. 5.

<sup>130</sup> Figure from Gregory, *A War of Peoples*, p. 62.

discriminating quality in the wartime Weltanschauung [world view].’ What had changed was a growing sense on the part of the people of Béziers that they themselves were victims of the war. Their sympathies towards victims of the rape of Belgium had dissipated under ‘restrictions and hardships and above all, by soaring casualties and the subsequent grief.’<sup>131</sup> Likewise, Britons, having been confronted with the reality of ‘total war’, would have been less able to feel sympathy for the suffering of a distant foreign people when news of the genocide became available. There were, as the *Times* put it, ‘events in more immediate perspective.’<sup>132</sup>

If these conditions enabled Britain’s public to effectively disregard the lives of 800,000 Armenians, a figure the *Mail* gave in October 1915,<sup>133</sup> their sympathies towards Cavell demand explanation. Though the genocide’s scale trivialises Cavell’s death from a modern perspective, to contemporaries it had the opposite effect. The *Guardian* observed that ‘there is something in the very magnitude of such horrors that the general mind recoils from, refuses to take in, and allows to sink into oblivion.’<sup>134</sup> Although the *Mail* had certainly reported on other mass killings, most notably in Belgium and France, Gregory shows, contrary to received scholarly wisdom, their interest was seldom in details of the killings themselves. Coverage focused primarily on physical destruction of property, appealing to middle-class values of ‘sanctity of home and public property.’<sup>135</sup> Cavell, by contrast, was not a nameless and faceless entity amongst an incomprehensible mass of victims. She was, as the *Mail* referred to her, ‘Miss Edith Cavell, who was the daughter of Mrs. Cavell, widow of the late Rev. Frederick Cavell, vicar of Swardeston, near Norwich’,<sup>136</sup> an individual with whom they could identify. As shown, the *Times*, found meaning in these events as a tragic narrative of betrayal between individuals.<sup>137</sup> This characterisation, grounded in elite status, could not have resonated with Britain’s broader public and, unsurprisingly, was absent from the *Mail*’s coverage. Also absent were the heroic narratives of Armenian resistance so important in the elite press’ coverage. The Armenians, presented only as passive victims, were not shown to have proved themselves deserving of the *Mail* readers’ sympathies. Given wartime constraints, there was no reason for Britain’s public to accord the Armenians moral consideration. The humanitarian concern for the Armenians’ suffering examined in the previous chapter was thus confined to Britain’s elites.

<sup>131</sup> Purseigle, *Uncovered Fields*, p. 113.

<sup>132</sup> ‘Armenia Day’, *The Times*, 13 June 1917, p. 3.

<sup>133</sup> ‘A Nation Almost Wiped Out’, *Daily Mail*, 7 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>134</sup> ‘A Question of Policy’, *Manchester Guardian*, 19 July 1916, p. 4.

<sup>135</sup> Gregory, *Last Great War*, pp. 47-55, esp. pp. 51-52.

<sup>136</sup> ‘The Executed Nurse’, *Daily Mail*, 18 October 1915, p. 5.

<sup>137</sup> See pp. 15-16 above.



Northcliffe's decision not to publish much of the substantial volume of information available to him on the genocide in the *Mail*, or, as the elite press had done, to make any substantial criticism of Germany for its perceived role in the events, is also highly significant from an historiographical perspective. As previously discussed, current scholarly opinion holds that the Northcliffe press acted as a recruitment outlet for Britain's war effort by disseminating violent enemy atrocity stories.<sup>138</sup> Gregory has already challenged this view, demonstrating that the *Mail*'s atrocity reporting was not nearly as prominent as is traditionally assumed. During the first few months of the war, when its atrocity reporting was at its peak, it amounted to no more than ten percent of the *Mail*'s written content. He concludes that 'the overwhelming bulk of the *Daily Mail* coverage was of ordinary military affairs, much of it recycled and desperately unreliable official bulletins', with only 'a small fraction of stories...conform[ing] to the supposed classic model.'<sup>139</sup> The *Mail*'s nearly non-existent coverage of the war's greatest atrocity strengthens Gregory's challenge. Despite the *Mail*'s inattention, the genocide was used by recruiters to demonstrate the war's necessity. Lancashire's Lord Lieutenant, Lord Shuttleworth, for example, said at a recruitment rally at Burnley's Mechanic's Hall:

We are also face to face with new and horrible forms of that "frightfulness" of which we have seen far too much in this war. I need only, as recent examples, speak of these atrocities and vast Armenian massacres and of the shocking murder of Nurse Cavell. If those things do not stir us I do not know what will.<sup>140</sup>

Although recruiters clearly believed the genocide had domestic propaganda value, Northcliffe showed no interest in using it for this purpose. While Gregory is clearly aware of the genocide's effective absence from the *Mail*'s coverage, he fails to appreciate the significance of this inattention, mentioning it only briefly in a footnote.<sup>141</sup> The *Mail*'s decision to omit available details of the war's greatest 'German atrocity' almost entirely from its pages, despite its potential propaganda potential, provides clear evidence that the conventional characterisation of the wartime press is misguided.

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<sup>138</sup> See pp. 3-4 above.

<sup>139</sup> Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 53.

<sup>140</sup> 'To Fill Up the Gaps in the Ranks', *Manchester Guardian*, 25 October 1915, p. 9.

<sup>141</sup> Gregory, *Call to Arms*, p. 48, n. 63; Gregory, *Last Great War*, p. 313, n. 79.

The elite press' interest in the Armenian genocide did not filter down to the popular press. The *Mail*, the most widely-read of these papers, gave the events negligible attention. This chapter has argued this was a deliberate editorial decision, one that is particularly surprising given its scholarly reputation for pushing sensationalised accounts of enemy barbarity on an impressionable public to aid military recruitment drives. This decision was not the product of a diminished the *Mail*'s interest in atrocity stories. Cavell's execution, another atrocity which occurred concurrent with the genocide, received extensive coverage. Rather, the chapter has suggested that the *Mail*'s sparse coverage of the genocide reflected broader indifference to the Armenians' suffering resulting. Britain's public had undergone a wartime 'process of victimisation' that diminished their ability to sympathise with the distant Armenians' suffering. This meant that the Armenians, who were presented as passive victims with whom Britons could not identify, were not seen as deserving a wartime populations' moral consideration. Finally, it suggested that the *Mail*'s decision not to publish the many lurid details of Armenian slaughter by the enemy to which it had access, or to use the genocide as a point of significant criticism of German militarism, necessitates a re-evaluation of the propagandist reputation the Northcliffe press holds in current scholarship. What atrocity coverage it did provide should instead be understood as reflecting the interests of its readership.

## Conclusion

The *Times* and the *Manchester Guardian* provided an extensive coverage of the Armenian genocide during the First World War. This extended beyond details of the massacres' brutality to the fleeing Armenians' struggle for survival in the Caucasus and the associated relief efforts, demonstrating genuine humanitarian concern for the Armenians themselves. Their capacity to extend such sympathy in the context of a taxing total war resulted, first, from a belief that the Armenians were like themselves. The *Guardian* and other humanitarian advocates appealed for donations by stressing the Armenians' Christianity, presented as essentially Protestant, while the *Times* emphasised the initial execution of Armenian elites, with whom their readers could identify through a shared class and status. Moreover, both papers presented the Armenians as actively resisting their assailants, allowing Britain's elites to see them as deserving, in a wartime context, of their support. While such depictions proved a necessary component of elite interest, both papers perceived their readers' interest to stem, primarily, from the belief that Germany was ultimately responsible for their deaths. The genocide, consequently, assumed a special ideological significance, serving as further evidence for Britain's elites of German *Kultur*'s threat to British 'civilisation' and, hence, the moral necessity of Britain's 'just war'. As sincere as their outrage might have been, it was ultimately motivated by this need to view the brutal and socially draining war in which they were engaged as being fought for a real moral purpose.

Conversely, Britain's most widely circulated 'popular' paper, the *Mail*, covered the events only in passing. This disparity is particularly surprising given the *Mail*'s long-standing scholarly reputation for zealously printing lurid details of wartime atrocities, in coordination with government recruitment efforts, to demonise the enemy and 'dupe' the public into supporting a meaningless war. Despite its tremendous potential propaganda value, the narrative of German complicity was nearly completely absent from the *Mail*, which similarly refrained from publishing much of the substantial volume of graphic accounts of Armenian massacres to which it had access. This editorial decision, taken in conjunction with their substantial concurrent coverage of the execution of Cavell, reveals the scholarly consensus on the purpose behind the *Mail*'s atrocity coverage to be misguided. In addition to strengthening Gregory's

claim that the extent of this coverage is greatly exaggerated in modern scholarship,<sup>142</sup> it suggests that the presence of atrocity narratives in the *Mail* is best understood not as an extension of government propaganda initiatives but, more plausibly, as a reflection of their readers' interests. The Armenians, who were presented in the *Mail* as passive victims with whom most Britons could not identify, could find little sympathy from a population confronted with the realities of total war.

This dissertation enhances existing scholarship on British interest in the Armenians by giving due emphasis to Britain's wartime experience, the impact of which previous authors on the subject have failed to appreciate. Its most important contribution, however, is in putting this interest into perspective. Through its engagement with the popular press, it reveals that humanitarian concern for the Armenians was a predominantly elite preoccupation. For most Britons, the slaughter of this distant people, despite its unprecedented scale and brutality, was overshadowed by an event of more immediate concern: the First World War.

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<sup>142</sup> See Gregory, *Call to Arms*, pp. 25-39; Gregory, *Last Great War*, pp. 40-69.

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