Uğur Ümit Üngör, *Genocide. New Perspectives on its Causes, Courses and Consequences.* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2016). 276 p. ISBN 978-90-8964524-1

The unprecedented violence in the form of mass killing during the twentieth century not only led to the coining of the contested term 'genocide' but propagated a new and burgeoning field of research and publication, genocide studies. Uğur Ümit Üngör, himself an important investigator of the Armenian Genocide of 1915, has brought together some of the best research produced by graduate students from the Center for Holocaust and Genocide Studies in Amsterdam. Broadly defining genocide as 'a complex process of systematic persecution and annihilation of a group of people by a government,' Üngör contends that genocide is to be best 'understood as the persecution and destruction of human beings on the basis of their presumed or imputed membership in a group rather than on their individual properties or participation in certain acts.' (p. 15) Going beyond the United Nations definition of genocide – 'acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such' – this work argues that it 'does not make much sense to discriminate between the types of groups that are being targeted: ethnic, religious, regional, political, sexual, etc.' Genocides are 'directed against all members of a group, mostly innocent and defenceless people who are persecuted and killed regardless of their behavior.' They are acts of 'brutal collective criminality' distinct from 'other forms of mass violence such as war, civil war, or massacre.' (ibid.)

This compact volume organizes its investigation into three sections: causes of genocide, the course of genocide, and its consequences. On the causes of mass killing, Diane Oncioiu shows how the evolution of extreme racist nationalism and particular readings of history contribution to the Rumanian destruction of the country's Jews in the early 1940s and the Serbian targeting of Croats and Muslims at the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. In a comprehensive discussion of why perpetrators commit violence against the defenseless, Christophe Busch eschews essentialist explanations drawn from human nature and demonstrates how

ordinary people are converted into killers through demonic transitions – which involve desensitization, growing emotional distance from victims, obedience to authority, and the pressure to conform to new brutal norms – that effectively overcome 'our natural inhibitions to kill.' (p. 76) Kjell Anderson focuses on the state as the principal perpetrator of genocide. Concealed behind the veil of sovereignty, states deliberately killed an estimated 169,000,000 people in the twentieth century. Genocide is a crime under international law, and states that are criminal in their actions, writes Anderson, must be understood and treated as criminals.

Looking at the course of mass killings, Alex de Jong tells the little known story of the self-destruction of the Communist Party of the Philippines in the 1980s when members turned on members suspected of being police spies. With the failure of Maoism to explain developments in the Philippines, party leaders concluded that a conspiracy of infiltrators rather than deficient ideology and strategy were the causes of the erosion of support for the party. The solution was to eliminate physically dozens of perceived enemies within the party ranks. Sandra Kortsjens distinguishes between obligatory and discretionary violence, the first referring to the killings ordered by the leaders of Democratic Kampuchea in the genocidal years 1975-1979, and the second to the executions carried out by ordinary cadres without orders from the top. The Khmer Rouge murdered an estimated 1,700,000 people, targeting successively figures from the previous regime, people from the city and market towns, non-Khmer peoples (Vietnamese, Chinese, etc.), and finally regime supporters who were accused of being traitors. Both obligatory and discretionary violence occurred in Cambodia. Orders came down and people died, but 'confusion about policy, fear, radicalization, lack of control, and geographical differences' led local officials and activists to kill at their own discretion. (p. 148) In a chilling chapter Franzeska Karpinski and Elysia Ravinsky expose the horrors of sexual vio-lence in the Nazi genocide and show how militarized masculinity combined with senses of racial superiority and even soldiers' solidarity led to rape, mutilation, and murder of Jewish and other women.

In the section on consequences Laura Boerhout gives an account of the competing memory narratives in Sarajevo that render difficult a shared commemoration of the 11,000 to 15,000 lives lost in the war of 1992-1995. At the same time as war raged in Bosnia the 1994 genocide in Rwanda claimed an estimated 800,000 lives. As Suzanne Hoeksema shows, the divisions between Hutus and Tutsis that devastated the country are being reimagined in a new national culture through the re-education of perpetrators in *ingando* solidarity camps. Carrying the story into the realm of transitional justice, Thijs B. Bouwkegt explores the strategies of forgetting, denying, or explaining mass killing and the difficulties of truth commissions and other agencies to carry out fact-finding in the absence of reliable facts. Acceptable histories remain elusive.

In the concluding essay Philip Spencer reminds us that 'the construction of the group in genocide is the work of the perpetrators' imagination.' The perceived threat of the victim group is in turn a creation of the perpetrator, and it 'is the perpetrator who poses an actual, real (and often mortal) threat – not the victim.' (p. 255) As elusive as motives and methods, facts and historical reconstructions, are, this admirable collection aids us in the effort to understand human actions that defy easy comprehension.

Ronald Grigor Suny, The University of Michigan, National Research University – Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg, Russia