

# PROSPECTS FOR TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS

Proceedings of the Symposium Organized by AVİM on 30 April 2015





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

# PROSPECTS FOR TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS

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## Foreword

On 30 April 2015, AVİM (Center for Eurasian Studies) organized a symposium titled *Prospects for the Turkish-Armenian Relations*. Ten scholars from Turkey, Azerbaijan, Israel and the USA addressed an audience composed of the *corps diplomatique*, representatives of the civil society and the research community.

Presentations at the symposium, questions and comments of the audience, and, most importantly the symposium itself were a reflection of the new perspectives that are taking root in Turkey and the world as regards to the Turkish-Armenian dispute controversy.

The speeches at the symposium fell into two groups as those on the historical background of the genocide allegations and those that examine the recent forms of the controversy.

The speeches on the historical background of the genocide allegations were based on scholarly research and concrete analyses of archival documents. Compared with the earlier scholarly presentations in Turkey that was mostly providing rather general information and narratives, an important characteristic of these speeches are the specific and in-depth analyses of the important historical moments of the Turkish-Armenian controversy. We believe that this change demonstrates that in the near future there will be more specific, document-based and concrete historical studies. Such an improvement would help to the development of rational arguments that would ease the resolution of the Turkish-Armenian controversy.

The symposium also revealed the recent interest in the political aspects of the genocide claims in specific, and the Armenian-Turkish dispute in general. We believe this is a very noteworthy sign revealing that as time progresses, pro-Armenian discourse that targets emotions, some of which emanate from religious affinities by relying on moral concepts such as empathy and conscience at the expense of historical facts derived from archival documents is losing its persuasiveness and people are getting more aware of the political abuse of that moral discourse. We believe that this may be an important development to achieve a fair and rational resolution of the Turkish-Armenian controversy.

By publishing the presentations delivered at AVİM's symposium titled *Prospects for the Turkish-Armenian Relations* together in a conference book, AVİM hopes to contribute to the literature and the ongoing debates, and, ultimately, to the reconciliation between the Turks and the Armenians.



## OPENING SPEECH

**Alev KILIÇ**

*Ambassador (R)*

*Director of AVİM (Center for Eurasian Studies)*

Excellencies,

Distinguished Guests,

Friends,

We are gathered here today to hold a symposium on the prospects for Turkish-Armenian relations. Today, ten esteemed speakers will give an account of their academic work that interprets recent history and the events of 1915-16 based on facts and documents at hand.

In the order in which they will speak, our esteemed speakers are as follows:

Altay Cengizer, Ambassador, General Director at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and author of the book titled *Adil Hafızanın Işığında: Birinci Dünya Savaşı'na Giden Yol ve Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'nun Sonu (In the Light of Just Memory: The Path to the First World War and the End of the Ottoman Empire)*

Jeremy Salt, formerly of the Department of Political Science of Bilkent University;

Orhan Gaffarlı, Eurasian expert at Research Centre for Eurasian, Russian and East European Studies and PhD student in International Relations at Ankara University;

Maxime Gauin, researcher at the Center for Eurasian Studies and PhD candidate in History at Middle East Technical University;

Professor Michael M. Gunter, of Political Science at Tennessee Technological University;

Professor M. Hakan Yavuz, of Political Science at the University of Utah;

Uluç Gürkan, journalist and former Deputy Speaker of Grand National Assembly of Turkey, and the author of the book titled *Ermeni Katliamı Suçlaması, Yargılama ve Karar: Malta 1919-1921 (The Accusation of Armenian Massacres, Trial and Judgement: Malta 1919-1921)*;

Tal Buenos, PhD candidate in Political Science at University of Utah;

Professor Seçil Karal Akgün, formerly of History at the Middle East Technical University;

Assistant Professor Christopher Gunn, of History at the Coastal Carolina University in South Carolina

Considering that a number of our speakers have come from abroad, I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude and I have the distinct pleasure to welcome all of you.

As we know, this symposium holds a special significance both in terms of its timing and also in terms of its approach. In terms of its timing, this symposium is going to take place in the aftermath of the date in which the Armenian wartime losses, labeled by some Armenians and their supporters as “genocide”, reached a crescendo, but apparently failed to make the desired impact. In terms of its approach, this symposium will help highlight why the genocide allegations are rejected and that denialism can actually be attributed to those who are not ready, willing and spirited to discuss historical facts.



## Alev Kılıç

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We, at AVİM, have never considered ourselves to be “denialist”. We are an independent think tank, not swayed by emotions, political or other influences. We try to be as objective as possible on an intellectual level.

It is possible to summarize AVİM’s position regarding Armenian allegations under three main headings:

1. It is not possible to characterize the losses suffered by Armenians during World War I as “genocide”. This legal term does not fit in with the events that unfolded during World War I;
2. Tampering with the number of people who lost their lives during World War I and thus increasing the number of Armenian casualties for the sake of dramatizing war-time losses constitutes an inappropriate and disrespectful “numbers game”;
3. Armenians were not the only ones to suffer casualties during World War I. 17 million people lost their lives during this war, millions of which were Turks or Muslims of the Ottoman Empire. Armenians too suffered casualties during this war. AVİM does not ignore this fact, and acknowledges it just like it acknowledges the other casualties. What AVİM objects to is the allegation that the casualties were suffered only by the Armenians. The pains inflicted during this war must be felt by everyone for all sides. AVİM cannot condone those who express no sorrow for the overwhelming suffering experienced by the Turkish side.

We are ready to discuss these three main objections with anybody, anytime, anywhere. However, to this date, we have failed to see Armenians or their supporters expressing the will to openly discuss these objections. The truth is, when the facts and realities are put forth, the real denialism is laid bare. The unwillingness of Armenians to lose ground in terms of academia when they have previously gained ground in terms of politics is understandable. This is a political choice that Armenians and their supporters make, but they will have to come to realize that political gains and political arguments have their limitations in the face of historical facts and legal realities.

This is exactly why we gather here today to listen to historical and legal facts, and search for a way forward for available means for reconciliation on a historically and politically controversial issue.

I thank you all for being here.

**PANEL I**  
**Current State of Turkish-Armenian Relations**

**Moderator:**  
**Alev KILIÇ**  
*Ambassador (R)*  
*Director of AVİM (Center for Eurasian Studies)*



## **THE PAIN FAVORED FOREVER: THE YOUNG TURKS AND THE END OF THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE**

**Altay CENGİZER**

*Ambassador*

*General Director at the MFA of the Republic of Turkey*

It is true that the Ottoman Empire was not a colony of the Great Powers. However, European Powers had established control on many aspects of the empire's domestic affairs, including its finances. As such, a keen observer would be tempted to describe her as a semi-colony. In fact, the contempt of the Young Turks to this subordinate status within their own empire was perhaps the most powerful influence that shaped their outlook. They understood well that in order to accomplish reforms, foreign policy of the empire had to be changed. The overarching aim of the Young Turks was to find a way to prevent the decline of the Ottoman Empire.

The Young Turk Revolution was a slap in the face of the Great Powers. The Young

## The Pain Favored Forever: The Young Turks and the End of the Ottoman Empire

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Turks were determined to restore the empire by addressing her many weaknesses. For that, they needed a lengthy period of recovery. Yet, they never had that much-needed time. The unprovoked Italian assault on Tripoli in September 1911 sidelined the recent perturbations of the Annexation Crisis of 1908-1909, as the Balkan Wars of 1912-1913 were to sideline those of the Libyan War of 1911-1912. When the Republic of Turkey was declared on 29 October 1923, Turkey had been in war almost incessantly for the last twelve years, thrice as much as any other major belligerent power of the Great War.

Now, a century later, with the spotlight still focused relentlessly on colossal human tragedies, defeat, and its aftermath, the easiest thing for historians to do is to place every Ottoman sin squarely in the Young Turk doorstep. Blaming the Young Turks for recklessly entering the First World War and accusing them of gambling the fortunes of the Empire away has become the almost-standard narrative in Turkey and abroad. Yet, this is simply the reincarnation of the 'liberal imperialist narrative' of the victors a century ago.

This narrative totally disregards the predicaments of the Young Turk government such as the rising specter of full frontal Russian aggression and increasingly hostile policies of Great Britain towards the Ottoman Empire throughout the Young Turk era. It downplays the way that the question of the Straits rose to prominence as the *Entente* showed itself ready to denounce the vital interests of the Ottomans. The utter lack of any credible guarantee of the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire on the part of the *Entente* is still painfully obvious. Likewise, it conceals how Great Britain was promising bits and pieces of the Ottoman Empire to other possible allies like Greece and Bulgaria already in September 1914, almost two months before the Black Sea Incident.

The obvious limitations that the new realignments imposed upon the diplomacy of the Young Turks cannot be discounted. As August 1914 approached, the relationship between Britain and Tsarist Russia progressed to take on the characteristics of a full-fledged alliance. Russian troops were a necessity for Great Britain, which was devoid of a land army that would be of some worth in Continental Europe. To make sure that Tsarist Russia remained within the fold of the *Entente*, Britain repeatedly signaled the Russians that they would be compensated through Turkish gains. Increasingly after 1908, preserving the Russian connection became the paramount concern of Britain, and this fundamental outlook dominated British policy towards the Ottoman Empire.

The protracted Libyan War led the Balkan nations to perceive a once in a lifetime opportunity to oust the Ottoman Empire forever from the Balkans. With that single aim in mind, they set aside their differences. Although the Great Powers had announced at the start of the First Balkan War that they would not permit any

## Altay Cengizer

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territorial changes, at the end, they brought enormous pressure to bear on the Ottoman Empire. Notably, it was the political and strategic consequences of the Balkan Wars that finally rendered the historic rivalry between Austria-Hungary and Tsarist Russia unmanageable. In fact, the First World War can indeed be viewed as the Third Balkan War.

A closer look at Great Britain's general approach towards the Ottoman Empire during the Young Turk era brings out the very clear contours of a distinctively negative policy. In so far as Britain regarded the strengthening of the Ottoman Empire as anti-thetical, it can fairly be stated that the two had an antagonistic relationship. However, while the Young Turks were mute and passive on this point until they entered the First World War, Britain had the means to act upon this antagonism. For instance, she persistently opposed the main reforming policies of the Young Turks, and actively worked to create zones of influence for herself within the Ottoman Empire.

The Liberal Imperialist Whig Government perceived strengthening of the Ottoman Empire as a threat to Britain's economic and strategic prospects. Whenever the Ottomans took steps to move forward, survive and reform, they had to face Britain's not only resistance, but active intervention. The antagonistic relations in Europe at the time were not confined to Anglo-German and Austro-Russian antagonisms. Lurking behind, there was a more concealed but just as valid Anglo-Turkish antagonism. In the larger European scale, the consequences of the Anglo-Turkish antagonism were far from being secondary.

The Young Turks' worries were far from being limited to Great Britain and Tsarist Russia. For example, when the French heard that a British company was to be allowed to construct the ports of Samsun and Trabzon, they voiced their objection claiming that northern Black Sea region had been "designated" as theirs.<sup>1</sup> Austria-Hungary and Italy, the lower ranking powers as they were, had also their own ideas and projections.

The Liman von Sanders Crisis which lasted from December 1913 to February 1914, was to be the last one in the series of the big European crises prior to the

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1 The 1911 Annual Report of the British Embassy, FO/371/1491 (4966)

2 The Liman von Sanders Crisis, has also been much taken out of its context. The appointment of a foreign officer to a position of high command may seem, at first glance, an extreme measure. However, the fiasco of the Balkan Wars had made abundantly clear how radical a reform was needed in the Ottoman army. This time, the reforms were going to hurt. The Government could not risk entrenched interests put a brake on reforms. The survival of the far-flung empire which has just ended in the Balkans was more than ever dependent on the success of reform. Ottoman Empire's poverty and many weaknesses were apparent, and this was no time for business as usual. It was evident enough that partial or slipshod measures would have no chance to bring about the transformation required if the Ottoman Empire was to survive. Hence the logic behind Liman's appointment. As a matter of fact, the Unionist government wanted to pursue a far-reaching reform programme in the bureaucracy. British officials would be responsible for reform in the Navy and at the Ministries of Finance and Justice; the French in the Gendarmerie. As such, Liman von Sanders did not personalize the much talked about "German influence."

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outbreak of the First World War.<sup>2</sup> The crux of the issue was Russia's steadfast opposition to any effort aimed at the strengthening the defensive capabilities of the Ottoman Empire. When Britain agreed to build a dreadnought and other warships for the Ottoman Empire, and also to send an admiral and a retinue of officers to head the Ottoman navy and train its personnel, St. Petersburg was much irritated and opposed the delivery of the warships. Hence, the issue certainly predates the appointment of General Liman von Sanders to head the First Army Corps based in Istanbul.

Russia preferred, for the time being, to see the Ottoman Empire continue to exist as a sluggard; an anachronistic eastern empire without allies. She had already decided to prevent by any means the establishment of any other supremacy but her own in Constantinople. The Liman von Sanders Crisis showed how Russia was determined not to let any other power to capitalize on the weakness of the Ottoman Empire.<sup>3</sup> Even though, Russia's *Entente* partners were not alarmed by the appointment of Liman von Sanders to head the First Army Corps, Russia was alarmed. Sazonov first proposed to Russia's *Entente* partners that they impose a financial boycott on the Ottoman Empire, and then within the space of a few weeks, he was talking of severing all diplomatic relations and opening war on the Ottoman Empire. Russian uproar only a few months before the July Crisis, reveals the extent to which Russia was inclined to aggravate crisis situations.

It was also during the Liman von Sanders Crisis that Russia started to further articulate and modernize its Straits policy. As the minutes of the Council of Ministers meeting in February 1914 and the memorandum of Count Basily demonstratively make clear, Russia understood that achieving her historic aims on the Straits could only be possible in the context of a "great upheaval" when the wrath of unprecedented turmoil wreaked Europe. She also understood that in order to be able to retain the Straits, it would have to take hold of both sides of the Marmara Sea.<sup>4</sup>

Indeed, by 1914, Constantinople and the Straits issue was at the forefront of Russia's preoccupations. It was because of the existence of the tacit agreement between Great Britain and Tsarist Russia that the fate of the Ottomans quickly rose to the fore, and at the end, the Great War was fought over the future of the Near East as it was fought over the future of the European balance of power and dynastic empires.

Probably the single most important event that poisoned the already strained

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3 Interestingly, Russia had prepared to intervene in order to avoid the expected entry of Bulgarian forces to Istanbul during the First Balkan War. More or less the same consideration delayed Greece's joining the War on the side of the *Entente*.

4 Nicholas de Basily, *The Abdication of Emperor Nicholas II of Russia*, Appendix I "On Our Goals in Regard to the Straits," Princeton, 1984

relations with Great Britain was the seizure of the warships *Sultan Osman* and *Reşadiye* on the 31st of July, before the outbreak of the War and the signing of the Turco-German alliance agreement. This was perceived as an open act of aggression and caused tremendous indignation and outrage in the public opinion and in the government. It was a terrible blow to British prestige in the Ottoman Empire who were now regarded as thieves. Churchill, the First Lord of Admiralty who ordered the seizure of the ships did not neglect to let the Ottoman government know that the amount paid for the dreadnought and the battleship would be repaid by England in weekly installments, adding insult to injury. The amount of installments was a paltry few thousand Pounds and the Ottomans computed that the full repayment would take decades. With the entry of the Ottoman Empire to the Great War, the issue of installments disappeared completely. At the end, Britain had acquired *HMS Erin* and *HMS Agincourt* for nothing.

Interestingly enough, the French seized, at the same time, fifty monoplane that were being built for the Ottoman Empire. These seizures cannot solely be seen as merely scrambling after munitions. They disclose that Great Britain and the *Entente* in general had neither any coherent strategy to try to win over the Ottoman Empire nor regard for Turkish concerns of security. It should be stressed that Britain did not even consider delaying the delivery of the battleships in order not to throw away its chances on the Ottoman Empire straight out of the window. She felt no need to wait until the alliance configurations were more readily recognizable. Seemingly, she had no intention to avoid the total alienation of the Turkish public opinion. In her hubris, she did not even stop to think about how she was jeopardizing the position of the so-called moderates in the Ottoman cabinet, let alone that of Admiral Limpus, the British Commander of the Ottoman fleet.

At any rate, Britain had been following an openly pro-Greek policy since the First Balkan War, and she had no objection for the Greek occupation of the Aegean Islands. Already in December 1913, Eyre Crowe, the extremely influential Head of the Near Eastern Department and future Permanent Under-Secretary, wanted the battleships being built for the Ottoman Empire given to Greece.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Venizelos had also asked London not to give the ships to the Ottoman Empire. Russia had been making clear how she was against Britain helping the Ottoman Empire strengthen its navy and she had also asked the ships to be retained. As such, the decision to seize *Sultan Osman* and *Reşadiye* falls in line with the thinking and general approach of the *Entente* towards the Ottoman Empire. Britain's mindset was already predisposed to comply with the Greek and Russian requests, and Britain set to work to win the Greeks over to the *Entente* side.<sup>6</sup>

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5 Note by Eyre Crowe dated 24 December 1913, on the telegram from Mallet to Grey dated 12 December 1913. FO/371/1998/27926

6 William Peter Kaldis, "Background for Conflict: Greece, Turkey, and the Aegean Islands, 1912-1914," *The Journal of Modern History*, Volume 51, No 2, June 1979, Attachment D 1119-1146, page D 1142



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Clearly, Great Britain sided with the enemies of the Ottomans at a very early stage because of its own military-strategic outlook and on the basis of what it perceived its stakes to be. It was a deliberate choice on the part of Great Britain to render negative its Ottoman diplomacy. She was just doing what was to be expected from a Great Imperialist Power; acting in accordance with its perceived higher interests, and it was readily obliging those whom it wanted to see on its side.

In the wake of the flight of the German warships *Goeben* and *Breslau* to the Bosphorus, Britain instituted blockades, in and of themselves reason for war, at the mouth of the Dardanelles and at Basra. It chose to apply them very strictly. So much so that, on the eve of a harsh winter, the British blockade practically forbade entry of coal to İstanbul on the pretext that it would be used for the German ships. Normal trading vessels carrying perishable goods for daily consumption were not able to leave or enter the Dardanelles. On the other end, Indian forces had been stationed in Bahrain, in support of the blockade at Basra, and they had explicit orders to move to Basra at the occurrence of the slightest provocation. Of course, under the circumstances, “provocation” is a dangerously loose, ill-advised terminology. Britain did not stop at actively pursuing the blockades. She was promising Adrianople and Thrace to Bulgaria and Smyrna and its interior to Greece to win them over to the *Entente*.<sup>7</sup> With the same purpose, it was promising yet undefined regions of Anatolia to Italy.

The Union and Progress Government,<sup>8</sup> on the other hand, was facing intense dilemmas. After the loss of the Balkans and the ensuing massacres and human tragedies attendant at the expulsion of the Turkish and Muslim population from the Balkans, the Empire was at its lowest ebb ever. At a time when even the Great Powers were prepared to go to great lengths in order to maintain their alliances and gain new allies, the Ottomans were seen as deficient on many counts. Since 1908, Great Britain had already rejected at least four serious and well-meaning Ottoman attempts at alignment and/or alliance with the *Entente*. The German establishment was against any idea of alliance with the Ottoman Empire, and even in August 1914 it remained aloof and cool. Yet, the sheer weight of geography, history and bare *realpolitik* prancing towards the Unionists should have dispelled any confusion about the gravity of the situation and made clear that that the Ottoman Empire would soon be drawn into war.

The threats the Ottomans faced were not imaginary. In a letter dated 30 August 1914, the Tsar had ordered Count Vorontsov-Dashkov, the General Governor of Caucasus to start preparing the grounds for insurrection and arming the rebellious Armenians. The Ottoman Empire was at the edge of the precipice and to think

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7 See “The Balkans, 1914-1915: from the Outbreak of the War to the Offer to Bulgaria” 9 July 1915, F.O. 371/2264

8 The government formed by the Young Turk cadres.



otherwise required the denial of the stark realities on the ground, and the refusal to accept the existence of the perennial Eastern Question, and how resilient it still was. When August 1914 arrived, the Ottoman Empire and Russia had already gone to war thirteen times, almost at every twenty-fifth year. To be sure, wishful thinking persisted within the Cabinet and elsewhere that the Empire would somehow remain intact and untouched by the Great War. But that was only human nature, not statesmanship. Nor there were any basis for the hope to retain meaningful neutrality. The Ottoman Empire required all of its munitions from abroad, and it had a paltry 92,000 Ottoman Pounds in its coffers at the end of June 1914.

The Ottoman government did not have the luxury to vacillate between action and prognostication, like Italy, for example, or Greece. It was in this context that leadership struck an agreement of alliance with Germany on 2 August. It was a purely defensive agreement, basically stemming from the Ottoman Empire's fears from Tsarist Russia. The Military Cabinet of the Kaiser and the German Navy aside, Enver Pasha lacked any support whatsoever from within Germany. The Turco-German alliance was not easily achieved, and it should be seen as a success of historic proportions on the part of the Ottoman Government, since it endowed the Ottoman Empire for the first time in six decades after the Crimean War with a Great Power ally.

The extremely strict, nonsensical application of the blockades imposed by Great Britain at the mouth of the Dardanelles and at Basra should have been revealing enough. No movement was allowed and both exits of the Empire were mined. HMS *Espiègle* in the Royal Navy squadron blockading Basra had received, on 21 October 1914, a week before the Black Sea Incident, instructions to fire on any Ottoman vessel that would attempt to clear the mines laid on the Shatt al-Arab.<sup>9</sup> Why did Britain use the blockades as provocations rather than keeping them as precautionary measures? Of course, Britain had the biggest Muslim population within her empire, and as such, she could have faced opposition from within and even subversion from the Muslim elements in the empire if she was perceived to be the aggressor. It would have been much easier, on the other hand, to explain war against the Ottomans if they were provoked into action first. This would have allowed Britain to further depict the Ottoman leadership as irresponsible and reckless, composed of pan-Turanist, pro-German gamblers, while successfully pushing into oblivion the many intricacies of the situation. The *Entente* and, to be precise, Great Britain more than any other member of the bloc, needed this phantasmagoria. They had to discredit the Young Turks not only *vis-a-vis* the Muslim population, but also *vis-a-vis* their domestic constituencies. France and Britain agreed in December 1914, to pool ideas and materials in anti-Turkish propaganda directed at their Muslim populations. The British suggested that this

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9 Joseph Heller, *British Policy Towards the Ottoman Empire 1908-1914*, London, 1983 p 69

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should take the form of branding the Young Turks as “free-thinking internationalists” masquerading as Muslims.<sup>10</sup> Hence the persisting belief that the Young Turks were philistines and atheists who had no consideration for Muslim values and interests; pan-Turanists who recklessly entered the First World War on the side of Germany.

Notwithstanding the attitudes of the *Entente*, the Unionist Government toiled and finally exhausted the means at its disposal to come to terms with the bloc. Indeed, even after the agreement with Germany was reached, Enver wanted to strike a *modus vivendi* with Russia. He told the Russian military attaché on 5 August that he was ready for an arrangement along the lines of the Kuchuk Kainardji agreement of 1774 which had spelled Russian superiority in the Black Sea for the first time, and that there was no need for Russia and the Ottoman Empire to go to war. Sazonov did seriously consider the matter, and thought that it could just be worth Russia’s while, as the question of the Straits could at any rate be taken up later under better circumstances rather than right away. It was Britain, who stopped any movement along these lines.

It is difficult to talk of duplicity on the part of Enver. His last ditch attempt to find common ground with Russia shows, more than anything else, the limitations and hapless status of the Ottomans. Between 2 and 5 August, the world had turned upside down as Great Britain entered the War on 4 August. The Ottoman Empire was merely seeking some solid protection against incipient Russian aggression, and this, in their mind, should not have meant war with Great Britain. Even the German government continued to hope until the last minute that Britain would stay neutral and avoid entering the War.

Furthermore, talks between the *Entente* and the Ottoman government lingered on for some time. As the Liberal Imperialist narrative and its modern versions never fail to point out, it is true that the *Entente* offered to guarantee the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire. But it was a sham offer. The Ottoman government demanded that this guarantee be given on a bi-lateral basis rather than as the *Entente*, which was, at the end of the day, a political construct. However, the *Entente* members refused. When the Turks asked what would happen when the *Entente* ceased to exist, they had no credible answer to that quite intelligent question. It should not have been difficult to imagine the day when the Turks were to be told that the guarantee was given at the start of the war, and that the *Entente* was a thing of the past.

Weeks moved on, and İstanbul increasingly felt the effects of the blockade at the Aegean mouth of the Straits, debilitating and taxing her strengths in every manner. Yet, if it came to it, they could have tried to find ways to postpone action on the

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10 G.R.Berridge, Gerald Fitzmaurice (1865-1939) Chief Dragoman of the British Embassy in Turkey, Leiden, 2007, p 211

Aegean direction. However, once Russia started to mine the other end at the Black Sea, the Ottoman Empire was left with no other choice but to react and break her way through. Hence the 29 October Incident and the bombardment of Odessa and Sébastopol. Russian mining at the Black Sea would not have only completed the suffocating blockade, but it would have doomed the Ottoman Empire. The Black Sea route from İstanbul to Hopa was vital to the defense of the eastern front which in turn held the key for central Anatolia. In the absence of dependable roads, the Black Sea connection provided the only reliable supply route, and if that was also unavailable, there would have been no Caucasus front to speak meaningfully about.<sup>11</sup>

Yet, there was an even more coercive reason for the Ottoman Empire to dismiss inaction and enter the fray: The threat of a unilateral agreement between Germany and Russia which had been hanging over the air now seemed to be a reality in the wake of Russian defeat at Tannenberg. This was not a figment of Enver's imagination. In fact, from the start of the War until Russia's withdrawal, the probability of a separate agreement between Russia and Germany pre-occupied Russia's *Entente* allies. Now, routed in Tannenberg and having lost 90,000 soldiers, Russia could well be disposed favorably towards German offers. An agreement between the two would have allowed Germany to fully concentrate on the Western front, while leaving Russia comfortable enough. What if Germany offered the same, the Great Prize of the Straits? Russia might have simply ceased hostilities and change camps. This likelihood was as frightening for Britain and France as it was for the Ottomans, and rumours started to circulate that it was bound to happen after all. Sazonov, had masterfully played on precisely this fear as he led the Allies to the agreement on Constantinople and the Straits.

Of course, by the agreement of 6 September 1914, the *Entente* allies had promised each other not to conclude separate treaties with the enemy until victory is achieved. But everyone knew that such promises did not count for much in a world of harsh realities. After all, the Russian lines were broken in Tannenberg, and there was increasing speculation that the conclusion of a separate agreement was afoot. Indeed, these rumours were later proven to be true and it was confirmed that the pro-German elements around the Tsar were gathering traction at the time.

The very scant material pertaining to the twilight meeting at Said Halim Pasha's residence, when the leadership debated the increasingly dire situation the Ottoman Empire found itself in, gives us a few jotted down lines to relate Enver Pasha's words: "*They are winning, we must enter the war too.*" The dominant

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11 The recent work of Edward J. Erickson sheds much valuable light on the Ottoman national security context. See his "The Armenian Relocations and Ottoman National Security: Military Necessity or Excuse for Genocide?" *Middle East Critique*, Volume 20, No. 3, Fall 2011, pp 291-298

Also, his *Order to Die: A History of the Ottoman Army in the First World War*, Westport, 2001

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interpretation of this specific sentence, developed in tandem with British propaganda of the time, is that Enver Pasha, being the “gambler” and “pan-Turanist,” wanted to enter the War recklessly and as soon as possible on the winning side to make sure that the Ottomans received their share in the spoils of war. What if he was solely referring to the *force majeure* of pre-empting a separate Russo-German agreement which would have the Straits at its center? This was the essence of Wangenheim’s menacing words, condemning the Ottomans for not taking action. The former interpretation assumes that Enver Pasha was acting opportunistically, while the latter assumes the reverse. But one should ask what factors really count during such make-or-break moments. What shapes a decisive moment? Do leaders always look at the circumstances through a window of opportunity even when there are mounting threats all around them?

The Ottomans did not have a world of opportunities awaiting them. In contrast, they were surrounded by huge existential threats, and Enver Pasha would surely have distinguished between the two. He was not a “gambler,” as his opponents and personal enemies at the *Entente* camp and within the domestic opposition have made us believe to this day. Rather, he was simply not a defeatist. Looking at the circumstantial evidence and the threats of the *Entente*, along with increasingly severe blockades and a deteriorating strategic context in the Black Sea and the Caucasus, he would have had to be court martialed if he did not act and enter the First World War, on the side of Germany, in the absence of any other alternative. While the Sarıkamış Operation is much cited by the detractors of the CUP as a gamble that was indeed ill-fated, it was also a military necessity if Russia was to be kept at bay before summer arrived, offering much more propitious circumstances for the Russians. Failing to see the evident and real circumstances, as well as the grave threats facing the Ottoman Empire, it is with the hubris of hindsight that we are tempted to think that the opportunity aspect prevailed in the Ottoman decision to enter the First World War.

On the contrary, as Michael A. Reynolds argues: “a sober vision grounded in concrete geopolitical reasoning, and not any nationalist or proto-nationalist ideology of identity, guided those conducting policy towards the Russian Empire in the final years of the Ottoman Empire.”<sup>12</sup> However, the explanation of the victors inundated the whole area of research and scrutiny, resulting in numerous extremely important details falling through the cracks into oblivion. The allegation of pro-German bias within the Young Turk leadership is rubbish thrown at the face of scholarship unless considered against the background of the persistently anti-Ottoman policies of the *Entente*, and especially Great Britain. Whatever the reproductions of that particular narrative claim, Great Britain and the *Entente* had

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12 Michael A. Reynolds, “Buffers, not Brethren: Young Turk Military Policy in the First World War and the Myth of Panturanism.” *Past and Present*, Volume 203, issue 1 (2009) pp 137-179

more than a fair chance to avoid direct confrontation with the Ottoman Empire. Yet, Great Britain allowed this chance to pass away in front of her eyes, and refused to offer the Ottomans the benefits of an alliance or meaningful neutrality. Instead, she chose to risk facing the Turks over the length of the still huge geography of the Ottoman Empire.

The *Entente* was after the Ottoman Empire not because she had turned into a German ally, but because the grand balance among the existing and prospective *Entente* allies could only be achieved by offering and dividing Ottoman lands. This was precisely why the *Entente* had been able to pursue “constructive” diplomacy towards any other prospective ally because it felt that its hands were free to offer Ottoman territory. Depicting the Turkish leadership as irreconcilably pro-German served their higher purposes.

In 1914, Eastern Poland was part of Tsarist Russia and no one in Russia would continue to fight for a thirty kilometer long strip called Posen. Nothing but the *glavnyii priz* would make meaningful the great sacrifices Russia had to incur, even at the risk of revolution at home to the horror of the pro-German establishment of land-owners and other aristocrats around the Tsar. Britain understood this quite well. They knew that Russia would not continue to fight for long in pursuit of imaginary and undefined war aims, and that only a more solid, galvanizing war aim could compel all the Russians to keep fighting. Whether or not the Ottoman Empire entered the War, Tsarist Russia would have moved by every means at its disposal, diplomatic and otherwise, towards gaining the Straits. The First World War was exactly the type of major European upheaval needed, fulfilling the prerequisite conditions. Tsarist Russia had already made its mind up that her development as a Great Power could not be achieved without Russian control over the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles, and only that could be the possible final solution to the Question of the Straits.<sup>13</sup> Indeed, as Russia’s Foreign Minister Sazonov made clear in his memoirs, Britain had agreed to Russia’s expectations with regard to Constantinople and the Straits before the Ottoman Empire had entered the War.<sup>14</sup>

In the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was the only Power from the primordial East to take on a group of mighty Western Powers. It was believed that they would be finished off quickly. This was not at all the case. Lloyd George divulged that much at his speech to the Commons at the end of the War, admitting that the Ottoman’s “choice” to enter the First World War caused it to drag on for two more years. He did not, of course, admit how Britain pushed them to the brink, because his purpose was not to flatter, but to lay the ideological ground for their

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13 Count Basily, “On Our Goals in Regard to the Straits” p 173

14 Serge Sazonov, *Fateful Years*, New York, 1928 pp 252

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oncoming severe punishment. In fact, Great Britain was as much revanchist on the Ottoman Empire at Sevres as France was on Germany at Versailles.

In the First World War, all of the Great Powers sought to defend, and if possible, augment their Great Power status. Not a single one of that illustrious group faced an existential threat. At the last analysis, if they did not wish to make war, they could have continued to live, albeit some steps down in the hierarchy of Great Powers. Lesser allies on either side were also primarily after aggrandizement of territory. However, their petty disputes predated the outbreak of the War. In this massive World War, the Ottomans were the only ones who were fighting a genuine existential threat. This singularity of Turkish resistance discloses the main context of direct Ottoman involvement in the War.

The Ottomans, like the Habsburgs, the Hohenzollerns, and the Romanoffs, had come to the very edge, and a grand settling of accounts was impending, as old Europe was coming to a close. There was no pro-German group which had hijacked the Ottoman government in August 1914, just as there was no Germany doing everything in its power to win over the Ottoman Empire. However paradoxical it may seem, the Turco-German alliance was the result of British intransigence and *Entente* politics. The Young Turks had met the perfidious Albion *par excellence!*

Moments which will be described as “historical” years later arrive suddenly. Suddenly, the geo-strategic realities jump to the forefront. The unspoken but very much present facts of life take hold. Crisis built up on concrete, irrefutable realities, and they demand concrete answers. Leaders who are called on to take action at such historic moments, do not usually have much choice. Just like a first glance thrown at the deck of cards, they are forced to compute in seconds what is bound to happen. Under such circumstances, it is the gut feelings, more than anything else, that count. In August 1914, their gut feeling told the Young Turks that Tsarist Russia would not miss the opportunity arising in the midst of the “great upheaval,” to settle once and for all the historic question of Constantinople and the Straits. Given the long history of Russo-Turkish wars, this conclusion would have been easy for any Ottoman leadership to draw, Young Turk or not. But, Enver Pasha and the Young Turk leadership had the wherewithal to act and the rest is history, with all the consequences of this momentous decision to enter the First World War. To be sure, the end of the Ottoman Empire was a most painful and tragic process for its ancient and time-honored *millet*s. Yet, in this world of intertwined pains, it still seems to be the most favored one, because that particular pain does not seem to go away. Ignoring the complexities that surround the Young Turks’ decisive moment-failing to see the hand of Great Power politics in the shaping of that moment, and how a multitude of factors rose to the ground from the disturbed substrata of dormant considerations-will hardly teach a lesson of history to the generations of today.



The Armenian narrative never talks about the many predicaments that the Ottoman Government of the time found itself in, and even the slightest allusion to the impending Russian threat and the many other complexities of the situation in August-November 1914 is a taboo. As a matter of fact, the whole Armenian narrational construct stands on the fundamental assumption that the Young Turks were pan-Turanist and that their main reason to go to war in 1914 was to build a Turanist empire. As such, it is alleged that the Young Turks regarded the Armenians as a barrier that had to be done away with on their way to Central Asia. Of course, this is an extremely simplified explanation of that momentous period. Likewise, that particular narrative almost always emphasizes the Entente offer for guaranteeing the territorial integrity of the Ottoman Empire, but it never discloses that it were a sham offer, after all. Unless, the new generation of Armenians want to go deeper to the sources of the conflict, and indeed, arrive at a much more wholesome and detailed picture, the well-meaning efforts for reconciliation will bear no results. Evidently, the Turks are much more pre-disposed to take account of other features that surround the conflict. It is unfortunate that the many proponents of the Armenian narrative inspired by the victorious liberal-imperialist rendering of that seminal era want us to remain just by the beach with our goggles on, as ten-year old boys watching small fish come and go. It is the Turkish side who really wishes to leave the beach and swim toward deeper waters.



## **NOT A MATTER FOR THE HISTORIANS? GEOFFREY ROBERTSON AND THE “ARMENIAN QUESTION”**

**Dr. Jeremy SALT**

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Geoffrey Robertson is an Anglo-Australian lawyer who at some point took on human rights as his life’s work. He operates from chambers in London and several years ago involved himself in the ‘Armenian question’ by taking a retainer from the Armenian lobby in Britain. His brief was to change the British government’s policy of acknowledging the suffering of the Armenians in the First World War but not calling it genocide. He did not reach this objective but because he is well known as a lawyer, author and media figure, his campaign did have some impact. He has recently acted for the Armenian government in the European Court of Human Rights hearing of an appeal against its ruling that a Swiss court violated Doğu Perinçek’s right to freedom of expression by sentencing him to prison for saying that the Armenian genocide was an international lie. The court has yet to issue its decision.

Mr. Robertson recently extended his interest in the issue by publishing a book, *An Inconvenient Genocide: Who Now Remembers the Armenians?* His starting point is that ‘this is not a matter for the historians’ because ‘we know the history’ and



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the ‘facts’ are known. It is therefore now just a matter for the law. In fact, as an argument that this question should be kept out of the hands of lawyers and left in the hands of historians, no better case could be made than Mr. Robertson’s book.

There is a history behind every crime, be it atrocities committed against Ottoman civilians during the First World War (whether Muslims or Christians) or a mugging on the street. The difference between lawyers and historians is that whereas the historian’s central concern is searching for the truth, the lawyer’s concern is in court to defend his (or her) client irrespective of the truth.

Mr. Robertson may well believe that every word he speaks is the truth. He may well believe that prisoners can be transported from İstanbul to Ankara by ship, as he writes in this book, but if he can be so badly mistaken on a simple question of geography requiring him only to look at the map, is it possible that he has made other mistakes in his representations of history and the ‘facts’?

In fact, a real fact, his book is strewn with them. There are small mistakes, small but significant, indicating that the writer does not have a strong grasp of some of the basics. He gets the name of the Committee of Union and Progress Party wrong. He talks of Armenians being “deported” when not one was moved beyond the boundaries of the Ottoman Empire. He refers to the Young Turks’ ‘tame ayatollah’, a religious title which applies only to Iran and Shia Muslims. These are all signs that Mr. Robertson does not know the history nearly as well as he thinks he does or as well as he would like his readers and listeners to think that he does. The transgressions lie in what he leaves out of his narrative in favor of the questionable facts on which it is largely based.

Here we can begin with the Hitler quote on the front cover of his book, “who now remembers the Armenians” a remark he is alleged to have made just before the invasion of Poland in 1939. The American scholar Heath Lowry has done the spade work here, demonstrating that there is no mention of the Armenians in the versions of the speeches Hitler made on that day accepted as evidence at the Nuremberg tribunal. The version Mr. Robertson uses came from an Associated Press journalist, Louis P. Lochner, who was apparently handed it by Hitler’s internal enemies in an attempt to discredit him. His insulting remarks about allies or erstwhile allies indicate that the Lochner version was touched up, if genuine at all. It was submitted to the prosecutors but they declined to table it, in favor of looking for something more reliable. At the very least, there is such doubt about its authenticity that it cannot be taken as reliable evidence of what Hitler said. It certainly has no place on the cover of the book as an apparent statement of fact.

Mr. Robertson’s knowledge of history does not extend to any understanding of the situation on the ground in eastern Anatolia, the very crucible of the Armenian

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question, at the time the war broke out. There were no sealed roads and almost no rail links. Communications were limited. The entire region had not changed from a century before and probably a century before that. Illiteracy hovered around 80 percent or more. Provincial administration had been reformed but only superficially. Modernity had barely scratched the surface of eastern Anatolia. Its very backwardness and remoteness were the reasons why Russian-Armenians chose it ahead of Russian territories as the platform for their campaigns of sabotage and provocation, intended to bring about the intervention of the European powers, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Real power on the ground lay not with the governor in his *konak* (palace) in the town, but with the tribal chiefs with whom the sultan worked out a form of social contract, according to which he acknowledged their traditional privileges in return for them recognizing his sovereign powers and performing such services as collecting taxes and raising troops. This arrangement was ruptured by Britain when it set out to create an 'Armenia' out of provinces that were more than 80 percent Muslim and predominantly Kurdish. It was for this reason that the sultan and his ministers called this region Kurdistan. British policies alarmed the Kurds as well, and can be seen as an element in the uprising of Shaikh Ubaydullah in the wake of the Congress of Berlin of 1878. The extent to which the killings in eastern Anatolia during the First World War were not 'Turkish' but an extension of Kurdish-Armenian rivalry over territory, authority and power has not been acknowledged even now. One cannot possibly understand, let alone know, the history without taking this background into account. Yet, it has no place at all in Mr. Robertson's narrative.

Much of the material he presents in support of his case is unreliable. It includes British wartime propaganda, especially the Bryce-Toynbee parliamentary 'blue book' of 1916 and the writings of Taner Akçam, whose 'scholarship' on the Armenian question has been shown to be more of a ship full of holes.

Robertson writes that Sultan Abdulhamit "oversaw the slaughter of some 200,000 Armenians between 1894 and 1896". This figure is a wild exaggeration, apart from which the sultan oversaw nothing; he was faced with outbreaks of violence that he could not stop. He had warned the British that their so-called 'reforms' would end in violence for which he would be blamed and he was right. He was blamed and he has been blamed ever since.

Mr. Robertson writes that massacres began at Sasun in 1894 when the "the provincial governor urged local Muslims to teach the insubordinate Muslims a lesson." In a book designed as a prosecutor's brief, he provides no evidence of this. In fact, Armenian militants had been stirring up trouble in the hope of provoking an outrage so great that one or more of the European powers would

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intervene and give them the autonomy they were demanding. The Sasun uprising was their handiwork. They committed atrocities against Kurds before a force of 4000 troops was sent from the 4<sup>th</sup> Army headquarters at Erzurum to quell the trouble. This was a regular military operation, soldiers facing a ragtag Armenian force of at least 1000 men (estimates went as high as 3000), mostly armed with muskets, swords and hatchets but some with modern weapons. A small number of *hamidiye* cavalymen took part in the operation but not the ‘regiments’, a popular theme in propaganda on this issue, to which Mr. Robertson refers. He repeats the lurid stories of events at Sasun and Urfa told by British consuls who were not even there. He refers to atrocities but not the atrocities committed by Armenians.

Referring to the demonstration outside the government offices (*Bab-i Ali*) in 1895, Mr. Robertson claims that the police opened fire, “charging the demonstrators with clubs [and] killing many of them.” In fact, the British ambassador Sir Philip Currie, no friend of the Turks or the Ottoman government, and the American minister plenipotentiary, Alexander Terrell, concurred in their conclusion that it seemed to be an Armenian who fired the first shots, triggering off an affray in which 15 gendarmeries and about 60 Armenians were killed or wounded.

This was no more acceptable in the streets of İstanbul than it would have been in any European capital or in Washington. It was a calculated attempt by Armenian militants to set off a fire which would bring in the European powers and force the sultan to give them what they wanted, namely, autonomy, which in time could be transformed into independence.

Mr. Robertson’s figures are as unreliable as are his accounts of specific events. Quoting Armenian church records, he refers to an Armenian population in Anatolia of 2.1 million. The Armenian patriarchs had been playing their own political game since the Congress of Berlin of 1878 and these figures have been inflated for propaganda purposes. The last Ottoman census taken before the war in 1912 showed an Armenian population for the entire empire of 1.2 million. Once the war started this is likely to have dropped but discounting this and making the most generous allowance for undercounting, the Armenian population by 1915 could not have been more than 1.5 or 1.6 million. The Armenians did not constitute 30 percent of the population of the eastern Anatolian provinces as Mr. Robertson claims, but about 30 percent of one province, Van. The demographics did not lend themselves to the autonomy the Armenians wanted. They were scattered over the region and creating Armenian autonomy in a region where Muslims constituted about 80 percent of the population would have had to involve what is now called ethnic cleansing. As Muslims had been cleared from the Balkans and the Caucasus *en masse* from early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this could not be regarded as a distant threat.

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With regard to the First World War, most of the so-called documents in the Bryce-Toynbee 'blue book' on which Mr. Robertson relies are not documents at all but letters from missionaries or from people living far from the scene, or they are excerpt from Armenian newspapers. Many if not most of the accusations are based on hearsay and would not hold up in any court of law worthy of the description. Bryce himself was a longstanding campaigner against Muslim rule over Christians anywhere. His propensity for exaggeration can be judged from his claim that 15,000 Armenians were killed at Sasun in 1894 when the figure established by an Ottoman Commission of Inquiry was 265. European observers put the figure as high as 900 but this was still a long way short of 15,000 or the equally crazed estimates of William Gladstone.

The claim by Robertson that Arnold Toynbee was 'no propagandist' is pure nonsense, because that is exactly the role he took on during the war. The same is true of Bryce, whose 1915 report on German atrocities was shown after the war to be full of exaggerations and inventions. Bryce used his authority as an historian and former US ambassador to give his report added weight and the British government used his reputation when publishing it as a parliamentary paper. The central fact remains that this publication is a collation of accusations launched against the Ottoman government with the intention of causing as much propaganda damage as possible. In no way does this parliamentary 'blue book' conform to the evidentiary standards prevailing in British and Commonwealth courts, as Bryce claimed in his introduction.

Another source is Henry Morgenthau, wartime US ambassador to the Ottoman Empire for a short period. Morgenthau never travelled to eastern Anatolia, did not speak the languages and relied on his Armenian office staff and missionaries for most of what he knew. He kept a diary in which there is no mention of the evil intentions he attributes to the Ottoman Interior Minister, Talat Paşa, in his 1918 book, *Ambassador Morgenthau's Story*. The American correspondent George Abel Schreiner took a very dim view of Morgenthau, writing in his own book, *The Craft Sinister*, that "you saw little of the cruelty you fasten upon the Turks. Besides that you have killed more Armenians than ever lived in the districts of the uprising. The fate of those people was sad enough without [it] having to be exaggerated as you have done."

Schreiner comes close to calling Morgenthau a liar and certainly had Morgenthau in mind when he wrote that "it is to be hoped that the future historian will not give too much heed to the drivel one finds in the books of diplomatist-authors... Studies would lead to 'no other conclusion that they are at best a record of backstairs gossip". Yet, it was from such books that people in the US learnt what they knew, or thought they knew, of the war.

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Mr. Robertson also makes use of Peter Balakian, whose book *The Burning Tigris*, the late Andrew Mango concluded, was “not a work of historical research” but was characterized by assertions that would make any serious Ottoman scholar’s hair stand on end. Taner Akçam and his mentor Vakahn Dadrian are other sources. Akçam’s book *A Shameful Act* is littered with basic errors and characterized by misrepresentation. Inverting the normal process of historical scholarship, he begins with a conclusion, genocide, which he then sets out to prove. His claim that the CUP met early in 1915 and decided to wipe out the Armenians is based on conjecture and supposition and is completely devoid of evidence. He provides no names, places or dates or indeed anything that would give weight to such an accusation. That this book could get into print without Akçam facing any consequences is extraordinary and is an indictment of the editing processes where the Armenian question is concerned. No less extraordinary is the description of the book as brilliant by Orhan Pamuk, but perhaps he became so engrossed in his reading he thought the book was a novel.

Mr. Robertson refers to the April 1915 Van uprising as the Armenians simply defending their quarter against aggression by troops under orders from the Turkish governor. This is not likely and it does not really matter anyway from the point of view of the military, which saw only that a major provincial town had been captured by Armenian insurgents and handed over to the Russians. Other towns (Bitlis, for example) were now threatened with the same fate. Van had been a major center of rebellion and arms stockpiling since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and the Armenians were well prepared for their uprising in 1915, which was probably coordinated with the Russians, who were about to engage the Ottomans in battle in northwest Persia, and possibly coordinated with the British, who were about to land troops at Gallipoli and preparing to move troops inland from their base at Basra in what is now Iraq (or rather what is left of Iraq following the US-led attacks of 1991 and 2003).

Mr. Robertson admits to heavy casualties on both sides, but comes nowhere near capturing the horror of what happened in Van as the Armenians overran Ottoman defenses, ransacked the Muslim quarter and slaughtered people before moving on to slaughter them in the villages around Lake Van. Many thousands were killed amidst a panicked flight of tens of thousands of others. Having taken over the city, Armenians handed it over to Russian control. The most appalling atrocities were committed by Armenians, none of which have any place in the Robertson narrative.

Mr. Robertson claims that the Ottoman army returned to Van ‘with a vengeance’ at the end of July. If that was the case, there was virtually no Armenian left on whom to take revenge as virtually the whole Armenian population of the province had fled across the Russian border, harassed by Kurds taking revenge for the

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killing of their kinfolk and coreligionists. The evidence for this comes from an impeccable source, a missionary, Miss Grace Knapp, who writes that "General Nicolaieff ordered all the Armenians of the Van province, also the Americans and other foreigners, to flee for their lives. By Saturday night the city was nearly emptied of Armenians and quite emptied of conveyances". As for troops attacking the Armenians, the Ottoman defenders in the town were mainly gendarmerie and volunteers.

The Armenians take April 24 as the critical date in 1915. This was when the government rounded up members of the Armenian committees and their sympathizers in İstanbul and sent them off to prison or house arrest in the interior at Çankırı and Ayaş. They were not all killed as Armenian propagandists keep repeating or "executed without trial" as Mr. Robertson claims. He obviously has not read the careful research done by Yusuf Sarınoy and probably is not even aware of it. Many of the arrested were released within the coming weeks, some were moved on to Syria, where they may have died or been killed and others were kept in detention until the end of the war.

It is at this juncture, April 24, that Mr. Robertson makes his most inane statement, writing that "in Constantinople that night several hundred were seized and transported in ships to military prisons near Ankara." How is it possible that someone who does not even know that there is no stretch of water between İstanbul and Ankara can claim that "we know the history" and "we know the facts"? How is it possible that any reviewer can call this book 'forensic', as one Australian reviewer did?

In any case, the critical date was not April 24, but about a week earlier when the Van Armenians launched their uprising, triggering the arrests on April 24 and eventually the recommendation of the general staff to relocate the bulk of the Anatolian Armenian population. Attacks on Muslim villages since the defeat at Sarıkamış threw the whole of northeastern Anatolia wide open to Russian invasion and the activities of Armenian insurgents operating behind the Ottoman lines. Yet propagandists still assert that the Armenians were arrested on April 24 for no other reason than that they were Armenian. As the Armenian committees had thrown their weight behind the Russian war effort, it is surprising they had not been closed down a long time before April 24.

Mr. Robertson argues that rebellion apart from Van seems to have been low level or non-existent, casting doubt on military necessity as being a plausible reason for the relocation. In fact, tens of thousands of Ottoman Armenians were doing their best to sabotage the Ottoman war effort from behind the lines. To this number has to be added the tens of thousands of Armenians fighting as regular soldiers in the Russian army and the thousands of Armenians recruited into the volunteer



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brigades tasked with ‘liberating’ east Anatolian provinces in which Armenians formed a small minority of the population.

Mr. Robertson’s assertion that uprisings were virtually non-existent is made without the benefit of research. Tens of volumes in Turkish have been published on the war apart from documents still unresearched in the archives and apart from general histories and memoirs. Mr. Robertson does not have the competence to study the military record and does not bother with it anyway, and thus his conclusion that military necessity was just a pretext for the removal of the Armenians has no scholarly or legal value at all and is only an ill-informed opinion.

The American military historian Edward Erickson has done the necessary research and concludes that sabotage of the war effort from behind the lines was the sole reason for the military recommending that the bulk of the Armenian population be moved away. The threat was taken so seriously that to the military command the whole war effort was endangered. The defeat at Sarkamış left the Third Army decimated and unable to launch strategic offensive operations or defend the civilian population of the interior. Villages denuded of young men, because all were off at the front, were vulnerable to attack by Armenian bands and many of their inhabitants were massacred. Van brought this cycle to a disastrous pitch and having failed to staunch insurgent operations from behind the lines, the military command recommended the drying up of the sea in which the insurgents swam, by removing the bulk of the general Armenian population. This was a harsh measure which had dire consequences, but the removal of a suspect population in war time was hardly one without precedents even in recent military history. One needs only to think of British actions against the Boers in South Africa in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Spanish resettlement of Cubans about the same time, American resettlement of civilians in the Philippines in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, British resettlement of a suspect population in Malaya in the 1940s, French resettlement of Algerians in the 1950s and the removal of millions of Vietnamese to ‘strategic hamlets’ by the Americans in the 1960s. Hardship and suffering was always involved, yet no one says the Spaniards, the British, the French and the Americans removed these people simply because they didn’t like them; that label is attached only to the Ottomans.

Mr. Robertson tries to soften the significance of anti-government activities in the southeastern Anatolian town of Zeitun, blaming conscription rather than revolutionary fervor. In fact, Zeitun had been a major center of anti-government activity since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was the site of the massacre of hundreds of Ottoman soldiers during an uprising in 1895. The evidence is all there, had Mr. Robertson wanted to pick it up. The Zeitunlis were tough mountaineers, whose services were offered to the British in 1915 if they chose to open a new front in

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the eastern Mediterranean. The British were already landing raiding parties and taking intelligence from Armenians on the ground. Hence, moving the Armenians from this critical point, where a British offensive would have threatened Ottoman supply lines to Mesopotamia and Palestine, was an act of prudence by the government.

There is a lot that Mr. Robertson bypasses or scarcely mentions. One is the scale of the killing of Muslims by Armenians before the relocation was ordered and continued long after it. About three million Ottoman civilians died in this war and they died from all causes, including combat, massacre, disease, exposure and malnutrition. The vast bulk of them (about 2.5 million) were Muslims. They have no place in Mr. Robertson's narrative, or Mr. Akçam's for that matter, any more than the disappearance of millions of Muslims from the Balkans between the 1870s and 1913 figures in most 'western' histories of that region. To this list one can add the slow and mostly overlooked ethnic cleansing of Muslims from the Caucasus from early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Archival documents indicate that hundreds of thousands of Muslims were massacred by Armenians and/or Russians during the war, but mostly by Armenians. These massacres began before the relocation was ordered and continued long after them. Armenians were the perpetrators of large-scale violence, as well as its victims. Ottoman forces returning to the eastern provinces encountered the most ghastly scenes left in the wake of the retreating Armenians.

Mr. Robertson does not deal with these 'inconvenient' facts. Neither does he deal with the destructive consequences of the British naval blockade of the eastern Mediterranean coast or the terrible locust plague of 1915, which, along with the general effects of the war created an enormous catastrophe in the history of modern Syria, with people dropping dead from hunger in the streets of Beirut and Damascus.

Mr. Robertson dips into the trials of 1919 when İstanbul was occupied by the British but does not touch the far more important trials of 1915-16. The postwar trials were set up under the aegis of occupying powers desperately seeking evidence against the wartime government. They ransacked the archives and asked the Americans for help, but could not find what they wanted and eventually had to give up. The trials of 1915-16 were held after the Ottoman government set up three commissions of inquiry to investigate crimes committed against Armenians as they were being moved south. More than 1600 people, including soldiers and senior provincial officials, were court-martialed, hundreds were jailed and more than fifty sentenced to death. These trials are never mentioned by the propagandists because of the logical question they pose: if the Ottoman



## Jeremy Salt

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government was so determined to wipe out the Armenians as they keep saying, why was it prosecuting people accused of committing crimes against them?

We are living in a theatre of the absurd worthy of Ionesco. Around the world people who know nothing of Ottoman history or the law proclaim that there was a genocide. Mr. Robertson knows the law but not the history and certainly does not know it well enough to pass legal judgment. He passes it nevertheless and proves only that he is not competent to pass it: if there is any overriding conclusion to be drawn from his book, it is that the Armenian question in history should be kept out of the hands of lawyers and politicians and left in the hands of historians.



## **AZERBAIJAN AND THE NORMALIZATION PROCESS OF TURKISH-ARMENIAN RELATIONS**

**Orhan GAFARLI**

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In 2015, the need for a re-evaluation and a more comprehensive study of the ‘Armenian question’ has gained importance in the light of the trilateral relations among Turkey, Armenia and Azerbaijan. The rationale behind defining the issue as “Armenian question” is not only due to its relation to the Turkish-Armenian relations, but also to other important matters that extend throughout the South Caucasus at large that have long been in need of resolution. Following this year’s centennial commemoration of what Armenians refer to as the Armenian genocide which left Turkey in a difficult situation, reexamination of Turkish-Armenian turned to be a necessity.

In both Armenian and Turkish communities, expectations of ironing out the problems between the two countries increased as the year 2015 approached. Other

issues that are yet to be resolved are the opening of the Armenia-Turkey border and the end of the occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh to be followed by a conclusive decision on its status. Since its beginning back in 2009, normalization process of bilateral relations between Turkey and Armenia has failed due to various reasons. The absence of dialogue between Turkey and Armenia, Azerbaijani government's determination in resolving the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh by maintaining the status-quo in the region and the vain debates within the two countries have been some of the underlying reasons of the failure of the normalization process. Azerbaijan believes that keeping Armenia under pressure through an ongoing blockade will force Yerevan to forgo its territorial demands from Nagorno Karabakh. Although Azerbaijan has maintained this position for the past two decades and Armenia has been excluded from all of the regional projects, Yerevan's stance in this matter did not change. Azerbaijan has been directing a considerable portion of its oil income, an amount close to Armenia's national budget, to defense related expenses. In the meanwhile, in accordance with its foreign policy objective of establishing a balance in the region, Russia has been supporting Armenia against Azerbaijan and has been providing Armenia with military assistance necessary for defense. Accordingly, Russia has been ensuring that the status-quo will not be altered in Azerbaijan's favor and to Armenia's loss. In this respect, Baku seems to have failed to analyze its own security dilemma accurately and to realize that investing in military defense has been a futile effort. It is an urgent need to understand that this policy only serves Russia's interests and contributes to Russia's transformative power in the region while further increasing its military and political authority. Currently, there is no force in the Caucasus that can stand against Russia's military power.

Until 2015, Armenia's economic profile was worse. Seizing the opportunity to take advantage of this situation, Russia has been strengthening its position in Armenia through financial aids and investments. This process has led Armenia to become a member of the Eurasian Economic Union.

### **The 2nd Phase of the Discussions for Opening the Turkey-Armenia border**

Considering Russia-related developments in the Caucasus in 2013-2015, it is very necessary to emphasize the importance of the commencement of discussions for the opening of the Armenian-Turkish border. Concurrently, inclusion of Azerbaijan in this process will help the process to reach a productive conclusion. Azerbaijan needs to be explained that the present situation differs from what it used to be four or five years ago. It is also necessary to prevent Russia from following a re-expansion strategy in the region. It is very important to change the status quo, since Azerbaijan and entire region South Caucasus may obtain beneficial result.

## **Azerbaijan and the Normalization Process of Turkish-Armenian Relations**

During the recently initiated discussions with Armenia, Yerevan needs to be persuaded that the withdrawal from the Azerbaijani regions surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh will result in the opening of the borders which will probably be followed by the removal of the economic sanctions and blockade, possibly guaranteeing its state sovereignty. It is also highly important to promise Yerevan to include Armenia in the regional projects following the establishment of a brand-new trade route in the East-West direction. The Armenians living in Nagorno-Karabakh region need to be convinced that their economic outlook will also be positively impacted.

If carried out with these details in mind, these discussions could bear positive results. Development of various regional cooperation models would also aid Turkey's economic growth. The completion of the West-East bound Silk Road through the South Caucasus will contribute to the establishment of a safe and secure zone.

### **Nagorno-Karabakh Problem**

It is essential for Azerbaijan, Turkey, Armenia and the EU to work together for the resolution of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh, a conflict that has been continuing for over 20 years with the potential of reigniting clashes between the two countries.

Currently being carried out according to Madrid principles, talks on Nagorno-Karabakh region have been led by the OSCE Minsk Group. It has been agreed that five regions adjacent to Nagorno-Karabakh must be returned to Azerbaijan and two regions in the same area are to be left to the control of the UN until the status of Nagorno-Karabakh is determined. Recently, despite the mutual agreement of all parties on the Madrid principles, Armenia has exerted efforts to prolong the process at every opportunity. When an accord is about to be reached between Azerbaijan and Armenia on these issues, Russia seems to delay the process through the employment of various visible or more discreet factors. As an example for this, Customs Union initiated by Russia in 2012 and the subsequent Eurasia Cooperation projects left both Armenia and Azerbaijan in very challenging situations.

In his most recent statement addressing the Nagorno-Karabakh issue, the OSCE Minsk Group and Turkey, US Foreign Minister John Kerry emphasized the importance of increasing Turkey's role in the resolution of the Upper Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and also implied that Turkey needs to prepare a comprehensive strategy for the South Caucasus in the approaching year of 2015. As of 2013, there is no possibility for Turkey to become a co-chair member within the OSCE Minsk

Group. Neither Russia, nor France is keen on this. However, Turkey may achieve successful results only if it conceives a project to open its border with Armenia while involving in the Nagorno-Karabakh negotiations.

### **The Armenian Question and the Armenian Diaspora**

Armenians living in Turkey, as well as abroad, are expecting the ‘Armenian question’ to be resolved in 2015. On the other hand, Azerbaijan is not content with this process in Turkey.

In order to reduce the dissatisfaction, Turkish foreign policy-makers must introduce a fresh approach that will re-examine these three issues-the opening of the borders, the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and Armenian genocide claims-to reach a successful solution.

The resolution of the problem with the Armenian Diaspora will have a positive impact on Armenia-Turkey relations and may result in the softening of Armenia’s attitude with respect to the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. The green light of Armenian Diaspora is very important for Yerevan. Having the support of the Armenian Diaspora will allow Armenia to follow a more autonomous strategy in its foreign policy vis-à-vis Russia. Currently, Armenian Diaspora and Russia have mutual benefits with regard to Azerbaijan and Turkey. Should Turkey succeed in breaking the alliance between the Armenian Diaspora and Russia, Armenia will not only regain its autonomy in its foreign policy but also win the support of the Armenian Diaspora.

Consequently, outmaneuvering and possibly breaking the alliance between the Armenian Diaspora and Russia will serve as the key for establishing peace in the South Caucasus as well as in Turkish-Armenian bilateral relations. Turkey’s comprehensive efforts in developing and patrolling the South Caucasus’ Silk Road will help solidify its role as a bridge between the East and the West and contribute to its objectives of expanding into the Caucasus-Central Asia route.



## THE TIME TO UNDERSTAND ARMENIAN NATIONALISM

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Today, I will try to reflect on Armenian nationalists. If we look at the events of the last weeks, we can say that there was no catastrophe such as recognition of the 1915 events as genocide by the US Congress, Israel or the United Nations. On the other hand, Norway refused to send representatives to Yerevan. Britain did the same. Australia took a very strong stance against the genocide claims. And just the last example: yesterday the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* published an op-ed of a great German jurist taking a stance against the genocide lobby. So nothing is lost. However, we cannot say that events of the last week were as good as we could expect last year. So, if I were to summarize our issue in two questions, they would be ‘what went wrong?’ and ‘What can we do?’.

In the first part, I will argue that for the time being Armenian nationalism hinders the very idea of the reconciliation between Turks and Armenians. I will begin by



factual remarks. As far as Turkey is concerned, Mr. Sargsyan is even more extremist than Mr. Kocharian. Indeed, we can think whatever we want regarding Mr. Kocharian. He gave an interview when he was the president saying that Armenia has no territorial claims against Turkey. This is not true, because territorial claims are indirectly referred in the Armenian constitution. That having been said, at least Mr. Kocharian said “no, we don’t claim territories from Turkey”. Mr. Sargsyan, on the contrary, said exactly the opposite in 2011 and more recently in this year. He referred to territorial claims against Turkey. It is quite obvious that you cannot reconcile with a government which is claiming your lands. I am French and I cannot imagine reconciliation with Algeria if Algeria was claiming Marseille and Montpellier. This is not logical. Correspondingly, one of the reasons of the failure of the Turkey-Armenia Protocols signed in 2009 is the the ruling of the Armenian Constitutional Court. This court declared that the subcomission on the historical issue could not debate the genocide label, because the genocide is recognized in the Armenian constitution. This, indeed, mean saying there could be no real reconcialiation. I want to mention that it is wrong to say that Azerbaijan played a crucial role in the failure of the protocols, because in the protocols we have a direct and explicit reference to the Helsinki Agreement, and the Helsinki Agreement says that you cannot change a boundary by use of force. However, this is exactly what Armenia is trying to do against Azerbaijan. So, Azerbaijan’s insistence on its territorial integrity is in perfect accordance with the protocols of 2009.

More generally, just look at the map. Armenia is a small land-locked country between Azerbaijan and Turkey. Azerbaijan as you know is a oil-rich country. So the only logical approach for Armenia is to make an effort to reconcile with Azerbaijan and Turkey. Azerbaijan is ready to pay billions of dollars to retake its territory. So, the national interest of Armenia dictates reconcialiation with Azerbaijan and Turkey. However, Armenian presidents since 1991 have been moving towards an exactly opposite path.

Some people in Turkey believe - and I believed so before - that when Mr. Levon Ter-Petrossian took power, all of these things would be better. I am very sorry but I do not think so anymore. Why? Because when he arrived in power in 1990-91, Mr. Petrossian wanted to make territorial claims against Turkey. He had to change his mind only because of the strength of the Turkish military. He wanted Armenia’s invasion of Azerbaijan, which was completely against the interest of Armenia. Lastly, Ter-Petrosyan asked Mr. Jacques Chirac in 1998 to pardon Varoujian Garabijdian, the perpetrator of Orly attack. So, we have to understand why these completely irrational positions of the Armenian leadership are against all interests of the Armenian people. These reasons are ideological. I think you cannot understand what is happening in the Caucasus during the last 25 years, if you do not understand the ideology that rules Armenia.



## The Time to Understand Armenian Nationalism

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I will focus on the era that began by 1998 when the Republican Party of Armenia took power. At least, we cannot say that the Republican Party of Armenia is hypocritical. They are extremely frank. In their statement of principles, in the booklets they publish, in the speeches they pronounce, they always claim that the basis of their ideology is the writings of Garegin Nzhdeh. And, Nzhdeh is a Nazi; not a Pro-Nazi, a Nazi. He established a group in the US, namely the *Tseghakron*, which means in Armenian the religion of race. According to the members of the *Tseghakron*, it was a pure and simple copy of the *Hitlerjugend*. A pure and simple copy. That is what their members say. Correspondingly, after a couple of years, Nzhdeh considered that it was not sufficient to create Nazi-style groups in the US. He went to Germany. He was a member of the Armenian National Council established in December 1942 sponsored by Alfred Rosenberg, who was a minister of Hitler for the occupied territories in the East. Nzhdeh wore the Nazi uniform with an immense pride. So, we have to understand that the anti-Turkish, anti-Azeri and anti-Semitic stance of the current Armenian government is sincere; these are what they sincerely believe. If you hold these beliefs, you cannot reconcile with these peoples.

The welcoming of Armenian terrorists in Armenia is self-explanatory of their conception of the world, not only against Turks and Azerbaijanis, but against almost everybody. Mardiros Jamgotchian, who was sentenced by the Swiss justice for the murder of a Turkish diplomat in 1981 was released in 1991, because the first NGO of Armenia said “we will welcome him, we will find a job for him”. When Garabidjian, the butcher of Orly, was eventually released in 2001, he was welcomed by the Prime Minister of Armenia and the by the Mayor of Yerevan. He was considered a national hero by the top Armenian leadership. So, for the current Armenian leadership, killing people randomly in an airport is not a problem. What kind of reconciliation do you expect from people who consider terrorism as heroic acts.

Even more concerning is the fact that these people are in charge. They are in charge of education and they are in charge of the media. I participated in a symposium in İstanbul University in January and there was a very good presentation about the school books in Armenia that demonstrated that the manuals in the Armenian schools present the Turks and the Azerbaijanis as invaders, foreigners. They contain nothing about the cultural osmosis. So from the very beginning, the children are taught that Turks are enemies. The Armenian children are not bound by their nature to be the enemy of anybody, like the Turkish or the Japanese children. But if they are educated in this way, they cannot think in other ways. This is not possible at least for the majority of them. Just to give you one example and then move to the diaspora. Let's take a self-hating Turk, a self-proclaimed liberal who knows nothing of Ottoman history, Hasan Cemal. When Mr. Cemal joined the events organized by the most extremist elements of the

Armenian diaspora, he was welcomed. But, when he went to Yerevan, he was insulted and if there was no physical violence against him, it was only because of the Armenian police. Why? Mr. Cemal says 1915 events were genocide. Mr. Cemal says nothing about the war crimes committed by the Armenians in 1916-17-18. Then, why was he insulted? Because, he says ASALA was a terrorist organization and the occupation of Azerbaijan is wrong. So, when compared, Armenians in Yerevan are more extremist than the most extremists of the diaspora. We have to take this into consideration. It can change in 10-15 years, but that is the current situation, and if you do not understand the current situation you cannot change the future.

Are the prospects any better in the diaspora? No, because the most important organization in the diaspora is the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF-Dashnaksutyun), a party that collaborated with the Nazis on the ideological basis and practiced terrorism in 1970s-1980s and until today is considered terrorist. One example: in 2008 in Paris and Lyon, there were ceremonies for a suicide attack against the Turkish embassy in Lisbon. A suicide attack is the most extreme kind of terrorism. You cannot argue with a suicide attacker. He does not care about dying. He does not care about his children. He cares only about killing you. And the ceremonies for the suicide attack was held in a democratic country, in France, by the most important party of the Armenian diaspora. So, what kind of reconciliation do you expect from such organization?

There are two chairmen in the coordination council of France's Armenian Association, Mr. Papassian, a Dashnak, so no comment is needed, and Mr. Jean-Marc Toranian who has been the spokesman of ASALA in France from 1976 to 1983. If you look at Mr. Touranian's website during the last years, you can find several articles praising ASALA terrorism, including the bombing of Esenboğa airport where 9 tourists were killed. And this is a man who represents Armenian Association in France. Strangely, nobody in this association sees anything wrong in praising Esenboga bombing in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. As long as this situation remains as such, we can forget about reconciliation. If you try to reconcile with such people, you will fail.

To understand the international context first, let's take the example of Germany. The Armenian community is very small. Politicians who support the Armenian claims are not interested in the Armenian vote; they do not need it. On the other hand, there are 3 million Turks, including many who hold German citizenship. In fact, the motivation behind is to share the burden of the Holocaust with other countries. However, this situation in Germany could be changed easily if the Turkish side reacted appropriately. I mentioned the Dashnak-Nazi collaboration and I will not go back to that. I will just say, if there was a publication in German about the Dashnak-Nazi collaboration, such German initiatives would become

## The Time to Understand Armenian Nationalism

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much more complicated. More generally, as soon as the Turkish side reacted, the vote on the draft of the resolution on 1915 events was postponed. So when the Turks react, they gain. The main problem is Turkish incapacity to understand what is effective. There is another kind of problem, too. It is obvious that Turkey is more isolated than it was, let's say, 5-6 years ago. I do not need to go into the details and anyway I am not a specialist of Iraq, Syria or things like that so I will not say who is right, who is wrong. But the fact remains: Turkey is more isolated. The European Parliament's resolution is obviously linked to the accusations against Turkey regarding Iraq and Syria. However, when the European Union has something to say to Greece, they say this thing. They say you have a debt and you will pay your debt. They do not vote a resolution calling the killings of Turks in 19<sup>th</sup> century and Balkan Wars a genocide. There is a specificity. This is partially due to a specific anti-Turkish prejudice, but is also due to a lack of Turkish reaction. Turkey allowed the people who want to say something bad to Turkey to misuse history. You can find hundreds of books on genocide allegations, you can barely find one regarding the killings of Turks in the Balkan Wars. And the last example in the international context: France, unfortunately, is the most anti-Turkish country in Europe. Yet, when Turkey acted cleverly, the bill that sought to criminalize the rejection of the genocide label was cancelled. So each time the Turks act cleverly, they obtain results. So what is wrong? First of all, there is comparatively insufficient scholars working on the Armenian issue in absolute terms, in Turkey or abroad. People who are honest and go to archives and publish in academic journals and books are rare. Secondly, there is too few people whose studies are sufficiently translated into Western languages. Take one striking example. The good book of Kemal Çiçek was published in 2005. The English version was published only in 2011 and at best you will have the French translation this year. The French translation, I know it because I was involved in it, was finished in 2012. It took 3 years to publish a translation that was done by French native speakers. So there is definitely something wrong. Another kind of problem is fighting propaganda. My point is against propagandists of the Armenian side. Let's take the example of Taner Akçam. I'm sorry but Taner Akçam has no degree in history and has broken all the rules of historical research. He relies on fake documents such as Andonian documents, manipulates his authentic sources deliberately and repeatedly, and does so in spite of scholarly criticism. I am really sorry, it is not my goal to tell you how wonderful I am; I am not. But I am the only person since 2010, who published in English a review essay exposing Akçam's manipulation of his key sources deliberately and I was the first one who spread my article. Previous ones published their review essays, but did nothing after that. Things do not work like that. You have to inform the academia that Akçam is a fabulist. He is ignorant and he manipulates his sources. And the best proof is that Akçam, for the very first time, felt obliged to answer any criticisms and he insinuated that I was "mentally retarded". He did not contest a single factual

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criticism I present and no scholar, even the most pro-Armenian ones, wrote a single line to defend Akçam.

In short, Turkey needs a timely strategy, which means more investment, more scholarships, not for propaganda, not to say that no Armenian was killed -which was actually never the official position of Turkey- but to study the archives, Ottoman as well as Western archives, because the Armenian archives are closed, and politically to understand what is useful, what is not useful. Crying about Islamophobia does not help. Yes, anti-Muslim hatred has certainly something to do with some resolutions in the European Parliaments. But, in the current context of the Islamic State, Al Qaeda and islamic terrorism, say “oh, this is Islamophobia” and nobody will take you seriously except few. The political argument shall be to stress that Turkey is a key member of NATO, a valuable ally of the West and an important country. Once again I do not to begin any blame game. I do not want to know who is right or who is wrong in the current tension between the European Union, US and Turkey, I do not even want to know. I just say there is a problem, and Turkey has to face and solve these problems.

My conclusion will be that: what the Turkish side needs is argumentation, rationality, historical research and spreading historical research efficiently.

**PANEL II**  
**Past Tragedies and the Legal Dimension**

**Moderator:**  
**Pulat TACAR**  
*Ambassador (R)*



## THE AMBIGUITY OF GENOCIDE

**Prof. Michael M. GUNTER**

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Shortly after World War II, genocide was legally defined, in part, by the UN Genocide Convention to mean “any...acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such.”<sup>1</sup> This treaty was signed in 1948 and ratified in 1951, when it then went into effect. The key word in this legal definition from the perspective of this article is “intent.” In other words there has to be intent, premeditation to deliberately destroy for the deaths to be legally called genocide. In addition, of course, to legally call any violence genocide before the Genocide Treaty was ratified in 1951 is not legally possible as it would constitute an *ex post facto* law.

Although nobody can deny the disaster suffered by the Armenians in 1915, the purpose of this article is to analyze whether or not the term genocide - arguably

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1 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 78 United Nations Treaty Series (UNTS) 277, entered into force on January 12, 1951. Previously, I published portions of this article as “What is Genocide? The Armenian Case,” *Middle East Quarterly* 20 (Winter 2013), pp. 37-46. Also see Michael M. Gunter, *Armenian History and the Question of Genocide* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

the most heinous crime imaginable and, therefore, a term that should not be bandied about lightly for propagandistic or political motives - accurately describes the Armenian deportations and massacres of 1915.

### Misusing the Term Genocide

The international law definition of genocide has not prevented journalists, activists, and even scholars from misusing the term in describing practically every subsequent conflict that has resulted in large numbers of civilian deaths: Bosnia, Burundi, Cambodia, Chechnya, Colombia, Guatemala, Iraq, Sudan, and Rwanda are all examples.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the concept of genocide has also been employed retrospectively (that is in an *ex-post-facto* manner) to describe the Athenian massacre of the inhabitants of Milos in 416 BC, the Roman destruction of Carthage in 146 BC, the Mongol sacking of Baghdad in 1258, the Vendee massacres during the French Revolution in 1793, the fate of the native Americans (Indians) of North America, the German suppression of the Herero uprising in Southwest Africa (Namibia) in 1904, the Armenians in 1915, Stalin's induced famine in the Ukraine during the early 1930s as well as the results of his various deportations, South Africa's apartheid policies, Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, Kosovar treatment of their Serb minority (and of course *vice versa!*), and even the US dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II as well as the actions of the former dictator of Chile Augusto Pinochet, and the collective suicide of Jim Jones and his 910 disciples in Guyana in 1978, among countless other such examples. During their fighting in August 2008, both Russia and Georgia accused each other of genocide.<sup>3</sup>

Obviously, applying the term genocide to all these very different historical events raises numerous semantic objections and stimulates even more heated controversies. Why so much semantic disarray? Henry Huttenbach has argued: "Too often has the accusation of genocide been made simply for the emotional effect or to make a political point, with the result that more and more events have been claimed to be genocide to the point that the term has lost its original meaning."<sup>4</sup> Jacques Semelin has explained: "Whether use of the word 'genocide' is justified or not, the term aims to strike our imagination, awaken our moral

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2 This partial listing, of course, is not to reject genocide as an accurate description for what occurred in some of these states.

3 Sabrina Tavernise and Matt Siegel, "In Areas under Russian Control, Limits for Western Media," *New York Times*, August 10, 2008, p. A10; and Robert Marquand, "Russia Exploits Division in Europe," *Christian Science Monitor*, September 3, 2008.

4 Henry R. Huttenbach "Locating the Holocaust under the Genocide Spectrum: Toward a Methodology of Definition and Categorization," *Holocaust and Genocide Studies* Vol. 3, No. 3 (1988), p. 297; as cited in Jacques Semelin, *Purify and Destroy: The Political Uses of Massacre and Genocide*, trans. from the French by Cynthia Schoch (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 423/no. 11.



conscience and mobilise public opinion on behalf of the victims.”<sup>5</sup> He adds: “Under these circumstances, anyone daring to suggest that what is going on is not ‘really’ genocide is immediately accused of weakness or sympathizing with the aggressors.”<sup>6</sup> Thus,

The term genocide can be used as a propaganda tool by becoming the hinge for a venomous rhetoric against a sworn enemy. Given the powerful emotional charge the word genocide generates, it can be used and re-used in all sorts of hate talk to heap international opprobrium on whoever is accused of genocidal intent... The obvious conclusion: the word is used as much as a symbolic shield to claim victim status for one’s people, as a sword raised against one’s deadly enemy.”<sup>7</sup>

### The Armenians

What then of the Armenian case? Unfortunately, as Gwynne Dyer concluded almost 40 years ago, most Turkish and Armenian scholars are unable to be objective on this issue and described the resulting situation as one of “Turkish falsifiers and Armenian deceivers.”<sup>8</sup> The main point that I will try to make in this section is not to deny that Turks killed Armenians; they certainly did. Indeed what happened might in today’s vocabulary be called war crimes or even crimes against humanity. To prove genocide, however, intent or premeditation must be demonstrated, and in this case it has not. In addition, of course, our understanding must also include that what occurred was not a unilateral Turkish action, but part of a long-term process in which some Armenians were guilty of killing as many Turks as they could in their attempts to rebel. As Christopher de Ballaigue argues, therefore, “what is needed is a vaguer designation for the events of 1915, avoiding the G-word but clearly connoting criminal acts of slaughter, to which reasonable scholars can subscribe.”<sup>9</sup>

So any objective analysis of the Armenian Question must trace the long history of Armenian revolutionary committees (*Gomidehs*) dating from the latter part of the nineteenth century and the Ottoman counterinsurgency responses. The outbreak of World War I brought the situation to a head, and was “largely a result of the machinations of the allied powers, which encouraged and supported the

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5 Semelin, *Purify and Destroy*, p. 312.

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*, p. 313.

8 Gwynne Dyer, “Turkish ‘Falsifiers’ and Armenian ‘Deceivers’: Historiography and the Armenian Massacres,” *Middle Eastern Studies* 12 (January 1976), 99-107.

9 Christopher de Ballaigue, *Rebel Land: Among Turkey’s Forgotten Peoples* (London: Bloomsbury, 2009), p. 104. In addition, see M. Hakan Yavuz, “Contours of Scholarship on Armenian-Turkish Relations,” *Middle East Critique* 20:3 (2011), pp. 231-51; and the other articles in this special issue.

eastern Anatolian Armenian revolutionary committees to commit acts of terrorism and minor insurrections in early 1915”.<sup>10</sup>

Erickson continues that “these small and localized, but widespread, acts of Armenian violence appeared to metastasize during a major Armenian insurrection at Van in April 1915, which drove the Ottoman government into the belief that the Armenian insurrection was an imminent and existential threat to Ottoman national security” (*ibid.*). “The lines of communications supporting those Ottoman fronts ran directly through the rear areas of the Ottoman armies in eastern Anatolia that were heavily populated by Armenian communities and, by extension, by the heavily armed Armenian revolutionary committees” (pp. 161-162). The Ottoman armies at the fronts in Caucasia, Mesopotamia, and Palestine were not self-sufficient in supplies and so were dependent on the roads and railroads leading from the west. “The Armenian revolutionary committees began to attack and cut these lines of communications in the spring of 1915 and to the Ottomans presented an acute danger... Thus, the Armenian insurrection was a genuine security imperative requiring an immediate solution, and it was an existential threat to the survival of the empire’s armies” (p. 162).

The Ottoman response was to relocate the Armenian population that was giving support to the invading Russian enemy in the eastern provinces, and “was based on the same rationale that the Americans, British, and Spanish used to remove insurgent populations in the Philippines, the Boer Republics, and Cuba” (p. 191). Such actions “became a template for the destruction of guerrillas and insurgents in the twentieth century” (p. 187) and were employed later by the British in Malaya in the 1950s, the French in Algeria, and the Americans in Vietnam.

Although the primitive state of Ottoman resources led to what might be termed criminal deaths due to neglect, starvation, and just plain murder, these “horrific events were an unintended consequence of government policies and military strategies designed to end a threat to national security from ‘enemies within’” (p. 219), and thus not genocide. Furthermore, “how do we explain the fact that so many Ottoman Armenian citizens were not relocated? In particular, why were as many as 350,000 Armenians in the western reaches of the Ottoman Empire left in their homes? If the goal was extermination, why weren’t the western Armenians relocated as well” (pp. 227-228). The most obvious reason is that the Armenians not living in the east where they were deemed a threat to the Ottoman supply lines were simply left in place. In addition, “why were the relocations halted at all, especially after the spring of 1916” (p. 228)? Is it possible to imagine Hitler sparing any Jews in Berlin, Munich, or Cologne from his genocidal rampage because they were not a threat to military supply lines?

10 Edward J. Erickson, *Ottomans and Armenians: A Study in Counterinsurgency* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 221. In the interest of brevity, the following page numerals in parentheses refer to the Erickson study so that repetitious endnotes may be avoided.

Although Taner Akcam has recently argued that his research illustrates premeditated genocide,<sup>11</sup> there are no authentic documents anywhere today that establish either an order to exterminate the Armenians or an order to relocate them for ideological or political reasons. The Ottomans were obsessive about paper and bureaucratic filing. It is simply inconceivable that 100 percent of such directives and orders, distributed empire-wide to provincial governors over the course of a global war would not have survived. In addition, why is it that the Ottoman archives are open to scholars today, but those of Armenia, the Dashnaks, who were the leading Armenian revolutionary party and whose archives are located in Watertown, Massachusetts, and the Armenian Patriarch in Jerusalem closed?

Arnold Toynbee, the renowned historian who co-edited the Blue Book compilation of Turkish atrocities during World War I with Lord Bryce,<sup>12</sup> later wrote, however: “In the redistribution of Near and Middle Eastern Territories, the atrocities which have accompanied it from the beginning have been revealed in their true light, as crimes incidental to an abnormal process, which all parties have committed in turn, and not as the peculiar practice of one denomination or nationality.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, in his final statement on the subject, Toynbee declared: “These . . . Armenian political aspirations had not been legitimate... Their aspirations did not merely threaten to break up the Turkish Empire; they could not be fulfilled without doing grave injustice to the Turkish people itself.”<sup>14</sup>

In addition, Admiral Mark Bristol, the US high commissioner and then ambassador to Turkey following World War I, wrote in a long cable to the US State Department in 1920: “While the Turks were all that people said they were, the other side of the coin was obscured by the flood of Greek and Armenian propaganda painting the Turks as completely inhuman and undeserving of any

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- 11 Taner Akcam, *A Shameful Act: The Armenian Genocide and the Question of Turkish Responsibility* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2006); and subsequently, Taner Akcam, *The Young Turks' Crime against Humanity: The Armenian Genocide and Ethnic Cleansing in the Ottoman Empire* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012). For a cogent critique of Akcam's work, see Erman Sahin, “Review Essay: A Scrutiny of Akcam's Version of History and the Armenian Genocide,” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 28 (August 2008), p. 316. In a later critique of Akcam's subsequent work, Sahin concluded: “These are substantive matters that raise serious concerns as to the author's theses, which appear to be based on a selective and distorted presentation of Ottoman archival materials and other sources. . . . Such errors seriously undermine the author's and the book's credibility.” Erman Sahin, “Review Essay: The Armenian Question,” *Middle East Policy* 17 (Spring 2010), p. 157. Also see the weighty critique by Maxime Gauin, “Review Essay: ‘Proving’ a ‘Crime against Humanity’?” *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 35:1 (2015), pp. 141-157, which delves into Akcam's apparent usage of false documents, misrepresentation of key sources, falsifying testimonies, and exaggeration of selected and questionable material, among others.
- 12 James Bryce, compiler, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire 1915-16*, Great Britain, Parliamentary Papers Miscellaneous no. 31 (London: Joseph Cavston, 1916).
- 13 Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilizations* (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1922), pp. vii-viii.
- 14 Arnold J. Toynbee, *Acquaintances* (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 241.

consideration, while suppressing all facts in favor of the Turks and against the minorities.”<sup>15</sup>

In a carefully nuanced study, Donald Bloxham struggled to call what happened premeditated.<sup>16</sup> Indeed, in an earlier article Bloxham wrote “that there was no a priori blueprint for genocide, and that it emerged from a series of more limited regional measures in a process of cumulative policy radicalization.”<sup>18</sup> Rather, Bloxham seemed to use the term genocide because of the magnitude of what happened: “nowhere else during the First World War was revolutionary nationalism answered with total murder. That is the crux of the issue.”<sup>18</sup> However, Bloxham also queried Armenian nationalists “whether recognition [of genocide] is really going to open the door to healing wounds and reconciliation, as we are often told, or whether it is a means of redressing nationalist grievances. Is it an issue of historical truth, morality and responsibility, or of unresolved political and material claims?”<sup>19</sup>

Intent or premeditation is all important in defining genocide, however, “because it removes from consideration not only natural disasters but also those man-made disasters that took place without explicit planning. Many of the epidemics of communicable diseases that reached genocidal proportions, for example were caused by unwitting human actions.”<sup>20</sup> Although some would disagree, the fate of the North American Indians is a case in point as they died largely from disease, not intent. Therefore, a large loss of life is not in itself proof of genocide. Ignoring intent creates a distorted scenario and may lead to incorrect conclusions as to what really occurred.

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15 Mark L. Bristol, as cited in Laurence Evans, *United States Policy and the Partition of Turkey 1914-1924* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), p. 272.

16 Donald Bloxham, *The Great Game of Genocide: Imperialism, Nationalism, and the Destruction of the Ottoman Armenians* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005). Similarly, see Thomas de Waal, *Great Catastrophe: Armenians and Turks in the Shadow of Genocide* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), who also struggles to call the Armenian tragedy genocide—“it obstructs the understanding of the historical rights and wrongs of the issue as much as it illuminates them” (p. ix)—but like Bloxham concludes that it was. However, de Waal also admits in his introduction that in his historical analysis he drew “on exclusively English- and Russian-language sources” (p. x). Reference to Turkish sources would have given him a more complete and therefore accurate account. In addition, see Ronald Grigor Suny, *They Can Live in the Desert but Nowhere Else”: A History of the Armenian Genocide* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2015), who also calls it genocide, while adding a useful “Bibliographical Discussion,” pp. 367-374.

17 Donald Bloxham, “The Armenian Genocide of 1915-1916: Cumulative Radicalization and the Development of a Destruction Policy,” *Past & Present*, No. 181 (November 2003), p. 143.

18 *Ibid.*, p. 186.

19 Bloxham, *Great Game of Genocide*, p. 232.

20 Kurt Jonassohn, “What is Genocide?” in Helen Fein, ed., *Genocide Watch* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1992), p. 21.

### The Manifesto of Hovhannes Katchaznoui.

At this point it would be most useful to turn to the testimony of Hovhannes Katchaznoui, the first prime minister of Armenia after World War I and thus an authority well placed to judge what had just occurred during that war. His testimony was given as an address to the Armenian revolutionary and nationalist Dashnak party congress in Bucharest, Romania in April 1923. Although he did not gainsay what he termed “this unspeakable crime...the deportations and mass exiles and massacres which took place during the Summer and Autumn of 1915,”<sup>21</sup> Katchaznoui’s statement constitutes a remarkable self-criticism of the Armenians by one of their top leaders. No wonder many Armenians have done their best to remove this telling document from libraries around the world. It is, therefore, for the purposes of this study, necessary to cite what Katchaznoui had to say at some length.

In the Fall of 1914 Armenian volunteer bands organized themselves and fought against the Turks because they could not refrain themselves from fighting. This was an inevitable result of psychology on which the Armenian people had nourished itself during an entire generation. It is important to register only the evidence that we did participate in that volunteer movement to the largest extent.

We had embraced Russia wholeheartedly without any compunction. Without any positive basis of fact we believed that the Tzarist government would grant us a more-or-less broad self-government in the Caucasus and in the Armenian villayets liberated from Turkey as a reward for our loyalty, our efforts and assistance.

We overestimated the ability of the Armenian people, its political and military power, and overestimated the extent and importance of the services our people rendered to the Russians. And by overestimating our very modest worth and merit was where we naturally exaggerated our hopes and expectations.

The proof is, however - and this is essential - that the struggle began decades ago [which] against the Turkish government brought about the deportation or extermination of the Armenian people in Turkey and the desolation of Turkish Armenia. This was the terrible fact!<sup>22</sup>

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21 *The Armenian Revolutionary Federation (Dashnagtzoutium) Has Nothing To Do Anymore* (Reprint), trans. from the original by Matthew A. Callender and edited by John Roy Carlson (Arthur A. Derounian) (New York: Armenian Information Service, 1955), p. 2. For a complete e-version of Katchaznoui’s testimony, see Lale Akalin, *Dashnagtzoutium Has Nothing To Do Anymore—Hovhannes Katchaznoui Manifesto*, 2006. <http://armenians-1915.blogspot.com/2006/05/679-dashnagtzoutin-has-nothing-to-do.html>. The Dashnaks were founded in 1890 as a revolutionary Armenian nationalist party and took a leading role in the bloody battles against the Turks, a struggle that still continues politically.

22 *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

### K.S. Papazian's *Patriotism Perverted*.

A decade after Hovhannes Katchaznoui's manifesto was published, but still much closer to the events of World War I than now, K[apriel] S[erope] Papazian produced a most revealing critique of the Dashnaks' perfidy, terrorism, and disastrous policies that had helped lead to the events in question. Written by an Armenian who bore no love for the Turks, but hushed up, ignored, and virtually forgotten by many because its self-critical revelations do not fit in with the usual received Armenian thesis of innocent victimization, Papazian's analysis calls for close scrutiny.

Authored just after the notorious Dashnak murder of Armenian Archbishop Leon Tourian in New York city on Christmas Eve 1933,<sup>23</sup> Papazian began by expressing disdain for the Dashnaks' "predatory inclinations"<sup>24</sup> in his preface. He then turned to an examination of the "terrorism in the [Dashnaks' early [1892] program," which listed: "To wage[,] fight, and to subject to terrorism the government officials, the traitors, the betrayers, the usurers, and the exploiters of all description."<sup>25</sup> Citing from Mikael Varandian, *History of the Dashnagtzoutune*, page 302, Papazian then wrote that "the purpose of the Armenian movement, has been...from the beginning, to organize as far as possible a long drawn-out fight against the Ottoman tyranny, to create in the country a continuous *revolutionary* state, always having before our eyes the intervention of the *third factor*...the European factor."<sup>26</sup>

With this background of Armenian Dashnak provocation and terrorism, Papazian then turned to examine what actually had happened during World War I. These revelations are so revealing as to deserve extended mention.

The fact remains, however, that the leaders of the Turkish-Armenian section of the Dashnagtzoutune did not carry out their promise of loyalty to the Turkish cause when the Turks entered the war...Prudence was thrown to the winds...and a call was sent for Armenian volunteers to fight the Turks on the Caucasian front.

Thousands of Armenians from all over the world, flocked to the standards of such famous fighters as Antranik, Kery, Dro, etc. The Armenian volunteer regiments rendered valuable services to the Russian Army in the years of 1914-15-16.

23 For an analysis of this event, see Christopher Walker, *Armenia: The Survival of a Nation* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 354; and Maggie Lewis, "Armenian-Americans," *Christian Science Monitor*, November 18, 1980, p. B19.

24 K[apriel] S[erope] Papazian, *Patriotism Perverted: A Discussion of the Deeds and the Misdeeds of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation, the So-called Dashnagtzoutune* (Boston: Baikar Press, 1934), p. 7.

25 *Ibid.*, pp. 13, 15.

26 *Ibid.*, p. 21.



On the other hand, the methods used by the Dashnagzoutune in recruiting these regiments were so open and flagrant, that it could not escape the attention of the Turkish authorities... Many Armenians believe, that the fate of two millions of their co-nationals in Turkey might not have proved so disastrous, if more prudence had been used by the Dashnag leaders during the war. In one instance, one Dashnag leader, Armen Garo, who was also a member of the Turkish Parliament, had fled to the Caucasus and had taken active part in the organization of volunteer regiments to fight the Turks. His picture, in uniform, was widely circulated in the Dashnag papers, and it was used by Talat Paha, the arch assassin of the Armenians, as an excuse for his policy of extermination.<sup>27</sup>

What then should be made of Papazian's *Patriotism Perverted*? Without denying that the Turks played a murderous role in the events analyzed, clearly, his long ignored and even suppressed revelations indicate that the Armenians were far from innocent victims in what ensued. Indeed, Papazian's text makes it clear that incompetent but treacherous Armenians themselves were also to blame for what had befallen their cause. It is unfair to fix sole blame upon the Turks.

### **Gunter Lewy's Book: A Disputed Genocide.**<sup>28</sup>

Gunter Lewy's book is a recent and very significant contribution to the long-standing debate over what happened to the Armenians during the last days of the Ottoman Empire. Was it a premeditated genocide perpetrated by the Ottoman officials, as most Armenian and other scholars believe, or the unfortunate result of wartime excesses, as the Turks and some others argue? Lewy accepts neither interpretation. Instead, he finds that "both sides have used heavy-handed tactics to advance their cause and silence a full and impartial discussion of the issues in dispute." (p. 258). Lewy aptly declares that "the key issue in this quarrel... is not the extent of Armenian suffering, but rather the question of premeditation: that is, whether the Young Turk regime during the First World War intentionally organized the massacres that took place" (p. ix).

Lewy takes on what many who back the Armenian contentions consider to be some of the most damning evidences of a premeditated genocide and shows how

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<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>28</sup> Gunter Lewy, *The Armenian Massacres in Ottoman Turkey: A Disputed Genocide* (Salt Lake City: The University of Utah Press, 2005). My following discussion of Lewy's book largely and originally appeared as a review I published in the *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 38 (November 2006), pp. 598-600. The page numerals in the text referred to the pages in Lewy's book. M. Hakan Yavuz, a professor of political science at the University of Utah, has also ably interpreted the Turkish point of view. See, for example, "Orientalism, the 'Terrible Turk' and Genocide," *Middle East Critique* 23:2 (2014), pp. 111-126. In addition, see the new study by Justin McCarthy, *Turks and Armenians: Nationalism and Conflict in the Ottoman Empire* (Madison, WI: Turko-Tatar Press, 2015).



they are “materials of highly questionable authenticity” (p. 250). These suspect documents include the so-called “Ten Commandments...issued by the Committee of Union and Progress [CUP] relative to their plan for massacring Armenians” (p. 47), “still another secret meeting that is said to substantiate the element of premeditation...described in memoirs written by a purported member of the central committee of the CUP, Mevlanzade Rifat” (p. 51), and the Naim Bey “telegrams allegedly sent out by minister of the interior Talaat Pasha, ordering the extermination of the Armenians” (p. 63) and published by a minor military censor at that time, Aram Andonian.

Lewy also questions the methods of one of the current leading Armenian scholar-advocates for the premeditated genocide thesis, Vakhakn N. Dadrian.<sup>xiv</sup> Lewy points out Dadrian’s “selective use of sources” (p. 282n3), how when “checking the references provided by Dadrian...it becomes clear that these sources do not always say what Dadrian alleges” (p. 83), Dadrian’s “manipulating the statements of contemporary observers” (p. 84), how “only through shrewd juxtapositions of words and insertions (which he puts in square brackets) that Dadrian ends up with the desired result” (p. 85), and how “it is Dadrian’s gloss and not the original text quoted that includes the incriminating words” (p. 86).

As for the argument that “the large number of Armenian deaths - genocidal consequences - as proof that the massacres that took place must have been part of an overall plan to destroy the Armenian people” (p. 43), Lewy counters that it “rests on a logical fallacy and ignores the huge loss of life among Turkish civilians, soldiers, and prisoners-of-war due to sheer incompetence, neglect, starvation, and disease. All of these groups also experienced a huge death toll that surely cannot be explained in terms of a Young Turk plan of annihilation” (p. 250).

So how does Lewy explain what happened to the Armenians? “The momentous task of relocating several hundred thousand people in a short span of time and over a highly primitive system of transportation was simply beyond the ability of the Ottoman bureaucracy...Under conditions of Ottoman misrule, it was possible for the country to suffer an incredibly high death toll without a premeditated plan of annihilation” (p. 253). In addition to Lewy, such distinguished scholars of Ottoman history as Bernard Lewis,<sup>xiv</sup> Roderic

29 Vahakn N. Dadrian has produced an enormous amount of scholarly work. For a sample of some of it that Lewy criticizes, see *The History of the Armenian Genocide: Ethnic Conflict from the Balkans to Anatolia to the Caucasus* (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995); and *Warrant for Genocide: Key Elements of Turko-Armenian Conflict* (New Brunswick NJ and London: Transaction Publishers, 1999).

30 One of Lewis’s best-known works is Bernard Lewis, *The Emergence of Modern Turkey*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1968). On May 19, 1985, 69 prominent academics in Turkish Ottoman and Middle Eastern studies (including Bernard Lewis) published a large advertisement in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* that criticized the US Congress for considering the passage of a resolution that would have singled out for special recognition “the one and one half million people of Armenian ancestry who were victims of genocide perpetrated in Turkey between 1915 and 1923.” Instead, these academics lucidly argued that such questions should be left for the scholarly community to decide.

Davison,<sup>31</sup> J. C. Hurewitz,<sup>32</sup> and Andrew Mango,<sup>33</sup> among others, have also rejected the appropriateness of the genocide label for what occurred.

### Further Analysis

Why then do most scholars accept uncritically the Armenian version of these events and demonize those who object? Why do the Turks continue to maintain their innocence in the face of so much reputed evidence? First of all, as mentioned already, one must realize that the Armenian massacres in 1915 did not just suddenly occur out of the blue, but followed decades of Armenian violence and revolutionary activity that then elicited Turkish counter violence. There are a plethora of Turkish sources documenting these unfortunate events. However, much more accessible to Western audiences are the studies by such eminent scholars as William L. Langer<sup>34</sup> and Arnold J. Toynbee,<sup>35</sup> among others.

Armenians too have documented copiously that they sometimes gave as well as they received. See, for example, Louise Nalbandian,<sup>36</sup> James G. Mandalian,<sup>37</sup> and Garegin Pasdermajian (Armen Garo),<sup>38</sup> among others. The Armenians, of course, present themselves as freedom fighters in these earlier events, but the objective scholar can understand how the Turks saw them as revolutionary and treasonous and thus hesitate to characterize their response in 1915 as “genocide.”

Moreover, throughout all these events, the Armenians were never more than a large minority even in their historic provinces they inhabited.<sup>39</sup> Yet they exaggerated their numbers before World War I and their losses during the war.

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31 See, for example, Roderic Davison, *Essays in Ottoman and Turkish History, 1774-1923: The Impact of the West* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1990).

32 For an example of this scholar's work, see J. C. Hurewitz, *Diplomacy in the Near and Middle East: A Documentary Record*, 2 vols. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1956).

33 For a representative example of this scholar's work, see Andrew Mango, *Ataturk: the Biography of the Founder of Modern Turkey* (Woodstock, NY: Overlook Press, 2000).

34 William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism: 1890-1902*. 2 vols. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935).

35 Arnold J. Toynbee, *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilizations*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: Howard Fertig, 1970, originally published in 1922).

36 Louise Nalbandian, *The Armenian Revolutionary Movement: The Development of Armenian Political Parties through the Nineteenth Century* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1963).

37 James G. Mandalian, ed. and translator, *Armenian Freedom Fighters: The Memoirs of Rouben der Minasian* (Boston: Hairenik Association, 1963).

38 Garegin Pasdermajian (Armen Garo), translated by Haig T. Partizian, *Bank Ottoman: Memoirs of Armen Garo* (Detroit, MI: Armen Topouzian, 1990).

39 On this important issue, see Justin McCarthy, *Muslims and Minorities: The Population of Ottoman Anatolia and the End of the Empire* (New York: New York University Press, 1983). The Armenians and their supporters, however, maintain that the Armenian population was much larger. See, for example, Levon Marshlian, “Population Statistics on Ottoman Armenians in the Context of Turkish Historiography,” *Armenian Review* 40 (Winter 1987), pp. 1-59.

Indeed, if the Armenian figures for those who died were correct, there would have been few left at the end of the war. Instead, the Armenians managed to fight another war against the emerging Turkish Republic following World War I for mastery in eastern Anatolia. After they lost, many Armenians in time came to claim that what had occurred after World War I was simply renewed genocide. The Turks, on the other hand, saw it as part of their War of Independence and understandably hesitate to admit sole guilt for all these events.

Furthermore, as Christians, the Armenians naturally found a sympathetic audience in the West. The Muslim Turks, on the other hand, were the historic enemy of the Christian West. In addition, the Armenians were much more adept in foreign languages than the Turks and thus able to present their case more readily to the rest of the world. When the events in question occurred, the Turks were again the enemy of the West and the object of Western propaganda and at times crude Orientalism.

Thus, without denying the tragic massacres the Armenians suffered during World War I, it bears repeating, that it is important to place them in their proper context. When this is done, the application of the term “genocide” to these tragic events is inappropriate because the Turkish actions were neither unilateral nor premeditated. Rather, what happened to the Armenians was part of a long-continuing process that in part started with the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78.<sup>40</sup> The Russian victory led to ethnic cleansing of Muslims from the Balkans and the removal of many survivors to Anatolia where relations with the indigenous Christian Armenians suffered.

In addition, Armenian patriarch Nerses, an Ottoman citizen and one of the leaders of the Armenian millet, entered into treasonous negotiations with the victorious Russians with an eye to achieving Armenian autonomy or even independence. However, as already noted, nowhere in the land claimed by the Armenians from the Ottomans were the Armenians anywhere near a majority. Still, some Armenians continued to agitate using terror to provoke retaliation that they hoped would be followed by European intervention. In August 1896, for example, Armenian terrorists struck the Ottoman Bank in İstanbul in a misguided attempt to force the Western powers to intervene on their behalf. When World War I broke out some Armenians supported the Russian enemy. As mentioned above, Garegin Pasdermadjian (Armen Garo), an Armenian member of the Ottoman parliament, joined the Armenian volunteers serving under the Russian army.<sup>lvi</sup>

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40 M. Hakan Yavuz with Peter Sluglett, eds., *War and Diplomacy: The Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 2011).

41 Kurdish (Muslim)/Armenian animosities also played a role in this process. See Janet Klein, *The Margins of Empire: Kurdish Militias in the Ottoman Tribal Zone* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011).

As the testimony of Hovhannes Katchaznoui, the first prime minister of Armenia after World War I makes clear, some Armenians killed as many Turks as they could in a misguided attempt to strike for independence. Additional Armenian writers such as Louise Nalbandian, James Mandalian, and Armen Garo, among others, have also detailed how some Armenians had long fought against the Turks in the lead up to the massacres of World War I. Furthermore, such distinguished Western scholars as William Langer and Arnold Toynbee, among others, have also concurred with this judgment. Their positions along with others have been mentioned in this article with again the conclusion that the Turkish actions were not unilateral, that the Armenians were not always innocent victims, and that what befell them was not entirely unprovoked.

As for the necessary attribute of premeditation to demonstrate genocide, there are no authentic documents that prove guilt. Although there are countless descriptions of the depravations suffered by the Armenians, they do not prove intent or premeditation. The so-called Andonian documents that purport to demonstrate premeditation are almost certain fabrications.<sup>42</sup> As for the Armenian contention that the huge loss of Armenian lives illustrates premeditation, what then should be said about the enormous loss of Turkish lives among civilians, soldiers, and prisoners-of-war? Were these Turkish deaths also genocide or rather due to sheer incompetence, neglect, starvation, and disease? And if the latter were true of the ethnic Turkish population, all the more were they the fate of an ethnic group that had incurred upon itself suspicion of acting as a fifth column in a time of war.

Even so, as already mentioned, Armenian communities in such large western cities as Constantinople and Smyrna were largely spared deportation probably because they were not in a position to aid the invading Russians. Is it possible to imagine Hitler sparing any Jews in Berlin, Munich, or Cologne from his genocidal rampage for similar reasons? If, as the Armenians allege, the Turkish intent was to subject their Armenian victims to a premeditated forced march until they died of exhaustion, why was this tactic not imposed on all of the Armenians? Therefore, without denying outright murders and massacres which today might qualify as war crimes, based on the analysis in this article, it seems reasonable to question the validity of referring to the Armenian tragedy as genocide.

## **Conclusion**

Much confusion exists about what is meant by the term genocide because the word

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<sup>42</sup> Aram Andonian, ed. *The Memoirs of Naim Bey: Turkish Official Documents Relating to the Deportations and Massacres of Armenians* (London: 1920, reprinted, Newtown Square, PA: Armenian Historical Research Association, 1964). For the case against the authenticity of these documents, see Sinasi Orel and Sureyya Yuca, *The Talat Pasha Telegrams: Historical Fact or Armenian Fiction? (Nicosia: K. Rustem and Bro., 1986).*

has come to have at least two different meanings, a precise international legal one and a non-legal popular one. The two different meanings have been conflated by some either by mistake or on purpose to confuse the world and accuse Turkey of being legally guilty of genocide for the Armenian massacres that occurred 100 years ago in 1915. Given this confusing situation, a brief concluding analysis of these two different meanings of the term genocide is in order.

Legally, as mentioned already, genocide is defined by the Genocide Convention that was signed in 1948 and then ratified in 1951 when it went into effect. The Genocide Treaty, in part, legally defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.” Therefore, for genocide to have legally occurred, there must have been intent on the part of the perpetrators to wipe out an entire ethnic group and this act must have been committed since 1951 after the Genocide Treaty went into effect. Neither requirement has occurred in regards to the Armenians.

Despite what many Armenians and their supporters claim, there is no authentic document that proves that the Ottoman authorities intended to wipe out the Armenians. Indeed, many Armenians living in western Anatolia who were deemed no threat to Ottoman supply lines and security were not relocated in 1915. If genocide were the Ottoman intention, why were these Armenians in the West spared? As already argued, without proven intent, legally there can be no genocide.

In addition, of course, even if intent could be demonstrated (which it has not), genocide legally could not have occurred before the Genocide Treaty was ratified and went into effect in 1951 because it would constitute an *ex post facto* law expressly prohibited by Article 11 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 15 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 1/Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution. An *ex post facto* law of course makes some action a crime which when it was originally committed was not a crime.

Furthermore, for the U.S. Congress or any other legislative body to pass any resolution declaring that the Armenian tragedy was a genocide would be analogous to a bill of attainder (a legislative act which punishes somebody without a fair judicial trial), which is also specifically prohibited by Article 1, Section 9 of the U.S. Constitution. Therefore, applying the Genocide Treaty to the Armenian tragedy by using an *ex post facto* law or bill of attainder would be a clear violation of due process of law which is specifically prohibited by the Fifth and Fourteenth Amendments to the U.S Constitution as well as through implication by Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and Articles 14 and 26 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

The Armenians and their supporters are trying to get around these major

international legal and U.S. constitutional safeguards by confusingly conflating the legal definition of genocide with the more general popular one that equates genocide loosely with any large-scale killings that have ever occurred either before 1951 or after that date when the Genocide Treaty went into effect. By this second, non-legal definition of genocide, of course, the Armenians suffered from large-scale killings or genocide. However, so did the Turks and other Muslims who were killed by ethnic violence during World War I. By this non-legal definition of genocide both Muslims and Armenians committed genocide against each other. To accuse only one side for this situation ignores what happened to the other and is patently unfair and a violation of due process of law.

However, the many Armenians and their supporters who accuse Turkey of genocide—either through simple lack of the complete facts or on purpose to malign Turkey for their own reasons—continue to try to piggy back these two definitions of genocide so as to brand Turkey legally guilty of genocide. It is time for governments, scholars, and the intelligent lay public to stop conflating these two different definitions of genocide and get their facts straight so we will not continue to dishonor the memory of those who so tragically died on both sides during World War I.





## PAST TRAGEDIES AND THE PRESENT

**Prof. Hakan YAVUZ**

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Genocide, a legal term that refers to a criminal act, was coined by Raphael Lemkin who was under the influence of racist and cultural values of his own time. For instance, in an article that was published in the *Journal of Genocide Studies* in 2005, Dominik Schaller illustrates how Lemkin used a racist language for the Africans, in general, and for the people of Congo, in particular. He used the term genocide in his first book, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe*, which was published in 1944 as a reflection of atrocities committed against Jews in WWII. Contrary to the claims made by some, there is no mention of Turks, Armenians and the Ottomans in that book.

There are two basic and competing definitions of genocide today. One is claimed by the legal experts, who define the term as deliberate extermination of one particular ethnic, religious, national, or racial group. In line with this definition, legal experts and international courts seek to determine if there is “special intent” in the killing of one of those four protected groups. The act of violence or ethnic cleansing by itself does not constitute as genocide in this perspective. In other



words, violence or ethnic cleansing is considered as genocide and an international crime only if you attempt to exterminate a group of people due to their ethnic, religious, national or racial identity. There are three legally established cases of genocide: Jews in the Third Reich, Rwanda in the 1990s, and Bosnian Muslims in Srebrenica. Importantly, in its 2007 verdict, the International Court of Justice did not consider the killings and ethnic cleansing in other cities of Bosnia as genocide.

The second definition is the popular one. It is mostly used by the scholars of genocide studies, as an area of study. However, the popular definition of genocide is very problematic. Instead of the intent, this approach defines genocide on the basis of the “outcome.” This has negative effects on history-writing. Those who rely on this definition call it genocide if one particular group of people lived in a specific location at one point of time in history, but do not live there anymore due to relocation, deportation or murder. According to this perspective, there are about 700-800 cases of genocide. In other words, there is nearly no state that built a nation-state that did not commit genocide. The killing of Native Americans in America, assimilation policies of the Canadian state towards the indigenous people, the colonial record of Europeans, Israel’s ethnic cleansing in Palestine would all be seen as genocide. In other words, almost every massacre in history would now be seen as genocide according to this popular definition.

The concept of genocide has been extensively used to criticize the nationalist historiography in an era of globalization. In particular, processes of nation-state building have come to be seen as examples of genocide. According to Fuat Dündar and Taner Akçam, 1915 is genocide because the Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) aimed to create a homogenized nation-state. It is not incomprehensible to see that these scholars vilify the founding philosophy of the Republic of Turkey. However, if we proceed with the second definition, the entire modern history of the Balkans should be seen as a history of genocides.

In the Perinçek case, Switzerland claimed that Lemkin came up with the concept of genocide because he was inspired by the 1915 events. However, Tal Buenos, who studied Lemkin very closely and worked in Lemkin’s archives, demonstrated that the claim made by the Swiss government was unfounded. In fact, the Swiss government did not repeat this misinformation later on. In his personal correspondences and archives, Lemkin used the concept of genocide in a very broad sense and even categorized the atrocities committed by the Greeks against the Muslims as genocide. Similarly, Professor Paul Mojzes wrote a critically important book, titled *Balkan Genocides*. According to Mojzes, the first and foremost genocide was carried out against the Muslim populations during the Balkan Wars of 1912-13. In addition, Benjamin Liberman’s book, *Terrible Fate: Ethnic Cleansing in the Making of Modern Europe*, traces genocide back to the

deportation and killings of Muslims during the Russo-Ottoman War of 1877-1878. A good portion of this book discusses the ethnic cleansing and massacres of Muslims. Yet, pro-Armenians and their colleagues in Turkey, who like to play “history/historicism” do not ever want to mention the genocidal campaigns against the Ottoman Muslims.

These pro-Armenian Turkish intellectuals that emerged in Turkey after the 1990s as ‘liberal intelligentsia’ have dedicated themselves to criticism of the ‘state discourse’ or ‘official discourse’ and to the de-legitimization of the state itself. These ‘liberal intellectuals’ have utilized the 1915 events as an opportunity in their paranoid obsession against the state. According to these ‘liberals’, as long as one accepts the genocide thesis, she is eligible to be ‘an intellectual’. In fact, there is great peer pressure to act in line with this thesis. Groups such as some Kurdish nationalists, some Islamists, as well as ‘leftist-liberals’ seek to take revenge from the republican project of modern Turkey through portraying the 1915 events as genocide. They actually do not really care or wonder about what happened in 1915. They are more interested in how the 1915 events can be utilized for their own political agenda. They do not really care about the misery that Anatolian Muslims and Armenians encountered in the past.

I think that scholars and intellectuals should remain distant from the state and its power circles. The duty of a scholar is to question and to be skeptical. Skepticism should be the norm while studying the state, as well. Yet, this does not mean that the state should be ‘otherized.’ We need to understand and analyze the positive and negative aspects of the state together, rather than envisioning the state as an absolute evil.

In opposition to pro-Armenian Turkish intellectuals, historians and scholars who are competent in Ottoman language and Ottoman historians from Turkey and outside mostly reject the genocide thesis. These scholars also argue that genocide is not a healthy concept for studying history. The aim of a historian is to understand what happened in the past; it is not to decide who is right or wrong, or who were the victims and the perpetrators. Taner Akçam, Fatma Müge Göçek, Uğur Ümit Üngör, and Ümit Kurt are either sociologists or genocide specialists. But, they are not historians. They all have problems with the Turkish state and with Turkish identity, in general. Against these scholars’ biased works, historians such as Justin McCarthy, Edward Erickson, Christopher Gunn, Kemal Karpat, İlber Ortaylı, Yusuf Sarıay, Kemal Çiçek, Ömer Turan, and Mehmet Perinçek emphasize the security dimension of the 1915 events despite their diverse approaches.

In short, if we stick to the second definition (the popular definition of genocide), there are so many cases that we may want to revisit and interrogate on the basis of the outcome. What happened to the Muslims in Salonica, Sofia, and Belgrade?

Historically, forty percent of the Bulgarian population was Muslim in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. What happened to the Muslims of Crete and Salonica? Where did Muslims and Jews of Salonica go? Is it possible to talk about a Muslim or Jewish population in Salonica today? Circassians in 1863, Ahiska Turks in 1943, Crimean Tatars in 1944 and many other peoples were deprived of their lands. Most recently, Armenia's ethnic cleansing in Karabakh still continues. In other words, it is important to understand what happened to the Muslims of the Balkans and Caucasus during the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Such an understanding will help us to understand both the 1915 events and the pillars of the founding philosophy of the new republic in Turkey. We must closely study and understand the tragedy of Muslims in the Balkans and their deportations. We should understand and write how these Muslims were exterminated due to their Muslim identity. Under such circumstances, the Republic of Turkey became the last harbor in which the refugee Muslims wanted to live honorably.

In the first place, the Great Powers found a solution for the 'Eastern Question', i.e., the dissolution of the Ottoman rule and removal of the Muslims in this region, by creating nation-states. In turn, these newly created states engaged in wars as an opportunity to homogenize their population through three inhumane strategies, namely, conversion, deportation and ethnic cleansing. Homogenization in the Balkans became possible not as a result of the Industrial Revolution, but instead through war-making. The greatest tragedies and massacres of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were suffered by the Balkan Muslims. For instance, Leon Trotsky, who followed up the Balkan Wars as a journalist at that time wrote that the new Balkan states, which were not satisfied with their demographic layout, aimed to homogenize their societies through systematic massacres committed against Muslims.

Unfortunately in Turkey, we neither tried to understand these processes, nor did we come up with works that appreciate their impacts. However, at least now there is more attention to the tragedies of the Balkan Muslims, thanks to the emergence of the genocide studies, no matter how ironic and paradoxical it is. The 'Balkan laboratory' has given birth to what we call Unionism (*İttihatçılık*), which amounted to a pragmatic dictum suggesting that the state is entity that must to survive. Unionism meant, more or less, a struggle to exist and the state was an indispensable aspect/spirit of such a will. It was a politically pragmatic position crafted to survive against European imperialist designs.

The extermination and displacement policies that the Balkan Muslims encountered constituted the psychological background of the Unionists. This emotional and mental ethos emerged in the Balkans, but most specifically in Macedonia. As historians Gül Tokay and Mehmet Hacısalıhoğlu demonstrated in their studies, Article 23 of the Treaty of Berlin of 1878 required the Ottoman state to make

reforms in Macedonia, while Article 61 prescribed the Ottoman state to undertake similar reforms in some areas of eastern Anatolia that were populated by the Armenians. In sum, the multi-national and multi-religious structures of the Ottoman Empire disappeared with the Treaty of Berlin. As Gül Tokay argues, nation-state building in the Balkan Peninsula became possible through ethnic cleansing of the indigenous Muslim populations of the Balkans.

The interpretation of the 1915 events as genocide requires an existence of a total hostility and a systematic ideology of dehumanization towards Armenians akin to anti-Semitism. There was no such ideology in the late Ottoman Empire. In the absence of such a racist hostility, the pro-Armenian side tries to relate the necessary animosity to some concepts in Islam such as dhimmi (non-Muslim subjects) and jihad. Those scholars who established the Armenian genocide industry, such as Vahakn Dadrian and his student Taner Akçam, who dogmatizes this subject, despite their zero knowledge of Ottoman language, put a special emphasis on Islam. A second group of people who equate the 1915 events with genocide fictionalizes a Turkish nationalism that became influential before 1915. These scholars think that the Turkish nationalism had racist and Social-Darwinist dimensions that led to the resettlement (many people use the word “deportation”) of Armenians. At this point, Hanioglu’s works offer a useful ground for the pro-genocide arguments. Likewise, the main arguments of some people, who try to make a correlation between the Unionists and Nazis, are backed up by Hanioglu’s problematic and vulgar use of Social Darwinism. He has a thinly superficial interpretation of the history of the Young Turk government between 1913 and 1918. His conceptual discussions do not go beyond encyclopedic information. In this context, the best review of Hanioglu’s works, especially on Abdullah Cevdet, was written by Cemil Meriç. In addition, Ali Birinci and Zafer Toprak’s opinions on Hanioglu’s scholarship are excellent. According to Hanioglu, Unionists were Turkish nationalists, who were racist and social-Darwinist, whereas works of Feroz Ahmad, Erik Zürcher, Hasan Kayali, and Behlül Özkan demonstrate that Unionists were state-centric actors, who adopted an Ottoman-Muslim identity. Today there are two groups. One presents Unionists as Turkist and racist. The second group acknowledges change and transformation within Unionists circles. They make it clear that no policy until 1918 was guided by nationalism or Pan-Islamism. In this context, one of Michael Reynold’s articles that was published in a highly prestigious history journal *Past and Present* is illuminating. In this article, Reynolds excellently shows how decisions concerning eastern Anatolia were made during the Great War based on strategic and military purposes rather than a Turkist or Islamist ideology.

The Ottoman state had to adopt critical decisions against some Armenians’ alliance with Russia, particularly after the rebellion in Van. There is no predetermined decision for the resettlement of the Armenians. Before World War I, Ottoman state

was a ‘failed state’. In other words, Ottoman state did not have the power and the capacity to govern certain parts of the empire. For instance, the state was not able to regularly pay the salaries of the civil servants due to financial difficulties. Under these circumstances, local centers of power had more capacity to govern. The absence of transportation infrastructure was restricting the state to efficiently reach out to distant territories, thus putting the security of the Ottoman state at risk vis-à-vis hostile states. After the Balkan wars, Armenians in İstanbul and Anatolia thought that the collapse of the state was inevitable. Some Armenian groups, particularly the Dashnak party, allied with the Russians, believing that the Russians would be the victor of the war and would subsequently support the creation of an independent Armenian state. Some Armenians were willing to live under the rule of Russia by having their own autonomy. Before World War I, especially during the talks about the ‘Armenian reform’, there was a great sympathy for the Russians among the Armenian elites. It seems that the Armenian members of the Ottoman parliament and the Armenian Patriarch cultivated a close relationship with the Russian ambassador. When the Ottoman Empire entered the war, sympathy for the Russians turned into a military alliance. Some members of the Ottoman parliament such as Armen Garo (Karekin Pastırmacıyan) went to Tbilisi to establish the Armenian volunteer units to serve under Russian command. Until recently, Armen Garo’s decision was considered as a personal one. But recent works show that this decision was taken with the approval and support of the Dashnak party. According to a study conducted by Sean McMeekin in the Russian archives, communication between the Ottoman Armenians and the Russians started in August 1914 with the goal of organizing an insurgency with the Russian support. In addition to Armenian volunteer units, Russia was planning to take advantage of the rebellions in the Ottoman territories. Under these circumstances, Ottoman state took the resettlement decision as a military precaution with the fear and signs of mass Armenian rebellions in Anatolia.

The resettlement was practiced gradually and was revised constantly according to the developing conditions within the context of war. Yet, unfortunately economic incapacities, collapse of the healthcare system, and the British siege led to massive hunger and caused many Armenian casualties. The resettlement ended with unintended consequences and great tragedy. But the same tragedy was present for the Anatolian Muslims, as well. I am from Bayburt. Stories are still being told there about how the Armenians burned Muslims to death in mosques. Today’s ‘liberal intelligentsia’ in Turkey, who mostly hang out in İstanbul’s Nişantaşı and Cihangir neighborhoods and who function as ‘colonized intelligentsia’, do not want to see one very important fact: Muslim communities of Anatolia consider themselves as the victims of the ‘Armenian events’. There is a deep memory of victimhood within this context and every government in Turkey has to take this fact into account. Today, the current debates on genocide keep this Muslim memory alive and vibrant.

In the group that interprets the 1915 events as genocide, Taner Akçam, his student Ümit Kurt and Uğur Ümit Üngör use an overtly hatred-filled tone regarding the Turks. Fatma Müge Göçek and Fuat Dündar, on the other hand, appeal to emotions. It is really difficult to consider their works as academic, because some of them distort the sources and selectively amplify supporting arguments. Some writers aim to turn the orientalist image of the “terrible Turk” into “genocidal Turk”. In addition to Turcophobia, there is also Islamophobia here. But, the primary goal is to show Armenians as innocents and Turks and Muslims as murderers. Within this framework, there is an innocent Armenian group that wants to get away with the burden of facing its history. Actually, however, Armenians themselves avoid facing their history. Specifically, roles of Armenian volunteer units in eastern Anatolia during the First World War and the Dashnak Party that pushed the Armenians to the edge of a catastrophe are being covered up. In his doctoral dissertation, Yektan Türkyılmaz illustrates the mistakes and looting done by the Dashnak Party in Van. Similarly, *The Armenian Rebellion at Van*, which was written by Justin McCarthy and his colleagues clearly demonstrates how Armenian volunteer units led to a great disaster. Nowadays some assert that the resettlement policy turned into genocide, but there was no intent or programmatic agenda in the first place. In this context, Donald Bloxham’s works are important. Some venture to state that the Ottoman state was forced to make a decision on resettlement as a result of a possible cooperation between the Armenian volunteer troops and Russians. However, some also argue that the resettlement turned into a catastrophe because the Ottoman state lacked the capacity to carry out this task. Certainly, people like Taner Akçam and Vahakn Dadrian see the 1915 events as an application of a premeditated and deliberate project of nation-state building in the context of war opportunities. It has to be noted that Erman Sahin illustrated how Taner Akçam distorted historical sources in his articles that were published by *Middle East Policy* and *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*. Likewise, Ahmet Efiloğlu has written two excellent articles about the distortion of sources in Fuat Dündar’s books.

Turkey does not have anything to hide concerning the 1915 events. Every perspective should be fully discussed in academic circles and in the public domain. I am sure that as a result of the interactions of the opposing views, we will gain a much deeper understanding about the 1915. Thanks to this open and critical environment in Turkey, Hakan Erdem’s excellent work *Gerçek ile Kurmaca Arasında Torosyan’ın Acayip Hikayesi* illustrated how certain political groups fabricated a series of documents in the early 1920s. I think that freedom of speech and expression are the most important tools we can use to distinguish imagined stories from history, thus develop a more objective understanding of the Armenian issue. Unfortunately, in recent years, genocide industry in Europe and the US is seeking to criminalize alternative interpretations of history. They seek to canonize their views by the force of law.



Armenians began labeling the events of 1915 as genocide after 1965. Before then, 1915 events in Armenian historiography were treated as deportation (*darakrutian*), catastrophe (*aghed*), and massacre (*yeghern*). The rapprochement between the Dashnak Party and the Soviet Union in post-1965 was crucial in that transformation. Turkey was an important member of the NATO and the USSR sought to push Turkey into a defensive position. Moreover, the Armenians wanted a cement in the diaspora for the preservation of the Armenian identity. Genocide was chosen as a new discourse because it served as a compelling unifying factor among new generations who distanced themselves from the Armenian Apostolic Church as a result of secularization. In other words, the claim of genocide was turned into a church, a religious common ground for the perpetuation of Armenian identity. It is for this reason that calling the 1915 events as genocide became a matter of faith. Accepting the 1915 events as genocide became the condition for being an Armenian. As a corollary, some states that want to bully Turkey in the international arena have turned genocide claims into a foreign policy instrument to gain some concessions from Turkey. This was mostly carried out by Christian circles in the US and Christian Democratic parties of European countries that wanted to keep Turkey outside of the European Union. Another point is that Armenia adhered to the concept of genocide, made it a foreign policy tool in order to legitimize its invasion of Azerbaijan lands and to conceal the massacres that were committed against the Azeris.

Pope Francis's speech at a Mass at St. Peter's Basilica to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Armenian massacres is as an example of the utilization of the concept of genocide as a policy tool. Pope Francis is an ambitious leader who wants to unify the Christians under his leadership. He sees himself as the primary representative of the Christian world in general and acts accordingly. He has two goals with this recent statement. First, he seeks to establish Christian solidarity around the Catholic Church. For that, the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary was an excellent opportunity for him to gain the support of the Orthodox Church. Second, unfortunately Pope Francis believes in Christian-Muslim strife and seeks to position himself accordingly. Where was the Pope when Muslims in Bosnia were massacred by the Catholic Croats? Why does Pope Francis not recognize the massacres and genocidal killings in Africa, Asia and the Balkans against Muslims and the black population? The Vatican did not hesitate to politicize the 1915 events by using the 'G-word' and recognizing the massacres as "the first modern genocide." Regrettably these anti-Turkish statements emerge, especially whenever Turkey's image abroad is deteriorating.

Richard Hovannisian's article in *Jerusalem Post* attacks Turkey by bringing unrealistic demands forward such as teaching the Turks 'the real history', changing the borders, returning the Armenian properties in Turkey, and giving Armenia free access to Trabzon port. These demands were also made with a declaration



proclaimed by President Sargsyan on 29 January 2015. So, the issue is not necessarily the recognition of genocide, but rather the irredentist nationalism of the Republic of Armenia. This has become clearer after the occupation and ethnic cleansing of the Karabakh region. Turkey should not underestimate the long-term negative consequences of the policies of the Republic of Armenia.

The two protocols signed on 10 October 2009 had several goals such as starting diplomatic relations between Armenia and Turkey, recognizing the current borders and opening them for trade, and establishing a commission of historians to study and discuss the 1915 events. If these two protocols could be realized, the rapprochement between Armenia and Turkey would be achieved. Yet, the Dashnak Party in Armenia and the Armenian diaspora opposed these protocols. At that time, Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan visited major diaspora centers in Lebanon, France and the United States and talked with leaders of the diaspora. He was protested almost everywhere he visited. As a result, these two protocols were sent to the Armenian constitutional court. Yet, the Court stated that Armenia would not give up promoting genocide discourse within the international community. The idea of 'Greater Armenia' as stated in the introduction of Armenian Constitution was emphasized, as well. Eventually, President Sargsyan withdrew these protocols from the national parliament last February.

The purpose of the pro-Armenian side is to create a genocide narrative out of the past and history. History is about our understanding of what and under what conditions the events of 1915 happened. The concept of the past is about a memory we construct with today's values, norms, and concepts. Thus, the second issue is about how individuals tend to represent the past events of 1915 in terms of 2015. In other words, historical understanding is about how we conceptualize, represent and discover the past. Historical understanding focuses on what happened, why it happened, and how social, local, economic and security issues and institutions played a role in the unfolding of the events. We cannot say there is no such a thing as objective history or historiography, but every historiography to a large extent is under the influence of the concepts and questions of the present and, especially, the concerns and identity of the historians. In other words, when we try to understand the 1915 events in terms of 2015, we reinterpret them within the current configuration of power struggles.

Today, the historiography concerning the 1915 events that was constructed by the Armenian historians and the genocide industry is marked by ideological, reductionist, Islamophobic, and Turcophobic discourses. For Taner Akçam and his teacher Vahakn Dadrian, the entire CUP history is all about planning and exterminating Christian minorities. So, for them, almost every act and policy of the CUP must be interpreted in these terms. In addition, the current coverage of the events of 1915, especially after the speech of the Pope, is framed in terms of

the Muslim-versus-Christian conflict. Today the emerging historiography about 1915 is largely based on the wave of Islamophobia that is on the rise in Europe and the United States.

Republic of Armenia and the Armenian diaspora's had great hopes for the centenary of the 1915 events. I do not think they have achieved their goal. So, as far as public opinion is concerned, there is some success but not a great deal. As far as academic publications are concerned, the genocide camp has produced five books for the centenary. However, the major success of the Armenian side has been the mobilization of an anti-Islamic mood in Europe and the US for the cause. They succeeded to get the Pope to deliver a radical, highly polemical speech to frame the events as the "first modern genocide" in the 20th century. David Olusoga published an article in *The Guardian*, entitled *Dear Pope Francis, Namibia was the 20<sup>th</sup> Century's First Genocide*. As Olusoga argues, what we have is that Pope Francis has become the new actor who refuses to see the destruction and massacres of Africa or Asia which were carried out by Christian imperialist powers in equivalent terms.

The point when I say 1915 events are not genocide does not mean that I forget or ignore the great tragedies and casualties that occurred. Anatolian Armenians experienced great tragedies and we must share their pain. However, we should try not to turn the past tragedies into present-day hatred and conflicts. Unfortunately, the Republic of Armenia has embraced a racist and nationalist attitude and language, presumably in order to justify the occupation and ethnic cleansing of Karabakh.

Lastly, I want to say that I do not think that Turkey fully understands yet what happened in 1915. We do not have any specific institutes or research centers that study in detail the 1915 events. Russian archives also have yet to be extensively explored. We do not have any scholars who speak Armenian and who could provide the subtle, nuanced readings so important to historical authenticity. Turkish universities did not extensively research nor have they produced top-notch academic works on the 1915 events. The soundest academic works in this area have been accomplished by foreign scholars such as Sean McMeekin, Justin McCarthy, Michael Reynolds, Jeremy Salt, Gunter Lewy, and Christopher Gunn. Most studies by Turks have been either biased with nationalist discourses or they just list the documents without critical or historical context. Unfortunately, very few studies engage with the existing literature on the Armenian problem. Moreover, there is a new discipline of genocide studies but yet no center dedicated to genocide studies in Turkey. The Turkish Historical Society either ignored the topic or has done very little to advance interest in the field. They mostly preferred to publish archival materials rather than analytically engaging and theoretically sound studies. They are not consistent in quality either, so there have been some

contradictory studies. I think, in general, Turkey is confused and does not have a clear agenda. Due to this chaos, many foreign scholars currently hesitate and decide to stay away from studying the 1915 events. If this situation is changed, I am sure there will be a boom of scholarly publications that would change the terms and the counters of the present game.



## THE MALTA TRIBUNALS

**Uluç GÜRKAN**

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“Genocide” is a legal term. *The 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* describes this term as an international crime and establishes its legal framework. For any debate on genocide, at least four articles of this 19-article convention has to be known.

Firstly, articles 2 and 3 define the crimes of genocide that can be punished under the convention. These crimes are those acts committed “*with the intent to destroy a national, ethnical, racial or religious group.*”

The key element of the crime is the “intent to destroy” a group. Without the “intent to destroy”, no act can be labeled as genocide.

In this context, allegations of a ‘systematic campaign of destruction’ of Armenians and other Christian minorities in the Ottoman Empire are based on legally faked and historically spurious claims.

Ottoman, British, French, Russian and American archive documents concur that the Ottoman government did not intend to exterminate the Armenians. The 1915 war-time decision on the relocation was based on the fact of the Armenian armed rebellion and cooperation with the invading Russian army.

Moreover, League of Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and Nobel Prize Laureate Fridtjof Nansen's address to the General Assembly on Sept. 21, 1921 consent this fact:

The Allied Western Powers told to the Armenians: 'If you fight with us against the Turks and if the war ends successfully for us, we promise to give you a national home, liberty and independence.' The Armenians fought for the Allied Powers. Two hundred thousand volunteers sacrificed their lives for the cause of the Entente; but when the peace was concluded the promise given to the Armenians was forgotten...

Secondly, Article 4 relates the punishable acts to the individual criminal responsibility. According to this article only real persons – not legal entities – can be charged with the crime of genocide.

Despite this binding judicial clause, genocide accusations are usually directed towards Turkey and the Turkish nation, rather than real persons. Thereby, these accusations gain a quality of 'hate speech' against Turkish people.

Besides being a crime in itself, this is a double standard. A primitive double standard. A double standard based on historical prejudices that turn the Armenian allegations to some sort of a pro-Christian story. Pope Francis' approval of Armenian genocide claims is the last version of this story. Double standards are a symptom of a diseased political culture. They should not lead us. We have to overcome prejudices and eliminate all racial hatreds.

To do so, we have to underline that neither the intent of a systematic extermination of Armenians nor the number of victims of the war tragedy of 1915 was ever established by any tribunal. No court decision was issued to interpret bypast inter-communal violence as an act of genocide consistent with the relevant 1948 United Nations Convention.

In fact, this element - court ruling - is defined in Article 6. It states that persons charged with genocide "shall be tried by a competent tribunal of the state in the territory of which the act was committed or by such an international penal tribunal as may have jurisdiction..."

According to UN's 1948 Genocide Convention, in order for an event to be considered genocide, there should be a court ruling. This is the obligatory condition.

Here, I will remind once again that there is no national or international court ruling characterizing the 1915 events as genocide. This is important.

Perhaps, more important is the fact that, there is an international court ruling falsifying the Armenian genocide allegations. That is the International Court-Martial in Malta, which is known as the Malta Tribunal.

By the end of the First World War, when victorious British army occupied İstanbul, the capital of Ottoman Empire, 144 Ottoman officials and military officers, majority of whom were members or sympathizers of the Committee of Union and Progress, were arrested and sent to Malta as prisoners of war.

The aim was to try and sentence the Turks on the accusation of perpetrating mass killings against Armenians. A judicial prosecution was opened against the Turks who were detained in Malta. The prosecution was conducted for more than two years by Britain's highest legal prosecution authority, Her Majesty's Attorney General for England and Wales in London.

Attorney General's prosecution was based on Articles 230 and 231 of the Treaty of Sèvres on allegations of 'massacre of Armenians'. Along with the Ottoman archives transported to London after being seized during the invasion, every document believed to be in America was examined. Also evidence of the 'Armenian massacre' was searched for in Egypt, Iraq, and Caucasia. Despite the British government's every effort to try and sentence the Turks detained in Malta, no evidence that a British court of law would consider sufficient evidence against them was found. Consequently, Attorney General's prosecution resulted in no charges being filed.

Failing to obtain proper evidence against the Turks in Malta which would satisfy a British Court of Law, the British Foreign Ministry asked Attorney General to initiate political charges against 42 Turks if judicial ones cannot be initiated, but failed to convince the prosecutor's office.

The British Attorney General, in a document dated 29 July 1921, informed the British government that with the evidence in hand, none of the Turks in Malta could be prosecuted on the ground of 'Armenian massacre'. Attorney General also stated that, from now on, the Turkish detainees at Malta were not considered as offenders for prosecution, but as hostages for exchange. Thus, the British government had to release the Turks being held in Malta.

Malta Tribunal's were a prosecution process during which the 'Armenian massacre' or, currently termed, genocide allegations were investigated. At the same time, the prosecution of the British Attorney General was an antecedent to the

Nurnberg Trials, the trial concerning the Holocaust after the Second World War. The prosecutorial process on Malta shared an international judicial atmosphere similar to that of the Nuremberg.

The Malta prosecution was conducted in order to establish a court similar to the international court later formed in Nuremberg to put German Nazi leaders on trial for the Holocaust. The establishment phase of the international court where the Ottoman officials and military officers were supposed to be put on trial was also discussed by the League of Nations, the post-First World War predecessor to the United Nations. During its sessions, among the topics that were discussed were the methods to use to establish a court which would carry out such prosecutions and an advisory board was formed for this purpose.

These preparations were not realized, because the British Attorney General put no Ottoman official and military officer on trial for ‘Armenian massacre’ allegations. He declared that no charges could be filed due to lack of evidence and made it clear that no penal action could be taken even if charges were filed. The Attorney General’s decision to dismiss the ‘Armenian massacre’ accusations for lack of evidence corresponds in modern law to non-hearing verdict or judgment of dismissal. This non-hearing verdict is the reason why no trials were held in Malta.

It is absolute that prosecutor’s inquiry constitutes a legal procedure. Accordingly, the Malta Tribunal is a judicial decision consistent with the relevant 1948 United Nations Genocide Convention clearing that the Armenian genocide does not exist.

The Malta Tribunal constitutes an important milestone of Turkish history. However, we have forgotten and indeed were made to forget it. Remembering Malta Tribunal and embracing its reality will make the Armenian genocide lobby, which at every turn calls on us to face our history, face the documented realities of history.

The Malta Tribunal with its judicial and historical first hand findings proves that there never was a Turkish policy to exterminate Armenians. Besides, the findings of this tribunal falsify nearly 25 parliaments’ ungrounded political support to genocide allegations with second, if not third or fourth hand, illegal findings. Here, I want to draw your attention to the fact that, British Parliament is not among those 25 parliaments. This is because the British governments seem to have faced the reality of the Malta Tribunal.

During the First World War and afterwards, the British tried to use every opportunity to try and sentence every Turk they arrested for the ‘killing of local Christian people’. However, as the country that knows best what happened during



these days, they clearly state that the events of 1915-1916 cannot be described as genocide.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, when Western parliaments were recognizing 'Armenian genocide', the UK was also asked to do the same. British Spokesperson of Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs Baroness Ramsay of Cartvale rejected this demand in a speech dated 14 April 1999 delivered on behalf of the British government:

...in the absence of unequivocal evidence to show that the Ottoman administration took a specific decision to eliminate the Armenians under their control at the time, British governments have not recognized the events of 1915 and 1916 as 'genocide.' ...we do not believe it is the business of governments today to review events of over 80 years ago with a view to pronouncing on them... These are matters of legal and historical debate.

Despite this statement, Armenian genocide lobby has maintained its pressure on the UK. Consequently, Armenian genocide allegations were addressed during a Holocaust commemoration ceremony held in London on 27 January 2001. In a press conference held in Ankara on 22 January 2001, Britain's Beverley Hughes, then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State in the Department of Environment, Transport and the Regions, stated that only the Holocaust would be addressed during the ceremony and made the following declaration in İstanbul:

A while ago, the British government reviewed evidence put forth on the Armenian allegations and examined documents on the events of 1915-1916. The decision is that these events do not correspond to what is defined as genocide by the UN. This is the attitude of the British government, and this will never change.

In a response to a question on this matter, the then Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office Baroness Scotland told the House of Lords on 7 February 2001 that:

The Government, in line with previous British Governments, have judged the evidence relating to events in eastern Anatolia in 1915-1916 not to be sufficiently unequivocal to persuade us that these events should be categorized as genocide as defined by the 1948 United Nations Convention on Genocide.

To conclude, Malta Tribunal is the key to overcome prejudices and to face historical facts. If Turkey officially asks for and the British Government makes the whole 'prosecution file' titled *International Court Martial in Malta* available, Armenian genocide allegations will both historically and legally invalidated.

**PANEL III**  
**Historical Aspect of the Controversy**

**Moderator:**  
**Ömer Engin LÜTEM**  
*Ambassador (R),*  
*Honorary President of AVİM (Center for Eurasian Studies)*



## THE CYCLICALITY OF THE GENOCIDE ACCUSATION

**Tal BUENOS**

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Speaking at a symposium organized by AVİM, provides an opportunity for scholars of political science to talk a little bit more ‘think-tankishly’ than usual. While in my academic presentations I have tended to focus on this or that overlooked or understudied document that reveals how Ottoman history has been politicized, the argument here is reserved for the expansion of a hunch. It is more of a thought exercise that would allow for a big-picture view of the issue. If anybody thinks that it presents a distorted view, then it would be valuable to learn why they think so. At any rate, this will be food for thought, something like a mint, to open up the airways and let in a breath of fresh air on this issue.

The main premise of my argument here is that this issue is not an Armenian issue; it is an American issue. The title of the symposium does not capture this concept. Armenians and Turks are not in control of their own relations. Not only is this a world in which bilateral relations are often stifled by multilateral considerations and commitments, but both sides are not in control of how each nation is informed

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about the other. At the very core of it, this is not an Armenian issue. It is understandable that the issue might appear like an Armenian issue. When one considers the ferocity of the Armenian terrorism that started in the 1970s, and the current persistence and level of organization shown by the Armenian diaspora, one might be convinced that this is an Armenian issue. However, before the Armenians wanted to fight Turkey on the genocide label, and before the Armenian national sentiment took on a life of its own because of this genocide campaign, the life that was breathed into it was American. Before believing they were acting on their own behalf, and for their own interests, Armenians were the victims of American soft-power, which led to their mobilization.

The cycle of this perceived conflict between Armenians and Turks – the repetition of Armenian claims, and the accusations against Turks – will not end as long as it is viewed as an Armenian issue, and as long as it stays a problem for Turks alone.

A thorough historical examination that is aware of imperial politics shows that the Armenians were not the originators of their national narrative, and never the main principals behind the authorship of their story as a Christian-minority victim. The literature on Armenian victimhood under Ottoman rule was imagined, outlined, published, and disseminated, according to the interests of great powers that wanted to bring about the collapse of the Ottoman Empire.

The Armenians were not the owners of their national narrative in the 1870s, when political circumstances led to the advent of the Armenian call for independence. Russia's growing ability to defeat the Ottomans in war, and the British reconfiguration of the balance of power in the region, introduced the change in Christian-Muslim relations within the Ottoman territories, and also introduced the Armenian national narrative. After centuries of coexistence with the Ottoman Muslims, the Armenians were suddenly encouraged to rebel. Their national story was erected by James Bryce, a scholar with Liberal contacts who at the time aspired to become a politician whose expertise would be foreign affairs. He raised the Armenian Question during the Bulgarian Agitation, and wrote that Armenian history warranted Armenian statehood. He stated that Armenians were racially superior to the Turks, and presented the best Christian hope for the civilizing process in the region. Already then, before the riots of the 1890s and the tragedy in 1915, he claimed that Armenians were being massacred. He had a pivotal role in organizing the Armenian national leadership, and even called to create armed Ottoman Armenian militias. Between then and WWI, many books and articles were published through Bryce and his socio-political circle, and some of it was penned by the Armenian leaders that he recruited and promoted in keeping with the discourse that was already put in place by the British Liberals.

The Armenians did not control their own national narrative during WWI. The

Entente framed the Armenian agenda according to wartime considerations. The British took the lead in the dissemination of anti-Turkish propaganda in the US, and enjoyed great success in doing so because of the close Anglo-American alliance, and specifically Bryce's strong ties in the US. Among his contacts were people who were positioned at the very top of American leadership. Bryce was close to American presidents such as Taft, Roosevelt, and Wilson; he was close to the man known then as the wealthiest in the world, Andrew Carnegie, whose fortune had been invested in organizations that were geared toward discourse control; and he was close to the editors of the *New York Times*. These associations were linked to one another. As the person in charge of British wartime propaganda in the US, Bryce unfolded the Armenian narrative yet again, this time also hoping to incriminate the Germans by their association with the Turks. Arnold Toynbee, then a young historian who was a full-time employee of the British government, was asked to produce anti-Turkish material, which he did to a great extent.

The Armenians did not master their own narrative after WWII, when in the late 1940s Raphael Lemkin began to characterize their tragedy in WWI as genocide. During WWII, while Lemkin was employed by the US, a book under his name was published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and the book presented the term genocide as a crime for which the Germans will have to pay post-WWII. The Armenians were not mentioned at all during the war, as the term genocide was invented as part of an American effort to exert power over Germany after the war. A few years later, when the term genocide began to be associated with many historical events, and Lemkin began to make reference to it regarding the Armenian case, he was under the influence of American Christian organizations. Already in the late nineteenth century, American Christians were mobilized through churches under the claims that Muslim Ottomans are butchering innocent Armenian Christians. In the late 1940s the concept of genocide was used to liven up the interest in the cultivation of Christian populations in the region.

The Armenians were not the catalyst that pushed the Armenian national narrative into the hands of American academia in the 1950s. During that time there was significant international pressure against the US for its increasing display of neocolonialist policies. The Korean War and the First Indochina War gave the impression that the US aimed to interfere with the internal affairs of African and Asian states. The Bandung Conference in Indonesia gave expression to the frustrations of over 1 billion people with the manner in which small nations were being economically and culturally trampled by new forms of colonialism. In this context, there was an American interest in telling stories about small nations whose victimhood – at least seemingly – had nothing to do with American neocolonialism, so as to relieve the international pressure. The project of establishing an Armenian national history under the control of American academia

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was supervised by Richard N. Frye. At the time Frye was a professor of Central Asian Studies at Harvard University, but it is important to note that he was also a former US-government employee who specialized in Central Asian affairs in the Office of Strategic Services.

The Armenians did not begin to pepper their national narrative with the term genocide until genocide accusations were made against the US for its aggressive attack on the people of Vietnam. During the Vietnam War millions of tons of bombs were dropped on helpless Vietnamese and Cambodian villagers, destroying lives and livelihood. Especially since the beginning of Operation Rolling Thunder, there was an outrage among intellectuals around the world and in the US. The word genocide turned into a popular word in the efforts to criticize US policies in Indochina. Without the power to impose a competent international tribunal in which US officials could be charged with the crime of genocide, the outcry amounted to an international tribunal that looked to affect world opinion through moral power alone and generate some pressure on the US government. Bertrand Russell led a team of international intellectuals, including Jean-Paul Sartre, in hearings held in Denmark and Sweden. They found the US to be guilty of genocide. However, an American plan for counteraction was already forming prior to the conclusion of the Russell Tribunal. The Armenian victimhood began to be characterized as genocide in mainstream American publications, just as the first genocide-calls were sounded against the US for its actions in Indochina.

The Armenians were not the ones who had the power throughout the 1970s and 1980s to turn their national narrative into the poster-child of genocide, massively advertised as the first case of genocide in the twentieth century. It was an American policy – not an Armenian one – to exploit the credibility of Holocaust study in order to reclaim control of the term genocide. The booklet on the President's Commission on the Holocaust in 1979 shows how the term genocide and the promotion of the Armenian case as the American-chosen genocide were blended into the US government's investment in the Holocaust's memorial and education. It was an American-led committee that organized the first conference in which the Armenian tragedy of WWI was sensationally presented as genocide. The conference was held in Tel Aviv in 1982, and some of the same people who were in the US President's Commission on the Holocaust took part in its organization. In this international conference on Holocaust and Genocide, the consensus over the legitimacy of Holocaust study was served to legitimize the American-controlled growth of genocide study, with the events of 1915 as the main case of genocide. It was American soft power – not Armenian soft power – that had major newspapers in the West act as a mouthpiece for the conference organizers. Especially biased was the *New York Times*, first, by accepting – and promoting as fact – the conference's assumption that the genocide-label is applicable in the Armenian case; second, by leading its readers to believe that Turkey is in denial

of its past; third, by reporting that Turkey is pressing the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs to cancel the conference, thereby making it seem as if Turkey wants to use political power to hide some historical truth, and as if official Israel was uncomfortable by the existence of the conference; fourth, by publishing the organizers' unverified claims that Turkey threatened to harm its Jews if the conference took place; and finally, by adding that Turkey was in denial of threatening to harm its Jews. This was a textbook example of a soft-power attack by the US against Turkey. It set the course for the genocide scholarship that is controlling the discourse to this day.

The Armenians were not the ones who established an entire genocide scholarship, upon its academic journals and its backing by popular media outlets. Over the decades the genocide accusation against Turks became solidified through an American enterprise that enjoys the American ability to frame the agenda internationally. For instance, in Denmark and Sweden, where the Russell Tribunal hearings were held during the Vietnam War – when the US was actually accused of genocide – there are now centers of Holocaust-and-genocide-studies in place, controlling the discourse on what counts as genocide according to US interests. Such centers exist across the US, and in countries that are dependent on the US for their security.

As a result, the genocide accusations against the US over Vietnam are long forgotten. Overall, there is also a blatant disregard by the genocide scholarship of Native American history, along with other cases of colonialist massacres in Africa, Asia, and Oceania. All the while, the American-controlled language on genocide has made the words “Armenian” and “genocide” be associated with each other in a manner that creates a fact regardless of historical accuracy or legal validity, and shapes the manufactured genocide-discourse.

However, being decades removed from the genesis of this genocide accusation against Turks, the Armenian narrative is still sustained by the US because it has become serviceable in other ways. The political game that is played through the accusation of genocide has branched out and now serves interests other than obliterating the memory of the genocide accusation against the US over the bombardment of Indochina.

It is apparent that the systematic portrayal of the Turkish government as being angry, callous, denialist, dishonest, and a host of other derogatory adjectives, is hurting Turkish image. Turkey is made to seem like a beast that is lacking Western sensibilities, like a raging bull. Turkey is shown as a bull in a china shop, as if it does not know how to behave in an enlightened Western manner. It is the villain in its dealings with the Armenians, a bully that is picking on the weak and poor Armenia by taking advantage of its power as a NATO member to apply pressure



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on the US. The genocide accusation against Turkey offers the US political leverage in its dealings with Turkey, enjoyed by the EU as well. Just as it is unimaginable that any entity could effectively charge the US with genocide, it is imaginable that the US could use its dominant power to suddenly execute a late charge of genocide against the leaders of the Committee of Union and Progress, based on the power it has given to the Armenian narrative and the genocide scholarship. Such an occurrence is highly unlikely, but because of how the US dominates the international scene, the threat of it happening is credible. It makes sense that the US would want to perpetuate this threat, and thereby be able to impose certain kinds of cooperation on Turkey; the kinds of cooperation that, otherwise, Turkey might reject.

The Cambodian Tribunal illustrates that the American threat is credible. As a result of heavy American bombardment, hundreds of thousands of Cambodians died by 1975, many had to relocate, and the social order there was destroyed. In this context, the Khmer Rouge took over the country and introduced a harsh policy of forced labor in an effort to rebuild the economy. Even after the American bombardment had ended, many still died as consequence of the conditions that were in place before the Khmer Rouge movement even became the governing body. The conditions of hunger and disease were so severe that the relentless discipline introduced by the Khmer Rouge, in addition to the persecution of those suspected of cooperation with the US, did not put an end to the suffering in Cambodia.

Despite this historical context, there are ongoing chargers against the Khmer Rouge regime in which there is no regard for American responsibility. Instead, these Khmer Rouge Trials, taking place decades after Khmer Rouge rule, rewrite history according to a Pol Pot-centered narrative that was established by the American-led genocide scholarship. In other words, these Khmer Rouge Trials, facilitated through international organizations, and financed by the US and its dependents, have created an internationally recognized legal fact. Japan, whose security depends on the US, made contributions to the trials between 2006 and 2013 that amounted to 42 percent of the budget. The US itself might have carried the financial load, had it not made the trials' political agenda too obvious. In the case of Cambodia, the US was not interested in threat alone, but in an actual rewriting of history through a legal court. By accusing Pol Pot's regime of genocide, the American did not just free themselves from blame for what happened in Cambodia, but could now point at China as a responsible party for being Pol Pot's communist inspiration. Thus, the US used its soft power to give itself the edge over China in their competition over the minds of peoples in East Asia. This shows that through its control of discourse and international organizations, the US can turn genocide accusations into legal charges. The bulk of literature produced by the genocide scholarship has the power to block from view many important

aspects of historical context, as seen in the Cambodian case. Luckily for Turkey, the US gains more by maintaining the threat of the genocide accusation against Turkey than it would by organizing an international court that would turn the Armenian narrative into a legal reality.

The perpetuation of the threat against Turkey follows a script. It is like a Harvard script for a Hollywood production. The script says 1.5 million; the script says mass killings; the script says Turkish denial; the script says angry Turkish reaction; the script says NATO membership is a Turkish card; the script says most scholars agree it was genocide; and the script says the US president wants to call it genocide but cannot. It is made to seem as if Turkey is using its political power against the US, to stop it from doing something right. Turkey is threatened, but made to seem as if it is the one that is threatening. It is made to seem as if Turkey is the fire-spewing dragon, and president Obama is the princess held captive and kept from uttering a sound. If Turkey continues to play its role in this script, then it will continue to do its part in perpetuating the genocide accusation. Does it make sense for Turkey to want to play this role? It has played this role for quite some time. How long will it continue to do so?

Having this role in mind, is it any wonder that the younger generation of Turks does not want to hear about this issue? The problem is not just how the Young Turks are being perceived, but how the younger generation of Turks are perceiving this issue. As long as this is the same old scripted Armenian issue, the Turks that do not want to be associated with this Turkish role, would rather be informed by non-Turkish sources on this issue, believe themselves to be intellectuals because they are open to criticism of Turkey, and end up adding more pressure on the Turkish government. This behavior by them is also scripted. Articles such as the one by Thomas de Waal of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, published recently by *Foreign Affairs*, aim at these younger Turks who think that they are better informed by such American articles that criticize their own government, without realizing that their reaction in such manner is desired by the author and the publisher. They are led to believe that non-Turkish information on this issue means that the information is more authentic and reliable. They do not realize that such articles are designed to mobilize them into pressuring the Turkish government. They mostly care not to have a group identity that is associated with saying no to the enlightened world, with being the bad guy, with failing to be on the same page with everybody else. It is understandable that this would be their view as long as this issue is known as an Armenian issue. How would Turks who are influenced by Western culture be able to ignore what the Western sources are telling them about their own Ottoman history? As long as those Western sources do not become the issue itself, many intellectual Turks will remain critical of the government, thinking that the government is being stubborn about the past and unfriendly to the Armenian people.

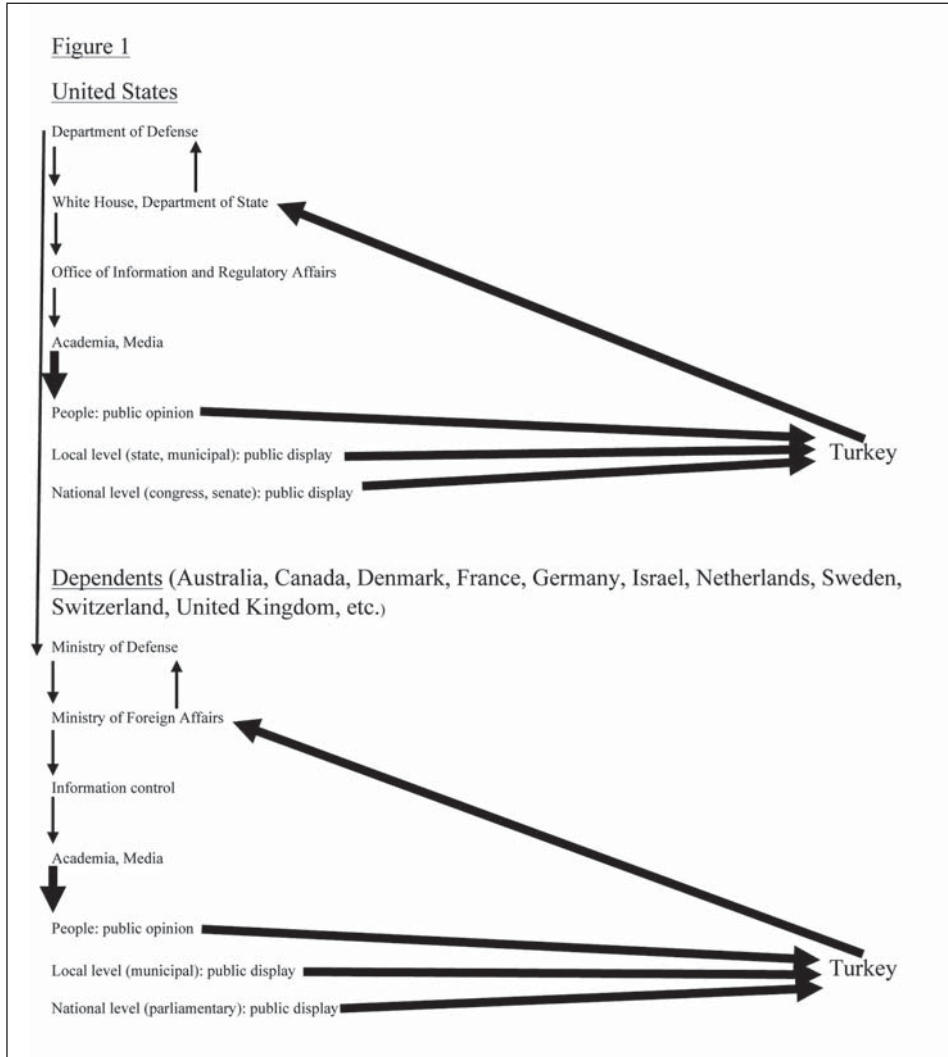
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The issue, as an Armenian issue, is a platform for anti-establishment passion. It is fed by the idea that it is the older gatekeepers of national pride who do not understand how the world sees Turkey. As an Armenian issue, it is viewed as an embarrassing inability to simply let the Armenians have what they want. To them, it is just a simple recognition, and only pettiness is holding Turkey back from progress, from truly joining Europe. They would like to see the issue disappear, for it seems to be a headache and nothing more. They do not see what Turkey stands to lose by calling it genocide, only what it could gain. They do not see this issue as attractive at all, and have not considered what is at stake.

That is why it is high time to flip the script. In order to turn this script around, Turkey will have to make this less about Yerevan, and more about Washington; less about Armenian lobbies in Washington, and more about American policies in Washington. Turkey's change of script would show that it is under a soft-power attack by the greatest power on earth. Turkey is the underdog in this story. Turkey has to be seen as the David who stands against Goliath. Turkey has not acted like David yet, even though it is the David of this issue. Once perceived as a David, the fight against the genocide accusation will gain more supporters in Turkey and around the world. Once it is recognized that there is a system in place, that works like a machine against Turkey, it will be identified that the cycle itself and those who control it are the Goliath in this issue. This is why it would be both beneficial and accurate to present this issue as an American issue, and highlight that this issue is about Turkey being challenged by a mammoth.

The cyclicity of the genocide accusation has to be illustrated in order for the true nature of this issue to be grasped. The illustration in Figure 1 is based on research of the genocide accusation as a phenomenon, and also based on a general sense that foreign policy in the US begins with Pentagon considerations. It is posited that the Department of Defense is the source of the genocide accusation, in consideration of its wishes to be freed from the burden of genocide accusation during the Vietnam War and its interest in keeping Turkey committed to the American agenda. While presidents come and go, giving the public an important sense of democracy, the Pentagon remains the permanent powerhouse in the US.



In Figure 1, the thin arrows, which first originate from the US Department of Defense, mark the direction of communication that is not observable. The thick arrows, starting from the information that is produced by academia and media, mark the direction of communication that is observable.

Being that only the thick arrows are seen by the public, the genocide accusation against Turkey has the appearance of an authentic bottom-up process, when in reality it is a premeditated top-down process that begins with the US government.

Being that the thin arrows relate to communication that is not available for

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examination, the displayed chain of communication from the Department of Defense to the literature produced by non-state entities such as the genocide scholarship is hypothetical, but is grounded in the examination of the genocide accusation as a phenomenon. Also, it is relevant to note that Cass R. Sunstein, who headed the US government's Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs between 2009 and 2012, stated in an article, which he co-authored with Adrian Vermeule, that it can be helpful for government to enlist "credible independent experts," but only if it is not seen that the government is controlling such experts: "Although government can supply these independent experts with information and perhaps prod them into action from behind the scenes, too close a connection will prove self-defeating if it is exposed..." ("Conspiracy Theories: Causes and Cures," *The Journal of Political Philosophy* 17, 2 (2009): p. 223).

Being that the involvement of the US government is concealed from the public eye, only the Turkish government is seen as the political body that is involved in the matter. In other words, the politicization of history is initiated by the US government, but only Turkey is shown as politicizing history by using a political route to engage the US government (White House, Department of State) about the genocide accusation.

Being that the US has great influence on academia and media, Turkey's historical claims through the work of scholars are not given any serious consideration, and, instead, the Turkish government's political reaction of anger and denial is highlighted.

Being that the public thinks that it is informed by credible academic work and media reports, the public is likely to question the integrity of the Turkish government rather than the integrity of the familiar sources of information.

Being that the people are convinced that the information is credible, and being that the executive branch of the government seeks to advance the genocide accusation, it becomes beneficial to put the matter on public display on both local and national levels of representation. The bills produced by these local and national politicians maximize the public pressure that can be placed on Turkey. These bills are not viewed by the public as political because they are in harmony with the information that is produced by academia and media. It is Turkey's reaction that is perceived as political by the public, because the Turkish perspective does not coincide with what the people think that they know about the subject. This further deteriorates Turkey's image in relation to the genocide accusation, because it depicts Turkey as trying to avoid the truth through politics. Moreover, it perpetuates the cycle by seemingly confirming the suspicions that the public already had of Turkey via the information received through academia and media. Once the US government sees that the public is convinced that the genocide

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accusation is genuine, there is even more incentive for it to see this policy as a success that ought to be repeated.

Being that many states are dependent on their relations with the US for their security, the US Department of Defense has the power to dictate to these states how to participate in the genocide accusation against Turkey. A prime example of this is found in the Australian case.

In Australian academia the information on genocide is controlled through the Australian Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies – an extension of the American enterprise of centers and institutes for both Holocaust and genocide studies – whose director, Colin Tatz, has done his share of telling the public there that 1915 was genocide. More interestingly, the media coverage of Professor Justin McCarthy’s visit to Australia in November 2013 emphasizes the peculiar manner in which information on the genocide accusation is disseminated in a country that is influenced by American soft power.

A written version of a news-item by the Australian state-sponsored TV channel, ABC, had the following title: “Armenian genocide denier Justin McCarthy to speak at Parliament House.” The bias in this title is unmistakable. The bias also runs throughout the report: “...an American history professor who many Armenians view with the same disdain as Jews view Holocaust denier David Irving”; “...who campaigns around the world against the recognition of the Armenian genocide”; “Although it is known as the Armenian genocide, thousands of Assyrians and Pontian Greeks were also killed”; “Turkey has long denied the charge...”; “International bodies... have also recognized the genocide”; and quotes whose effect is to establish Holocaust association and character assassination. This biased report was “By national defence correspondent Michael Brissenden.” The job title of this reporter is critical in the effort to understand the cyclicity of the genocide accusation, and raises important questions. The first question might seem naïve, considering the second one: Why is a “defence correspondent” of the state-sponsored TV channel informing the Australian public about Ottoman history? To what extent was the reporter guided by his typical human sources at the Australian Department of Defence who receive dictations from the American Department of Defense on this issue?

A letter by Julie Bishop, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, signed June 4, 2014, completes the neat showing of the cycle through the Australian example. In response to the efforts of Turkish lobbyists and diplomats in Australia who were growing more and more concerned by the public displays of the genocide accusation, she assures them that the Australian government does not “recognize these events as ‘genocide’.” Furthermore, she insists that “Australian states and territories have no constitutional role in the formulation of Australian foreign



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policy.” While that statement might be true, it is written in a manner that misleads into thinking that there is utter separation between the Australian government and the promotion of the genocide accusation against Turks. Governments that claim that state-sponsored media outlets are merely exercising their freedom of press when they accuse Turks of genocide are in denial of their role in the controlled language. It is understandable that Turkish lobbyists and diplomats in Australia would be glad to see such a letter, and thankful for it, but it must also be understood that a non-recognition of genocide only means the perpetuation of the cycle in which pressure is placed on Turkey. It perpetuates the cycle in three ways: first, when Turkey or Turkish representatives address foreign ministries, they are going on a political route that is then advertised as such by the Western media to make it seem as if Turkey turns to politicians because it has political power and because scholars agree that it was genocide; second, when governments announce that they do not recognize the events as genocide, the debate becomes even more publicized and the particular use of the word “recognize” suggests that there is a failure to acknowledge something that is known to be true; third, by seemingly giving the Turkish lobbyists and diplomats what they have requested, the foreign ministry notifies the defense ministry that Turkey is again indebted. What might seem like a triumph for Turkish lobbyists and diplomats, only strengthens the cyclicity of the genocide accusation.

Some might argue against this presentation of cyclicity that it is a mere “conspiracy theory” to say that the genocide accusation originates in the US. However, the centers of holocaust and genocide that follow an American blueprint and the media reports that follow an American blueprint are no different from the many McDonald’s restaurants that are spread around the world. Is it a conspiracy theory to claim that all the McDonald’s restaurants originate from the US? The production of a controlled language on genocide is the discourse version of a Big Mac. It follows the same guidelines to produce a controlled result. The American-controlled genocide scholarship is a McGenocide: a product of the US government’s sense of good business.

How to break the cyclicity of the genocide accusation? The cyclicity will not be broken by arguing with Armenians about history, or by competing with them over public opinion in Western society. Even once it is fully realized that the genocide accusation is framed by the US according to its interests, it would not be possible to break the cycle of the genocide accusation by trying to beat the US in its own game. The access to mainstream academia and media is restricted or even denied. The odds will not favor Turkey in a competition with Harvard and Hollywood over the ability to spread ideas.

In order to make a difference in the status quo of the genocide accusation, and possibly break its cyclicity, the US government must be discouraged from



running this cycle. There are two main ways to discourage the US government from continuing this cycle: one, by making the genocide accusation ineffective; two, by making the genocide accusation unprofitable.

How to make the genocide accusation ineffective? The concept of soft power in International Relations theory, as taught by American political scientist Joseph Nye, considers credibility to be a key component in a government's ability to frame an agenda. Without credibility, the government's ability to persuade is lost, and the attempt to persuade will be perceived as propaganda. It is here suggested that instead of continuing to play a scripted role by pleading with the Department of State and foreign ministries not to recognize genocide, Turkish lobbyists and diplomats will yield greater results by confronting their American counterparts about recognizing that the genocide scholarship is a product of the US government, in service of its interests. Turkish representatives would be able to say that research indicates that the genocide accusation against Turks is an American phenomenon. Once Turkish representatives make it clear that there is no separation between the academic work of genocide scholars and US interests, the US government will no longer be able to remain disingenuous about its role in the matter. If, instead of asking American officials not to recognize genocide, Turkish representatives will directly address the US government's involvement in genocide scholarship as the problem, then the genocide accusation will not have the same effect as previously, and the pressure would be placed on the US for operating a soft-power attack on Turkey.

One way of taking initiative in the effort to discredit genocide scholarship is by demanding an apology from the current US ambassador to the UN, Samantha Power. The apology should be for accusing the entire Turkish nation of "race murder" based on a biased selection of sources. Samantha Power's book, *"A Problem from Hell": American and the Age of Genocide*, is the most popular book on genocide and has influenced many people's opinion about Ottoman history and the image of Turks. Being that Power is now a political figure who is possibly looking to become the next secretary of state, she will have much to lose if Turkey applies public pressure for an apology from her. The demand for an apology should first be made through diplomatic channels; if that fails, then it should be made through Turkish media. If done correctly, an apology by Power for legitimizing anti-Turkish prejudice and using unreliable wartime propaganda as sources would also expose the bias of works by genocide scholars who rely on similar sources. This could lead to a significant loss of academic credibility, which could make the genocide accusation ineffective.

How to make the genocide accusation unprofitable? To make it unprofitable means to convince the US government that this policy of genocide accusation will become a liability if continued. In other words, it will have to be shown that this

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genocide accusation will begin to have costs for the US that are greater than the perceived benefits. Neither Turkey nor the US have an interest in harming relations, but being that the US has been applying its soft-power to pressure Turkey, then it is only fair that Turkey would respond by affecting the American considerations of how to benefit from its soft power.

One way of taking initiative in the effort to have the US reconsider its use of soft power is if it becomes apparent that the genocide accusation is leading Turkey to developing stronger cultural ties with China. The US is most concerned about changes in status quo with China, and would consider it a loss if due to its policy on genocide, China and Turkey will draw closer to cooperate toward establishing a common perspective on colonialist historiography and the lingering Western discourse-control. There is much ground for mutual research on the treatment of both the Ottoman and Qing empires by the great powers in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, as both empires were subjected to forms of British semi colonization. Chinese and Turkish scholars would be able to show how discursive legacies of colonialism maintain a mentality of Yellow Peril and Muslim Peril. Furthermore, both China and Turkey could articulate a united position against genocide and its misuse by the US and its dependents. By highlighting American atrocities against Native Americans, African slaves, and the people of Indochina, the genocide accusation against Turkey will become costly and counterproductive. If the main original goal of creating the Armenian claims of genocide was to make the association of genocide with Vietnam forgotten, then a renewed international focus on the atrocities in Vietnam is something that the US would wish to avoid. Such pressure on the US, through bilateral relations with China, could lead the US to see the genocide accusation as unprofitable.



## **THE GENERAL HARBORD REPORT**

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My presentation is on the objective and importance of the General Harbord Report, prepared upon President Woodrow Wilson's request at the end of World War I to supply correct and sufficient information for the President to extend to the US Congress at the point of deciding on the establishment of an independent Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia to be placed under American mandate along with what was left as the Ottoman State. Assuming mandate was a proposal extended to American President Woodrow Wilson at the Paris Peace Conference to overcome the controversy that developed during the discussions to determine the terms for the Ottoman peace treaty. The main actors in the controversy were England France and the USA.

When political, territorial, and economic conflicts among big European states for long separated into two blocks resulted in a world-wide war in 1914, the US was able to keep away from it for three years while Ottoman Empire joined the Central Powers and was defeated after fighting in five different fronts for four years. During these four years the Allies, noticing the rapid decline of the Empire, shared

its fertile territories on paper according to their interests with a set of secretly concluded treaties.

It was the imminence of economic crisis due to war that urged Wilson to decide that America should 'enter the War to end it'.<sup>1</sup> The President's proposal was not unanimously supported by the Congress but albeit the 6 negative votes in the Senate and 50 in the House US did join the war on 4<sup>th</sup> of April 1917<sup>2</sup> on the side of the Allies, assuring their victory. On the other hand, America, entering the war on the side of the Allies, carefully omitted declaring war on the Ottoman Empire for the sake of preserving philanthropic institutions, mostly schools American missionaries erected and operated throughout the country since 1820s. These institutions appealed mostly to Armenians Americans became familiar with mainly through the missionaries and came to believe that they were vulnerable Christians, suffering under Muslim yoke. American public opinion wholeheartedly supported them through the multiple deploring incidences between the Turks and Armenians prior to and during the First World War. Hence, providing a good representation for the Armenians during the peace negotiations that would follow the war became one of the primary concerns of the US government and Americans.

However, Wilson's prestige was weakened when the Russian Revolution broke out and the Bolshevik Government withdrew from war in December 1917 after the Soviet Foreign Office disclosed all secret agreements of the Tsarist regime. This did not only demonstrate to the world that America was excluded from Allies' partitioning of the resourceful Ottoman territories, but also left the President in a difficult situation at home. To remedy this humiliation, he acted as an arbiter and invited the belligerent blocks to stop fighting and negotiate around a 14-article peace program he announced which came to be known as Wilson's 14 Points or Principles. Although the Allies accepted to conclude the armistices and peace treaties in accordance with these terms, the points calling for open diplomacy, discontinuation of colonialism and self determination of nations holding demographical majority did not comply with the territorial terms of the secret treaties England and France were determined to apply. Accordingly, to access their zones of interests they included in the *Moudros Armistice* Ottomans signed on October 30, 1918, terms entitling the Allies to occupy any *strategically point* within the Ottoman frontiers in case of corruption. Allibies were found at once so they lost no time in landing troops at points which were actually not much different than the areas their interests lay. This clear violation of the fourteen points and the Armistice was rejected by the Turks and triggered armed local resistances to occupations which within a year turned into an organized war of independence under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Pasha. Actually, the 12<sup>th</sup> of the 14 Points

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1 Faulkner, Harold U., *A.g.e. s.673, 674*; Beard, Charles and Mary, *Basic History of the United States*, New York, 1944, p. 677

2 Op.cits. 674

## Seçil Karal Akgün

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assuring Turks sovereignty where they were in majority<sup>3</sup> justified the strong reaction, although the same article also raised Armenian aspirations for the establishment of an independent state they for long dreamed of in Eastern Turkey where they claimed they were in majority.

When Paris Peace Conference convened in January 1919, the Allies feeling obliged to Wilson but not wanting to be deprived of their shares came to the Conference prepared to submit to alternatives. The mandate system brought up during the discussions appeared to be the way out of the dilemma of preserving their allotments while seemingly observing the terms they accepted. This system originated by General Jan Christian Smuts from South Africa required the classification of underdeveloped areas of the world according to their strategic, geopolitical, economic and cultural conditions, and their placement under the administration of the big powers for an ample time until they reached sufficiency for self governing.<sup>4</sup>

Since the Ottoman Empire was determined as one of the states to be placed under mandate, the Allies readily accepted this suggestion. With a written accordance to the Sykes-Picot agreement of the Secret Treaties<sup>5</sup>, southern parts starting from Cilicia and covering Syria-Lebanon area with Arab majority was placed under French mandate and highly Kurdish populated oil rich Mesopotamia and Palestine, under British.<sup>6</sup> To secure the application of this well planned motive, the previously discussed establishment of an independent Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia to be placed under American mandate along with the remaining Ottoman State was proposed to Wilson by the British Premier David Lloyd George with a reminder that engagement to the Armenians would stir Christian spirit of the Americans and restore the prestige he lost at home.<sup>7</sup>

Wilson agreed to the suggestion, conditioning it to the consent of the Congress. It deeply interested the Americans anxious to extend a helping hand to the Armenians but albeit President's support, the proposal was met with hesitations at the Congress when the serious investments US would have to make for the development of the regions involved were bought up. Uncertainties climbed with the warnings of Admiral Bristol, US High Commissioner in Turkey that independent Armenia would be a buffer state against Bolshevik expansion England feared and American mandate over this state would secure US protection for the

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3 Eliot Grinnel Mears (ed) *Modern Turkey*, New York 1924, P. 622 *seph P. Tumulty, Woodrow Wilson As I Know Him*, New York 1921p.59

4 Herbert Hoover, *The Ordeal of Woodrow Wilson*, New York, 1958, p.232

5 Raymond L. Logan, *The U.S. Senate and the Versailles Mandate Systems*, Washington, 1945, s.4

6 Edward Mandel House, and Seymour, *What Really Happened At Paris*, New York, 1921, s. 178

7 *Prof Thomas A. Bryson, Mark Lambert Bristol, U.S. Navy, Admiral-Diplomat: His Influence on the Armenian Mandate Question, The Armenian Review Vol. 21, No. 4-84, Winter 1968, p.2*

rich oil resources of Mesopotamia under British mandate.<sup>8</sup> Finally, to end the increasing reluctance, the Head of the Near East Relief Organization Herbert Hoover suggested to Wilson to send a commission of inquiry to the Middle East to explore and report the conditions for the feasibility of an independent Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia as well as for the American mandate. Accordingly, two commissions were appointed to investigate and determine the probability of the proposal. The first was *The American Section of the International Commission on Mandates in Turkey*, briefly referred to as the *King Crane Commission* appointed by the Big Four in Paris to investigate mandate question in Arab provinces.

*General Harbord Commission* was the second, sent out at President Wilson's direction to investigate East Anatolia and Transcaucasia and comply the necessary data to determine the feasibility of the Paris proposal. The resolutions of this commission would also determine the part US would play in the settlement of the Turkish case at the Conference, which was also controversial since state of war did not exist between the two countries.

General James Guthrie Harbord, appointed to lead the commission, was a reputable general with overseas experiences, recommended to Wilson by Herbert Hoover, the US Foreign Secretary John Foster Dulles, and Henry Morgenthau, the former US Ambassador in Istanbul. The instruction given to Harbord by the President for the assignment was "Proceed without delay on a Government vessel to Constantinople, Batum, and such other places in Armenia, Russian Transcaucasia, and Syria, as will enable you to carry out instructions already discussed with you. It is desired that you investigate and report on political, military, geographical, administrative, economic, and other considerations involved in possible American interests and responsibilities in that region."<sup>9</sup>

Wilson's anticipation was that the commission would tour through the determined route and comply the required information to crystallize the facts pertaining to the prospected Armenian state and American mandate and submit a report that would end the hesitations Congress had for accepting mandate. But it should be noted here that not only the report officially reflecting results of inquiries but also Harbord's article "Investigating Turkey and Transcaucasia"<sup>10</sup> published in a widely read periodical while discussions continued at the Senate must have influenced the members of the Congress in forming their opinion. In fact, the article reflecting his personal impressions, views and experiences which were more critical of the

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8 Prof Thomas A. Bryson, *Mark Lambert Bristol, United States Navy, Admiral-Diplomat: His Influence on the Armenian Mandate Question*, *The Armenian Review* Vol. 21, No. 4-84, Winter 1968, pp.3-9

9 Maj. Gen. James G. Harbord, *Conditions in the Near East- Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia*, Washington Government Printing Office, 1920, p.3

10 Harbord, Maj. Gen. James, *Investigating Turkey and Transcaucasia*, *World's Work* V. XL, No. 1, (May 1920)



Armenians and reasoned much with the Turks was fairly differently worded than the report. This can be observed through the below examples justifying the assertion that Harbord intentionally or not, did supply a more objective data for the Congress members to consider at a decisive time.

Nevertheless, observations, inquiries and interviews during the one-month tour altered considerably General Harbord and the commission members' outlook to the matter that the report written at the end of the commission was, with its objectivity, far from meeting Wilson's expectations.

### *Commission at work*

Before General Harbord sailed for İstanbul from Brest, he was informed of the unrest prevalent in Turkey since the Greek occupation of Izmir in mid May. There was a general concern within the western world that this unrest might turn into a movement targeting non-Muslims in Turkey. Furthermore, the mission also received alarming reports in Paris "as to organized attacks by the Turkish Army impending along the old international border between Turkey and Russia" so they were asked to focus on 'Armenian *vilayets* of Turkey and Russian Armenia', the newly established Armenian Republic. Therefore the itinerary of the mission through Turkey was planned with the intention of observing the truth of such reports<sup>11</sup>.

Exposed to anti-Turkish and pro-Armenian propaganda in the US, Harbord and his team were prepared to meet severe displays of anti-Armenian sentiments in Turkey and report the atrocities they observed. But as he later wrote, prejudices started to wear off in Paris at the beginning of the mission when Harbord held discussions with the authorities of Peace Conference, with Boghos Nubar, the head of the Armenian Delegation and other Armenian representatives to hear their views.<sup>12</sup>

It was during these discussions that changes in Harbord's opinion started as he discovered that "the knowledge of many who were known as the experts on Armenian issue about Armenia and the Near East did not surpass what they read at the Library of Congress"<sup>13</sup>. He was surprised to learn that Boghos Nubar had never been to the lands he advocated freedom for just as he was over the exaggerated complains of the person who remarked "even I was massacred twice" when he was reflecting atrocities of Armenian replacement. In fact, Harbord's first

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11 Op.cit. p. 24

12 Op.cit. p. 4

13 Maj. Gen. James G. Harbord., *Investigating Turkey and Transcaucasia*, *World's Work V. XL, N o.1, (May 1920)* p. 35



impressions had become concealed warnings to abandon his prejudices. Accordingly, the itinerary of the mission through Turkey was planned with the intention of carefully observing the truth. Therefore he was able to write later in his report that “The Turkish Army is not massed along the border”<sup>14</sup> explaining that from the Black Sea to Persia, they found nothing to justify the notifications.

When Harbord arrived in İstanbul on September 2 with 46 members of the commission he was asked to select, all knew that they would be touring a country the US was officially in war with. Moreover, the turmoil İzmir’s occupation entailed was still climbing and local resistance groups were formed throughout the country to voice reactions. Therefore, safety of the group was most important. But the group also learned that the Porte had lost all authority in Anatolia to resistance groups, headed by a rebelling General, Mustafa Kemal, renowned as the hero of the Gallipoli battles. Although he was originally appointed by the Sultan to proceed to Anatolia to take under control Turkish retaliation to the allied forces, he disobeyed the imperial order to head the newly flourishing liberation movement. They also learned that a conference was recently held in Erzurum to display Turkish resistance to the establishment of an Armenian state in Eastern Anatolia. Additionally, Mustafa Kemal Pasha had already organized for a general congress to meet in Sivas to determine the methodology, design the military and political steps of the liberation movement and form a national front. With the awareness that this movement could not be ignored, Harbord made visits of courtesy to the representatives of the nationalist movement in İstanbul before the commission started its tour. This served as a visa for the mission for Harbord was to include in his report that everywhere they went they were met with courtesy and warm reception of the nationalists, and did not encounter any problems.

During the journey eastward Harbord came to notice that the entire civilian and military hierarchy in Anatolia was committed to the nationalist cause, received orders from Sivas, and that all civilian and military authorities *obeyed* Mustafa Kemal instead of the Sultan. Safety and concern for locals’ reception was overcome through his influence; he even ordered all military and civilian nationalist units to give the American mission good reception. This, Harbord did not fail to mention in his article as “we met with nothing but courtesy, kindly curiosity, and genuine hospitality”. He became convinced after the vast support he observed that neither the nationalist movement apprehended by the Armenians, or its leader could be disregarded in determining conditions in the Near East. So he added in his itinerary a Sivas stop to meet Mustafa Kemal Pasha the İstanbul officials considered an outlaw.

During the journey, members of the mission “interviewed at length representatives of every Government exercising sovereignty in that region, as well as individual

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14 Harbord Report p. 24

Turks, Armenians, Greeks, Kurds, Tartars, Georgians, Russians, Persians, Jews, Arabs, British, and French, including Americans for some time domiciled in the country”<sup>15</sup> They learned more about the current conditions and had the chance to experience multiple occasions that dimmed prejudices they had at the beginning about Turks’ belligerence to Armenians. Their first surprising experience was being greeted at İzmit train station by approximately 300 Armenians with flowers and fruit bags, headed by the Gregorian Armenian patriarch. They learned from this lot about returning deportees. They experienced similar greetings all over<sup>16</sup> and were especially surprised to see Armenian soldiers of the French Legion as well as civilian Armenians promenading in the streets of Adana and Antep they knew from 1909 massacres and 1915 replacement. Harbord noted in his report and article that the prevailing destitute of the places they visited was the same for the Turks and Armenians.

### *Meeting with Mustafa Kemal Pasha*

Harbord met with Mustafa Kemal on September 20, about a week after the closing of the Sivas Congress. This and the Erzurum meeting with General Kazım Karabekir who had organized the local conference there to reject Armenian state were to serve Harbord to reach a complete understanding of the nationalist movement which at that time was looked upon by the west as a pan-Turanian and pan-Islamist movement targeting non-Muslims.<sup>17</sup>

What Harbord sought to learn from Kemal Pasha was whether the nationalist movement was antagonistic to all non-Muslims and if the Turanian and Pan-Islamist aims included displays of belligerency against Armenians and Greeks. He also expressed his concerns about the safety of American missionaries and installations, reminding they were American investments. Equally important for him was learning Mustafa Kemal’s viewpoint on Armenian atrocities, particularly during the 1915 removal of Armenians from the war zone. Mustafa Kemal’s influence over the nationalists left no doubt that their views would be identical, so the meeting was of major importance for the report to Harbord was to write.

Mustafa Kemal, as Harbord wrote, explained very clearly that the sole intention of the nationalists was the integrity of their land, independence of their nation and sovereignty of their state. Although Mustafa Kemal stated that to achieve this goal, Turkey was ready to accept the mandate and assistance of a disinterested big power, preferably America, Harbord was able to distinguish that the Turkish

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15 Harbord Report, p. 4

16 *Maj. Gen. James G. Harbord,, Investigating Turkey .... p. 46*

17 Harbord Report p. 16-17

understanding of mandate differed from theirs. However, not mentioning this in his report, wrote in his article that “Turks conceive it as advice and assistance from a big brother with slight exercise of authority as not to interfere with their interior government or their foreign relations.”<sup>18</sup>

Harbord wrote not in the report but in his article that he found Mustafa Kemal inclined to balance his disapproval of the ill treatment of the Armenians against the atrocities Greeks committed in İzmir “under the eyes of allied representatives and under the guns of their fleets”.<sup>19</sup> He also learned that Mustafa Kemal attributed the current deplorable condition of the country to foreign intrigues and the nationalists were determined to rescue the country from these conditions. The meeting was most illuminating in supplying Harbord the facts for the rapidly growing Turkish nationalistic movement and with his travel, convinced him that the national struggle was not an imperialistic or anti Christian violent movement but was strictly for preservation of the territorial integrity and Turkish independence.

Harbord was impressed by Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s confidence; this, he expressed as they departed by telling him that he himself also would have acted similarly under same conditions.

The first of the three conclusions Harbord reached from talking with Mustafa Kemal was that the nationalist movement, did not portend violence to the non-Muslim races of the Empire. 2<sup>nd</sup> was that Turkish understanding of *mandate* differed from theirs, and 3<sup>rd</sup> that Mustafa Kemal was not an ordinary political adventurer, and that he was a military leader of proven skill.’ (again, mentioned in the article) so he included in the report that nationalists movement, particularly with the solidarity provided by the Sivas Congress had to be considered in the settlement of the Turkish question. He invited United States invited the same attention before entering under any obligation in Turkey.

Harbord, after meeting Karabekir too in Erzurum, sought written explanations about the nationalist movement and Turks’ stance towards non-Muslims from both generals and included Mustafa Kemal Pasha’s lengthy and explanations underlining the part “We guarantee no new Turkish violence against the Armenians will take place.”<sup>20</sup> This was very important for the US eager to assume the role of displaying benevolence and philanthropy to Armenians, and the note of gratitude he wrote in return to Kemal Pasha in the Appendix of his report. Addressing

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18 *Maj. Gen. James G. Harbord, Investigating .... Worlds Work V. XL, NY 1920 Moustapha Kemal Pasha And His Party p. 186*

19 Op. Ct.

20 Harbord Report, Exhibit “C,” Statement of Mustapha Kemal Pasha concerning organization, objects, “League for the Defense of the Rights of Anatolia and Roumelia

Mustafa Kemal he referred to as “former general” at first as *My Dear General* in this letter<sup>21</sup> and the affirmative comments about his qualifications probably made Harbord the first western authority officially praising Mustafa Kemal.

### *The Harbord Report*

The 29- page General Harbord Report, officially titled as *Conditions in the Near East – Report of the American Military Mission to Armenia* is known to have played a decisive role in determining the official US stance in both of the mentioned matters. Addressed to the Secretary of State and submitted to President Woodrow Wilson, it consisted of four main parts on history and present situation of the Armenian people; the political situation and suggestions for readjustment; the conditions and problems involved in a mandatory; and the considerations for and against the undertaking of a mandate. It was based on data compiled by the members of the mission during the tour on 11 different topics, each written as separate reports by military and civilian experts in the mission and given to General Harbord to use in writing the main report. These sub reports Harbord attached to the main as “Exhibits” were a) Political factors and problems, written by Capt. Stanley K. Hornbeck from the Ordnance Department; b) Government in Turkey and Transcaucasia, by judge advocate Lieut. Col. Jasper Y. Brinton; c) Public and private finance of Turkey and Transcaucasia, by Prof. W. W. Cumberland; d) Commerce and industry in Turkey and Transcaucasia, by Trade Commissioner Eliot Grinnell Mears; e) Public health and sanitation, by Col. Henry Beeuwkes from the medical corps; f) Population; industrial and other qualities; maintenance, by an engineer Lieut. Col. John Price Jackson; g) Climate, natural resources, animal industry, and agriculture, by Lieut. Col. E. Bowditch from Infantry; h) Geography, mining, and boundaries, by Maj. Lawrence Martin from General Staff; i) The press of Turkey and Transcaucasia, by Maj. Harold W. Clark, Infantry; j) The military problem of a mandatory, by Brig. Gen. Geo. Van Horn Moseley, from General Staff; k) Transport and communications in Asia Minor and the Trans-Caucasus, by Engineer William B. Poland.

Although the report contained many passages reflecting pro-Armenian and anti-Turk sentiments, many objective comments and especially the figurative reflections in the report entailed the undesired conclusion for the President.

Harbord who admitted he started his tour in Turkey and Transcaucasia with prejudices concluded it thinking differently on the Armenian and mandate issues in the light of the above mentioned informative reports added to his personal observations and contacts. This is noticeable in his report although it contained

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21 Harbord Report, Exhibit “D”

much about the Armenian atrocities and was written with easily noticeable pro-Armenian sentiments. However, it can be regarded as fairly objective for differentiating the rulers and the subjects, that is, the Ottoman government and Turkish populace through comments such as the ones indicating that Turks also confronted the same deprivations as the Armenians and suffered similarly through the incidences. Another point demonstrating the objectivity of the report was underlining in more than one place that the Armenians' negative stance against the Ottoman State were mostly products of Armenian Revolutionary Societies, foreign interferences, and war atmosphere.

Nevertheless, the report did lack the abundant affirmative, unbiased comments in General Harbord's aforementioned article *Investigating Turkey and Transcaucasia*, where Harbord reflected his personal opinion on Turks and Armenians impartially. Particularly the section of the article titled *Moustapha Kemal Pasha And His Party* was more explicit about the Turks and the emerging nationalist movement than the official report, probably written considering Wilson's sentiments and political expectations pertaining to Armenian state and American mandate. For example, "We literally dreamed Armenia and massacres... Much of the literature was of the class that in another cause might have been classified as propaganda." (p. 37) was what Harbord wrote about the beginning of the Turkey tour in his article. But it should be indicated that he did not refrain from including in the report his objective convictions he developed about Turkish people and their approach to Armenians with lines similar to the following:

There is much to show that, left to themselves, the Turk and the Armenian when left without official instigation have hitherto been able to live together in peace. Their existence side by side on the same soil for five centuries unmistakably indicates their interdependence and mutual interest. The aged *Vali* of Erzurum, a man old in years and in official experience, informed us that in his youth, before massacres began under Abdul Hamid, the Turk and the Armenian lived in peace and confidence. The Turk making the pilgrimage to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina left his family and property with his Armenian neighbor; similarly the Armenian on the eve of a journey intrusted his treasures to his Turkish friend. Testimony is universal that the massacres have always been ordered from Constantinople. Some Turkish officials were pointed out to us by American missionaries as having refused to carry out the 1915 order for deportation. That order is universally attributed to the Committee of Union and Progress, of which Enver Bey, Talaat Bey, and Djemal Pasha were the leaders. A court has been sitting in the capital practically since the armistice, and one man, an unimportant subordinate, has been hung. Talaat, Enver, and Djemal are at large, and a group of men charged with various crimes against the laws of war are at Malta in custody of the British, unpunished, except as restrained from personal liberty.<sup>22</sup>

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22 Harbord Report p. 10

However, the mandate issue was the actual concentration point of the report since it directly involved American interests and responsibilities in the regions concerned. In fact, the instructions given to him called attention precisely to this point, and the bulk of the discussions in the Congress also rested on whether US should accept the proposed mandate or not. During the tour of the areas concerned, Harbord had become more convinced that American mandate was a suggestion England and France brought up to acquire their intended investment areas through the same motive. Therefore the report displayed the observations of the Harbord Commission which investigated at first hand the economic and demographic conditions of the area to determine the requirements necessary should the U.S. assume a mandate:

When Harbord arrived in Erzurum, he was greeted by Turks holding posters which read,“ si“*Vive l'Article 12 des Principes de Wilson*” signaled Turks constituted the majority in the province and ought to be entitled sovereignty. Accordingly, the report contained figures on demographic distribution of the Turks and Armenians which ended Armenia suggestion; characteristics of the nationalist movement gradually overtaking the entire nation; and the Nationalists' approach to American mandate. With the awareness that America's major concern was Armenians, for demographic data, it was specified in the report that even before the war the Armenians were far from constituting the majority in the region claimed as Turkish Armenia. Harbord expressed doubts that they would outnumber the Turks in a single community even if the deported returned to their homes<sup>23</sup>.

So the report, which did not recommend an independent Armenia on Turkish territories, suggested a single mandate, if any, of what was left of the Empire rather than Turkish and Armenian zones.

Harbord stated in the explanatory parts of the report that ‘incorporating Turkish territory in a separate Armenia was unwise, no matter what the aspiration of the Armenians’ and that problems could be avoided by the consolidation of the mandate region under a single power. Otherwise “the inevitable jealousies, hatreds, exaggerated separatist tendencies, and economic difficulties would compel failure”. For Turks and Armenians he wrote that “Under one mandatory they will be neighbors. Under two or more, they will be rivals.”<sup>24</sup> It was reminded that with mandate, the existing Turkish revenue system as well as all commercial treaties with the Turks and all financial provisions would lose their validity and that all foreigner powers would have to be withdrawn within the time determined by the mandatory power, so America would have to provide entire means for security and serious military units to fortify the frontiers destitute in Eastern Anatolia and

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23 Op. Cit. p. 7

24 Op.cit. p. 17



the costly investments America would have to make to overcome poverty and develop the region were also included.

Without a definite judgment, 14 reasons were given for and 13 against the acceptance of mandate in the report to be presented to Congress. The reasons listed under the affirmative column were based on moral values while the negative reasons involved the factual, some with figures. The total cost of the mandate for five years was estimated as 756 014 000 dollars.<sup>25</sup>

Informative parts of the report included acknowledgements such as:

On the Turkish side of the border where Armenians have returned, they are gradually recovering their property, and in some cases have received rent for it,<sup>26</sup> but generally they find things in ruins and face desultory assistance as the Turkish Government can afford. Things are a little if any better with the peasant Turks in the same region, equally destitute, and equally defenseless against the winter. ...Not over 20 percent of the Turkish peasants who went to war have returned. The absence of men between 20 and 35 is very noticeable. 600 000 Turkish soldiers died of typhus alone, it is stated, and insufficient hospital service and absolute poverty of supply greatly swelled the death lists.<sup>27</sup>

The report contained evaluations such as “Turks were not the only responsible of the cruelties” ‘when left to themselves, the Turks and Armenians have been able to live together in peace and the belligerence between them was the product of big powers’ provocations; and that Turks were also persecuted during the past incidences. More were:

We saw nothing to prove that Armenians who have returned to their homes are in danger of their lives, but their apprehension has been greatly increased by unbalanced advice given by officers of foreign troops...

The moral responsibility for present unrest throughout Turkey is very heavy on foreign powers...The Armenian is never legally wrong but even American missionaries who have endangered their lives for the Armenians are not as fond of them as of the lazy but friendly and pleasure loving Turk.<sup>28</sup>

The above examples can easily be multiplied to indicate the objective parts of ‘The Harbord Report’ as well as serve to explain to the world that Turks did not

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25 Op.cit. p. 28

26 Op. Cit. p. 8

27 Op.cit. p.9

28 Op.cit. p.18



target annihilating the Armenian race and that the unfortunate events were products of war conditions. It is difficult to assert that Harbord was able to completely overcome his pro-Armenian sentiments and comprehend Turks' reasons for reacting against threats to Turkish sovereignty on their land. Nevertheless, the fairly unbiased evaluations and comparisons out-shadowed highlighting of Armenian interests to the anticipated extent. In any case, it can be asserted that the Harbord mission did accumulate accurate data on what the Powers sought and conveyed to Washington and Paris nonbiased views pertaining to the Turkish nationalist movement and latest developments within the Ottoman State.

### *Conclusion the Report Entailed*

The Harbord Report, not favorable to Armenian interests, was a disillusion to American Armenophiles in Turkey. Although it was dated October 16, 1919, it was sent to the Senate on April 3, 1920. Debates on the report started before the San Remo Conference to formulate the adequate peace terms to impose on the Ottoman Government ended. The Allies, determined to involve America in Armenian mandate, formally invited Wilson to the San Remo Conference on 25th of April where the boundaries of the Armenian and Kurdish states in Anatolia were to be drawn. However, by that date, the United States Senate had already announced that America would not be officially represented at the peace discussions in Europe. Although Wilson had refused official attendance, to provide America's commitment England and France asked him to personally determine the Turkish-Armenian frontier. He gladly accepted this task officially given to him by the Paris Peace Conference, but met an unexpected resistance at home, especially of his political opponents who were aware of the challenges the United States faced for oil.

In Washington D.C. discussions of United States assuming Armenia's responsibility largely focused on the Harbord Report, but there were two other dimensions of major importance. These were the approaching presidential elections and oil interests in the Middle East. Bitter complains of some senators that the President endangered the Armenians' case by submitting the report months after it was given to him, certainly were not favorable comments for Wilson's approaching campaign. Therefore, when Wilson conveyed the San Remo proposals concerning Armenian mandate and determination of the Armenian frontiers to both houses of the Congress for approval on May 24th, he carefully worded his message with Christian sentiments in order to win the hearts of the American people. However, his political opponents mostly disregarded the philanthropy involved, reminded him that the French and the British took away the most fertile provinces, the rich oil wells and copper mines. On the 28th of May, two days after the opening of the Senate debates that declined to grant the

President the permission to accept the mandate, Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, who introduced the resolution commented “Northern Armenia is just at the point where attacks are made. England is there holding Mesopotamia; France is holding Syria; Italy has a great block of territory in the neighborhood, and Armenia is the point at which they must be protected, and not merely from the Turks but from the Kurds, and the Georgians—and there has already been fighting with the Georgians. It is the crossroads, as I have heard it described by somebody, there are three banks and a poorhouse there, and we have been given the poorhouse”.<sup>29</sup>

The general atmosphere of the Congress was supportive to Armenians but reluctant to mandate. Nevertheless, the breeding contempt among some senators not only for the mandate, but even towards the Armenians became very noticeable when they learned through the General Harbord Report the responsibilities and obligations United States would have to assume with the mandate. Actually, the report posed very serious problems for United States to consider. Many senators questioned the reason all investments for the Armenian cause was left only to America. Senator James A. Reed of Missouri even underlined that Armenian massacres was eastern barbarism on both sides and complained that US was asked to take up the responsibility because all countries responsible declined because it was expensive.<sup>30</sup>

Harbord Report put forth the very high cost of such an assumption as well as the economic, social and political obligations and responsibilities it would bring to the United States. Following the debates, and undoubtedly, with the inspirations of General Harbord Report, on June 1, the Congress, by 52 to 23 votes declined the President the requested mandate authorization and refused for the US to assume any responsibility in the area.<sup>31</sup>

Albeit the mention of Armenian state in the Sevres Treaty the Ottoman officials signed nationalists fought for three years for Turkish independence, territorial integrity and sovereignty. When Turkish independence war was concluded by the Lausanne Treaty, similar to Paris Conference, Armenian delegates were officially supported neither by the big powers nor by the USA. Armenians were betrayed for own advantages,<sup>32</sup> as one senator put it, they were sold to oil interests.

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29 Prof. Thomas A. Bryson, *Mark Lambert Bristol, U. S. Navy, Admiral-Diplomat: His Influence on the Armenian Mandate Question*, *The Armenian Review* Vol. 21, No. 4-84, Winter 1968, p 9- 16

30 James B. Gidney , *A Mandate for Armenia*, PhD Thesis Ohio 1968 p.208

31 Thomas Bryson, John Sharp Williams, *An Advocate for Armenian Mandate*, 1919-20, p.30

32 Richard G. Hovannisian, *The Armenian Holocaust, A Bibliography Relating to the Deportations, Massacres and Dispersion of the Armenian People, 1915-1923*, Cambridge:1980, s. xv.



**SECRET ARMIES & REVOLUTIONARY FEDERATIONS:  
ARMENIAN POLITICAL VIOLENCE, 1973-1994**

**Christopher GUNN**

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Between 1973 and 1988, the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA) and the armed wing of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF), first as the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG) and later as the Armenian Revolutionary Army (ARA) led one of the most unique terrorist movements to emerge out of the eastern Mediterranean and Europe during the early 1970s. These terrorists killed approximately 90 individuals and wounded hundreds more through a combination of assassinations, bombing campaigns and violent assaults that spanned North America, Europe, the Middle East and the south Pacific and targeted ethnic Turks, assets of the Turkish government, and Turkish business interests.

Before fading in the late 1980s, ASALA and the JCAG/ARA were linked to various militant Palestinian factions, as well as other international terrorist organizations, international narcotic trafficking, international extortion rings and

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even to the USSR, Libya, Syria, Greece and Cyprus.<sup>1</sup> In a geographical and temporal environment where the Armenian organizations had to compete with such groups as the Italian Red Brigades, the German Red Army Faction, the Irish Republican Army, the Basque ETA, and the PLO for media exposure and government attention, the Armenians managed extremely well. In the early 1980s, various U.S. government officials described Armenian terrorists as the most dangerous, savage and mysterious group in existence, and in 1981 they actually accounted for the highest number of documented international terrorist attacks in the world.<sup>2</sup>

The groups' most ignominious acts were the murders of Turkish diplomats and their immediate family members, which took 31 lives between 1973 and 1984,<sup>3</sup> and included the 1980 assassination of the Turkish administrative attaché to Greece and his 14-year old daughter by Monte Melkonian, a native Californian and an honors graduate of the University of California, Berkeley.<sup>4</sup> What made the Armenian terrorist campaign unique, however, was neither the diversity or barbarity of its ideologues, nor the sudden and violent reemergence of the Armenian Question five decades after it had been settled by the international community with the Treaty of Lausanne in 1923, but that it had virtually no chance of reaching its publicly stated goals.

ASALA and the ARF wanted first, to force the Turkish government to acknowledge that the ethnic conflict in eastern Anatolia in 1915 was an Ottoman-sponsored and directed genocide against the Armenians; second, to pay reparations to the families of these victims; and third, to return the provinces of eastern Anatolia to the Armenians. Contrary to the aims and aspirations of the terrorists, however, Turkey's government was not going to revise their country's history to adopt the Armenian version of 1915. By extension, therefore, discussions over reparations were meaningless. Finally, the prospect of violating the territorial

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- 1 For just a sampling see Andrew Corsun, "Armenian Terrorism: A Profile," in Department of State Bulletin Vol. 82, No. 2065 (August 1982), 35; Michael Gunter, "Pursuing the Just Cause of their People": A Study of Contemporary Armenian Terrorism (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1986); Anat Kurz and Ariel Merari, ASALA—Irrational Terror or Political Tool (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1985), 39-52; Paul Henze, GOAL: Destabilization: Soviet Agitational Propaganda, Instability and Terrorism in NATO South (Marina del Rey, CA: European Institute for Security Research, 1981), 36; Andrew Mango, Turkey and the War on Terror: For Forty Years We Fought Alone (New York: Routledge, 2005), 12; Marvin Howe, "Turks Blame Cypriots for Attacks in Name of Armenians," New York Times, February 28, 1980; E.J. Dionne, Jr., "Armenian Terror: Tangle of Motives," New York Times, August 1, 1983; and Armenian Terrorism, Its Supporters, the Narcotic Connection, the Distortion of History (Ankara, Turkey: Ankara University, 1984).
  - 2 "Armenian Terrorists," January 10, 1983, CIA, CIA-RDP88-01070R000100520004-4; "Patterns of International Terrorism: 1981," in Department of State Bulletin Vol. 82, No. 2065 (August 1982): 16; and Gunter, "Pursuing the Just Cause of their People", 1.
  - 3 Bilal N. Şimşir, Şehit Diplomatlarımız (1973-1994), Vol. 2, (Ankara, Turkey: Bilgi Yayınevi, 2000), 967-968.
  - 4 Markar Melkonian, My Brother's Road: An American's Fateful Journey to Armenia, (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2007), 84.

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sovereignty of the Turkish Republic, especially along the longest NATO border with the USSR during the height of the Cold War, was quixotic at best. Yet, Armenian terrorism not only continued, it thrived for over a decade before abruptly fading away in the second half of the 1980s, despite an upsurge in terrorism at the exact same time.<sup>5</sup>

The violent acts of Gourgen Yanikian, ASALA and the ARF never succeeded in achieving their three stated goals: genocide recognition, reparations, and land in Eastern Anatolia. Instead, they left in their wake a legacy of death and destruction that stretched from Santa Barbara, California eastwards to Sydney, Australia, and killed at least 90 Turks, Armenians, French, Swiss, Italians, Germans, Yugoslavs, Swedes, and Americans and wounded hundreds more in the pursuit of justice for the Armenian people. Ironically, the organizations ended up killing more Armenians than the despised and hated “Turks.” Property damage ran easily into the millions of dollars, and their attacks kept the governments of Turkey, the United States, Canada and Western Europe preoccupied for years, their public frightened, and, in the case of the Turkish Foreign Ministry, in perpetual fear over their lives and the lives of loved ones.

The commonly held belief is that the Armenian people spontaneously “awoke” during the 1965 commemorations for the massacres and relocations of 1915. After fifty years, the Armenians were no longer willing to tolerate the indifference, apathy and political machinations of the Western governments that betrayed them between 1915 and 1923. They began to protest, demonstrate, and advocate for their cause. They wanted the world, and particularly the Republic of Turkey, to acknowledge that the massacres and relocations they endured at the hands of the Ottoman Empire constituted genocide, and they wanted the Turkey to pay for the crimes of their predecessor. What this meant for the most vocal Armenian groups in the mid-1960s, was an admission of guilt from Turkey, a formal apology, punishment (i.e. international condemnation), reparations, and the return of the historic Armenian homeland that they had lost some five centuries ago, or, at a minimum, the Armenia that President Wilson had drawn for them during the First World War.

When their just demands were not met, and when the international community allied with Turkey in the mid-1960s and early 1970s to frustrate their peaceful and justified political demands and thwarted their efforts in the United Nations, the Armenian youth, disappointed with the incompetence and inactivity of the Armenian diaspora’s traditional parties, and inspired by the actions of Gourgen Yanikian, took matters into their own hands. Eschewing non-violence, they adopted the ‘language’ of the times, and like the Palestinians, Irish, Basques, and

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5 “Terrorism Review,” CIA, Dec. 14 1989, CIA Doc No/ESDN: 0000258747, CREST.

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radical Marxist-Leninist groups in West Germany, Italy and Japan, and embraced international terrorism as a means to give voice to their frustrations, ideals and demands. The end result of this was the creation of the Armenian Secret Army for the Liberation of Armenia (ASALA), an Armenian terrorist organization that, ironically, carried out its first attack against the World Council of Churches, an institution helping Armenian refugees in Lebanon. Fearful that this new organization would undermine its position in the diaspora, and draw Armenian youth away from its ranks, the ARF activated an armed wing, known first as the Justice Commandos of the Armenian Genocide (JCAG). Together, these two terrorist organizations that plagued Turkey, Western Europe and North America from 1975 until 1988.

This rather straight forward and simplistic narrative, however, conceals much of the truth and many of the nuances that make the story of Armenian political violence between 1975 and 1988 so tragic. First, the ‘re-awakening’ of the Armenian people in 1965, was not a spontaneous event, but rather the culmination of a deliberate attempt by the Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) and elements within the Armenian SSR to separate the massacres and deportations of Armenians by the Ottoman Empire from the much more convoluted “Armenian Question” in order to implement an aggressive policy of anti-Turkishness throughout the Armenian diaspora and the Armenian SSR. One of the most tragic components of this period, and one which would have severe ramifications for the period of Armenian political violence, was the successful transfer of responsibility for the crimes of 1915 to the entire, collective population of modern Turkey. For many Armenians, the ‘Turks’ of 1915 were no different from the modern citizens of the Turkish Republic: guilty, and worthy of whatever punishment came their way. The plan to instigate tension and encourage animosity between Armenians and Turks, however, was simply carried out in order to achieve political gains inside the Armenian diaspora. The ARF, the Armenian SSR, and the Soviet Union never had any intention of following through with the demands being made by Armenians around the world with anything other than empty promises.

The ARF continued its policy of anti-Turkishness for the remainder of the 1960s and early 1970s, and implored Armenians everywhere to help publicize the details of the Armenian Cause and the crimes of the Turkish government. Many in the diaspora heeded the call, and devoted their time and energy to publications, erecting monuments, organizing community events, and demonstrating, protesting and advocating for the Armenian Cause. The anti-Turkishness promoted by the ARF was embraced by the Armenian diaspora, particularly by the Armenian youth in the United States, where student activism was burgeoning in response to the Civil Rights Movement and anti-Vietnam war activity. Protests and demonstrations against the Turkish government became increasingly more



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aggressive in nature and acts of violence against Turkish government facilities occurred. The radicalization of Armenian youth in the United States did not go unnoticed by Turkey's apprehensive diplomatic staff posted to the U.S., but the U.S. government and local authorities largely disregarded their concerns.

Tragically, their worst fears were realized in January 1973, when a deranged elderly Armenian named Gourgen Yanikian shot and killed the Turkish Consul General of Los Angeles, Mehmet Baydar, and his assistant Consul, Bahadır Demir. Linking his act of murder to the actions of the great Armenian hero, Soghomon Tehlirian, Yanikian urged the Armenian diaspora to take up arms against the Turkish government and to slaughter its representatives. Although unnoticed at the time, Yanikian's efforts to equate his murders with Tehlirian's assassination of Talat, provided modern Armenian terrorists, and their supporters in the diaspora, with all of the justification they needed to carry out their crimes. Yanikian proved that the diaspora would support the assassination of any Turkish government official, and for those who carried the executions, adulation and glory waited. In only a few short years after the Yanikian murders, death sentences for Turks came to be expected, and would extend even to the spouses and children of Turkish civil servants.

Although there would be no assassinations between January 1973 and October 1975, 1974 was an important year for political developments and activity among Armenians worldwide, and in particular Armenian-Americans. While their efforts to have the events of 1915 labeled as "the first genocide of the twentieth century" languished in the UN, the Turkish government's decision to lift the ban on domestic poppy production in mid-1974, and the Turkish intervention on Cyprus in July 1974, caused a deterioration in U.S.-Turkish relations. These events provided Armenians with an unexpected political boost, as they found no shortage of U.S. Congressmen who were willing to both propagate their anti-Turkish rhetoric and promote the Armenia Cause. An alliance with the much more powerful and established Greek lobby, which was also virulently anti-Turkish, especially during the Cyprus dispute, also greatly enhanced their political power and influence in Washington.

Despite the political progress being made by Armenians through non-violent and political efforts, in early 1975 two groups within the Armenia diaspora decided to pick up arms and embrace terrorism to advocate their demands for justice. While ASALA was a new voice that represented a new minority faction with the diaspora, the ARF was one of the oldest and most powerful organizations in the Armenian diaspora. While ASALA may have posed a very minor threat to the ARF's rhetoric in Beirut, it was in no position to challenge the ARF's traditional authority in the diaspora. Instead, the ARF's decision to activate an armed wing can only be viewed as a product of the violent anti-Turkishness it had propagated



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since 1965, and the opportunities provided by the advantageous international climate of 1975 in regards to Armenian interests. Unlike most terrorist organizations, the ARF did not turn to violence because of political weakness or a lack of viable non-violent or traditional methods. Instead, when the ARF deployed terror as means for a political end it attacked from a position of strength and deliberate choice.

For the next decade, the two groups competed viciously for the financial and moral support of the Armenian diaspora through propaganda, intimidation and violence. While many dismissed their campaigns as hopeless, it must be acknowledged that after their seventh assassination in four years, ASALA and the ARF forced the Turkish government to the negotiating table with the leaders of the Armenian diaspora for the first time in over sixty years. This was by no means a minor accomplishment, and it was something that the traditional representatives of the diaspora had never achieved. The actions of the ARF representative at the meeting made it clear, however, that as far as ARF was concerned, resolution for the Armenian Cause did not mean dialogue and reconciliation with Turkey, but rather the imposition of their terms through force or international pressure. Another attempt the following year, this time from the Turkish provide sector, also failed.

The primary impediment to talks in the late 1970s was land. The ARF and ASALA wanted eastern Anatolia, and there was no chance that Turkey was going to willingly cede land to the Armenians. Tragically, a chance at reconciliation and a cessation of the terror was lost. Ironically, the wider diaspora was not overly concerned with taking eastern Anatolia, and it became clear that the ARF did not speak for the entire diaspora. Likewise, ASALA, through their intimidation and attacks on Armenians and international relief organizations working to facilitate Armenians out of the Soviet Union and Beirut, proved that they too, did not speak for the diaspora. But while the larger diaspora did not agree entirely with the political platforms of the ARF and ASALA, it tacitly approved the means by which these two violent organizations were advocating the cause on their behalf, even when the violence was turned on non-Turkish academics. And by not speaking out unequivocally against terrorism, the Armenian diaspora helped prolong the existence of both groups.

Armenian political violence dramatically escalated between the fall of 1979 and the summer of 1983. During that period, assassinations, armed assaults and bomb attacks killed 19 Turkish officials, dependents and employees, as well as French, American, Italian, Yugoslav, Swiss and German nationals. There were also at least eight failed assassinations against Turkish officials that left two of the victims paralyzed for life. There was no dialogue or negotiations between the Armenian militant groups and the Turkish government during this period, only death, destruction and Turkish incredulity at the world's indifference to international

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terrorism. ASALA even began to broaden their scope, and attack non-Turkish targets in order to bring more awareness to the Armenian Cause and to secure the release of the increasing number of captured ASALA operatives. The ARF responded to the challenge, and increased the frequency of their assassinations.

As the violence continued, however, sympathy for the Armenian Cause waned while concern for the Turkish victims increased. First in the United States, after assassinations and bombing attempts in Los Angeles, Boston and Philadelphia, and then in Europe after a particularly brutal series of attacks in Brussels, Paris and Lisbon. For Europeans, it was a bombing attack at the Orly Airport outside of Paris that killed eight and wounded over sixty that turned them against the Armenian terrorism. Despite these attacks, the Armenian diaspora continued to support the violent campaign against Turkey until the very end, even after it became increasingly apparent that the violence was not the means through which to achieve the realization of the Armenian cause, but rather an end in and of itself.

Armenian terror was never the same after Orly. The United States, Canada and Turkey began to cooperate closely on counterterrorist measures aimed at ending Armenian terrorism, and the U.S., in particular, embarked on firm position against international terrorism. Even countries that were previously reluctant to condemn Armenian terrorism and go after *ASALA* and the ARF, like France and the Soviet Union, changed their policies. Those countries which did not speak out, or who maintained connections with *ASALA* and/or the ARF were put on warning. The Armenian diaspora, though, did not waiver in their commitment to their radical youth, and continued to defend, glorify and honor political violence. This support enabled *ASALA* and the ARF to temporarily weather the storm produced by the controversial attacks in Europe, and they continued their campaign of violence for two more years. Their ability to induce fear in Turkey, Western Europe and North America lingered on much longer and was a testament to their prowess as terrorist organizations. By the time the leader of *ASALA*, Haroutiun Takoushian, was assassinated in Athens in April 1988, however, Armenian terrorism had run its course.

While there are multiple theories as to why Armenian terrorism faded away in the mid-1980s, the evidence available suggests that in addition the new international political climate brought on by the New Cold war and the subsequent collapse of Communism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union that left little room for international terrorist organizations, both *ASALA* and the ARF experienced violent internal dissension at the highest levels of the organizations' leadership, right before both groups engaged each other in a brutal street war on the streets of Beirut for political control of the Armenian diaspora. By the time the 'war' was over, the ideological, political, logistical and financial sources of support that had sustained the Armenian groups, and *ASALA* in particular, had enjoyed disappeared over

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night. Even its strongest supporter, the Armenian diaspora, had abandoned them for a greater cause: the liberation of the Armenian SSR and the war with Azerbaijan over the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. Many of the veterans of ASALA and, to a lesser extent, the JCAG/ARA who survived the internal violence in Beirut were eventually able to bring their violent skills to that emerging conflict in the Caucasus. At least one former prominent ASALA member, Monte Melkonian, was able to redeem himself and obtain a place reserved for only the most revered heroes of the Armenian nation for his efforts in the Karabakh war after his death on a Caucasian battlefield in 1993.

It is no small irony that 20<sup>th</sup> century Armenian terrorism begins and ends with the two greatest Armenian heroes of the twentieth century, Soghomon Tehlirian and Monte Melkonian, who took completely reverse paths to glory. Born in eastern Anatolia, but living in Yugoslavia, Tehlirian left the relative safety of Belgrade to volunteer to fight for the Armenian Irregulars in the Russian army. After proving himself an able soldier, he was selected and trained to be the ARF's greatest assassin: the man who killed Talaat Pasha. After his death, Tehlirian was buried under a monument constructed in his honor in Fresno, California. Monte Melkonian, left California and the comfortable confines of Berkeley to become an ASALA assassin, only to end up idolized as the great Armenian military commander who helped 'liberate' Nagorno-Karabakh. Melkonian was buried with full military honors, and in the presence of the President of Armenia, in Yerevan's Yereblur cemetery. Tehlirian, the soldier-cum-assassin, was born in the Caucasus and buried in California; and Melkonian, the assassin-cum-soldier, was born in California and buried in the Caucasus.

In the end, the Armenian campaign of political violence between 1973 and 1988 is yet another example of the catastrophic dangers inherent in inciting an extreme nationalism based almost entirely on the dehumanization and hatred of the 'other', cloaked in unimpeachable self-righteousness and historical justification. It was also, by any measure, a complete failure. Despite the violence, fear, terror, and murder of innocent men, women and children, *ASALA* and the ARF never came closer to achieving their goals than the meeting between the Turkish Foreign Minister and the heads of ARF, Hunchaks and Ramgavars in 1977. Tragically, that opportunity was wasted. Instead, the drastic increase in attacks between 1979 and 1983, the indifference of its Western allies to the violence, coupled with sympathy for the Armenian Cause, and the relentless pressure from an unrepentant diaspora that refused to unequivocally denounce terrorism, forced the Turkish government and its citizens into an aggressive defense that still largely persists today.

Some claim that the terrorist attacks brought unprecedented attention to the Armenian Cause in the international media and academia, but considering the gains being made in the early 1970s in this regard before violence, this is a difficult

argument to make. Judging by commentaries and interviews in the press during the attacks, some in the diaspora believed that any assassination of a Turkish official was a victory for the Cause. Even if this true, however, one must ask: at what cost? More Armenians were killed by *ASALA and the ARF* than Turks, even if we include those who were not employed by the Turkish government, and if the non-Turkish victims are added to the Armenian lives lost, the disparity is even greater. An observation not found on the Facebook pages dedicated to Gourgen Yanikian, Monte Melkonian and Hagop Hagopian (Haroution Takoushian), or on the web page of the Hrair Maroukhian Foundation.<sup>6</sup>

The only success obtained by ASALA and the ARF is that very few, even in the Armenian diaspora, seem to be aware that Armenian terrorist organizations existed, that they were staffed by hundreds of young Armenians, and that one of the most prominent, powerful, legitimate organizations in the diaspora, and now in Armenia, was involved. While these organizations were comparable in nearly every way to many of their contemporary international terrorist organizations like Baader-Meinhof, the Red Brigades, Black September and the PFLP, no one remembers or discusses ASALA or the JCAG/ARA. And while the nearly 40 Turkish citizens murdered by these two organizations is not in any way comparable to the 800,000 to 1.5 million Armenians who died over the course of events in 1915 and after, an open discussion and recognition of the havoc wrecked by ASALA and the ARF would undoubtedly contribute to the reconciliation process between Turkey, Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora.

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6 For Yanikian see: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Gourgen-Yanikian/106348076081281>; For Melkonian see: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Monte-Melkonian/142005402522448>; for a selection iphone covers and t-shirts see: [http://society6.com/araaslanyan/monte-melkonian\\_iphone-case](http://society6.com/araaslanyan/monte-melkonian_iphone-case); For Haroution Takoushian (Hagop Hagopian) see: <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Hagop-Hagopian/265312296878835>; For the Hrair Maroukhian see: <http://www.maroukhianfoundation.org/english/about-us/hrair-maroukhian-a-visionary-leader>.



## CLOSING REMARKS

**Ömer Engin LÜTEM**

*Ambassador (R)*

*Honorary President of AVİM (Center for Eurasian Studies)*

At the end of this symposium, I would like to make some short remarks.

The first one concerns genocide allegations. Although the 1948 Genocide Convention cannot not be applied to the events of 1915, the definition of the crime of genocide in Article 2 of this convention is the only criteria to determine whether an event constitutes genocide or not.

The International Court of Justice requires the demonstration of the genocidal intention beyond doubt for the establishment of the crime of genocide. Such an intention of the Ottomans cannot be proved beyond doubt as required by the International Court of Justice. Therefore, insisting that the resettlement of the Armenians was, in fact, genocide has no legal meaning.

There is a new tendency to consider these events as crime against humanity. As a matter of fact, resettlement of the Armenians seems to fit to forcible transfer of

population defined by the Rome Statute of International Criminal Court. However, we should keep in mind that the Rome Statute is applicable only to events that occurred after its entry in force. If this principle is to be overlooked, Turkey and Azerbaijan could very well insist that the Rome Statute has to be applied to the atrocities committed by the Armenian forces during the Karabakh war, as well.

The main and insurmountable difficulty concerning genocide allegations is to try to apply new norms of international law, which did not exist at that time to the events of 1915.

The Ottoman Empire collapsed so long ago. Ottoman officials who took the decision of the Armenian resettlement are all dead; many of them were assassinated by Armenian terrorists. As such, Armenian allegations are without addressees. For that, longtime ago, Armenian activists asserted a new concept that I would like to name as ‘hereditary guilt’, which means that a person is responsible of the acts of his/her forefathers. This is a very primitive conception of justice and such a concept or approach does not exist in modern law. On the other hand, in order to incriminate the Turkish Republic, it is alleged that the modern Turkish Republic, being the successor of the Ottoman Empire, should be accountable for the events of 1915. However, the Turkish Republic, as successor of the Ottoman Empire, is responsible for the obligations of this state like its debts for example, and not for its political decisions, many of which the Turkish Republic criticized and even condemned.

I think that we should work much more on the legal matters and perhaps organize a comprehensive conference on the legal aspects of the Armenians genocide allegations.

Another subject that I would like to raise is the Armenian demands emanated mostly from the diaspora and supported (up to now unofficially) by the Armenian State.

The first demand is the recognition of genocide allegations by Turkey. I have already given my mind on that subject.

The second one is compensation or indemnities to be paid to the descendants of the resettled Armenians. Every claim to be fulfilled should have legal base. Resettled Armenians, as Ottoman subjects, depended on the Ottoman legislation, which did not foresee any compensation for them. As far as international law is concerned, there is no such provision in the Treaty of Kars or in any other international treaty on this issue. I should also mention that in the Diaspora, fantastical compensation figures are advanced ranging from 44 to 104 billion dollars, even to 800 billion dollars.



The third one is the restitution of the resettled Armenians properties. It is overlooked most of the time that just after the First World War, for a period about four years, Armenians easily took their properties back. The Turkish Republic has passed legislations on the vacant properties that I cannot summarize right now. Nevertheless, I could say that the main point is to apply to the courts. On the other hand, due to the fact that a long time has passed, many of these properties now belong to the state.

On this subject, I would like to remind that the Turkish government is restoring some Armenian churches which have historical and artistic values, a policy that I applaud and wish for its continuation. Armenians insist that their churches and other religious buildings should be returned to the Armenian Patriarchate. I find this logical as far as there are enough people to attend religious services.

The most important Armenian demand is Turkey giving land to Armenia. This is basically a Diaspora demand. The Armenian government tries to be vague on this subject, knowing well that nobody, except maybe South Cyprus, will support them and their insistence on this topic could depreciate others demands. Needless to say, that the Treaty of Kars of 1921, which fixed the North Eastern borders of Turkey, is still valid and no state contests its validity.

The only Armenian demand that concerns today is the opening the Turkey-Armenia border. This border was closed in 1993 to deter Armenia from occupying Azerbaijani lands. As Armenia continues to occupy these lands, there is no reason for Turkey to open its border. If it is done, I am sure that Armenia, having received what they wanted the most, will not bother to solve its problems with Azerbaijan, believing that Russia will assure its security.

Faced Armenian aggressive and increasing demands, Turkey, especially in the last years, adopted a conciliatory policy like the then Prime Ministers Erdoğan's statement of condolences of the last year and Prime Minister Davutoğlu message this year for the perished Armenians. These good will messages apparently did not and do not have any effect on the Armenians who refused in fact the olive branch offered to them.

Few days ago, the centennial of the Armenian resettlement during the First World War was commemorated all over the world and especially in Armenia in a most pompous manner. It is not clear to me, except to influence its public opinion, what are the advantages of these ceremonies for Armenia as no new initiatives are taken and no new demands are formulated for resolving its conflict with Turkey.

After the euphoria created by these commemorations, Armenians all around the world will realize that nothing has changed. Especially the Armenians of Armenia



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will see that their economic condition remains the same. There is no change on Turkey's stance on major problems like genocide allegations, territorial demands, indemnity and the evacuation of Azerbaijani lands etc. and that Azerbaijan is always determined to take back their lands.

For the future, it is not expected that Armenia in the short term will change its excessive policies. If its membership to Eurasian Economic Union will not fulfill its expectations, continuing emigration and further economic decay in addition to the Azerbaijan enrichment and Turkey's already powerful position could induce Armenia to solve its problems, at least partially, with its neighbors. So, in a contradictory way, it will not be Armenia's success but its failure that could lead to a future reconciliation.









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- THE ARMENIAN-AZERBAIJANI NAGORNO-KARABAKH CONFLICT: A THREAT TO REGIONAL PEACE, SECURITY AND NEIGHBORLY RELATIONS
- REGIONAL COOPERATION POSSIBILITIES AND PROSPECTS FOR THE FUTURE IN THE CAUCASUS
- 28 OCAK AİHM PERİNÇEK-İSVİÇRE DURUŞMASININ IŞIĞINDA TÜRK-ERMENİ SORUNU (In Turkish)
- THE 'SOCIOLOGICAL TURN' OF TAIWAN-CHINA RELATIONS
- TURKIC COUNCIL AND COOPERATION IN EURASIA IN THE LIGHT OF DEVELOPMENTS ACROSS THE REGION