

# THE ARMENIAN DIASPORA IN THE NETHERLANDS: STATISTICS OF EDUCATION, RESIDENCE, AND PLACE OF BIRTH\*

(HOLLANDA'DA YAŞAYAN ERMENİLERİN VERİLERİ:  
EĞİTİM, İKAMETGAH VE DOĞUM YERİ HAKKINDA İSTATİSTİKLER)

**Armand SAĞ**

Senior researcher and Chairman  
Institute for Turkish Studies in Utrecht  
a.sag@turksestudies.org

**Abstract:** *Armenia and also diaspora Armenians have a distinct form of nationalism as a part of their process to create unity amongst their own “people”. This process of nation-building coexists with the process of creating “the other” against which you can argue that it is of high importance to create unity amongst your ‘own’ people in order to be prepared to defend themselves against this perpetrated “other”. The story is that this “other” is out to destroy the people as a whole. Amongst Armenians this “other” is portrayed as being “the Turks”. When looking at the statistics of the Armenians living in the Netherlands, the Armenian Diaspora in the Netherlands, this is also a strong point of reference since the Armenians compare themselves not with the local Dutch people but with the Turks living in the Netherlands. When looking at the statistics of the Armenians in the Netherlands, also known as Dutch-Armenians, other important findings are also seen as a red thread throughout this research to the Armenian Diaspora in the Netherlands. During this statistic research topics like education, place of residence and marriage are focused upon, amongst others.*

**Keywords:** *Armenians, The Netherlands, Dutch-Armenians, Armenian Diaspora in the Netherlands, statistics.*

---

\* This article derives from the original article titled 'Statistics of Armenians living in the Netherlands' that was presented at Atatürk University in Erzurum, Turkey during the “Second International Symposium concerning the Great Powers and Turkish-Armenian Relations”, which took place between 6-8 May 2015 at Atatürk University, in the form of an eleven-page PowerPoint presentation during the nineteenth panel of the before mentioned symposium on May 6. The presentation was held in Conference Room A between 15:45-17:30 hours. My presentation revolved around my research in the Netherlands, where I looked at the Armenian Diaspora living in the Netherlands. During this research, I looked at the various statistics about Armenians living in the Netherlands.

**Öz:** Ermenistan ve diaspora Ermenileri, Ermeniler arasında birlik oluşturmak için kendine has bir milliyetçilik süreci uygulamaktadır. Bu birlik oluşturma süreci, “ötekileştirmek” süreci ile el ele ilerlemektedir. Bu ötekileştirme süreci bir tarafın “kendi” halkı arasında birlik oluşturması için çok önemlidir. Zira bu süreçte bahsi geçen tarafın “kendi” halkı, dışarıdan tehdit oluşturduğu iddia edilen “ötekiye” karşı kendisini savunması için birbirine kenetlenmesi gerekecektir. Bu süreçte, “ötekinin” Ermeni halkını tamamıyla yok etmeđi öngördüğü iddia edilmektedir. Ermeniler arasında bu “öteki”, Türkler’dir. Hollanda’da yaşayan Ermenilerin, yani Hollanda’daki Ermeni diasporasının, verilerine bakarken bu çok önemli bir karşılaştırma noktasıdır, çünkü Ermeniler kendilerini yerli olan Hollandahılarla değil de Hollanda’da yaşayan Türklerle karşılaştırmaktadırlar. Hollanda’daki Ermenilerin, yani Hollanda Ermenilerinin, verilerine bakarken Hollanda’daki Ermeni diasporası ile ilgili başka önemli sonuçlara da ulaşılmaktadır. Bu istatistiki araştırma sırasında, diğer verilerin yanında, eğitim, ikametgâh yeri ve evlilik gibi verilere odaklanılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ermeniler, Hollanda, Hollanda Ermenileri, Hollanda’daki Ermeni Diasporası, veriler.

## **Introduction**

Quite a few years ago, the Federation of Armenian Organisations in the Netherlands (original name: “*Federatie Armeense Organisaties Nederland*”, abbreviated as: “FAON”) conducted a research focusing on Armenians in the Netherlands.<sup>1</sup> This resulted in the book titled ‘Armenians in the Netherlands: An exploratory study’ that is in Dutch and has the original title of “*Armeniërs in Nederland: Een verkennend onderzoek*”. The book was published in The Hague in 2008. The research was conducted by a Ph.D.-student from the University of Amsterdam, Gert-Jan M. Veerman, who is apparently continuing his Ph.D. studies as of early 2016.<sup>2</sup> The retired Professor of Armenian Culture and Language, Jos J.S. Weitenberg, contributed to this research as well. Veerman was assisted by a commission in which the following people took part: Chan Choenni, lawyer Inge Drost, Mato Hakhverdian, Noubar Sipaan, and Jos J.S. Weitenberg.

Chan Choenni was the chairman of this commission, while the before mentioned Jos Weitenberg was also present in this commission. The other members of the commission are all active Armenian activists from the Netherlands. The most known is lawyer Inge Drost, who worked at a Dutch ministry for almost 43 years while being a high-member board member of the “24 April Committee” (or “*24 April Comité*” in Dutch) for sixteen years, which is a part of FAON.<sup>3</sup> She is also affiliated with Abovian, which is the research institute of FAON.<sup>4</sup> In retrospect, Abovian has no academics in service but only activists and is used as a lobby organization. The other member, Mato Hakhverdian, is a high-ranking member of FAON and also the spouse of Inge Drost. The last member, Noubar Sipaan, is the chairman of the before-mentioned 24 April Committee. Although the said publication is controlled by an Armenian lobby organization in the Netherlands, it still gives us a very good insight in the statistics of Armenians living in the Netherlands. FAON’s research can be seen as the first study on Armenians in the Netherlands and although it is a preliminary research, it is still the only one that one can be referred to. From that point of view, reviews of FAON’s study are needed to see whether the research is conducted in a way that is acceptable in academic circles.

---

1 Federatie Armeense Organisaties Nederland (FAON), <http://www.faon.nl/> (last visit: 05/03/2016).

2 University of Amsterdam (UvA), <http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/organisatie/medewerkers/content/v/e/g.j.m.veerman2/g.j.m.veerman2.html> (last visit: 05/03/2016).

3 24 April Comité, <http://www.24april.nl/> (last visit 05/03/2016).

4 Abovian: Armenian Cultural Association in The Hague, <http://www.abovian.nl/> (last visit: 05/03/2016).

## Background

The unification of states, like with Germany and Italy, are the outcome of nation-building. Creating “the other” is argued to have played a major role in the process of nation-building. For instance, this process in France tried to depict a picture in which France was a spiritual unity of people with a common enemy. That is why French history text books from 1870 onwards taught that France was “one people, one country, one government, one nation, one fatherland”.<sup>5</sup> In this context, creating “the other” was used to create a spiritual unity with people that were one. In this “unity-creating” pretext, the people did not need to live in the same country or even within the same boundaries. The boundaries of France were extremely elastic. For instance; although France was emphasizing “one people, one country, one government, one nation, one fatherland”, it did bend the rules in order to expand to other regions. The expansion of Russia to Eastern Asia is also hard to understand without making reference to this unity-creating narrative. Both France and Russia justified their conquests by pointing to historical and cultural references in order to strengthen their claims on those lands. According to Benedict Anderson, such examples show how elastic and infinite the boundaries of a geographical nation were perceived by many.<sup>6</sup>

However, the point that Anderson tries to make is that a limited concept of nation does not aim to “convert” the whole planet, but simply to distinguish oneself from the rest. On the other hand, when a geographical gain is at stake, the concepts of “nations” prove extremely elastic, as the example of France shows.<sup>7</sup> The expansion of Germany to the east in the thirteenth (and again in the twentieth) century are justified as ‘return’ of land and not as “conquest”.<sup>8</sup> Having a grasp of the unity-creating narrative provides an explanation for France and Germany’s past actions.

This type of nationalism focuses on a spiritual entity. A nationalism that promotes the moral and intellectual entity of a nation throughout history was the case in Prussia, where philosophers and historians focused on a dynamic world in which the German moral of freedom and equality was seen as the core of the German nation. The unity it created was focused on a German culture

---

5 Eugen Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France, 1870-1914* (Stanford, California, 1976).

6 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition (London, 1991/1983).

7 Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*...

8 Patrick J. Geary, *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe* (Princeton, 2003), p. 35.

with universal values.<sup>9</sup> Germany had become the principal agent of freedom, a role now claimed to be taken on by United States of America. These basic elements became the core of those nations and this is very much emphasized in the history text books of those countries. It is no coincidence that German nationalism focuses so heavily on German morals and values through important philosophers like Kant, Hegel, Schopenhauer, Marx, Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Wittgenstein. These names are still the core fundamentals in German nationalism as is seen in German nation-building in which there was almost no room for colonialism due to moral objections (among other reasons).

This form of nationalism carves out a concept of nation in which there is seemingly no focus on the geographical context of a nation or its people. The emphasis on spiritual unity in the case of France, however, has become intensified in France due to the glorification military prowess in its process of nation-building in which “the other” is created.<sup>10</sup> The glorification of military successes in history, and the downplaying of military failures, creates the myth of an unbeatable, strong nation with a strong military force. Together, this glorification military prowess and spiritual unity has made French nationalism be typical of France. As with any form of nation-building, this is a never-ending process for a nation. In this case, nation-building was used to form a spiritual unity without geographical features of the nation. The critique on this correlation between nationalism and nation-building, is that it was shaped by a small elite of French people that were highly-educated and therefore portrayed as the “French nation” with a certain spiritual entity that entitled them to include the French peasants into the process of nation-building. Resisting minorities, like the Huguenots, were accordingly expelled, but this focus on a spiritual unity did transcend ethnic and racial trademarks. There is, however, no reason to assume that this “top-down”-approach of the elite was used to force certain views concerning the nation upon the people. What is to say if those sentiments were not already present among the common folk? Next to France, this kind of nation-building is especially present in Western Europe and the Western hemisphere in general.

Another theory about the nationalism of a nation, include that of a selective ethno-history, which consists of the pre-existing myths, symbols, and traditions to be found in the historical record and in the living memories of “the people”.<sup>11</sup> In this context,

---

9 Ernst Breisach, *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*, Third Edition (Chicago, 1983/2007).

10 Robin Luckham, “French militarism in Africa”, *Review of African Political Economy*, Volume: 9, Issue: 24 (1982), 55-84.

11 Eric Hobsbawm & Terence Ranger, *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

...[the] return to an “ethnic past” (or pasts) is a corollary of the nationalist quest for “authenticity”. Only that which can be shown to be “genuine” and “ours” can form the basis for a national identity, and that in turn requires a cultivation of indigenous history and vernacular languages and cultures, and the vernacular mobilization of “the people” in and through their own history and culture. The result is a type of nation founded on “ethnic” conceptions, and fueled by a genealogical nationalism; although even here, the nation, as in Germany or Greece, is simultaneously defined in territorial and political terms.<sup>12</sup>

In this process, nationalism is used to emphasize certain pre-existing myths, symbols, and other historical records while simultaneously maintaining a territorial criterion. In this theory of an ethnic nation, the nation is transformed by intelligentsia and professionals rediscovering and implementing a selective ethno-history like the before mentioned pre-existing myths, symbols, and traditions.

These abovementioned types of historiographies focus on a spiritual entity, the glorification of military prowess, and/or pre-existing myths (which can be complementary to each other). The main critical approach to nationalism in its many forms is that it stems from the desire of certain people to live together, the need to own a common possession of a rich heritage of memories, and the will to exploit the inheritance one has received in joint tenancy.<sup>13</sup> Nationalism is in fact formed by intelligentsia and professionals that emphasize or choose to neglect certain events in history in order to form cohesion among a group of people.<sup>14</sup> Subsequently, Smith also states that it is “*difficult indeed to see how and why anyone should have wanted to turn the pre-modern Finnish or Czech, Kurdish or Ewe ‘low’ cultures into modern, literate ‘high’ cultures, rather than adopting the nearest high culture of the dominant ethnic population in the state*”.<sup>15</sup> In other words, nationalism fuels the imagining of a (national) community.<sup>16</sup>

These critics are countered by the new term “psycho-history” in which the history that becomes reality in the minds (psychology) of people is seen as the only genuine history of that specific nation.<sup>17</sup> This psycho-history replaces

---

12 Anthony D. Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism* (New York, 1998/2003), p. 194.

13 Weber, *Peasants into Frenchmen*...

14 Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*.

15 Smith, *Nationalism and Modernism*, p. 38.

16 Anderson, *Imagined Communities*...

17 Alper Ersaydı, “Psiko-Tarih Bağlamında Türkiye-AB İlişkileri”, *Politik Psikoloji Yıllığı*, Volume: 1 (Ankara, 2011), p. 237-239.

history through invented, even artificial, elements of a supposed high culture of modernity, manufactured by intelligentsias and purveyed to thousands of school children through nationalism in standardized textbooks and courses. Ernest Gellner frequently underlines that we identify with the publicly-taught culture in modern society, not with our culture of origin or of family.<sup>18</sup> Arnold Toynbee takes it a step further by stating that “no European nation or national state, however, can point back to a history which would be explicable”.<sup>19</sup> However, “psycho-history” may seem artificial, but for “the nation” and “its people”, it is very much real and it is how it carves out its own identity. The main focusing point in this discussion should be the various forms in which nationalism played a role in the process of nation-building.

History can be depicted in various ways through nationalism, but the most important is that of creating “the other”. In this form, nationalism is reflected on a mythical image of the past that is no longer present, but still is depicted as an ultimate goal that will fulfill the hope of uniting the spiritual unity of a people; sometimes through a geographical unity or imbedded moral values. Nationalism that shows a strong emphasis on the glorification of military prowess is mostly used to create a spiritual unity against an outsider foe. In the Balkans and the Caucasus, it is common to use nationalism by concentrating on military humiliation and elastic boundaries. Two pertinent examples are Serbia and Armenia, whose nationalism respectively focuses on the glorification of major military defeats during the Battle of Kosovo of 1389<sup>20</sup> and the Armenian Relocation of 1915 (referred to by Armenians as the “Armenian Genocide”).<sup>21</sup> However, when military success is the main criteria for either glorification of an entire region, or (in case of military humiliation) downplaying and neglecting other regions, this process of glorifying military

*These critics are countered by the new term “psycho-history” in which the history that becomes reality in the minds (psychology) of people is seen as the only genuine history of that specific nation. This psycho-history replaces history through invented, even artificial, elements of a supposed high culture of modernity, manufactured by intelligentsias and purveyed to thousands of schoolchildren through nationalism in standardized textbooks and courses.*

18 Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (New York, 1983).

19 Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History* (Oxford, 1939). Also see; Arnold J. Toynbee, *Een Studie der Geschiedenis* (Bussum, 1952), p. 1.

20 Heike Krieger, *The Kosovo Conflict and International Law: An Analytical Documentation, 1974-1999* (Cambridge, 2001).

21 Erich Feigl, *Armenian Mythomania, Armenian Extremism: Its Causes and Historical Context* (Vienna, 2006).

proWess becomes the glue that holds a nation together. This correlation between glorification of military prowess with geographical emphasis on one region while neglecting other regions in nationalism has not been covered yet in scientific debates.

In Armenia, the process of nation-building still depicts Eastern Anatolia as “Western Armenia”, while the Republic of Armenia is dubbed “Eastern Armenia”. The focus lays on geography that is narrated to have been lost during an immense traumatic experience; in the case of Armenians, this is the Armenian Relocation of 1915. The perpetrators of this trauma are seen as the Turks, and therefore these Turks are cultivated as “the others” in which everything the Armenian people accomplish are compared to the accomplishment of the Turks.

*In Armenia, the process of nation-building still depicts Eastern Anatolia as “Western Armenia”, while the Republic of Armenia is dubbed “Eastern Armenia”. The focus lays on geography that is narrated to have been lost during an immense traumatic experience; in the case of Armenians, this is the Armenian Relocation of 1915. The perpetrators of this trauma are seen as the Turks, and therefore these Turks are cultivated as “the others” in which everything the Armenian people accomplish are compared to the accomplishment of the Turks.*

### Creating “The Other”

Armenians have focused their process of creating unity on two important pillars. For one, the story-telling of the “Armenian Genocide” is without a doubt the most important core of Armenian nationalism. The second pillar of Armenian nationalism is based upon the phenomenon of

“creating the other/otherization” that is the base for why Armenians compare themselves not with the local inhabitants of the country where they are living, but with the Turks living in that same country. Almost without exception, the Armenian minority in any country is doing better (in terms of education and occupation/income) than the Turkish minority in that country. It is precisely this comparison, or competition, that the Armenians wish to win.

This drive for competition is one of the forces behind Armenian nationalism. It is part of a process that Vamik Volkan calls “creating the other”. In this process, the core of the identity is to not be like the one you see as “the enemy”. Therefore “becoming the enemy” is seen as very threatening for a large group. Especially in conflict between two large groups (that define themselves as distinct ethnic entities) that have become deadly or traumatic, one or both groups define their own identity in retrospect to the other. In most cases, this

is visible as a sort of “competition” with the other. This process, on a conscious level, is repeated as part of the process of nation-building.<sup>22</sup>

According to Volkan, large groups -constituted of either a common nationality, ethnicity, religion, or political ideology- exist as the subjective experience of thousands or millions of people who are linked by a persistent sense of sameness, even while also sharing some characteristics with people who belong to foreign large groups. These people share “cultural amplifiers” which are concrete or abstract symbols and signs that are only associated with a particular large group and which are accepted as “superior” and as a source of pride. On the other side, the main antagonist (in this case the group that is seen as “the enemy”) is seen as inferior. By comparing the accomplishments of the “superior group” with the (lower and lesser) accomplishments of “inferior groups”, the “superior group” develops its own sense of confidence and superiority.<sup>23</sup>

Volkan continues to state that these mental representations become large-group amplifiers called “chosen glories”. Chosen glories are passed on to succeeding generations through transgenerational transmissions made in parent/teacher-child interactions and through participation in ritualistic ceremonies recalling past successful events. Chosen glories link children of a large group with each other and with their large group, and the children experience increased self-esteem by being associated with such glories. It is not difficult to understand why parents and other important adults pass the mental representation of chosen glories to their children; this is a pleasurable activity. Past victories in battle and great accomplishments of a religious or political ideological nature frequently appear as chosen glories. In stressful situations, political leaders reactivate the mental representation of chosen glories and heroes associated with them to bolster their large-group identity. A leader’s reference to chosen glories excites his followers simply by stimulating an already existing shared large-group amplifier.<sup>24</sup> In the case of the Armenians, the glory of Armenians having a higher education, on average, than Turks is portrayed as Armenians being more intelligent than Turks and therefore being superior to Turks.

---

22 Vamik Volkan, “Large-group Identity, International Relations and Psychoanalysis”, *Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft e.V. (DGP)* meeting, Gasteig Cultural Center, Rosenheimer Platz, 23 May 2008. Available online: <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Large-group-Identity%2C-International-Relations-and-Psychoanalysis.php> (last visit: 21/11/2016).

23 Vamik Volkan, “Large-group Identity, International Relations and Psychoanalysis”, *International Forum of Psychoanalysis* (Sweden, 2009).

24 Vamik Volkan, “Large-group Identity, International Relations and Psychoanalysis”, *vamikvolkan.com 2007/2016* (last visit: 21/11/2016). Available online: <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Large-group-Identity%2C-International-Relations-and-Psychoanalysis.php>

“Chosen trauma” is the image of a past event during which a large group suffered loss or experienced helplessness and humiliation in a conflict with a neighboring group. This term refers to the mental representation of an event that has caused a large group to face drastic losses, feel helpless and victimized by another group, and share a humiliating injury. Since a large group does not choose to be victimized or suffer humiliation, some take exception to the term “chosen” trauma.<sup>25</sup> In the case of Armenia, the process of humiliation is countered by the myth that the “honest, righteous, intelligent, and peaceful Armenians” were done wrong by the “barbaric, undeveloped, backward Turks”; therefore implying that Armenians are (at least intelligence-wise)

*In the case of Armenia, the process of humiliation is countered by the myth that the “honest, righteous, intelligent, and peaceful Armenians” were done wrong by the “barbaric, undeveloped, backward Turks”; therefore implying that Armenians are (at least intelligence-wise) superior to Turks.*

superior to Turks. Volkan believes that it reflects a group’s unconscious “choice” to add a past generation’s mental representation of an event to its own identity, and the fact that while groups may have experienced any number of traumas in their history, only certain ones remain alive over centuries. A chosen trauma is linked to the past generation’s inability to mourn losses after experiencing a shared traumatic event, and indicates the group’s failure to reverse the perpetual and narcissistic sense of injury and humiliation said to have been inflicted by another large group, usually a neighbor.<sup>26</sup> While each individual in a traumatized large group has his

own unique identity and personal reaction to trauma, all members share the mental representations of the tragedies that have befallen the group. In our case, this is the implying factor when Armenians compare themselves with Turks and pat themselves on the back because they are, on average, far higher educated. The injured self-images of Armenians associated with the mental representations of the shared traumatic event are “deposited” into the developing self-representation of children in the next generation, as if these children will be able to mourn the loss or reverse the humiliation of something that is said to have occurred even before these children were born. By comparing themselves with Turks and aim for attaining higher education to further the competition with Turks, Armenians try to reverse the humiliation that the Armenians feel was done to them in 1915 in the Ottoman Empire. Such

25 Vamik Volkan, “Transgenerational Transmissions and ‘Chosen Trauma’: An Element of Large-Group Identity”, *vamikvolkan.com 2007/2016* (last visit: 21/11/2016). Available online: <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Transgenerational-Transmissions-and-Chosen-Traumas.php>

26 Vamik Volkan, “Transgenerational Transmissions and ‘Chosen Traumas’: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity”, *Group Analysis*, Issue: 34 (2001), 79-97.

depositing constitutes an intergenerational transmission of trauma. If the children cannot deal with what is deposited in them, they, as adults, will in turn pass the mental representation of the event to the next generation which is the case throughout fifth or sixth generation Armenians, even those that live in the diaspora (for example the Netherlands).<sup>27</sup>

When looking at the theory of Volkan, the statistics of FAON seem to underline the examples given by him.<sup>28</sup> Although the Armenians in the Netherlands are just a small part of the global Armenian diaspora, and this is only a preliminary research on a micro-level, the Armenian diaspora of the Netherlands is in a fierce competition with the Turks in the Netherlands. The statistics show a clear comparison that the Armenians in the Netherlands make comparisons between themselves and the Turks in the Netherlands. To illustrate this, one must look closer to the publication of FAON.

## **Statistics**

The first question that is answered by FAON's publication is how many Armenians live in the Netherlands. This is to be explained by three categories, which can be summarized as follows; Armenians in the Netherlands originate either from Turkey (1964-1980s), from the Soviet Union (until 1991), or from Armenia (1991 onwards). When looking into these three categories, only the people from the last category are actually registered in the Netherlands as being "Armenian".<sup>29</sup> Armenians that migrated from Turkey to the Netherlands are registered in the Dutch archives as "Turks", while Armenians from the Soviet Union are in turn registered as being "Russians".<sup>30</sup> Therefore the total number of Armenians in the Netherlands is officially only 398. However, like stated before, these are only the Armenians that migrated from Armenia since 1991 to the Netherlands.<sup>31</sup> When looking at a broader context; of the people that are registered as "Soviets" or "Russians", 3641 were actually (and officially) born in the region of Armenia between 1995-2007. With Turkish Armenians, this case is much more difficult. Most Armenians in Turkey are either from İstanbul, which has a population of almost 16 million (of which only 100,000 are

---

27 Vamik Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and 'Chosen Traumas'", *Thirteenth International Congress of the International Association of Group Psychotherapy*, August, 1998.

28 Vamik Volkan, "Large-group Identity: 'Us and them' - Polarizations in the International Arena", *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, Volume: 14, Issue: 4 (2009).

29 Federation Armeense Organisaties Nederland (FAON), *Armeniërs in Nederland: Een verkennend onderzoek*, The Hague 2008, p. 33-43.

30 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 34.

31 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 33.

Armenians; either as an ethnic minority or as migrants from Armenia), or from various places in Eastern Anatolia where Kurds and Armenians are again a minority against the Turkish majority in that region. Therefore, the place of birth of Armenians in the Netherlands does not, in any way, give any hints to their nationality or passport. When looking at these figures, it is fair to estimate that, unofficially, between 11,000 and 15,000 Armenians live in the Netherlands, either from Turkey, Soviet Union, Armenia, Iran, and various other countries.

The regions in the Netherlands where the most Armenians reside are also the regions where the first Armenian organizations were established. This was done in Amsterdam, Amersfoort, The Hague, Almelo, and Dordrecht in the 1970s and 1980s. Subsequently, the first “Armenian Genocide” themed organization was established in 1989 in Amersfoort as a symbol of Armenian nationalism and nation-building process, since as explained earlier, the “Armenian Genocide” is used as a fuel to create unity amongst Armenians. In 2003, FAON was established as the Armenian Federation in the Netherlands in the The Hague. FAON’s publication was produced using surveys. 2678 known Armenian families in the Netherlands were contacted through Armenian organizations and the database that these Armenian organizations had. These 2678 families had on average 2.9 kids; meaning that 7766 results came back.<sup>32</sup>

Of these 7766 results, the following places of birth were mentioned: Of the people surveyed, 30% were born in Turkey, 22% were born in Armenia, 14% were born in Iran, 11% were born in Iraq, 8% were born in the Soviet Union, 6% were born in the Netherlands, 2% were born in Dutch colonies (Netherlands Antilles etc.), and 7% were born somewhere else.<sup>33</sup>

Another question concerned the education level of the Armenians living in the Netherlands. Before addressing this question, it may be important to explain the Dutch education system before looking into the results. In the Netherlands, the education system is comprised of three levels. The first level is primary school, which is no different from any other country in the world. The second level is secondary school, which in turn is divided in three subcategories: VMBO, HAVO, VWO. VMBO is the lowest degree one can get, while HAVO is used to go high school, and VWO is used to go to university. One cannot attend university without a VWO degree. All pupils are obligated to take a test after finishing primary school, which shows to which of the three subcategories in secondary school they can attend. Only the pupils with high scores can attend

---

32 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 47.

33 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 59.

VWO, while the lowest results only grant access to VMBO. HAVO is the average, but after completing HAVO (which is five years), one can then attend VWO (which is six years). VMBO is only four years and prepares you for the low-wage jobs which do not need a degree to pursue. The third and last level is higher education, which constitutes as a university education.<sup>34</sup>

Having established to education system in the Netherlands, we can now look at the figures.<sup>35</sup> Only 13% of the Armenians living in the Netherlands have taken primary education and nothing more, while 42% have secondary education as their highest finished education level. A staggering 45% of the Armenians living in the Netherlands have finished higher education in the Netherlands. It is striking that the book of Veerman and FAON also shows the statistics of Turks in the Netherlands as a comparative tool. This showcases diaspora Armenians' need to define themselves in relation to Turks, as was explained earlier. According to the publication of FAON, only 6% of the Turks living in the Netherlands have obtained a university degree, against 45% of the Armenians in the Netherlands. Furthermore, while only 13% of Armenians have enjoyed only a primary education, this figure is 45% amongst Turks.

*It is striking that the book of Veerman and FAON also shows the statistics of Turks in the Netherlands as a comparative tool. This showcases diaspora Armenians' need to define themselves in relation to Turks, as was explained earlier.*

Against the backdrop of 42% of Armenians enjoying secondary education, 49% of Turks have enjoyed secondary education as their highest education level. When comparing with local Dutch people, the Armenians are far above average as only 31% of Dutch people have obtained a university degree against 45% of Armenians. Whereas 8% of the Dutch people have obtained nothing more than a primary education degree, this is 13% amongst Armenians. Dutch people that have a secondary education degree is 61% against 42% of Armenians.<sup>36</sup>

When looking at the details of the secondary educational level in the Netherlands, we can see the following results: Approximately 35% of

34 Hans Luyten, "Stability of school effects in Dutch secondary education: The impact of variance across subjects and years", *International Journal of Educational Research*, Volume: 21, Issue: 2 (1994), 197-216. Also see; Wiel Veugelers, "Creating critical democratic citizenship education: empowering humanity and democracy in Dutch education", *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, Volume: 37, Issue: 1 (2007), 105-119.

35 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 68-69.

36 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 69.

Armenians have enjoyed VMBO, while 65% has enjoyed HAVO or even VWO. It is striking that the publication makes no distinction between HAVO and VWO, probably to make it seem as if Armenians are enjoying higher overall level of education than they really are. However, the figures related to Armenians are nevertheless very high in comparison with the Turks in the Netherlands and the local Dutch people. While 35% of Armenians are enjoying (or have finished) their VMBO education, 78% of the Turks have VMBO as their highest education against 52% of the Dutch people. When comparing HAVO/VWO, 65% of the Armenians have finished (or are still attending) a HAVO/VWO education against 22% of the Turks and 48% of the Dutch people, making the Armenian average much higher; even higher than the average of the local Dutch people.<sup>37</sup>

Yet another statistic in FAON's publication is focused upon the place of residence of Armenians in the Netherlands. Of all the Armenians living in the Netherlands, some 18% live in the city of Almelo that is situated close to the Dutch-German border. It is also the city where the largest "Armenian Genocide" -monument outside of Armenia- is located.<sup>38</sup> The city is known for having Armenian-Dutch politicians in the local municipality.<sup>39</sup> The second city is the Dutch capital of Amsterdam with 10% of the Armenians that live in the Netherlands.<sup>40</sup>

When looking at yet other statistics, the one most striking is that of intercultural marriage. At least 16% of Armenians are married with Dutch people that have no Armenian heritage or any other Armenian-related heritage and/or background. In comparison, this is only the case for 4% of the Turks living in the Netherlands.<sup>41</sup>

Having looked at all these statistics, one can easily argue more than one conclusion. However, since the publication of FAON (as well as this preliminary article) is exploratory, I instead want to look at the bigger picture and the context of all these statistics as my own conclusions after my research into the statistics that were presented by FAON.

---

37 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 73.

38 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 32.

39 Municipality Almelo, "Robin Gelici", <https://www.almelo.nl/fractie-cda> (last visit: 05/03/2016).

40 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 66.

41 FAON, *Armeniërs in Nederland...*, p. 85.

## Conclusion

After looking at all the statistics of the Armenians living in the Netherlands, I argue that (in correlation with the notions of Armenian nationalism) the Armenians that are living in the Netherlands compare themselves with Turks, and not the local Dutch people. This is an interesting aspect of the process of nation-building that is going on currently amongst Armenians since this past century. Armenians have focused their process of creating unity on two important pillars. For one, the story-telling of the “Armenian Genocide” is without a doubt the most important core of Armenian nationalism. The second pillar of Armenian nationalism is based upon the phenomenon of “creating the other/otherization”, which is the base for why Armenians compare themselves not with the local inhabitants of the country where they are living but with the Turks living in that country. Almost without exception, the Armenian minority in any country is doing better (education-wise and job-wise) than the Turkish minority in that country. It is precisely this comparison, or competition, that the Armenians wish to win.

*Armenians have focused their process of creating unity on two important pillars. For one, the story-telling of the “Armenian Genocide” is without a doubt the most important core of Armenian nationalism. The second pillar of Armenian nationalism is based upon the phenomenon of “creating the other/otherization”, which is the base for why Armenians compare themselves not with the local inhabitants of the country where they are living but with the Turks living in that country.*

The success stories of the Armenians in the Netherlands also show another story with regards to the general picture. Whereas Armenians in the Netherlands are prone on continuing their education and accomplishing far more than even the locals, the Turks are not. Armenians are keen on education and producing intellectuals. In this respect, they are markedly different from Turks in the Netherlands, who are more focused on earning money. It is this aspect that has been the main red thread throughout this preliminary research I have conducted about Armenians living (born or not born) in the Netherlands.

The two most important conclusions I have reached upon conducting this research are that, for one, as evidenced by the case of the Netherlands, Armenians seem to compare themselves with Turks no matter which country they live in and no matter how many Armenians there are in that country. Armenians feel the desire to compete with Turks, and not with any other ethnic minority or even the local population.

Secondly, Armenians have based their notion of nationalism and creating unity amongst themselves upon the process of distinguishing themselves from Turks. It is this process of nation-building that has created so much animosity between Turks and Armenians. The Turks in the Netherlands do not compare themselves with Armenians living in the Netherlands, whereas the Armenians living in the Netherlands do exactly that. In essence, whereas Armenians compare themselves with Turks, Turks do not pay particular attention to Armenians in a general sense, meaning they do not have a habit of defining themselves in relation to Armenians.

These two findings are the most important findings that are to be underlined in this article, which is only a preliminary research on the statistics of the Armenians in the Netherlands that reveals, among other things, the underlining thought patterns of diaspora Armenians when they engage in identity formation.

## Bibliography

- 24 April Comité, <http://www.24april.nl/> (last visit: 05/03/2016).
- Abovian: Armenian Cultural Association in The Hague, <http://www.abovian.nl/> (last visit: 05/03/2016).
- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd edition. London, 1991/1983.
- Breisach, Ernst. *Historiography: Ancient, Medieval, and Modern*, Third Edition. Chicago, 1983/2007.
- Ersaydı, Alper. “Psiko-Tarih Bağlamında Türkiye-AB İlişkileri”. *Politik Psikoloji Yıllığı*, Volume: 1 (Ankara, 2011).
- Federatie Armeense Organisaties Nederland (FAON). <http://www.faon.nl/> (last visit: 05/03/2016).
- Federatie Armeense Organisaties Nederland (FAON). *Armeniërs in Nederland: Een verkennend onderzoek*. The Hague, 2008.
- Feigl, Erich. *Armenian Mythomania, Armenian Extremism: Its Causes and Historical Context*. Vienna, 2006.
- Geary, Patrick J. *The Myth of Nations: The Medieval Origins of Europe*. Princeton, 2003).
- Gellner, Ernest. *Nations and Nationalism*. New York, 1983.
- Hobsbawm, Eric & Terence Ranger. *The Invention of Tradition*. Cambridge, 1983.
- Krieger, Heike. *The Kosovo Conflict and International Law: An Analytical Documentation 1974-1999*. Cambridge, 2001.
- Luckham, Robin. “French militarism in Africa”. *Review of African Political Economy*, Volume: 9, Issue: 24 (1982), 55-84.
- Luyten, Hans. “Stability of school effects in Dutch secondary education: The impact of variance across subjects and years”. *International Journal of Educational Research*, Volume: 21, Issue: 2 (1994), 197-216.

Smith, Anthony D. *Nationalism and Modernism*. New York, 1998/2003.

Toynbee, Arnold J. *A Study of History*. Oxford, 1939.

Toynbee, Arnold J. *Een Studie der Geschiedenis*. Bussum, 1952.

University of Amsterdam (UvA).

<http://www.uva.nl/over-de-uva/organisatie/medewerkers/content/v/e/g.j.m.veerman2/g.j.m.veerman2.html> (last visit: 05/03/2016).

Veugelers, Wiel. “Creating critical democratic citizenship education: empowering humanity and democracy in Dutch education”. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, Volume: 37, Issue: 1 (2007), 105-119.

Volkan, Vamık. “Large-group Identity, International Relations and Psychoanalysis”. *Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft e.V. (DGP)* meeting, Gasteig Cultural Center, Rosenheimer Platz, 23 May 2008. Available online: <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Large-group-Identity%2C-International-Relations-and-Psychoanalysis.php> (last visit: 21/11/2016). (\*)

Volkan, Vamık. “Large-group Identity, International Relations and Psychoanalysis”. *International Forum of Psychoanalysis*, Sweden 2009. (\*)

Volkan, Vamık. “Large-group Identity, International Relations and Psychoanalysis”. *vamikvolkan.com 2007/2016* (last visit: 21/11/2016). Available online: <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Large-group-Identity%2C-International-Relations-and-Psychoanalysis.php> (\*)

Volkan, Vamık. “Large-group Identity: ‘Us and them’ - Polarizations in the International Arena”. *Psychoanalysis, Culture and Society*, Volume: 14, Issue: 4 (2009).

Volkan, Vamık. “Transgenerational Transmissions and ‘Chosen Trauma’: An Element of Large-Group Identity”. *vamikvolkan.com 2007/2016* (last visit: 21/11/2016). Available online: <http://www.vamikvolkan.com/Transgenerational-Transmissions-and-Chosen-Traumas.php> (\*\*)

Volkan, Vamık. “Transgenerational Transmissions and ‘Chosen Traumas’: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity”. *Group Analysis*, Issue: 34 (2001), 79-97. (\*\*)

Volkan, Vamik. "Transgenerational Transmissions and 'Chosen Traumas'".  
*Thirteenth International Congress of the International Association of Group  
Psychotherapy*, August, 1998. (\*\*)

Weber, Eugen. *Peasants into Frenchmen: The Modernization of Rural France,  
1870-1914*. Stanford, California, 1976.

(\*) The sources are used as by the author himself during the period 2007-  
2009.

(\*\*) The sources are used as by the author himself during the period 1998-  
2007.

