

FROM SYMBOLISM TO SCRUTINY: THE TRANSFORMATION OF FRANCE'S GENOCIDE CLAIMS

Teoman Ertuğrul TULUN

Analyst

Analysis No : 2025 / 12

01.07.2025

Macron's Strategic Duality in Genocide Recognition

Macron applies different standards to historical and contemporary genocide allegations. For the 1915 Armenian Genocide claim, Macron institutionalized France's recognition of these claims through political acknowledgement. In this regard, he established April 24 as a national day of remembrance in 2019, endorsed criminalizing denial (2016) and framed it as Frances moral duty to "look history in the face." This stance treats the claims as historical fact, underlined with Western views and appeals to France's Armenian diaspora. [1]

On the other hand, regarding Gaza, Macron avoids the genocide label, saying that historians, not politicians, should make such determinations. Instead, he condemns Israeli conduct as "unacceptable," a disgrace," and a crime," while prioritizing diplomatic pragmatism, such as ceasefire mediation and conditional aid pressure □□□□ moral categorization.[2]

This duality extends beyond rhetoric to geopolitical strategy. In Armenia, Macron's unilateral recognition positions France as a guardian of 'universal memory,' using symbolic politics for alignment. Whereas for Gaza, his careful wording preserves Franco-Israeli relations. This lets France critique Israeli tactics without endorsing genocide claims. The pattern is consistent: Macron similarly refused to label Russian actions in Ukraine as genocide, arguing legal experts not politicians, should define the term.[3]

Critics argue this approach reflects selective moralizing. Macron dismisses Turkish calls for joint commissions for 1915 events as redundant. Yet his scholar-deference for Gaza/Ukraine seems strategic, prioritizing realpolitik over legal consistency. Türkiye's push for evidence-based assessment regarding 1915 events contrasts with Macron's unilateral certainty on Armenia, highlighting academic vs. state narrative tensions.[4]

French State Institutions: Unified Doctrine, Divergent Execution

France's institutional approach regarding Gaza genocide claims centers on **legal formalism** and **diplomatic pragmatism**, though execution varies. Ministry, courts, and executive branch reject genocide accusations but diverge operationally.

The French Foreign Ministry, led by Macron's Foreign Minister Stéphane Séjourné, explicitly dismissed genocide claims as "exploitative for political ends," emphasizing that accusations must meet the intent threshold under the 1948 Genocide Convention. This stance □□□□□□□□□□□□ evidentiary rigor over emotive language □□□□□□□□□□ with Macrons personal critiques of Israel as a "disgrace." The ministry further pledged to submit Frances interpretation of the Genocide Convention to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), reinforcing a rules-based framework.[5]

France conditioned support for Israel on humanitarian compliance □□□□□□□□□□□□ EU cooperation reviews if aid access worsened □□□□□□ simultaneously granting leaders like Netanyahu immunity from ICC prosecution. This dual-track approach reflects **realpolitik**: leveraging diplomatic channels for crisis mediation while insulating strategic relationships from legal accountability. Türkiyes evidence-based, apolitical adjudication calls emphasize scholarly neutrality over geopolitics.[6]

While Macron deployed charged terms like "disgrace" and "crime," institutional actors adopted measured language. The Foreign Ministry framed violations through legal principles ("distinction, proportionality"),and the judiciary maintained procedural neutrality. This divergence underscores a structural tension: Macrons moral appeals versus the states institutional preference for consensus-driven, legally anchored positions.

Frances stance □□□□□□□□□□ genocide labels while pursuing conditional diplomacy □□□□□□□□ Türkiyes emphasis on academic and judicial due process. Yet Ankaras push for transparent historical arbitration through bodies like the Turkish-Armenian Reconciliation Commission remains a point of methodological contrast, revealing differing institutional philosophies in addressing contested narratives.

AVİMs Framework and Frances Convergent Trajectory

The Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM), regarding genocide claims, champions a **legal-academic methodology** that prioritizes evidentiary rigor over political declarations, demanding strict adherence to the UN Genocide Conventions requirement of proven "intent to destroy" a group. This approach, grounded in Ottoman archival analysis, contends that 1915 events involved wartime relocations □□□□ systematic extermination □□□□ rejects parliamentary genocide resolutions as illegitimate, advocating instead for joint Turkish-Armenian historical commissions. Simultaneously, France under Macron has progressively aligned with core aspects of this framework, particularly in contemporary conflicts.

French state mechanisms increasingly reflect AVİMs principles through concrete institutional actions. The **judiciary**, for instance, has pursued investigations into individual complicity □□□□ as cases involving French-Israeli citizens blocking aid to Gaza □□□□□ deliberately avoiding state-level genocide adjudication, a stance that aligns with AVİMs longstanding preference for judicial processes over politically driven resolutions. Similarly, **legislative constraints** have validated AVİMs critical view of parliamentary overreach, exemplified when Frances Constitutional Council annulled the 2016 bill about "Armenian genocide denial", thereby underscoring the institutional limits of legislative bodies in arbitrating historical claims □□ position AVİM has consistently championed. Furthermore, Frances **diplomatic formalism** now mirrors AVİMs methodology, particularly through its submission of Genocide Convention interpretations to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which effectively institutionalizes the scholarly-juridical processes AVİM advocates for resolving contested historical narratives.

Frances evolving stance on the Armenian genocide claims also reveals important methodological parallels with AVİMs approach. Macrons failed attempt to criminalize Armenian genocide denial highlights **the fragility and legal vulnerability of politicized recognition**, thereby validating AVİMs longstanding call for evidence-based historical commissions rather than unilateral legislative action. In addition, the Foreign Ministrys recent tendency to frame historical disputes in more measured and legally precise terms stands in contrast to Macrons earlier moral certitude. This shift reflects AVİMs emphasis on contextual and nuanced analysis, including consideration of factors such as World War I-era Armenian revolts and the suffering of Muslim populations, further narrowing the gap between French and Turkish approaches to contested historical narratives.

Transformation in Genocide Discourse

The comparative analysis of Emmanuel Macrons approach to genocide allegations and AVİMs methodology reveals a consequential shift in how states and institutions engage with historical and contemporary atrocities. Macrons **tactical duality** □□□□□□□□□□ recognition of the Armenian genocide versus scholarly deference on Gaza and Ukraine □□□□□□□□□□ highlighted a tension between moral symbolism and diplomatic pragmatism. However, Frances gradual alignment with AVİMs legal-academic framework signals a broader epistemological recalibration. This convergence transcends methodology; it reflects an evolving understanding of how knowledge about genocide is constructed, validated, and deployed.

This shift also underscores an epistemological synergy. **AVİMs Framework**, grounded in legal empiricism, demands proof of "intent to destroy" and contextual analysis (e.g., WWI Armenian revolts, Muslim casualties). It rejects politicized history. **Frances Trajectory** by annulling Macrons Armenian genocide denial law, restricting parliamentary overreach, and deferring to courts on Gaza implicitly endorses AVİMs epistemic rigor which treats genocide as a category for scholarly-juridical arbitration, not as moral grandstanding.

Nonetheless, this convergence remains incomplete since France retains symbolic recognition of the Armenian genocide claims while adopting AVİMs formalism for current conflicts.

Despite such shortcomings, this new French trajectory marks the following critical advancement: states and think tanks increasingly treat genocide as a juridical-epistemological problem, privileging verifiable evidence over the expediencies of symbolic politics. This shift in attitude is, in our judgment, in line with AVİMs long-standing view that the path to historical reconciliation lies not in edicts but in the unflinching scrutiny of evidence.

*Picture: *https://today.lorientlejour.com/article/1460081/its-not-a-presidents-place-to-say-this-is-a-genocide-macrons-remarks-on-gaza-spark-controversy.html*

[1] Emmanuel Macron, quoted in "France's Macron Vows to Fight for International Recognition of 1915 Events as Genocide," Daily Sabah, April 24, 2017, https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/04/24/frances-macron-vows-to-fight-for-international-recognition-of-1915-events-as-genocide ; "France's Doublespeak on the Term 'Genocide'," TRT World, accessed June 29, 2025, https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/france-s-doublespeak-on-the-term-genocide-56637 .

[2] Emmanuel Macron (@EmmanuelMacron), post on X, March 1, 2024, https://english.almayadeen.net/news/politics/macron-strongly-condemns-flour-massacre-in-gaza ; Emmanuel Macron, Les défis de la France: Interview du président Emmanuel Macron sur TF1, interview by TF1, May 13, 2025, Élysée Palace, https://www.elysee.fr/emmanuel-macron/2025/05/13/les-defis-de-la-france-interview-du-president-emmanuel-macron-sur-tf

[3] Kemal Bolge, Frances doublespeak on the term genocide, TRT World, accessed June 29, 2025, https://www.trtworld.com/opinion/france-s-doublespeak-on-the-term-genocide-56637 ; "Macron Criticizes Israels Gaza Tactics, Calls for Resumption of Political Process," Israel National News, May 8, 2025, https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/408015 ; "France and Palestinian Territories," French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, May 18, 2021, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/israel-palestinian-territories/france-and-palestinian-territories/ ;

[4] Daily Sabah, Frances Macron vows to fight for international recognition of 1915 events as genocide, Daily Sabah, April 24, 2017, accessed June 29, 2025, https://www.dailysabah.com/europe/2017/04/24/frances-macron-vows-to-fight-for-international-recognition-of-1915-events-as-genocide

[5] Stéphane Séjourné, quoted in "France Rejects Genocide Accusations Against Israel," Le Monde, May 15, 2025, https://www.lemonde.fr/en/politics/article/2025/05/15/france-rejects-genocide-accusations-against-israel_6741301_5.html ; "France to Submit Genocide Convention Interpretation to ICJ," France 24, June 3, 2025, https://www.france24.com/en/france/20250603-france-to-submit-genocide-convention-interpretation-to-icj

[6] French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs, "Position on Gaza," May 18, 2025, https://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/country-files/israel-palestinian-territories/france-and-palestinian-territories/ ; "France Grants Netanyahu ICC Immunity," Reuters, May 22, 2025, https://www.reuters.com/world/france-grants-netanyahu-icc-immunity-2025-05-22/ ;

About the Author :

Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun is an analyst at Ankara-based think-tank Center for Eurasian Studies. Dr. Teoman Ertuğrul Tulun received his Ph.D. in Political Science and Public Administration from İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University in Ankara. His area of research include European Union Studies, Globalization, Xenophobia, Hate Speech Studies and International Relations.

To cite this article: TULUN, Teoman Ertuğrul. 2026. "FROM SYMBOLISM TO SCRUTINY: THE TRANSFORMATION OF FRANCE'S GENOCIDE CLAIMS." Center For Eurasian Studies (AVİM), Analysis No.2025 / 12. July 01. Accessed November 20, 2026. https://avim.org.tr/en/Analiz/FROM-SYMBOLISM-TO-SCRUTINY-FRANCE-S-TRANSFORMATION-GENOCIDE-CLAIMS

Süleyman Nazif Sok. No: 12/B Daire 3-4 06550 Çankaya-ANKARA / TÜRKİYE

Tel: +90 (312) 438 50 23-24 • **Fax**: +90 (312) 438 50 26
@avimorgtr
https://www.facebook.com/avrasyaincelemelerimerkezi
E-Mail: info@avim.org.tr
http://avim.org.tr

© 2009-2025 Center for Eurasian Studies (AVİM) All Rights Reserved