

# TURKISH- ARMENIAN ISSUE: VICTIMIZATION AND LARGE-GROUP IDENTITY

**Sevinç Göral**

Clinical Psychologist, MA,  
ASAM Political Psychology Specialist  
e-mail: sgoral@avsam.org

## **Abstract:**

*Psychology and psychoanalysis have gradually become involved in the politics, international relations and interpretations of macro events during the last two decades. Their contribution to understanding the large groups' conflicts has been recognized as useful tool to handle the long term conflicts between two nations. This article examines the psychological dynamics operating within the Turkish- Armenian issue. It was planned to accomplish this aim by two separate papers, former of which focuses on the psychological mechanisms determining the Armenian side's attitudes and political actions. Effects of victimization psychology and large group identity are emphasized as important factors for the skeleton of Armenians' group behavior. It is concluded that there are psychological processes influencing what seems to be the reality in politics, for this reason politics should include more non-traditional methods of conflict resolution.*

**Keywords:** *Psychoanalysis, political psychology, large group identity, victimization, Turkish-Armenian relations*

## **Öz:**

*Özellikle son yirmi otuz yıl içinde, uluslararası ilişkiler ve siyaset bilminde odak, insan değişkenine, etkileşimin önemine ve karşılıklılığa doğru kaymıştır. Buna paralel olarak psikoloji ve psikanaliz içinde de odak, bireyden toplumsala ve grup yaşantılarına doğru genişlemiştir. Psikoloji ve psikanalizin büyük gruplar arasındaki uzun süreli çatışmaları anlama ve onlara müdahale etmede etkili araçlar olduğu düşüncesi yaygınlık kazanmış ve çatışma çözümü uygulamalarında daha çok yer almaya başlamışlardır. Bu çalışma, Türk- Ermeni meselesinde işleyen psikolojik dinamikleri ele almaktadır. Mağduriyet psikolojisi ve büyük grup kimliği, Ermeni grup davranışının iskeletini oluşturan mekanizmalar olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Sonuç olarak, reel politikte etkiyen pek çok meselenin içinde psikolojik dinamiklerin alttan alta işleyen süreçler olduğu ve gerçekliği yanıltma riski taşıdıkları vurgulanmaktadır.*

*Ayrıca Türk-Ermeni meselesinin çözümünde, psikoloji ve psikanalizin olanaklarından ve geleneksel olmayan yöntemlerden yararlanılabileceği dile getirilmektedir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Psikanaliz, siyaset psikolojisi, büyük grup kimliği, mağduriyet, Türk-Ermeni ilişkileri*

## INTRODUCTION

There are some important underlying and occult phenomena, which are affecting and operating in the events, the perceptions, the behaviors, the emotions, the relationships, the politics and even the world, but cannot be named or comprehended easily. Yet, some questions can not be answered without understanding these phenomena. For example, why the members of the some societies identify and describe themselves through their large-group identity, such as being a member of a community, a group or a nation, whereas some communities do not show this characteristic? Why some groups can easily come together and become a united whole around an ideology, a leader or a phenomenon, but others show the same reflex only in the war or other threat situations? How the social or political events, which are occurred ages and generations ago, can influence and arouse the emotions of members as vivid as the event has been happen to themselves, whereas the same individuals show insensitivity toward the pains of other human beings from the other groups and be cruel toward them? How some groups could accept and conform to the constructed and given realities and belief systems, which might be distorting the reality as well, without any questioning? Why a between-group conflict cannot be easily resolved and maintains its strength throughout years despite huge amount of political, economic, military or judicial precautions and protections? Even it has been resolved, how come it reappears lively again as if it was there all the time without any indication?

These kinds of questions have become important research areas for social sciences. International relations, politics and sociology tried to examine similar questions by means of the macro theories or models. Yet there has been no integrated theory that involves all the answers of these questions come out from these social sciences. However, the world has increasingly become a conflict laden place and these conflicts can not be worked out without considering the answers of these questions. Political psychology which is a newly emerging and developing discipline and some other parts of psychology have become increasingly more involving to these research questions. This article aimed to understand the Turk-

ish-Armenian issue, which is a crucial matter in dispute in Turkey, by means of examining the psychological dynamics. It was proposed that this point of view provides a beneficial perspective, which can contribute to the policies or the strategies for both Turkish and Armenian sides and international powers.

## CONTRIBUTION OF PSYCHOLOGY AND PSYCHOANALYSIS TO THE UNDERSTANDING OF INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS

Most of the social sciences, especially politics, sociology, history and anthropology, have been worked on different aspects of conflicts, battles or wars. They have studied on inter-group conflicts and their consecutive results such as immigrations, poverty, and formation of sub-cultural structures within the society... etc.

Politics and international relations have failed in the predictions and the provisions for the future, particularly in the issues of the collapse of Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), racism and resulting Holocaust phenomena, and the establishment of international, supranational political unions like European Union during the last 50-60 years<sup>1</sup>. Last years' publications of international relations suggested that realist approach, which emphasize the macro- level analysis in international relations and state is the primary and rational actor in the international relations, became to loose its power. These publications proposed a new interdisciplinary approach that in both macro and micro level analyses are integrated to each other and the macro events are seen as they are multidimensional and reciprocal rather than understood by linear deterministic processes<sup>2</sup>. While there was an evolution from linear, cause-effect type of understanding of international relations to reciprocal, mutual, multi dimensional and multidisciplinary comprehension of macro events in international relations, there emerged a similar change in psychology and psychoanalysis, which are more micro level disciplines examining the intra-psychic processes. In the last 30 years, researches on the different aspects of ethnic groups, in-group and out-group relations, group-leader relations... etc. has become accumulated in psychology. Also the build up knowledge on group relations have begun to be used in the conflict resolution practices. For example, some social psychology theories brought new premises that emphasize the mutuality principle and human factor in international rela-

1 F. Sevinç Göral, "Siyaset Bilimi ve Uluslararası İlişkilerde Siyaset Psikolojisi", *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol 5, Iss. 59, March 2005, ss.77-82.

2 Valarie M. Hudson and Christopher S. Vore, "Dış Politika Analizinin Dünü, Bugünü ve Yarını", Erol Göka and Işık Kuşçu (in ed.), *Uluslararası İlişkilerin Psikolojisi*, ASAM Yayınları, Ankara, 2002.

tions against the propositions of realists. According to these theories, international conflicts come out from the psychosocial processes of the collective needs and the fears of the groups, rather than from the rational decision making processes of the macro level actors through their objective evaluations. International conflict is a phenomenon operating via social processes rather than a result of a disagreement between two or more states. In other words, international conflict does not arise from the damage resulting from administration of the physical or political force onto other side; rather it comes from a multilayered process, which is based on repetitive reciprocal interactions between two sides. In addition, international conflicts should not be formulated as the sequence of actions in which both actors consecutively respond to each other in a cause-effect relationship. Besides this interactive nature, they have usually self-induced characteristics and provoked by in-group processes as well<sup>3</sup>.

Consequently, it could be proposed that psychology and psychoanalysis can be beneficial and be used for the understanding of the international conflicts, that international conflicts have the impression that are operating in the international level of action at first<sup>4</sup>. By considering the risk of trapping into reductionism and “psychologism”, psychological and psychoanalytical examination of political events and international conflicts could have a considerable contribution to the understanding of international and inter-group conflicts.

### EFFECT OF VICTIMIZATION IN THE TURKISH-ARMENIAN ISSUE

Some long term problems of traumatized individuals are based on and originated from their cognitions about themselves, other people and the world. These individuals usually see themselves as a weak person and a victim who is mistreated. They perceive the others and the outer world as powerful, oppressive, cruel and enemy. These perceptions, beliefs and cognitions result in a change in the construction of self identity which has weaker connection with the reality. As a result of these changes in cognitive processes, the individual mostly experiences interpersonal difficulties and problems. This phenomenon is named as ‘victimization’, in that the individuals perceive the self as helpless/victim and the others as

3 Herbert Kelman and Ronald Fisher, “Conflict Analysis and Resolution”, David Sears, Leonie Huddy and Robert Jervis (in ed.), *Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, Oxford University Press, New York, 2003, pp. 316- 320.

4 Vamık D. Volkan, “Uluslararası İlişkilerde Psikanaliz ve Psikanalizde Uluslararası İlişkiler 1: Psikanaliz ve Diplomasi Arası İşbirliğinde Engeller”, (Translation: F. Sevinç Göral), *Stratejik Analiz*, Vol 6, Iss. 62, June 2005, ss. 52-57.

offender. Most of the traumatic events related to the victimization phenomena particularly involve intentional and human made events like wars, torture, terrorism related events, physical or sexual abuse.

By means of group identity theory and group psychology perspectives, victimization phenomenon can be a beneficial conceptual metaphor used in order to understand the political

events emerged in international relations. Psychology of victimization, which is an important operating mechanism within many ethnic, religion related, cultural, economic or political conflicts, has an impact on Turkish-Armenian relations

These publications proposed a new interdisciplinary approach that in both macro and micro level analyses are integrated to each other and the macro events are seen as they are multidimensional and reciprocal rather than understood by linear deterministic processes.

as a maintaining factor for the disputes and conflicts. In international relations platform, there are some situations in which one side takes the role of victim<sup>5</sup> and the relationship between two sides is begin to be perceived by others through victim-offender duality. The common examples of these situations might be that one nation state might show defensive reflexes for the separatists or there might be conflict laden relations between the marginal or the minority group and the state. In both examples, it is quite easy to see the powerless side, which is usually the marginal group or minority group, as victim, especially if the state uses coercive power for the aim of deterrence.

Many experiences of mistreatments and excessive use of power have been witnessed throughout the history. In these experiences one group uses unfair, cruel and excessive power over other group and there is a shared judgment about victimization within both supranational and international arenas. Dropping the atomic bombs upon Japan by United States of America, biased political sanctions and unequal power uses during the ethnic conflicts in the Balkans and the Caucasus, the genocide of Muslims in Kosovo, and the genocide of Jews in Europe by Nazis could be the examples of these experiences. The common reality shared by these experiences is the excessive use of power that damaged side is victimized, which is recognized in international level of judgment.

5 Nuri Bilgin, *Siyaset ve İnsan*, Bağlam Yayınları, İstanbul, 1997, pp. 92- 98.

There is also other side of the coin that victimization has the unseen side, which is the excusing phenomenon. This is operating within idealized western notions of human rights and justice as a substratum. The modern western societies generally are perceived to have a tendency of excusing the weak, damaged, suppressed part and making positive discrimination. The origin of this tendency is related to the primitive motivation for the projection of the bad parts onto other in order to be purified from the one's sins. By projecting one's bad and unwanted qualities onto the other, one can maintain the identity intact and purified. The modernization process of the West involves the projection of the aggressive parts onto "others", who is usually the "barbarian" Orient.

Assoc. Prof. Erol Göka emphasized the psychological factors in the Armenian question and mentioned about the psychological climate for genocide in the groups and nations. He states that "the Holocaust practice in Europe toward Jews by Germans forms the main frame of this psychological atmosphere. Within the frame of the Holocaust, a new ideological and psychological atmosphere and what sociologists called "human rights age" that almost giving high premium for victim and reinforcing the role of victim emerged after the Second World War"<sup>6</sup>. He suggested that this condition of increasingly accepted state of being the victim among the Western societies is being abused by Armenians. They try to take advantage by giving extra weight to their originally rightful pains. Göka emphasized the excessive excusing psychology of Western civilization, which is responsible for the two world wars, as the main underlying mechanism of this victimization psychology. He evaluated that the thesis of Armenian Diaspora, which states that "Hitler learned genocide from Turks", is actually a mechanism of purification in the Western/Christian consciousness<sup>7</sup>. It is noticeable that Judaism has a strengthening and widening structure, which is nourished and reinforced by victimization, in the world. It was also suggested that the Holocaust provided the Jews to gain positive discrimination form Western societies. The Judaism gets stronger by benefiting this situation.

The same relationship between the Holocaust and the construction of Jewish identity has been attempted to be used in the construction of Armenian identity<sup>8</sup>.

6 Erol Göka, "Ermeni Sorunu'nun (Gözden Kaçan) Psikolojik Boyutu", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Cilt 1, (March, 2001), p. 131

7 Erol Göka, "Ermeni Diasporasının Psikolojisi", *Ermeni Araştırmaları 1. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri*, Vol. 3, ASAM Yayınları, Ankara, 20-21 Nisan 2002, p. 43.

8 İbrahim Kaya, "The Holocaust and Armenian Case: Highlighting the Main Differences", *Armenian Studies, A Quarterly Journal of History, Politics and International Relations*, Vol. 4, pp. 274- 295.

After the signing of Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in United Nations in 9<sup>th</sup> October 1948, Armenians began to depict insistently that the Armenian relocation in 1915 was also genocide. At the same period, Armenian Diaspora living in the western countries, like USA, England, France, Germany, have begun to realize that the important parts of Armenian identity, such as language, life style, cultural characteristics, folklore, and community traits, begin to dissolve within the host land culture, thus they become to be assimilated. The Armenian Church, Hinchak and Tashnak parties and other Armenian aid associations, which were experiencing survival anxieties due to the dissolution of Armenian identity, used the assertion of this genocide thesis as a shelter to resist for annihilation. This thesis provided them a balanced formula for keeping the group identity alive without preventing them from joining with the host land. Armenian Diaspora members usually do not have an idea of returning to their homeland due to Republic of Armenia's economical and political difficulties and shortages in natural resources, in socio-cultural structure and in social life aspects. Thus the mental representation of genocide operates as a mental homeland, which emotionally supplies the construction of a shared Armenian identity and plays a role in the transmission of this identity to the next generations<sup>9</sup>.

Psychology of victimization, an important element of Armenian identity, has roots in the Armenian mythology. Armenians believe that they come from Noah's lineage and become to be a nation. According to their belief, the tribe, who can survive from the great Noah Flood by means of climbing to the Mountain of Ararat, was their ancestors. This is why they claim for the Ararat, as if it belongs to Armenians as a sacred land. This assertion is reinforced by Armenian Church. Based on this thesis, Armenians describe themselves as "chosen nation" due to this collective belief. Mental representations of their identity consist of this core belief that their nation has been tested by various tests throughout history and they have overcome all difficulties and could have survived. Now it could be understandable why the Armenian Church tries to make a connection between the Noah Flood and the Relocation of Armenians in 1915. There is an intention of strengthening the image of "victim nation" who has survived despite great catastrophic events<sup>10</sup>. This analogy which is consciously and intentionally emphasized

9 Haluk Özdemir, "Diaspora Ararat'ı Ararken: Ermeni Kimliği ve Soykırım İddiaları", *Ermeni Araştırmaları*, Vol. 4, Iss. 14- 15, pp. 75- 97; Laçiner, "Ermeni...", pp. 13- 25; Erol Göka, "Ermeni Diasporasının ...", pp. 39- 46; Erol Göka, "Ermeni Sorununun...", pp. 128- 136; Ömer E. Lütem, *Ermeni Sorunu*, Seminar presented in CESS, 21 Temmuz 2005.

10 Sedat Laçiner, "Ermeni Sorunu'nun Temel Unsurları Olarak Ermeni Kimlik Bunalımı ve Güç Politikaları", *Ermeni Araştırmaları 1. Türkiye Kongresi Bildirileri*, Vol. 3, ASAM Yayınları, Ankara, 20-21 April 2002, p.20.

by Armenian Church lead to the perception that the Relocation has had the intention to extinct their race, like the great flood which removed all other races from earth's surface. Thus their large group identity and mental representations related to this identity provides a psychological base for and reinforces their insistence of genocide thesis.

Many experiences of mistreatments and excessive use of power have been witnessed throughout the history.

An important component and the axis of the group existence of Armenian identity is the shared set of beliefs that are based on being a victimized group. The great traumatic events that they are believed to have been experiencing since the formation of their community differentiates Armenians from other nations or groups. They are the nation who has been tested throughout the history and resuscitated again right on the time when they have been ceased to exist. In addition to that they had been the victimized side all the time in history. All these elements of images and belief codes are the integral part of Armenian identity. Besides, the Armenian Diaspora and the governors try to hold these images alive and perceive them to be an opportunity for benefiting in international relations. Geopolitical, demographic, economic, political and military statuses of the Republic of Armenia are also reinforcing this victimization perception. Republic of Armenia is a landlocked state which is deprived of rich natural resources. It also surrounded by neighbors with whom they have distant relations that could create security problems and threat perception. In the west, there is Turkey with larger amount of population, richer natural resources and stronger economy. In the east, there is Azerbaijan, which has a sea coast and relatively rich resources, but with whom there is increased tension due to the war about Nagorno Karabagh. In the north, there is Georgia with whom there are no good and stable relations except for their narrow economic relation and it separates Armenia from Russia, which is historically and culturally closer to Armenia and supports it in economic and political areas. In the south, there is north border of Iran, where the most of the population is consisted of Azerbaijanis. Consequently, four sides of it are surrounded by neighbors with insecure relations that create a disadvantageous position which promotes both victimization and excusing psychology. Being surrounded by these neighbors, which share the same kinship and bloodlines that Armenia have been involved in the ethnic enmity toward them in the past, intensify the perception of misery and victimization psychology in Armenian



group behavior. They also reinforce the psychology of excusing and attitudes of premium giving to the victimization in the west. Especially its relationship with Russia, which can be defined by an analogy of clinging and dependent relationship between father and son, is legitimized by this state of being wrapped up. It is seen that religious and historical bonds between two states result in Russia to give privileged position to Armenia among other states which have took their independence by separating from USSR in the Caucasus. From this base, Russia uses its power over Armenia in order to consolidate its operative effect in economic, political and military areas in the Caucasus<sup>11</sup>.

In summary, the “identity” stands out as an important factor in the problem between Armenia and Turkey. The psychology of victimization, which has been constituted the identity of the “victim” or identity of suppressed nation and created the perception of the group in need of protection, influences the international relations regarding the Turkish- Armenian issue. The group reflexes operating in Armenian identity base on the perennial enmity of Turks. Turks and Turkey constitute the essential “other” for Armenian side to project their aggressive parts and maintain the identity of wretchedness. Armenia seeks legitimization for this phenomenon in juridical and political areas of international relations.

## ROLE OF LARGE-GROUP IDENTITY IN TURKISH- ARMENIAN ISSUE

Large group identity is constructed by the mental codes, which are acquired through internalization mechanism within the development and socialization processes of an individual by the members of the group. They are the mental representations help to make adjustments in the relationships with the social world. Large group identity is intermixed with the individual's personal identity. Because this large group identity is “ego syntonic”, which means that the beliefs, thoughts, emotions, behaviors and attitudes pertaining to large group identity are compatible with the person's own mental world, the individual does not aware of its existence unless there is an evident threat to this identity. Yet, it underlies and determines the mental activities, attitudes and behaviors of an individual as much as the personal identity actually. In his tent model<sup>12</sup>, Vamik D. Volkan defined large group identity with an image of a tent canvas covering different individuals of the same group, who might not see and meet with other members any time. This canvas covers on top of the personal clothes of the individual, which represents the

11 Sedat Laçiner, *Türk Ermeni İlişkileri*, Kaknüs Yayınları, İstanbul, 2004, pp. 237- 246.

12 Vamik D. Volkan, *Kanbağı Etnik Gururdan Etnik Teröre*, Bağlam Yayınları, İstanbul, 1999, p. 40.

personal identity. It brings people together by creating the we-ness in the group and draws the borders of the group by defining the in-group and out-group. This border protects group from outer dangers. Group leader functions the pole of the tent, which keeps the tent upright position and determines its direction. When the canvas or the pole of the tent is threatened, the shared we-ness within the group increases, which will eventually create the awareness of being a member of that large-group. Large group identity becomes to be even more important than the personal identity in the threatening dangerous situations.

The characteristics of the threatening event for the large group are important determinants of how the group will react to this event. The danger can be a real danger that could threaten the group existence. Or the event can be just 'perceived' to be threatening to the group, yet it may not be dangerous in reality. The important thing here is the sharing of this perception by the group members, as the amplifier of we-ness.

1915 Armenian Relocation has been an important traumatic event especially for the innocent Armenians who have not been involved in the rebellion actions. Because, besides these people faced with the risk of being killed due to war context, they fought with poverty, starvation, epidemic diseases caused by the immigration as well. Survivors have experienced traumatic events or witnessed such events throughout the way to their new place into be exiled. As a matter of fact, this was not difficult to expect that this relocation, all by itself, was a great traumatic event that will strengthen and magnify the large group identity of Armenians.

Trauma has great impact in the human mind and psychology. The perception of the event, beside its characteristics in reality, determines its degree of influence. In order for the human mind to resolve the effects of trauma, it needs processing the disturbing information like a digest process of the food that is required for the organism to absorb it. The existing mental structures are broken down into pieces by the trauma. The reconstruction of these shaken belief system and schemas of the individual is the main object to be achieved. The individual needs to live and complete his or her grief by means of accepting his or her loss and grief in order achieve a new set of beliefs and reconstructed identity. In order complete the grief process, the lost object should be retained in the past as memories, should not carried into the present issues.

Societal traumas also result in similar consequences for the large group identity, like the effects of loss and trauma to the personal identity. If the members of

the group perceive themselves as weak, helpless, damaged and victim, the group carries the past traumatic event into the present as a “chosen trauma”. This event is transmitted throughout the generations and tried to keep alive<sup>13</sup>. “Transgenerational transmission is when an older person unconsciously externalizes his traumatized self onto a developing child’s personality. A child then becomes a reservoir for the unwanted, troublesome parts of an older generation. Because the elders have influence on a child, the child absorbs their wishes and expectations and is driven to act on them. It becomes the child’s task to mourn, to reverse the humiliation and feelings of helplessness pertaining to the trauma of his forebears”<sup>14</sup>. The transmission of the trauma-related affective and cognitive material to the child does not have to be occurred intentionally and verbally. The mental images are delivered through non- verbal communication or while transmitting family history by stories, fairy tales, songs... etc. unconsciously. The messages such as “you mourn for my pain instead of me”, “I was humiliated, you reversed this for me”, “be assertive and protect yourself and your rights instead of me”, “idealize our victimization”, “take revenge of violence against me”, “repair our trauma”<sup>15</sup> are given to the next generations.

The same relationship between the Holocaust and the construction of Jewish identity has been attempted to be used in the construction of Armenian identity.

The group leader can exacerbate and inflame the chosen trauma during the generational transmission. The easiest way to mobilize and direct a group in a desired way is to create a perception that there is threat outside and to enhance we-ness in the group. The group identity, which has been sleeping for a while, can be mobilized and enlivened by means of making the group to remember the past trauma or loss again. The trauma or loss, for which the grief process could not have completed by the group in the past, can be very potent tool to manage the group. Even if there is a great time lag between the traumatic event and the present, the trauma can be re-experienced by the group as vivid as if it is happened to them. “Time collapse” occurs that the past collapses onto the present and affective responses given by the group nearly as powerful as the time that traumatic event

13 Vamik D. Volkan, *Politik Psikoloji*, Ankara Üniversitesi Yayınları, Ankara, 1993, p. 70.

14 Vamik D. Volkan, *Bloodlines: From Ethnic Pride to Ethnic Terrorism*, Westview Press, Colorado, 1997, p. 43.

15 Vamik D. Volkan, “Psychoanalysis and History”, *Psychoanalytic View 2:History of the Person, History of the World Symposia*, 24- 26 April 2004, İstanbul.

has been experienced<sup>16</sup>. Especially in the times of stress, the group regresses to a lower level of functioning that the emotional and other mental processes shared by the group becomes more primitive thus more easy to control by leaders or other political actors. These vigorous emotions experienced within the group are used with the intention of social mobilization.

Psychology of victimization, an important element of Armenian identity, has roots in the Armenian mythology.

From this point of view, 1915 Armenian Relocation is functioning as “chosen trauma” for the Armenians. It is an important source of we-ness and group identity especially for the Armenian Diasporas. This historical event occupies great place in the Armenian policies. Great part of Armenian Diaspora’s activities is constituted by the struggle for the recognition of this event as “Armenian genocide”. These can show that although the event has been occurred at least four generations ago, the Relocation has great impact on Armenians today and influences the group emotionally. Although third and fourth generations have not experienced the relocation, they show greater enmity toward Turkish people than the first generation Armenians. Also they are more radical about and insist more harshly on the “Armenian genocide” than the preceding generations. These observations are enough to state that there is psychological processes operating behind the reality in Turkish- Armenian issue. Armenian policies try to reinforce the transgenerational transmission and time collapse for the 1915 Relocation by means of the disinformation procedures, which can take place through media and national education devices in order to make the society homogeneous enough to control the group in a desired direction. These kinds of psychological processes and mechanisms can be used as a manipulation device in the international relations by macro actors as well. For example, Armenian side’s thesis and demands from Turkey have been stated by different authorities who are against the Turkey’s membership to the European Union. The demands for the acceptance of “Armenian genocide” have been put in front of Turkish side as an obstacle for starting

<sup>16</sup> Vamık Volkan gave the example of time collapse that Milosevic and his followers showed around the bones of Lazar, who is a Serbian prince, has been killed in Kosovo War in 1389 by the Ottomans. Milosevic have dug and get the bones of Lazar out of the grave in the 600th anniversary of this war. The bones have been carried from village to village and city to city throughout the country. This was the beginning of the process causing the genocide of Muslims in Bosnia Herzegovina. For more detailed examination, look at Volkan, Kanbağcı..., pp. 65-100. In addition, it is known that monuments, literature, film and cinema industry can be used to maintain feelings of we-ness and group identity alive and powerful for certain purposes by using chosen traumas.

of the negotiations. This historical issue is tried to be used as a political tool in international relations.

There is a research, which has results supporting the abovementioned opinions, has been conducted by Turkish Economic and Social Studies Foundation (TESEV) in Turkey and Armenia<sup>17</sup>. Some examples of the results can be revealed that Armenians stated their information resources about Turks and Turkey are press/ media, history books, and old generations/family seniors in sequence<sup>18</sup>. The rate of giving erroneous answers for the Turkey's characteristics like religious structure or political system has been found to be increasing by increasing the education level of the Armenians<sup>19</sup>. These results indicated that government ideology and perspective may distort the information given to the Armenians about Turkey by disinformation mechanisms.

The careful examination of research results revealed that Armenians were more prejudiced in their responses than the Turks. For example, while many Turks have answered the questions measuring their level of knowledge about Armenians by the response of "I don't know" generally, Armenians generally and consistently have given negative responses for the same questions about Turks<sup>20</sup>. This shows that Turkish side was more neutral toward Armenians, whereas Armenians were more biased in their responses; hence Armenian side uses more projective mechanisms than Turkish side<sup>21</sup>. Similarly, for the questions measuring the attitudes of two sides about each other, while variety of the answers of Turkish side is broad, Armenians gave stereotypically negative answers, thus variety of their responses is small and restricted negatively. This indicated that Armenians are more homogeneous group than Turks in terms of their attitudes about them. When they were asked to report their expectations about other side's attitudes

17 Frehat Kentel ve Gevorg Poghosyan, *Ermenistan ve Türkiye Vatandaşları Karşılıklı Algılama Projesi*, Erivan, İstanbul, 2005, TESEVweb site, [http://www.tesev.org.tr/etkinlik/Turk\\_ermen\\_i\\_rapor.pdf](http://www.tesev.org.tr/etkinlik/Turk_ermen_i_rapor.pdf)

18 Kentel ve Poghosyan, *Ermenistan...* p. 18.

19 Kentel ve Poghosyan, *Ermenistan...* pp. 11-12.

20 Kentel ve Poghosyan, *Ermenistan...* pp. 16-18.

21 Projection: It is one of the defense mechanisms that human beings use during the early development. The infant projects unwanted negative mental representations, which are not integrated into a whole object yet, to outside in order to get rid of the destructiveness of his/ her aggressive impulses and to survive. He/she experiences them as they come from outside. Human projects its own destructiveness and badness to outside and creates an illusive perception that "the bad and evil is he / she / it, not me". The projection has important functions in the construction and development of being a nation as well. The group needs to project its bad parts onto other and to create an enemy outside in order to set the feelings of we-ness, to gathering around shared and idealized issues. For more detailed information, look at, Erol Göka, F. Sevinç Göral and F. Volkan Yüksel, "Birbirimize Ne Yapıyoruz? İnsan İlişkilerini Kavramanın Bir Aracı Olarak Yansıtımlı Özdeşim", *Avrasya Dosyası*, Vol 10, No. 1, Spring 2004, pp. 279-314.

about themselves, Armenians expected that Turks have more negative attitudes about themselves than in reality, thus their expectations were negatively biased. On the contrary, to lesser extend, Turks expected that Armenians have more positive attitudes about Turks than in reality, thus their expectations were positively biased<sup>22</sup>. In the questions tried to assess the mental representations of Armenians and Turks about each other, two-thirds of the answers of Armenians consisted of negative adjectives, such as “enemy, barbarian, bloodthirsty, murderer, wild...”. Whereas one-thirds of Turks’ responses involved negative adjectives, like “egoist, self-centered, prejudiced, enemy...”. Remainder two-thirds of Turks’ responses contained definitions such as “good people, endeavoring, a friendly nation, very clever, human, Christian, Armenian...”<sup>23</sup>

According to a result revealing “transgenerational transmission”, while 18-29 age of Armenians were the group which define the Turks with the most negative terms, 30-44 age group defined the Turks with average and more positive terms<sup>24</sup>. Similarly, in the question of “would you purchase the Turkish products?”, the younger the age group, the higher the rate of response of “no”<sup>25</sup>. These results show that there is higher rate of enmity and prejudice toward Turks in the third generation than the first and second generations. Consequently, unresolved trauma and mourning of the first generation of Armenians after the 1915 Relocation is transmitted to the third generation through grandfather/ grandmother and grandchild relationships. And these can be evidence that Armenian policy, which was transformed toward policies that promote the enmity against Turks and demands of the recognition of “Armenian genocide” especially after 1950’s, uses mass communication for disinformation about Turkish side and pumping the Turkish enmity among Armenians.

## CONCLUSION

The main object of this paper, which tries to understand the psychological dynamics of Turkish-Armenian issue, is to examine the psychological dynamics operating within the policies and group identity of Armenian side rather than Turkish side. In order for a broad and comprehensive evaluation of the issue, psychological factors affecting the Turkish side should also be taken into account, because transactional, reciprocal and interactive processes take place in interna-

22 Kentel ve Poghosyan, *Ermenistan...* p. 27.

23 Kentel ve Poghosyan, *Ermenistan...* pp. 28-29

24 Kentel ve Poghosyan, *Ermenistan...* p. 29.

25 Kentel ve Poghosyan, *Ermenistan...* p. 33.

tional system, like in all other systems. Thus the analysis, which does not take two sides into account, will be incomplete to understand the whole. In addition, it would be non-sense to state that all the factors affecting the Turkish side are de facto. Some characteristics related to the group identity of Turkish side have maintaining effect for the Armenian-Turkish issue as well. These characteristics and related psychological dynamics should be explored in another paper, which will complete this review.

1915 Armenian Relocation is functioning as “chosen trauma” for the Armenians. It is an important source of we-ness and group identity especially for the Armenian Diasporas.

The main argument in this paper is that the reality in international relations can be biased by many psychological mechanisms. There are some ancient psychological mechanisms and dynamics behind the demands of “Armenian genocide” recognition, not the reality.

These psychological mechanisms operating behind the conflictive structure of Turkish- Armenian relations provide important tools for archeological digging up for the etiology of the problem. Full comprehension of this problem, which is seen as affecting the international relations as well, can be possible only by means of taking human factor into account. Rather than reality, humans’, groups’, or nations’ “perceived” reality make strong influence on the policies. In international system, where macro actors’ manipulations have important effects basically, the human factor may cause unexpected effects occasionally, and sometimes these psychological backgrounds and resources can be used and controlled by the macro actors in direction with their benefits. The victimization psychology and group identity, which have become fully developed fifty years ago, operating in the Armenian group psychology, function as a manipulation tool in the political maneuvers of these international actors intentionally or unconsciously.

Turkey needs to develop the more efficient way and more skillful ability to deal with Armenian side’s projections of threat and enmity in order to get a better position in the political circumstances related to the Turkish- Armenian issue. This cannot be achieved through reactive and polarizing policies. On the other hand, it cannot be realized by excusing and accepting approaches as well. Understanding of this issue should get rid off from the duality of either accepting or rejecting the “Armenian genocide” hypothesis. The new policy style should be re-framed around the awareness that there are important psychological mechanisms

operating within the Turkish-Armenian issue and they have potential to distort the reality. The other part of this new policy should contain various methods of influencing the actors and making them to accept this point of view inside and outside of Turkey.